Women's Political Participation











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International IDEA

WPP
Women in Political Participation

GENDER LINKS
FOR EQUALITY AND JUSTICE

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Sverige

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Morck Rally - Women Political Participation Cross Generation Academy Training - Maun, Botswana. *Photo: Mboy Maswabi*
National Assembly session, Cameroon, November 2023.
Morck Rally - Women Political Participation - Gaborone, Botswana. *Photo: Mboy Maswabi*
Marie Joséelfoku Mputa Mpunga with the press, DRC. *Credit: CENI*
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Meeting of the candidate, Bourhane Hamidouin Moroni, Comores.
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Hon Councilor Botshelobokae Ramasu – Making a difference Botswana Women Political Participation Cross Generation Academy Training - Maun, Botswana. *Photo: Mboy Maswabi*

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GL Gender Justice Associate Kevin Chiramba wrote the Electoral Laws and Management as well as the Violence Against Women in Politics chapters. Veteran Botswana journalist Pamela Dube wrote the Political Parties chapter. Lynette Mudekunye, a South African gender and public health specialist, wrote the chapter on the role of men. GL's outgoing WPP Programme Manager and communications specialist Tarisai Nyamweda (Zimbabwe) wrote the chapter on Media and Social Media. GL's incoming WPP Programme Manager Mabetha Manteboheleng (Lesotho) managed the project.

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Sincere thanks to all those listed in these acknowledgements, as well as others too numerous to name who made this project possible.

FOREWORD



Hon. Ambassador Fatuma Ndangiza

It is my singular honour to write this foreword to the second Africa Women's Political Participation (WPP) Barometer launching in July 2024. The Barometer carries dire warnings but also fresh insights. It reflects a continent still struggling to balance the WPP numbers, but fully engaged on the issues.

Women's representation in African parliaments has increased by just one percentage point from 25% in 2021 to 26% in 2024. At this rate, it will take until 2100 for African countries to achieve gender parity in their parliaments. Women's representation in political party leadership declined from 12% to 9%. Women in top executive positions increased from 7% to 13%, but this is still glaringly low. Women constitute just 25% of local councillors, which is lower than the representation in parliament. Africa has wide variations in WPP: Rwanda with 61% women in parliament has among the highest such representation globally, while Nigeria (4%) is among the lowest.

Forty one of the 54 African states have implemented some form of quota at the national or local level or both. In countries like Rwanda, South Africa, Namibia, and Mozambique, quotas have rapidly increased WPP in both the lower house and local government. However, quotas have not been as effective in countries like Kenya, Eswatini, Mali, Somalia, and others due to a lack of implementation and political will.

Patriarchy is the single biggest barrier to WPP. Society expects women to fulfil duties related to their roles as mothers and wives. Juggling domestic and care responsibilities while balancing work and family demands presents a significant obstacle. Traditional attitudes and beliefs about women's public participation discourage their involvement. Women often encounter slander and abuse when entering male-dominated spaces. Lack of economic resources and the "boys network" in political parties hamper progress. Media, including social media is more often part of the problem, rather than the solution. Online violence is a new phenomenon confronting many women in politics.

> "To achieve gender equality, we need to mobilise not just parliament but population, not only civil society but ALL society."
>
> *- Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, former UN Women Executive director and former Deputy President of South Africa*

The 2024 Barometer introduces a welcome chapter on the role of men in promoting WPP. It provides numerous examples of "shifting the power" in public and private spaces. The chapter shows how the fifty-fifty principle is a win-win formula. Enlightened men begin to take up "women's issues." They also cherish and embrace diversity and inclusion.

In October 2024 the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Committee will consider **General Recommendation 40 (GR40)** that establishes fifty percent (not 30%) as the goal and goes beyond numbers towards equal and inclusive participation. CEDAW's GR40 aims at a new approach to governance based on parity as a core principle and a leading force for transformative change.

The Barometer Chapter Eight entitled **"***Making a Difference***"** moves us in this direction. It gives examples of how women bring different issues and a different leadership style to decision-making. This is consistent with Ambassador Thenjiwe Mtintso's access-participation and transformation framework that posits that when women are present in sufficient numbers, and participate effectively, *we will see a change!* We must keep gathering this evidence of the link between gender equality, cleaner, more inclusive and more effective governance, peace and prosperity.

I commend International IDEA and its WPP Consortium partners, particularly Gender Links, for the commitment to tracking, benchmarking, naming, shaming (where needed) but also affirming good practice. Sincere appreciation also to the Embassy of Sweden in Addis Ababa for the unwavering support, and the shining example that Sweden itself provides to WPP. This report marks a milestone in a longer journey we must undertake together.

#WomenMustLeadAfrica!

Hon. Fatuma Ndangiza
Secretary General, East African Legislative Assembly Women's Caucus

Fatuma Ndangiza is a Rwandan lawmaker at the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) and Secretary General for EALA Women Caucus where she champions regional integration, gender equality and women's full participation in the East African Community (EAC), to advance the EAC mission of improving the quality of citizen's lives through increased competitiveness, value added production, trade and investments. Prior to that, Ndangiza played a pivotal role in Rwanda's post-genocide reconstruction, promoting women's empowerment as well as nurturing the women's movement. She also led the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission spearheading healing and reconciliation initiatives to help Rwandans come to terms with their past and forge a path towards peaceful and sustainable development. Her diplomatic career includes serving as Rwanda's Ambassador to the United Republic of Tanzania accredited to Seychelles, Zambia, Malawi and Madagascar. As Deputy CEO for the Rwanda Governance Board, Ndangiza championed good governance and decentralisation to enhance local empowerment and sustainable, inclusive development. She subsequently served on African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) Panel of Eminent Persons and was its Chairperson for two years. The APRM Panel ensures the integrity and credibility of APRM voluntary governance peer reviews in APRM and African Union (AU) Member States. At the nomination of Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, the former Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission, Ndangiza headed the AU Election Observer Missions to observe Presidential elections in Namibia in 2014 and the first ever All- Women-AU Observer mission to observe Parliamentary Elections in Seychelles in 2016. She also served as the Deputy Head of EAC Observer Mission during Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Council elections in Kenya in 2022. In early March 2024, the Fifth Transformational Leadership Summit on "Bridging the gap between traditional and political leadership of sustainable development in Africa" awarded Ndangiza the leadership and achievements award.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With just six years to go until 2030, it is unlikely that the majority of African countries will meet the 50% target set in SDG 5.5 on Women's Political Participation (WPP). Women's representation in African parliaments has increased by just one percentage point from 25% in 2021 to 26% in 2024. At this rate, it will take until 2100 for African countries to achieve gender parity in their parliaments. This assumes a linear progression, which is unlikely given that generally after countries achieve the 30% mark progress slows down.

According to this second *Women's Political Participation (WPP) Africa Barometer 2024*, women constitute just a quarter of the 13,057 parliamentarians in Africa - 26% in the lower houses, and 21% in the upper houses of parliament. With just six years before 2030, the deadline for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), many African countries are still far from achieving women's "equal and effective" participation in political decision-making.

There have been 38 elections in Africa since the first WPP Africa Barometer in 2021 (see **Annex 1**). The Barometer tracks ten key WPP indicators. These are:

1. Upper and;
2. Lower houses[1] of parliament;
3. Both houses of parliament combined;
4. Local government;
5. Political party leadership (top three political leaders in the ruling and main opposition party);
6. Election management bodies (EMB);
7. Speakers;
8. Cabinet;
9. Top executive (presidents, vice presidents, and prime ministers); and
10. Women mayors in the 54 capital cities of Africa.

[1] The analysis focuses largely on the lower houses of parliament because they are common to every country, while upper houses vary - including how selected. The IPU ranking, which we use for our analysis, ranks countries by WPP in the lower house.

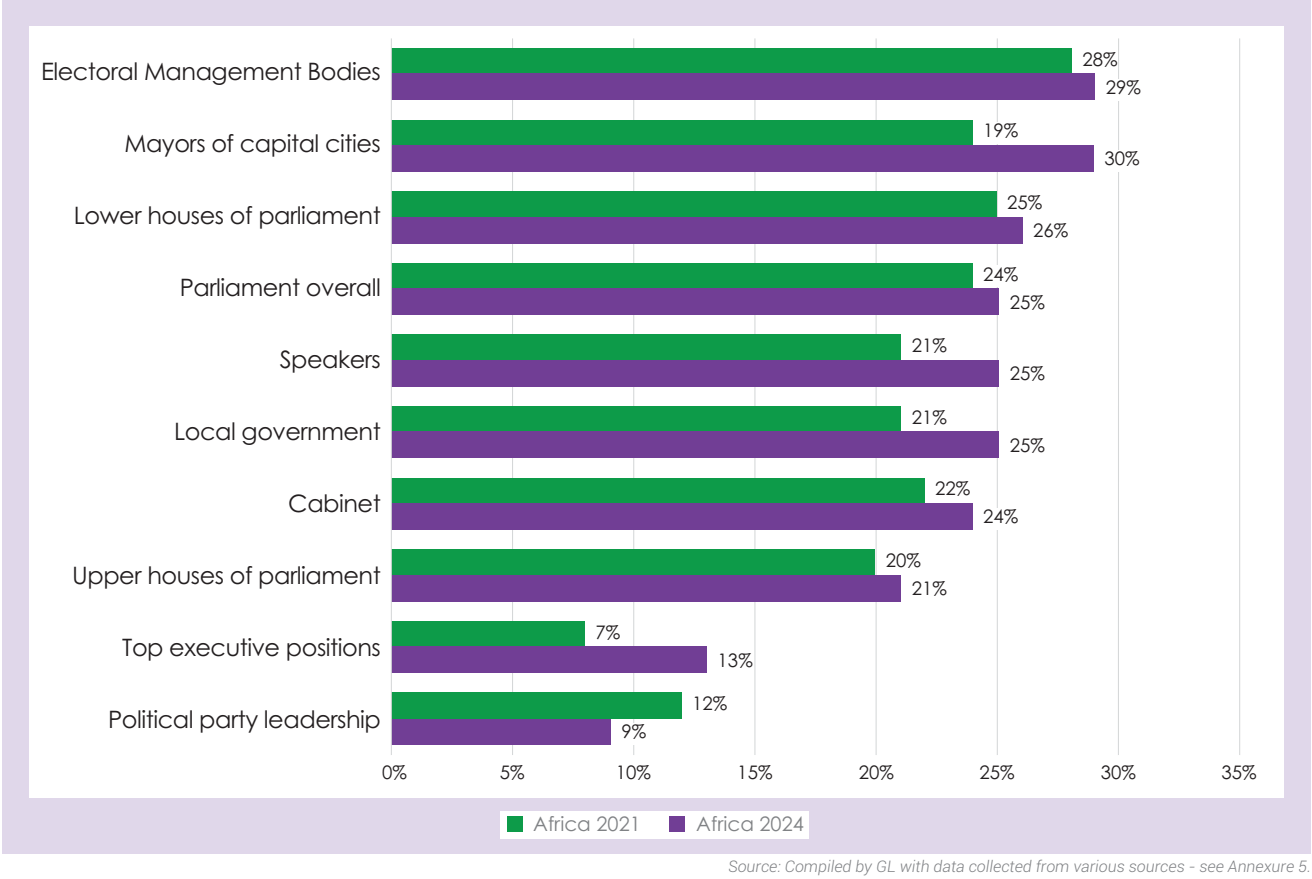
Table I: Key WPP Africa metrics 2021 - May 2024

	Africa	Horn	East	Southern	Central	North	West	Annex
Lower houses of parliament 2024	26% (25%)	31% (33%)	34% (33%)	29% (28%)	22% (19%)	22% (24%)	20% (16%)	2
Upper houses of parliament 2024	21% (20%)	28% (30%)	34% (29%)	31% (29%)	28% (20%)	10% (11%)	7% (12%)	5
Parliament overall 2024	25% (24%)	35% (33%)	34% (32%)	29% (28%)	23% (19%)	20% (21%)	19% (16%)	5
Political party leadership 2024	9% (12%)	0% (17%)	11% (15%)	19% (14%)	0% (7%)	0% (0%)	0% (11%)	7
Election management bodies 2024	29% (28%)	30% (21%)	45% (45%)	39% (40%)	23% (20%)	15% (25%)	27% (24%)	8
Local government 2024	25% (21%)	29% (N/A)	24% (35%)	25% (20%)	24% (27%)	26% (3%)	28% (2%)	6
Speakers 2024	25% (21%)	0% (0%)	44% (33%)	43% (35%)	27% (18%)	0% (0%)	16% (16%)	9
Mayors of capital cities 2024	29% (19%)	40% (20%)	0% (0%)	20% (19%)	29% (43%)	17% (0%)	43% (20%)	10
Top executive positions 2024	13% (7%)	8% (10%)	28% (12%)	21% (9%)	11% (7%)	0% (0%)	11% (7%)	11
Cabinet 2024	24% (22%)	19% (17%)	36% (32%)	30% (26%)	18% (20%)	21% (13%)	21% (19%)	12

KEY	
	Increased since 2021 (in brackets)
	Decreased since 2021 (in brackets)
	The same as 2021 (in brackets)

Table I shows changes in the ten metrics of WPP tracked since 2021, for Africa as a whole, as well as by region (as defined by the African Union). Green denotes progress; red retrogression and yellow the same as 2021. The table - 65% green; 25% red and 10% yellow - shows that change is at best slow, at worst there is regression.

Figure I: WPP in Africa at a glance 2021 and 2024



Source: Compiled by GL with data collected from various sources - see Annexure 5.

Figure I shows that for Africa as a whole, all indicators, except women in political party leadership, showed slight increases. As in the case of the 2021 Barometer, women's representation in Electoral Management Bodies (EMB) at 29% is the highest of all ten indicators. This is a one percentage point increase on 2021. Considering that governments appoint commissioners to EMB, and therefore have greater control over WPP in this sector than in elections, this is a disappointing outcome.

The biggest increase in WPP in Africa is women mayors. Women now comprise 16 of the 51 mayors of capital cities for which we could obtain information, increasing from 19% in 2021 to 30% in 2024. This is an encouraging indicator, given the importance of local government in nurturing leadership for national politics. WPP in local government increased from 21% to 25% in countries for which data is available.

WPP in African lower houses of parliament, upper houses of parliament and in parliaments overall increased by one percentage point each, for an overall increase from 24% to 25%. Women's representation in cabinet that is also by appointment, rather than through elections, increased marginally, from 22% to 24%.

WPP in Africa is lowest in top executive and political party leadership. Women's representation in political party leadership declined from 12% to 9%. Women in top executive positions increased from 7% to 13%, but this is still glaringly low.

Using case studies and interviews, the authors endeavored to bring these numbers to life by weaving in stories illustrating real experiences of women in political decision-making to understand what works (or does not) in enhancing WPP. The WPP Africa Barometer is an advocacy tool that women's rights activists can use to advocate for women's equal, effective and transformative participation at the national, regional, continental and global level.

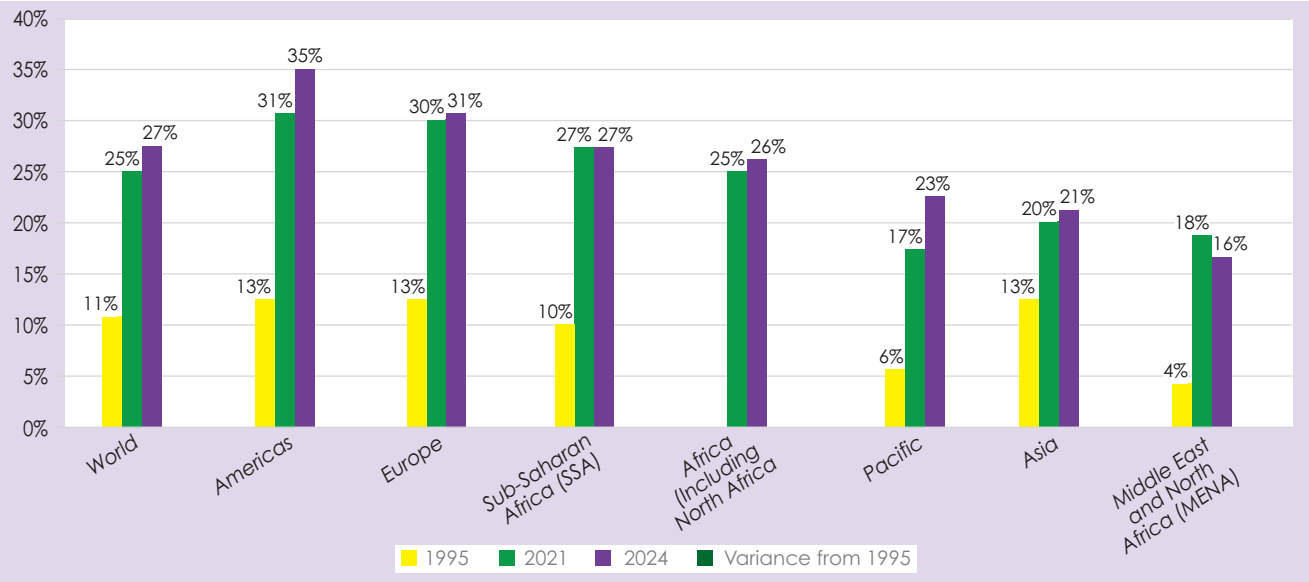
Context

Nearly thirty years ago in 1995 the seminal Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) identified power and decision-making as one of the 12 critical areas of action for governments to address. More recently, women's participation in decision-making is clearly articulated in Sustainable Development Goal 5.5, to "ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life."

Since the Beijing conference, women's representation in lower houses of parliament globally has increased by 16 percentage points since 1995, from 11% to 27%. In sub-Saharan Africa women's representation increased from 10% to 27% over the same timeframe.[2] Africa has the highest and lowest WPP in lower houses, ranging from Rwanda where women comprise 61% of MPs to Nigeria, where women comprise only 4% of parliamentarians.

[2] UN WOMEN, A summary of the Report of the Secretary-General on the 20-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (E/CN.6/2015/3). New York, March 2015

Figure II: Women's representation in the single/lower house - 1995; 2021; 2024



Source: IPU[3].

Figure II shows WPP in single/lower houses of parliament across the globe since 1995. The graph shows that WPP has increased across all regions. However, WPP is still well below the 50% target set in the SDGs. Regionally, the Americas have made the greatest progress, increasing 22 percentage points from 13% in 1995 to 35% in 2024. Europe has made slower progress and stands at 31%. Sub-Saharan Africa has increased by 17 percentage points since 1995, meeting the global average of 27%. Asia has made the slowest progress (21% women in parliament), followed by the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) currently at 16% (a decline of two percentage points compared to 2021, but significant increase from 4% in 1995).



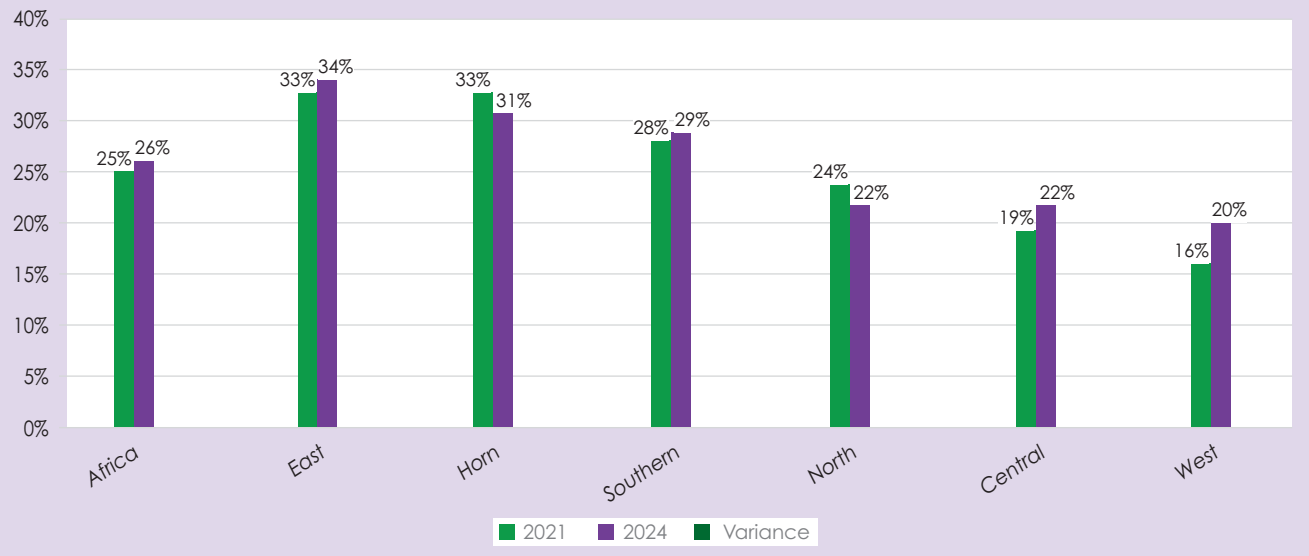
Session of the National Assembly, Ivory Coast. *Credit: Abijan.net*

[3] https://data.ipu.org/women-averages, accessed 12 February 2024 and IPU Women in Parliament 1995-2020

WPP in Africa progress over time

As noted earlier, in Africa, women's representation in lower houses of parliament has increased by just one percentage point from 25% in 2021 to 26% in 2023. This, however, differs significantly across different regions.

Figure III: WPP in Lower Houses in Africa, by region, 2021 and 2024



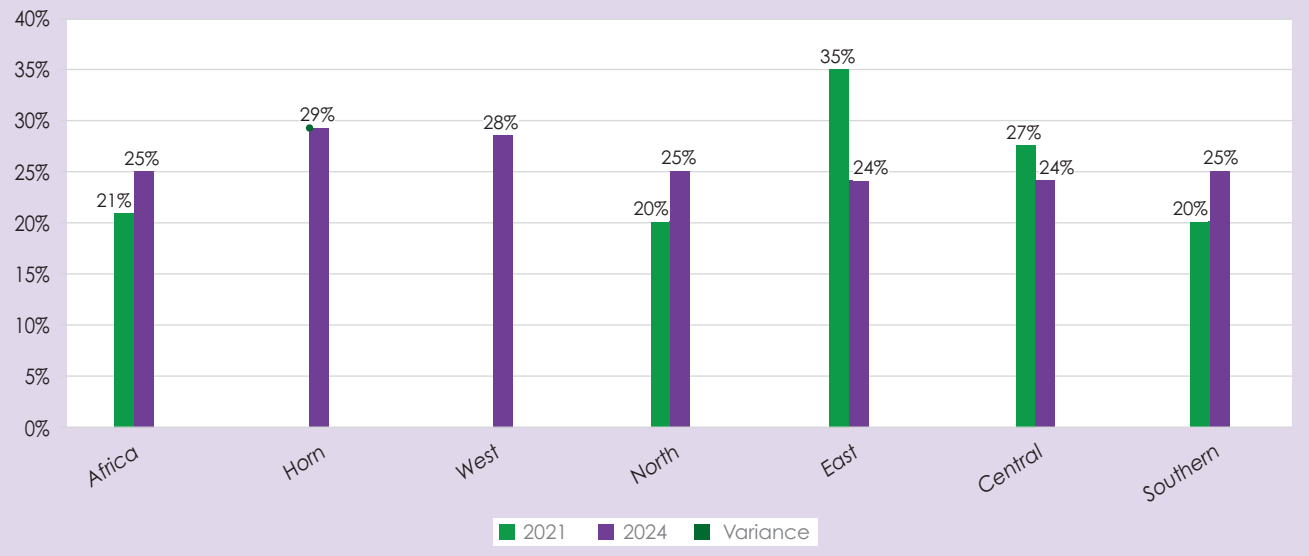
Source: IPU data, analysed by GL.

Figure III shows that at the regional level, women's representation in the single/lower house ranges from 20% in West Africa to 34% in East Africa.[4] Four regions (East, Southern, Central, and West) improved marginally. The Horn and North Africa regions witnessed drops in WPP of two percentage points each.

At the country level, there are wide variances in WPP in lower houses. Rwanda ranks first globally, with 61% of women in the single/lower house, while Nigeria ranks last at 180, with a mere 4% of women in the lower house. Six African countries (Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique, and Ethiopia) have achieved 40% or higher women's representation in their lower houses. Three African countries (Guinea Bissau, the Gambia, and Nigeria) have less than 10% of women in their lower houses. We could find no data on Eritrea, Gabon, or Sudan. See **Annex 2** for details of the IPU ranking.

[4] Parline database on national parliaments https://data.ipu.org , accessed 17 October 2023

Figure IV: WPP in local government by region 2021-2024



Source: IPU data, analysed by GL.

At the local government level, women's representation is lower than for the lower house, with just 25% of local councillors being women. Figure IV shows that overall women now comprise 25% of local councillors in Africa, compared to 21% in 2021.

While data on local government is becoming more available, particularly with the UN Women Local Government database, this is still a challenging area to collect reliable data. For the first Barometer, GL could only source reliable data for 19 countries, most of which were from GL's own research in Southern Africa. For this Barometer, we were able to source data from 41 countries. More data is now available for North, West, and East Africa, which may account for some of the wide variations in WPP in local government in these regions between the 2021 and 2024 Barometer.

According to the available data, the Horn has the highest level of women's representation at the local level. However, data is only available for one country, Djibouti. This skews the region's average.

Fourteen countries either have no local government structure, officials are not elected, or local government has been suspended indefinitely (see **Annex 3**).

Women constitute a lower proportion of councillors than MPs in East, the Horn and Southern Africa. In Central, North and West Africa, WPP in local government is higher than at the national level. The difference is most marked in East Africa (34% parliament and 24% in local government). These figures suggest that women sometimes face even higher levels of systemic discrimination and exclusion at community than national level in African countries.

Table II: Change in WPP by region in national elections 2021 to 2024

% Change	Central	East	Horn	North	Southern	West
Over 10%	Chad				Eswatini	Benin Sierra Leone Cabo Verde Guinea Burkina Faso
5%-10%	Equatorial Guinea Congo					
0-5%		South Sudan Kenya	Ethiopia Djibouti	Morocco Mauritania	Angola Lesotho DRC	Liberia Senegal Côte d'Ivoire Gambia (The)
-5%		Uganda	Somalia		Zimbabwe Zambia South Africa	Nigeria Guinea-Bissau
-10%	Sao Tome and Principe					
-10% or lower				Tunisia Algeria		

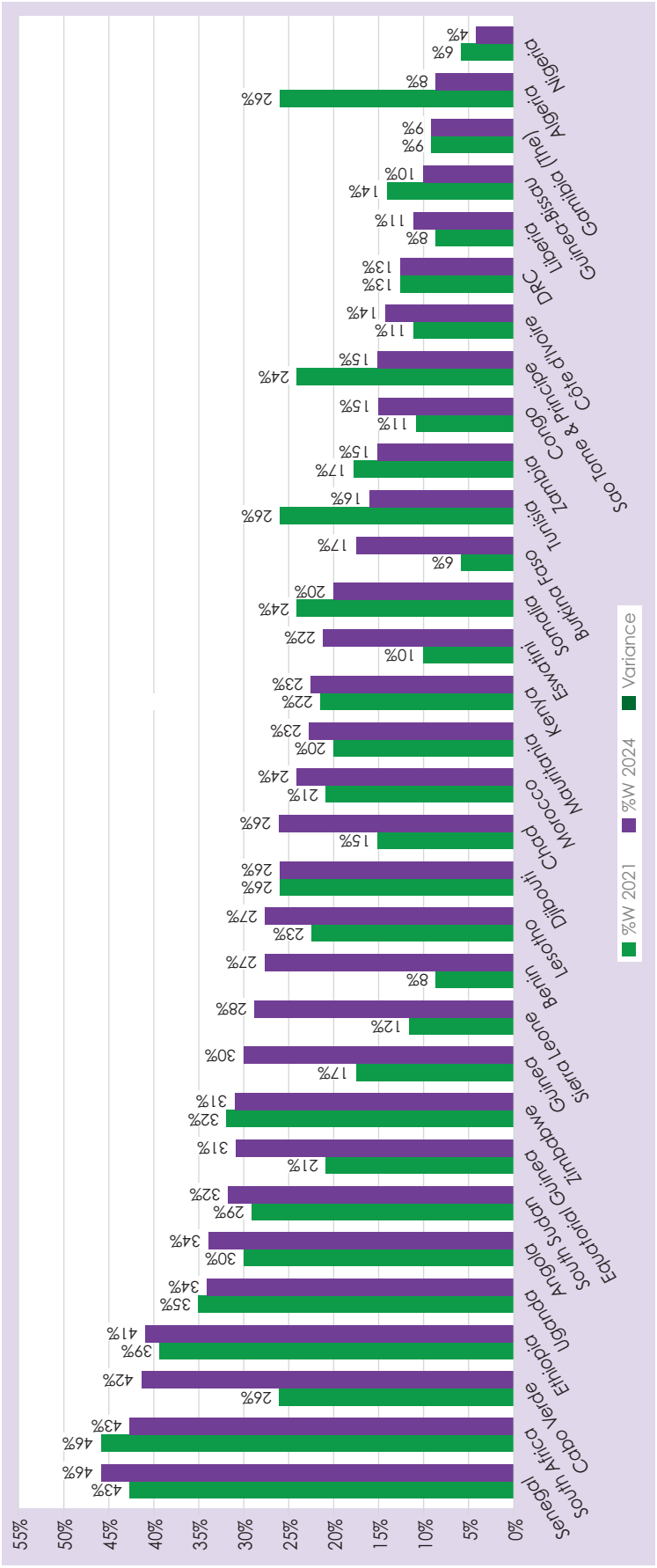
Source: Compiled by GL with data collected for the WPP Africa Barometer.

Women in lower/single house elections 2021 to 2024

Table II shows that 32 countries held national elections between 2021 and 2024. West Africa held the most elections (11) and had the highest number of increases in WPP (over 10%). Ten countries experienced a decline in WPP at the national level (evenly distributed between regions).



Eswatini general elections 2023 polling station in Mbabane. *Credit: Eswatini Observer*



Source: IPU and 2021 WPP Barometer.

Figure V: Lower House countries with elections 2021-2024

Country	% W 2021	% W 2024	Variance
Benin	8	27	18
Sierra Leone	12	28	16
Cabo Verde	26	42	15
Guinea	17	30	13
Eswatini	10	22	12
Burkina Faso	6	17	11
Chad	15	26	11
Equatorial Guinea	21	31	10
South Sudan	29	32	4
Morocco	21	24	4
Angola	30	34	4
Congo	11	15	3
Lesotho	23	27	3
Senegal	43	46	3
Mauritania	20	23	3
Liberia	8	11	3
Côte d'Ivoire	11	14	2
Ethiopia	39	41	2
Kenya	22	23	2
Djibouti	26	26	0
Gambia (The)	9	9	0
DRC	13	13	0
Zimbabwe	32	31	-1
Uganda	35	34	-1
Zambia	17	15	-2
Nigeria	6	4	-2
South Africa	46	43	-3
Guinea-Bissau	14	10	-4
Somalia	24	20	-5
Sao Tome and Principe	24	15	-9
Tunisia	26	16	-10
Algeria	26	8	-18

Source: IPU and 2021 WPP Barometer.

Figure V shows the 32 countries in which lower house elections took place in Africa, between 2021 and 2024.

The table shows the variances (all numbers have been rounded up or down resulting in some apparent inconsistencies), from countries that made the most progress to those that regressed. The graph shows that increases in WPP in the most recent national elections ranged from 18 percentage points in Benin to two percentage points in Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia and Kenya. Three countries remained static, while ten countries regressed by between one and 18 percentage points. Algeria experienced the largest decline (18 percentage points).

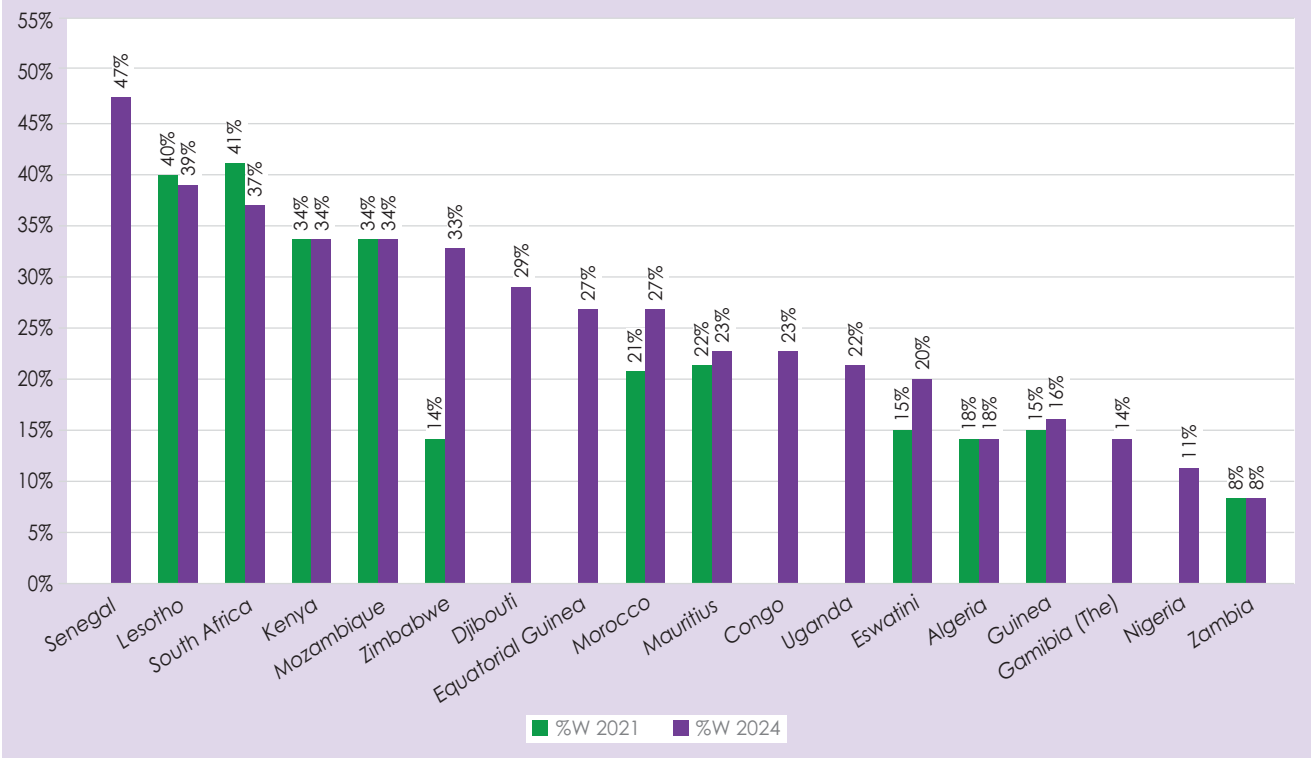
Table III: Changes in WPP by region in countries that held local elections 2021 to May 2024

% Change	Central	East	Horn	North	Southern	West
Over 10%					Zimbabwe	
5%-10%				Morocco		
0-5%		Kenya		Algeria	Eswatini Mauritius Zambia Mozambique	Guinea
-5%					Lesotho South Africa	

Source: Compiled by GL with data collected for the WPP Africa Barometer.

Eighteen countries in Africa held local government elections between 2021 and May 2024. Table III shows the increases and decreases in WPP in 11 countries which had local government elections between 2021 and 2024 for which data is available. Researchers could not compute increases for Equatorial Guinea, Congo Brazzaville, Uganda, Djibouti (The) Gambia, Nigeria and Senegal due to the absence of data for 2021. Zimbabwe improved by more than 10 percentage points, while two countries (Lesotho and South Africa) decreased by one and four percentage points respectively.

Figure VI: Women in local government in countries with elections 2021- May 2024



Source: Compiled by GL with data collected for the WPP Africa Barometer.

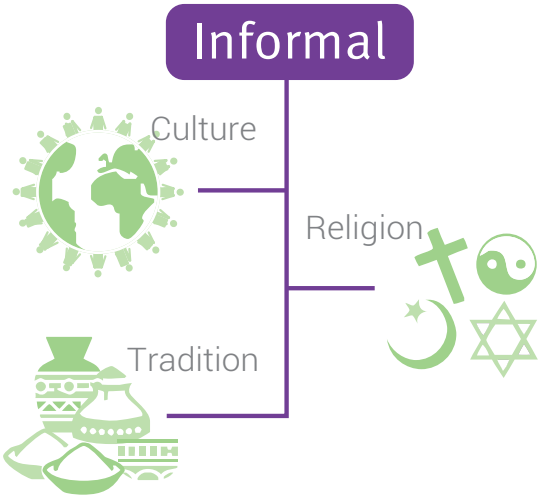
Figure VI shows the 18 countries in which local government elections took place in Africa between 2021 and May 2024, sorted from highest to lowest WPP (2024).

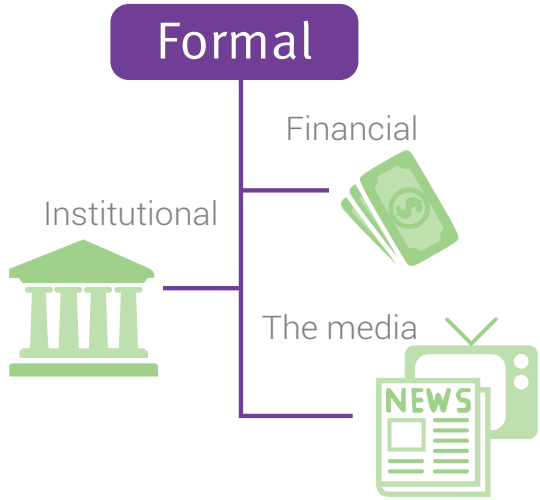
Country	% W 2021	% W 2024	Variance
Zimbabwe	14	33	19
Morocco	21	27	6
Eswatini	15	20	5
Mauritius	22	23	1
Guinea	15	16	1
Kenya	34	34	0
Mozambique	34	34	0
Algeria	18	18	0
Zambia	8	8	0
Lesotho	40	39	-1
South Africa	41	37	-4
Senegal	No data	47	
Djibouti	No data	29	
Equatorial Guinea	No data	27	
Congo	No data	23	
Uganda	No data	22	
Gambia (The)	No data	14	
Nigeria	No data	11	

Source: Compiled by GL with data collected for the WPP Africa Barometer.

The table shows the variances from 2021 to May 2024, sorted from highest gains to biggest losses. Of the countries that had elections, Senegal leads the way in WPP at the local level in Africa, with 47% women. Zambia (8%) has the lowest WPP at the local level for countries which had elections. The graph and table show that in five African countries, WPP in local government increased in the most recent local government elections by between one and 19 percentage points. Southern Africa has the best and worst performers, with Zimbabwe progressing by 19 percentage points, while South Africa regressed by four percentage points. Four countries remained static (Kenya, Mozambique, Algeria and Zambia), while two countries (Lesotho and South Africa) regressed. See detail on local elections in **Annex 3**.

Barriers to WPP





The Barometer explores the long-term structural causes of women's exclusion from political decision-making as well as immediate barriers. Across Africa, patriarchy, social, cultural, and religious influences have resulted in women rendered second-class citizens. Many African societies expect women to be responsible for duties that related to their reproductive role as mother and wife. The burden of domestic and care responsibilities, struggling to balance work and family demands is a fundamental barrier.

Persistent and prevalent traditional attitudes and beliefs about WPP discourage women for participating in public spaces. Women often face slander and abuse for entering the male dominated spaces. Other obstacles include lack of economic resources and political parties, which are traditionally deeply patriarchal, male-dominated entities that have been slow to transform.

Electoral systems and Temporary Special Measures (TSM)

Electoral systems and quotas/TSMs have a key bearing on the extent of WPP. Globally and in Africa, there are three main types of electoral systems: Proportional Representation (PR), Constituency or "First Past the Post" (FPTP)/ plurality/majority systems and mixed systems using both PR and constituency system.

Quotas/TSMs are a form of affirmative action or equal opportunity measures that address the slow pace of change in WPP. These measures fix a target for women - whether it is a candidate list, a parliamentary assembly, a committee, or a government.[5] Quotas can be voluntary, legislated and or Constitutional. Quotas generally work best in the PR or "list" system where parties put up lists of candidates in order of priority. The "zebra" system refers to women and men alternated on these lists. Where such a quota is mandatory, it delivers good results. Quotas in the FPTP do not guarantee the same results unless the system reserves seats for women (often seen to be unconstitutional).

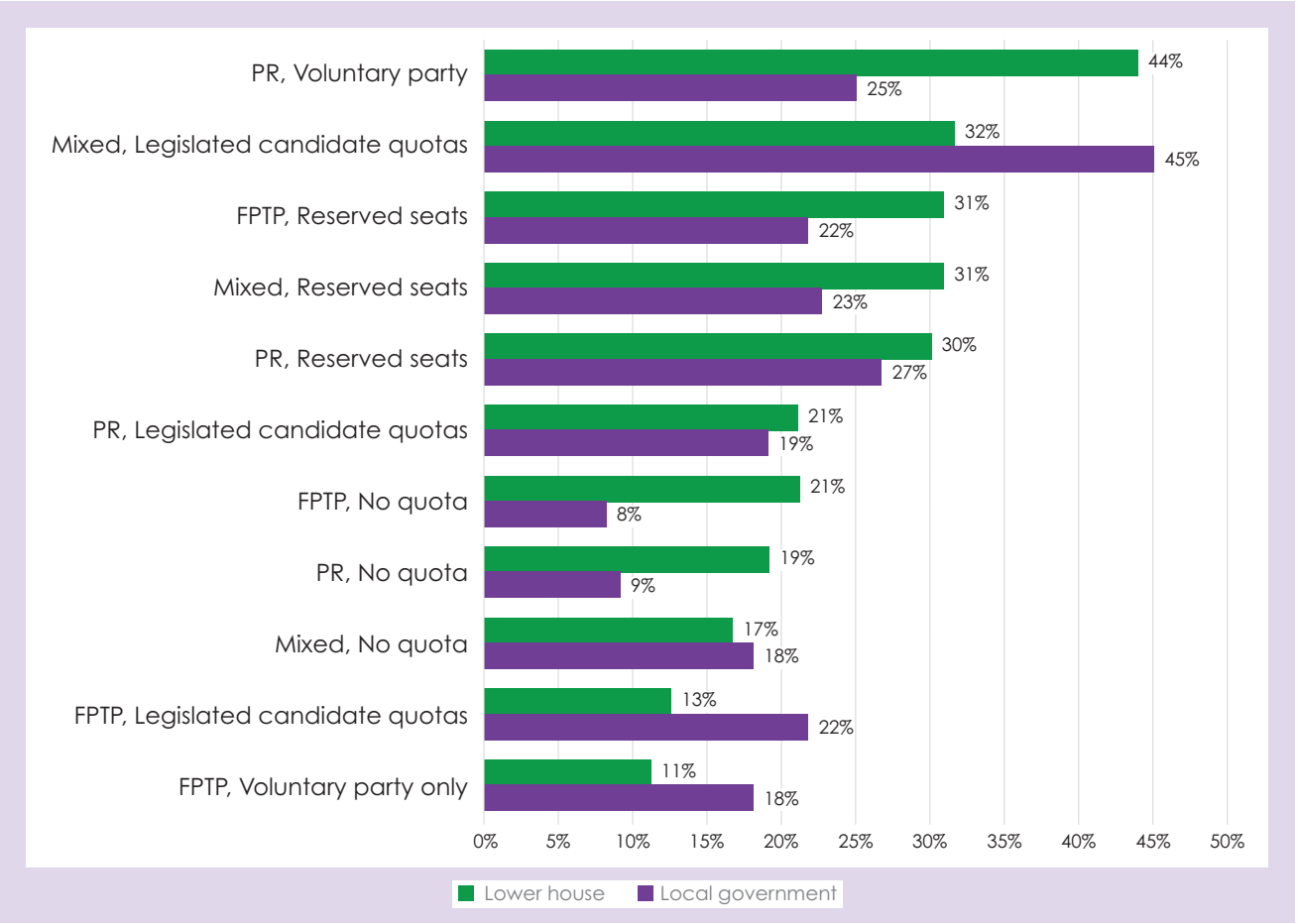
Forty one of the 54 African states have some form of quota in operation whether at national or local level, or both. In some countries like Rwanda, South Africa, Namibia, and Mozambique, quotas have rapidly increased WPP in both lower house and local government. However, in other countries such as Mali, Lesotho, Somalia, and others, quotas have not been as effective, mainly due to a lack of implementation and political will. This, coupled with deeply patriarchal, cultural, and traditional systems and beliefs, keeps women out of political decision-making. The quota adopted by Zimbabwe at the local level in 2023 resulted in a 19-percentage point increase in WPP at that level; conversely, however, WPP in the lower house in Zimbabwe regressed by one percentage point despite having a quota in place.



General elections 2023 polling station in Mbabane, Eswatini. *Credit: Eswatini Observer*

[5] https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas-database/quotas

Figure VII: WPP in Africa by electoral system and quota type



Source: Compiled by GL with data from WPP Africa Barometer.

Figure VII shows that countries can combine any type of quota with any type of electoral system to increase women's political representation but with varying degrees of success. Quotas are more common for election to the lower parliamentary houses than local government. The figure shows that the best combination for increasing WPP in Africa at national level is voluntary party quotas in the PR system. Women constitute 44% of MPs in countries with this combination. At the local level, the mixed system with legislated candidate quotas has proved to be the most effective. Legislated quotas and reserved seats in the mixed system also yield good results. Reserved seats in the FPTP systems is the best combination for that electoral system, but is open to legal challenge.

At the local level, data shows that the legislated candidate quotas in the mixed system yields best results. The mixed system is a good work around for the deficiencies of either of the two systems. At the local level governments prefer the FPTP system because it enhances accountability. A PR overlay provides the opportunity for parties to obtain seats based on the percentage of their votes, and is more inclusive for women.

The various experiments with quotas and electoral systems show that, at least on paper, there is a high level of commitment to increasing WPP in Africa through the adoption of quotas. However, they also show that merely having quotas is not a panacea to increasing WPP. WPP advocates need a combination of strategies to break through the many barriers to effective participation.

Political parties

> The place of women in our parties is still very marginal, it is an accessory. She's mostly there for the cheering or to make up the numbers. And even if a woman, as competent as a man or even more so, occupies an important position in a party, she is not viewed as capable but they say she got the job out of favour.
>
> *Beassemda Lydie, President of Parti Democrate Ideal (PDI), Chad*

Political parties are instrumental in the advancement of national leadership. Chapter three of the Barometer explores the role of political parties in achieving gender balance. Male dominance of top leadership (Leader, Secretary General (SG), and DSG) is a feature in every country. In the three years since the 2021 Barometer, women's representation in executive positions of ruling and main opposition political parties across the African continent dropped by three percentage points, from 12% to 9%. The chapter analyses how political parties, as gatekeepers of political participation and representation help or hinder WPP. The chapter also investigates why so few women have made it to top-level positions in political parties.

Electoral laws and management

In terms of the ten indicators in this Barometer, women's representation is highest in election management bodies (EMBs) at 29%. In Chapter 4, we examine electoral laws and the crucial role of EMBs in Africa, in ensuring transparent, inclusive, and accountable electoral processes. The chapter highlights the legal frameworks and institutions responsible for managing elections and explores the provisions and mechanisms to ensure that elections are gender-inclusive, fair, accessible, and credible.

The chapter also reflects on the challenges electoral management bodies face, such as limited resources, political interference, and emerging threats like disinformation and cyber-attacks. It highlights the complexities, challenges, and potential unintended consequences of such measures and offers recommendations to address them and promote genuine electoral integrity, transparency, and accountability.



70 % of countries provide **direct public** funding to political parties



However, only **17 %** of countries have **gender-targeted** public funding to promote women's political participation

Source: International IDEA

Violence against women in politics

Violence against women in politics (VAWP) in Africa is a serious and widespread issue that affects the participation and representation of women in democratic institutions. VAWP refers to any act or threat of gender-based violence, coercion, or intimidation that targets women because of their political involvement or views[6]. Chapter 5 explores the multiple causes and consequences of VAWP, including patriarchal norms and stereotypes, political instability and conflict, weak legal and institutional frameworks, and lack of awareness and data[7]. It proposes some possible measures to prevent and combat VAWP.

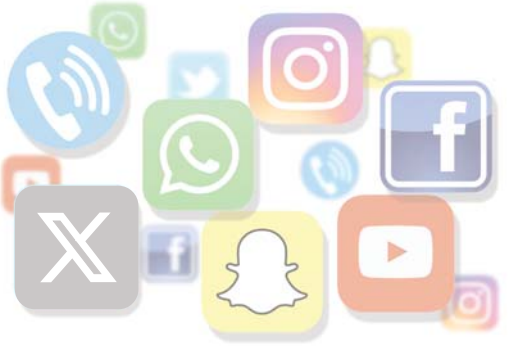
Eighty per cent of the female parliamentarians interviewed from **50 African countries** reported experiencing **psychological violence online**, and **67% faced sexist behaviour or remarks** (IPU).

Role of the media, including social media

Gender equality is intrinsic to freedom of expression, yet globally, women's voices make up merely a quarter (25%) of those whose views and voices are heard in the news. The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), which has tracked the representation of women as news sources, remains the largest and longest longitudinal research study on gender equality in the news media worldwide, spanning 1995 to 2020.

In Africa, women make up only 22% of news subjects and sources.[8] Politics and government news constitute 30% of the news coverage across Africa's newspapers, television, and radio broadcasts.[9] This trend extends to online news platforms, where approximately 25% of the news content focuses on political matters. Overall, in Africa, women make up merely 18% of sources in the political topic category compared to the global average of 20%, according to the GMMP.[10] New forms of online violence disproportionately affect women politicians and increasingly hinder their participation in online spaces.

Chapter 6 explores the role of the media as watchdogs; how the media covers women politicians during elections and throughout their political careers. It analyses how women are using social media for campaigning; the positive and negative outcomes.



6 Widespread sexism and violence against women in African parliaments according to new IPU report (2024) Inter-Parliamentary Union. Available at: https://www.ipu.org/news/press-releases/2021-11/widespread-sexism-and-violence-against-women-in-african-parliaments-according-new-ipu-report (Accessed: 18 February 2024).
7 Rutherford, S. (2022) 'Political violence against women: A case from the Central African Republic', GIWPS, 24 January. Available at: https://giwps.georgetown.edu/political-violence-against-women-a-case-from-the-central-african-republic/ (Accessed: 18 February 2024).
8 World Association of Christian Communicators. (2020) Who Makes the News. Global Media Monitoring Project 2020. https://whomakesthenews.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/GMMP2020.ENG_.FINAL20210713.pdf Accessed 15 January 2024.
9 Ibid
10 Ibid

Role of men

Politics is seen almost universally a male domain. In Africa, as elsewhere, society relegates women to the role of wife, mother and caregiver within the "private sphere" of the home. The general belief is that women's domestic responsibilities preclude them from having enough time to devote to politics. Chapter seven explores some of the persistent barriers to WPP and the role men play in their identities as husbands, fathers, political party members, cultural and traditional leaders. It shows how men can hinder or facilitate WPP at all levels from the home, community and broader society. This chapter explores the role of men in championing women's leadership. The Chapter also explores how working with women as equal partners has the potential to change the attitudes of men.

> "Going forward, the best way is to engage men to be allies to the cause. We must not fight them. Actually, we need to have a conversation with men; they could be the voice that is missing. Let's create positive masculinity as we fight for numbers of women in politics and in positions to increase."
>
> *Dr Thando Makubaza, Padare/Enkundleni*

Making a difference

Formal access to positions of power and decision-making is a pre-condition, but not a guarantee for women to exercise influence in politics. Whether women have substantive influence with, over and through people is central to their decision-making power. The Barometer draws on Thenjiwe Mtintso's access-



The importance of women in politics, explained by Dr Rama Sitanen, Mauritius.
Credit: Underdogs Studio

participation and transformation framework, which posits that for women to make a difference they must be present in sufficient numbers and be able to participate effectively. This is a pre-requisite for the change needed in policies, laws, practices, and service delivery to bring about gender equality.

Indicators for effective participation can be quantitatively measured by assessing the extent to which women hold leadership positions in cabinet (24%), as speakers (25%), mayors of capital cities (30%), and in portfolio committees and in which areas. Women are least represented in political party leadership (9%) and top executive positions (13%). Women also tend to be concentrated in "traditional" portfolios, for example those dealing directly with women's affairs and the social sectors.

Chapter eight draws on case studies to show how women lead and make a difference. Many more indicators need to be devised for measuring women's effective participation and further, in depth qualitative research on how women lead would add value to the discourse on moving "beyond numbers" in Africa.

Looking to the future

As the Africa WPP Barometer went to press, the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) Committee concluded its consultations on General Recommendation 40 (GR40) to promote women's equal and inclusive representation in decision-making systems worldwide. GR40 seeks to address structural obstacles, discrimination, stereotypes, and gender-based violence that hinder women's access to and participation in decision-making roles.

The recommendation aims to shift towards a new form of representation that goes beyond mere participation towards equal and inclusive representation. It will provide clear guidance, measures, and a structured agenda for States Parties and stakeholders to ensure the effective implementation of women's rights. Additionally, the recommendation aims to highlight the CEDAW Committee's role in promoting gender equality, combatting discrimination and inequalities, and contributing to social cohesion, stability, peace, and sustainable development, aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.[11]

In Chapter 9, the final chapter, we recommend key measures to address the structural barriers to WPP, including electoral laws and reforms and temporary special measures. We also emphasise the crucial importance of addressing the informal barriers, particularly the deeply entrenched cultural and traditional attitudes toward WPP.

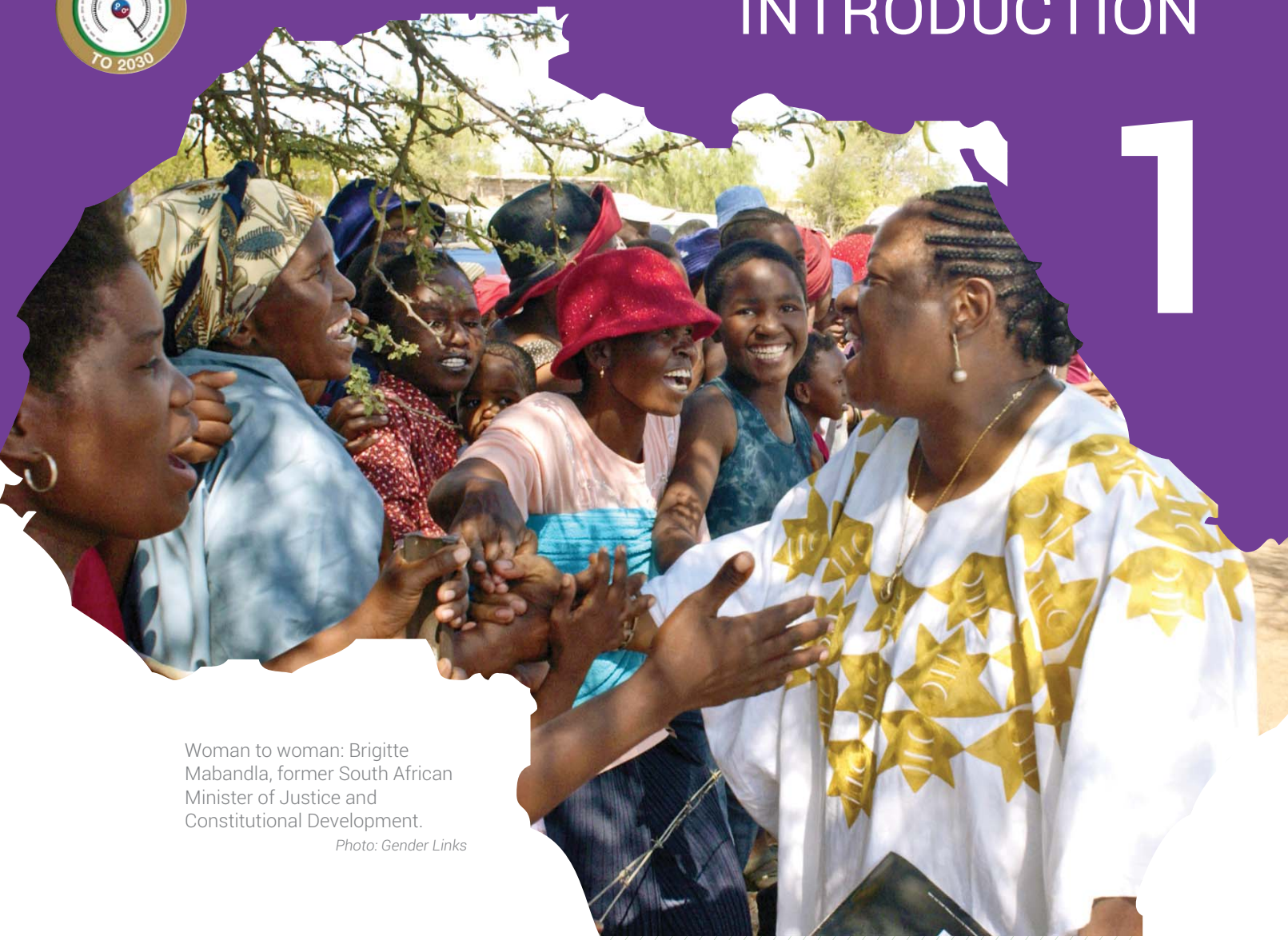


We underscore the importance of cross generation engagement. There is growing recognition of the crucial role that youth can and must play in governance and political decision-making.

Through all the chapters we have tried to include the voices of young women about some of the challenges and barriers they face when engaging in political spaces, and the importance of being active from a young age.

INTRODUCTION

1



Woman to woman: Brigitte Mabandla, former South African Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development.

Photo: Gender Links

KEY FACTS

- Women's political participation (WPP) is intrinsic to democracy and good governance.
- Several formal and informal barriers undermine WPP.
- International IDEA defines democracy as a political system based on principles of "popular control" over decision-making and "political equality" among those exercising that control.
- Thenjiwe Mtinto's access-participation-transformation model informs the research.
- Access alone does not guarantee substantive participation.
- Women face a myriad of formal as well as "informal" barriers to WPP.
- At least 12 instruments (six global, two African and four sub-regional) commit African countries to achieving gender equality in political decision-making.
- Eight of these provide for affirmative action of some kind, progressing from 30% to 50%.

This chapter lays the foundation for the rest of the book. It examines the systemic barriers to WPP; conceptual framework and rationale for increasing women's political representation and participation in decision-making in Africa. The chapter examines why women's political participation is so crucial to sustainable development and meeting the targets set out in the SDGs and other international and regional frameworks that aim to address the gender imbalance in political decision-making.

Thenjiwe Mtinsto's framework posits that access and numbers are a prerequisite for, but do not guarantee transformation.[1] She argues that once women have entered political decision-making, it is necessary to remove the barriers to their effective participation in order to effect change. The chapter outlines the methodology used to undertake this research, the limitations, and areas for strengthening in future research.

Systemic barriers to WPP

INFORMAL FACTORS	FORMAL FACTORS
Custom, culture, tradition	Political parties and institutions
Domestic roles and responsibilities	The media
Socialisation, attitudes, stereotypes	Finances and resources
Violence Against Women in Politics	Electoral systems and TSMs
	Electoral system management
	Conflict and war

Several factors continue to undermine WPP. These fall into two categories. The first is the deep-seated systemic **"informal factors"** or **'unwritten rules'** such as custom, culture, tradition, socialisation, and gender stereotypes, which in their most extreme form are expressed as gender violence. These age-old patriarchal norms will not be eradicated overnight. They result in the constant "one step forward, two steps back" syndrome.

The second "formal" category or more immediate factors is more within our control. This includes the media, electoral systems and election management, finance, and resources, which are explored in greater depth in subsequent chapters.

Women are not homogenous, and the gendered barriers to political power intersect and are compounded for women based on other discriminations based on class, ethnicity, religion, age or sexual orientation, and gender identity. For example, a young African woman living in an underprivileged area is less likely than a wealthy African woman to have the social and economic assets to enable them to take advantage of new opportunities for political power. How formal rules work often depends on their interaction with informal rules, social norms, and practices.[2]

[1] Mtintso, T., Women in Decision-Making: A Conceptual Framework in "Women in Politics and Decision Making in SADC: Beyond 30 % in 2005", SADC: p35-52 and Mtintso, "Women in Politics- A Conceptual Framework" in "Redefining Politics: South African Women and Democracy" (Commission on Gender Equality, 1999) pp.33-51
[2] Tam O'Neil and Pilar Domingo , The power to decide - Women in decision making and gender equality, ODI, September 2015

Old Boys' Networks - No women allowed!

Politics is about power and is often a hostile space for women. In most countries, men have always predominated in political spaces and decision-making, accumulating and holding power. This power is exercised through the institutions they create and the policies and laws they establish. Historically, this power has been used to benefit men to the detriment of women. Old Boys' Networks are informal systems of predominantly influential men who play a significant role in politics and promote elitism, exclusion, and uneven power distribution.

When women do break into these spaces, there is a perception among women decision-makers that they have to be "twice as good to be half as recognised." The testimonies that follow illustrate these formal and informal barriers; how they intertwine and result in women feeling "uncomfortable" in political spaces.



Said Mohamed Djohar, considered "the Father of Democracy" in **Comoros**, named a woman minister for the first time. "It was not easy at all to be a woman minister, particularly the first woman minister. Firstly, I faced all sorts of suspicion, slander, and dishonourable remarks. For me, for my partner and my children, it was a very difficult period", remembers **Sittou Raghadat Mohamed**, former Secretary of State for Population and Women, now president of the National Commission on Human Rights and Liberties (CNDHL). "Then I had to cohabit with all the men who saw me as an intruder in their sphere of great gentlemen, an excessively masculine universe. Their eyes were constantly on me, traps were set on all sides, and I lost count of the banana peels that were slipped under my feet to make me fall. It took the patience of the devil and the strength of Hercules to resist. I had to be upright and blameless."[3]



Gladys Chivige, Chair of the Chirumanzu Rural District Council in **Zimbabwe**, says, "While in office, I fought against condescending males who felt entitled to dominate and belittle women. I have empowered fellow women to have the confidence to stand up for themselves. As I endured the fight for the recognition of women in leadership, I found myself becoming the first woman to be elected as Chair of the Rural District Council. Winning the Chairmanship is a stride I will continue to celebrate because I contested against three males, and being the only female, I prevailed. To navigate the male-dominated world of politics, I had to stand like a man, and when I spoke up, I was not intimidated by men. They would threaten to beat us, and I would confront them to show them that I was not afraid of them. They would go as far as wanting to trap women by requesting sexual favours to ruin women's reputations. I stood against the archaic stereotype that profiles female politicians as prostitutes. I had to stand as a hero and defend my place in politics. Through training, I confronted the barrier of male dominance in politics. Over the years, through the capacity building training, I have gained the fortitude to be firm and consistent in my pursuits. I have stopped entertaining anything that nudges me towards being intimidated by politics, and I have become intentional and assertive as I lead."[4]



Fatma Zohra Zerouati, former Minister of the Environment and Renewable Energies (in **Algeria**) says that there have always been "bad habits in the political environment that have not allowed women to get into higher decision-making positions in significant numbers. The present political ecosystem is not attractive enough to encourage women's participation in politics, unlike other sectors such as science, research, justice, or entrepreneurship, where female participation is more pronounced. Our strategy

[3] Case study by Mmadi Mihidjay
[4] Voices Amplified: Women Driving Change, Zimbabwe

at the Tamajoue Amal El Djazair (TAJ) party, which stands for the Rally of Hope, is based on raising awareness and coaching women at individual and group levels. We are trying to see how we can make them and their ideas more visible, share their thoughts, and push them to speak out more at meetings in the various structures and commissions within the party. And we equip them with all the means of communication for their outreach work so that they develop their listening skills, and above all, we show them how to win citizens' trust at different levels of society."[5]

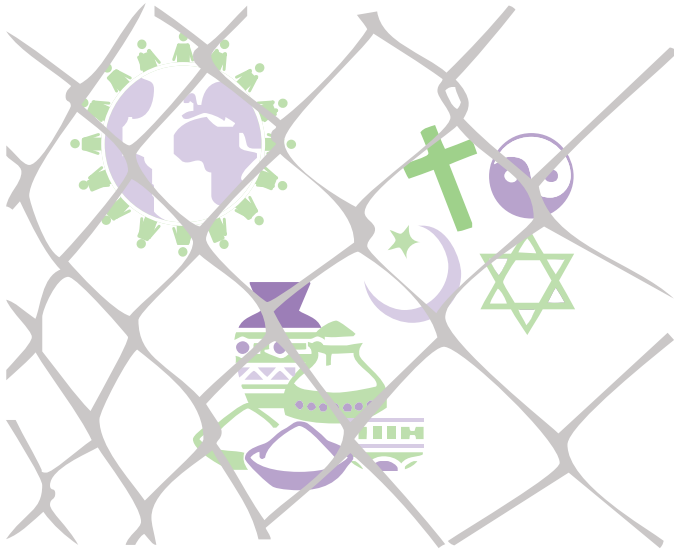
Cultural, traditional, and religious barriers

Most African societies are patriarchal, with deeply ingrained gender stereotypes and power imbalances. Traditional beliefs and customs often assign women to domestic roles, limiting their involvement in public and political spheres. This can create barriers and hinder women from actively participating in politics. Cultural norms and stereotypes that associate women primarily with caregiving, nurturing, and domestic tasks can make it challenging for women to be seen as capable political leaders. These stereotypes may limit society's perception of women's abilities and undermine their potential political contributions. Some examples follow:



Espoir Abalo, a Togolese politician, notes: "When you are a woman and you work in the political arena, society puts tags on you. They say you are a promiscuous woman, and they also criticise you if you are single, saying that you'll be single for life as if it is a shame. You must understand that in **Togo**, patriarchy is the rule, so marriage is highly valued, and if you are single, you are considered no good. If you are a woman who gets promoted in a political post, automatically people will say that you got the job because you slept around. They never have these degrading remarks about men. Everything is done to discourage women from getting into the political world. Yet, women's participation in politics is vitally important. Women have different skills and points of view that can help shape a new political order. Women who participate in government and decision-making positions give greater prominence to women's rights and human rights worldwide", explains a woman engaged in politics. "There is an intrinsic relation between gender inequality and women's political participation, and this inequality must be tackled and resolved so that women can enter politics in large numbers in Togo."

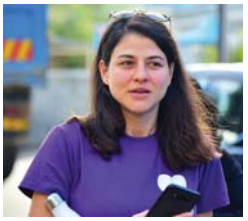
"In Togo, some fields are perceived as exclusively feminine and others as masculine," adds **Afi Atanley**, another young woman politician. "Things are slowly changing, but one must recognise that women getting into politics are still badly perceived. In Togolese society, politics is reserved for men. When women step into that world, they are called all kinds of names, and this does little to encourage other women to enter this field."[6]



[5] Case study by Nassima BERRAYAH
[6] Case study by Hélène DOUBIDJI

Juggling time - Domestic roles and responsibilities

Women often face a double day, balancing career and family responsibilities, thus limiting their opportunities for career advancement.[7] Many women politicians are, or plan to be, mothers. Because of this role, there is an unwritten expectation that women will perform the reproductive tasks involving care and maintenance of the household, such as cooking, cleaning, and looking after children, the sick, and the elderly. Male politicians generally do not have to bear this burden, creating the time for them to invest in formal and informal politics. The examples that follow show how juggling time between home and work impacts on women in politics:



As a devoted mother and politician, **Joanna Bérenger**, a young woman MP in **Mauritius** and daughter of former Prime Minister Paul Bérenger[8], juggles various responsibilities. She campaigned while pregnant and chose to breastfeed her baby, but had nowhere in Parliament to pump her milk or breastfeed.

"The clerk of the National Assembly, who was a woman, kindly lent me her office so that I could pump my milk every three hours, and the pumped milk was kept in the canteen fridge, behind the soft drinks, because after a few hours, my cooler box no longer cooled the pumped milk sufficiently," she recalls.

"This is not an ideal scenario for a politician and mother. The problem would not have risen if there had been the possibility of benefiting from the services of an on-site nursery. I suggested this idea in 2020 when I asked Parliament to set an example and offer nursery services for all National Assembly employees and members of Parliament. A suggestion that fell on deaf ears... If I hadn't had the support of another woman, the 'clerk,' I would certainly have been forced to stop breastfeeding my baby," reveals the opposition MP.

Berenger believes there is a need for a more welcoming political environment for women. "Nothing will discourage me or put me off if I have the support of the men and women activists in my party… But there is a need for more welcoming conditions for women who want to engage in active politics". She proposes removing containers transformed into "headquarters" for political parties during election campaigns, where women in general are not welcome, especially in the evenings. She also proposes holding parliamentary sessions during the day rather than at night.

"As we still live in a patriarchal society, women are much more involved in child-rearing than men. It is no coincidence that the 'rules' they put in place are more beneficial to them than to women. But these "rules" have to change if we really want to achieve parity," she points out.

Excerpt from the profile of Joanna Bérenger by Karen Walter

[7] P.R. Beckman, and F D'Amico (eds.) Women, Gender and World politics: Perspectives, Policies and Prospects. (Westport, Bergin, 1994) pp.76
[8] Former Prime Minister and emblematic leader of the Mouvement Militant Mauricien (MMM)



Bernadette Akakpo, a former active member of the National Alliance for Change political party in **Togo**, explained how she had to withdraw from the party two years ago after she got married because of the domestic burden and social pressures. “Since I was a child, politics has interested me, and as I grew up, it became a passion. At adult age, I decided to join the National Alliance for Change Party as we share the same values. I took an active part in all the party activities, but once I got married, the difficulties began in the form of domestic burdens and social pressures. It became very difficult for me to go to party meetings regularly. Worse still, it became impossible to do so when I started having children. In the end, I had to sign my resignation. It is deplorable to say it, but in our society, all domestic tasks fall on the shoulders of women. This prevents them from pursuing any other form of occupation once they are married," she regrets.[9]

Lack of resources and societal support

A significant barrier to women's political participation is the lack of resources compared to their male counterparts. Women are less likely to have access to the same resources to support their political ambitions, which can dissuade them from taking an active role in the electoral process. Campaigns are expensive, and without a political party's support, competing is challenging. Even where women politicians have the support of their parties, this often does not translate into financial support.



“One of the most significant challenges was my entrance into politics," says **Margaret Nyahoda** of Nyanga Rural District Council in **Zimbabwe**. “It is very difficult for women because you have to be nominated by your political party first. Several names go through to a primary election to choose only one person to represent the ward. At this point, most women find it difficult because they need to canvass for votes. Campaigns by their nature are costly. Unfortunately, due to the patriarchal structure of families, most women do not have control of the family finances. Because women have little or no access to family income or other resources, they face difficulties financing their campaigns. Fortunately, I had personal projects that allowed me to fund myself, which still was not enough, but at least there was a starting point."

Young women in politics



Age is yet another barrier to women's entry into politics. Young women are the least represented in political leadership. IPU data on youth participation in parliaments show that **only 2.2 % of parliamentarians are under 30, and less than 1% are young women**.[10]

While young people[11] are one of the most significant determinants of a country's economic growth they are largely left out of decision-making spaces. Africa is the continent with the youngest population worldwide. As of 2022, around 40% of the population was 15 years and younger, compared to a global average of 25%. While the median age on the continent has been increasing annually, it remains low at around 20 years. The reasons for this low median age are multifaceted but

[9] Case study by Hélène DOUBIDJI
[10] Inter-Parliamentary Union, https://www.ipu.org/news/call-action-young-womens-political-participation-and-leadership accessed 3 February 2024
[11] This demographic, according to African Union (AU) covers men and women under 35 years of age.

include low life expectancy at birth, wars, conflict, and poor healthcare on the continent, leading to high mortality. In contrast, the high fertility rate contributes to lowering the median age.[12] Africa is vast and these demographic characteristics vary from country to country and region to region. Eighteen of the 20 countries with the youngest populations are in Africa.[13]

On the other hand, Africa has some of the world's oldest leaders.[14] Africa is home to the world's oldest and youngest heads of state. **Cameroon**'s president Paul Biya at 90 years is the oldest head of state in the world in a country with a median population age of just 18.5 years. At the other age extreme, 35-year-old Ibrahim Traoré became the youngest head of state in **Burkina Faso** after a coup d'etat in September 2022.[15]

The AU has developed several youth development policies and programmes at continental level aimed at ensuring the continent benefits from its demographic dividend. The policies include the African Youth Charter, Youth Decade Plan of Action, and the Malabo Decision on Youth Empowerment, all of which are implemented through various AU Agenda 2063 programmes. The African Youth Charter protects young people from discrimination and ensures freedom of movement, speech, association, religion, ownership of property and other human rights, while committing to promoting youth participation throughout society.[16]

Several young women have spoken to us about the challenges and barriers they face when engaging in political spaces and the importance of being active from a young age.



Sarah Leigh Elago first got involved in politics through the junior councils in Windhoek, **Namibia**, and then went on to serve in local government. She gave a passionate presentation on a Pan-African Perspective of Leading at Local and Regional levels. She spoke about the persistent barriers that women face, especially young women who come up against traditional beliefs that politics is a man's domain. She has had to overcome a range of barriers in addition her age, including cultural norms, lack of participation and cooperation among youth and women organisations and lack of economic resources. She gave some very practical steps that could be taken to ensure young women's full participation and to transform women from mere participants and beneficiaries. These include: access to resources; effective political mentorship; platforms for young women to dialogue and make contributions to policy debates; regarding women as equal partners to the growth of Africa; women's networking platforms that include all women not just a tiny elite, so that women can start pulling together.[17]



Chelsea Mujuru, former junior councillor in the City of Harare, **Zimbabwe**, spoke about how being a junior council member has advanced her study and career ambitions. She joined the council because she wanted to participate in civic duties. "Leaders are talking about children's issues, but they're 65, and that doesn't make any sense... We can't have 65-year-olds discussing issues they probably don't even understand," she said. The council raises issues such as period poverty and uses social media as a tool to get their message out. Using social media is a crucial strategy to reach many young people. Mujuru believes that many youth want to get involved but do not know how to do so.[18]

[12] Statista, https://www.statista.com/statistics/1226158/median-age-of-the-population-of-africa/ accessed 3 February 2024
[13] Daily Mail, Revealed: Countries with the oldest AND youngest populations (and how there's a gap of 40 YEARS between the two ends of scale), available at, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-12666501/Countries-oldest-youngest-populations.html accessed 3 February 2024
[14] Yinka Adegoke, The world's youngest continent will keep being run by its oldest leaders, Quartz Africa, 28 December 2017, https://qz.com/africa/1162490/the-youngest-continent-keeps-on-being-run-by-the-oldest-leaders/ accessed 24 July 2021
[15] Visual Capitalist, https://www.visualcapitalist.com/cp/visualized-heads-of-state-each-country-by-age/, accessed 3 February 2024
[16] AU website - https://au.int/en/youth-development accessed 2 February 2024
[17] Cyberdialogue 28 June 2021, during the Generation Equality Forum
[18] Cyberdialogue 28 June 2021, during the Generation Equality Forum



In **Burkina Faso**, there are 12 women out of 71 members of the Transitional Legislative Assembly (LTA), established in 2022. Five are between 25 and 40 years old, and the youngest parliamentarian is a woman. They have an innovative vision and are driven by a burning desire to contribute to their country's development. These young women have decided to break down traditional barriers to participate actively in their country's political life. **Bénédicte Bailou** is one of these young women. She says: "My prospects are excellent. I intend to continue demonstrating that women, especially young women, have much to contribute to building a prosperous Burkina Faso. The city management is the responsibility of all citizens. In my opinion, young girls and women need to be properly trained".



Léontine Idohou Konou is the President of the Network for the Integration of Women in Non-Governmental Organizations and African Associations (RIFONGA) - **Benin**. According to her, the key to leadership empowerment of women is training. "We said to ourselves that the older generation is getting older, so we're building the capacities of young women in terms of leadership, political communication, conflict management and, above all, how to promote themselves within political parties so that the leader can notice them and position them in his time, i.e., to ensure a quality succession."



Halima Sogho, a 32-year-old entrepreneur, wife, and mother of two, stood as a candidate in the legislative and municipal elections of May 2023 under the Ribat party in **Mauritania**. Although not elected, her commitment remains strong. She expresses her determination to pursue her activism to achieve her objectives. She focuses on promoting employment for young people, who represent 57% of the population, against a backdrop of an unemployment rate of 14.9% in 2019. She also wants to work for a greater representation of women in politics despite stereotypes, discrimination, and violence.[19]

Violence against women in politics (VAWP)

Violence against women is a destructive tool used in various ways throughout the electoral cycle to dissuade women from participating as election administrators, voters, and candidates. In addition to physical harm, much of this violence is verbal and psychological. Political violence, social stigma, and the notion that politics is a "dirty game" are significant disincentives to women entering politics, as illustrated by the examples that follow:



In **Senegal**, women's representation is now the second highest in Africa (46%) and highest at the local government level (47%). But women who enter the political fray must navigate several forms of violence. 2024 Presidential hopefuls Anta Babacar Ngom and Amsatou Sow Sidibé have both experienced some form of violence in their campaigning. Although this is not Sidibé's first attempt to be elected to the highest office, she recalls that a "religious leader told me that it was not possible to have a woman as president of the Republic because the religious leaders of the country cannot have a private meeting with a woman, even if she is the president of the Republic. These remarks were very hurtful and left their mark on my political career."

[19] Excerpt from case study by Amy FOFANA

Violent conflict and war

Many African countries have recently experienced or are currently experiencing conflict or war both within and across borders. The effects of war continue for years after the fighting ends. While entire communities suffer the impact of armed conflict, women and girls are often the first to lose their rights to education, political participation, and livelihoods.

On the other hand, social ruptures and shocks can produce rapid structural change. As conflicts and struggles in Africa have shown, conflict can catalyse shifts in gender relations.[20] Post-conflict countries with transitional leadership structures are an opportunity to challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes post-conflict and involve women in peace and decision-making processes. But male elites and decision-makers may backslide to traditional systems and attitudes to women's rights post-conflict, wiping out the gains made.



Following the establishment of the Conseil National de la Transition (CNT) in **Mali**, where members are appointed by decree of the Transitional President, women's representation increased from 10% to 29%, just missing the 30% threshold. The President of the transitional government has appointed six women ministers, representing 21% of the cabinet. However, these women are unsure if they will remain in office until the next elections. Tounkara Sophie Soucko, appointed national director for the Promotion of Women, Children and the Family, lost her job in early 2024. "Despite women's constant presence in the political life, they are still underrepresented in the decision-making bodies," she says.

Why a woman's place is in politics

Of all the areas of decision-making, politics is the most public of spaces and, therefore, has been among the most hostile for women to access. Yet, it is one of the most critical spheres for effecting change.

The seminal Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) in 1995 identified women in power and decision-making as one of the 12 critical areas of concern for governments to address. Sustainable Development Goal 5.5 is to "ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life."



[20] Tam O'Neil and Pilar Domingo , The power to decide - Women in decision making and gender equality, ODI, September 2015

In Africa, as in other parts of the world, gender inequality and discrimination are rooted in patriarchy and entrenched social and cultural belief systems. Society assigns women and men different, often unequal roles, allocating a dominant role to men and a subordinate role to women. Society relegates women to the private sphere, extending their reproductive roles to taking care of the home and family. Conversely, society assigns men to the public sphere, running the affairs of state.

This has resulted in the gender gap in decision-making in general and politics in particular. Society expects women who enter political spaces to play similar roles to those they play in society. For example, women are often the ones in political parties responsible for organising events, cooking and cleaning up. When they take up issue-related portfolios, these are often the "soft" issues, such as social development and education, reinforcing the gendered division of labour. On the other hand, women are expected to "act like men" if they want to get ahead.

The BPFA argues: "Women's equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be considered. Achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making will provide a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society and is needed to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning."[21]



Danielle Boni-Claverie, founder and president of the Union républicaine pour la démocratie (URD), and former parliamentarian and minister, in **Côte d'Ivoire**, agrees that WPP is not a nice to do, but a have to do. "My younger sisters need to get over their shyness and be brave. Politics is not just for men. After over 30 years in the business, I am still convinced that women have a complementary role. They need to build up their self-confidence, and I strongly encourage them to start by investing in municipal councils, which have multiplied in number, as independent candidates. The most courageous can then run in general elections to try their luck as MPs. Be daring, be audacious, don't remain confined to associative life, get involved in political circles, especially as there are a few men who have changed their mentality and are now ready to support the candidacy of a woman."[22]

International IDEA's broad and comprehensive concept of democracy encompasses fundamental attributes beyond free and fair elections. It includes civil and political rights; social, economic, and cultural rights; democratic governance and the rule of law. This comprehensive view of democracy allows us to understand its multifaceted nature. International IDEA's Global State of Democracy Indices assigns five fundamental attributes for the functioning of a healthy democracy.



Representative Government covers the extent to which access to political power is free and equal as demonstrated by competitive, inclusive, and regular elections. It includes four sub-attributes: Clean Elections, Inclusive Suffrage, Free Political Parties, and Elected Government.



Fundamental Rights capture the degree to which civil liberties are respected and whether people have access to basic resources that enable their active participation in the political process. This aspect overlaps significantly with the international covenants on civil and political, economic, social, and cultural rights. It includes three sub-attributes: Access to Justice, Civil Liberties, and Social Rights and Equality. It also includes the following subcomponents: Freedom of Expression, Freedom of Association and Assembly, Freedom of Religion, Freedom of

[21] United Nations, The Beijing Platform for Action, paragraph 181, (UN,1995).
[22] Excerpt from case study by Augustin Tapé

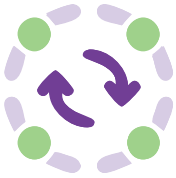
Movement, Personal Integrity and Security, Basic Welfare, Social Group Equality and Gender Equality.

Checks on Government measures effective control of executive power. It includes three sub-attributes: Effective Parliament, Judicial Independence, and Media Integrity.



Impartial Administration concerns how fairly and predictably political decisions are implemented, and therefore reflects key aspects of the rule of law. It includes two sub attributes: Absence of Corruption and Predictable Enforcement.

Participatory Engagement measures people's political participation and societal engagement at multiple levels and captures different phenomena under the attributes of Civil Society.[23]



Women's **representation and participation** in political decision-making is integral to these concepts. It is also important to understand the difference between these terms, often used synonymously.

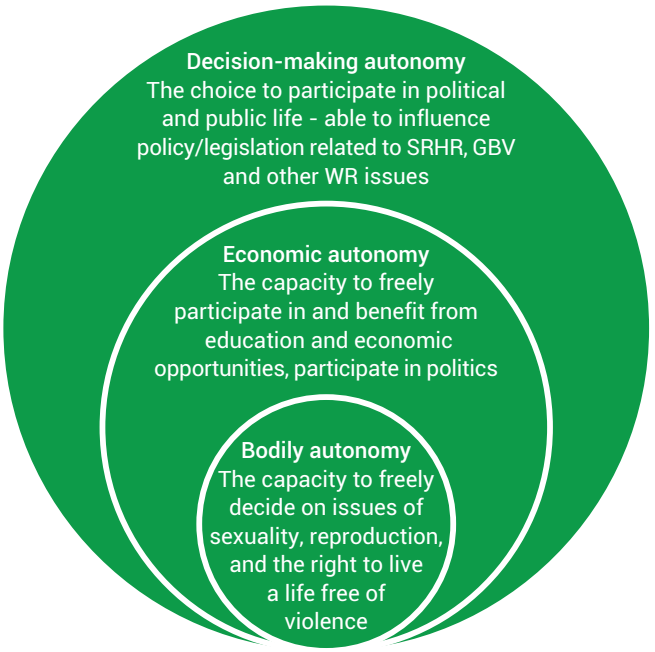
Representation is about presence and the equal representation of all interest groups in society. **Participation** is about engagement and relates to how women are able to exercise their power. Women have the fundamental **right** to be equally involved in political decision-making. However, challenges arise when considering whether women have the autonomy to make these choices. This autonomy is crucial in ensuring that women are able to participate in political processes without facing barriers or discrimination.

Autonomy means having the capacity and conditions to make decisions that impact our lives freely. Women's autonomy involves three interrelated dimensions - physical/bodily autonomy, economic autonomy, and decision-making autonomy.[24]

Physical/bodily autonomy is women's capacity to freely decide on issues of sexuality, reproduction, and the right to live a life free of violence.

Economic autonomy is the capacity to generate income and personal financial resources. This can link to women's participation in political decision-making, as access to finance is one of the most significant barriers to women's political participation.

Decision-making autonomy refers to the choice to participate in political and public life.[25]



These autonomies are interlinked and interdependent. The lack of physical autonomy or difficulties in controlling their own bodies affects the conditions necessary for achieving

[23] 2023 International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance Strategy
[24] Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, https://oig.cepal.org/en/autonomies , accessed 3 January 2024
[25] Ibid

economic independence. The lack of economic autonomy affects women being able to achieve decision-making authority, e.g. lack of finance to campaign for political decision-making. Conversely, when women can make choices about their bodies, their economic autonomy improves. As a result, decision-making autonomy increases, leading to better policy and law-making that addresses the needs of women.

There are, however, both formal and informal barriers (and conversely facilitators) to women's political participation. As demonstrated by the actual representation of women in parliament across the region, electoral systems, and gender quotas (often referred to as Temporary Special Measures or TSM) play an influential role. Generally, these have been set at 30%, although the thrust now is to increase these to 50% or gender parity.

A concern, however, is that countries are failing to move beyond the target set in the TSM. This points to the other barriers, such as finances and resources, lack of political party support, the media, violence, and intimidation. Underlying all these is patriarchy, reinforced by socialisation, attitudes, customs, culture, and religion, which manifest themselves in the "old boys' network" of politics.

Barriers to women's political participation extend across the whole election cycle, from the decision to stand to holding office. At the every stage, from deciding to stand for an elective office, women tend to be constrained at the individual level regarding ambition and requisite resources. Research has clearly demonstrated that women are less likely than men are to think they are qualified to run for office, to consider running, or to seek high-level national positions if they decide to run[26].

A significantly lower proportion of women run for public office relative to men. In other words, relatively fewer women offer themselves for elective office. While more women may want to run for office, they face a range of barriers and stereotypes. The politics of this gender gap need to be adequately characterised to avoid falling into the trap of equating this gap to some innate attributes of men and women, but rather to seek to understand the social and historical roots of political ambition differentials. This will ultimately point to the need for clear strategies for closing the gender gap in political ambition.

The second stage in political recruitment is that of gatekeepers, the political parties (or other mechanisms) that turn those who finally aspire into candidates. Therefore, party rules and practices are important in how they either facilitate or bar women from translating ambition into candidacy. Evidence shows that party practices either facilitate or block women's full participation. The party leadership and nomination processes impact the manner in which female members of those parties will engage in an election.

The final stage is that of voters who then turn candidates into MPs or local government representatives, where there exists a general tendency for voter preference for male candidates as well as cultural negativity towards women. The post-election period relates to what happens in the aftermath regarding reviewing and making recommendations for the next round of elections. Obstacles to women's participation, especially in the electoral period, also relate to campaign financing, harassment, and the reality of electoral violence.

[26] Lawless, J. & Fox, R. (2012). Men Rule: The Continued under-Representation of Women in U.S. Politics. Women & Politics Institute, American University. http://www.american.edu/spa/wpi/upload/2012-Men-Rule-Report-web.pdf



Conceptual framework

Thenjiwe Mtintso's WPP framework is illustrated in Figure 1.[27] The crux of Mtintso's argument is that access and numbers are a prerequisite for, but do not guarantee, transformation. She argues that once women have entered political decision-making, it is necessary to remove the barriers to their effective participation. Only when women are present in significant strengths, and can participate effectively, are they likely to start participating effectively.

Access - representation

Historically, society has denied women access to the political decision-making space. While there is an upward trend in WPP progress has been slow over the last three decades.

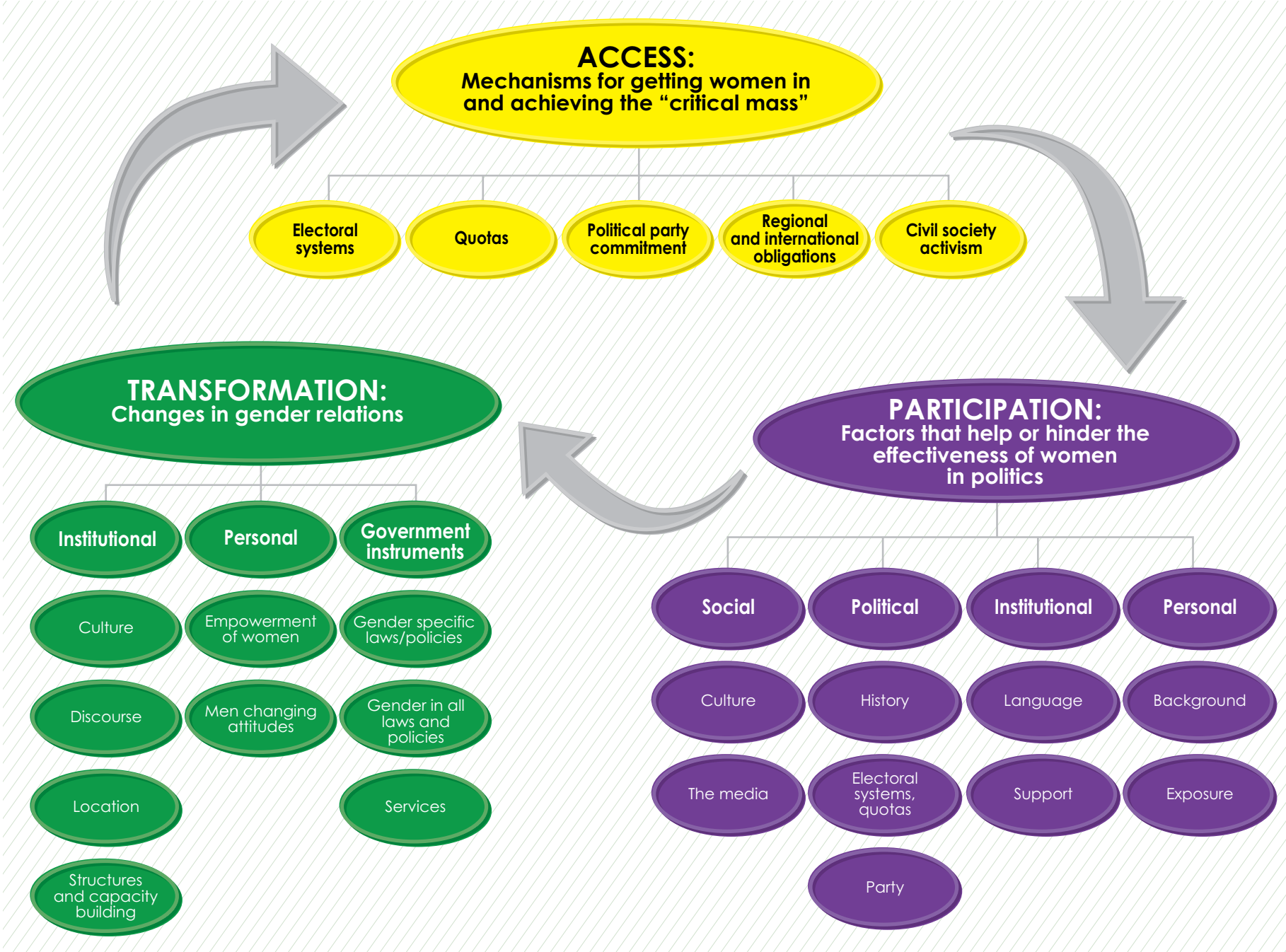
One of the main facilitators for women's access to political decision-making is the type of electoral system and TSMs (see Chapter 2). However, despite many African countries undertaking electoral reform and introducing quotas since the early nineties to address the systemic challenges women face when accessing decision-making positions, WPP in Africa remains low. Original global targets for WPP of 30% (the so-called **"critical mass"**) have shifted to 50%. Yet many African countries have not yet reached 30%. This illustrates that even as formal barriers crumble, countries still need to address the informal barriers to political decision-making.

As a minority operating in a male-dominated domain, most women public figures find they must adapt to, and adopt the male priorities predominating in public life. Minorities, according to the classic theory of minority behaviour, absorb the dominant culture to such an extent that they tend to dissociate themselves from other women, to undermine their own success. It takes a minority of a specific minimum size, 30-35 percent, to be able to influence the culture of groups and to facilitate alliances between group members. The theory may also explain why lone women who reach high office often appear not to bring distinctively female values to their office.[28] As Britton points out, there is "an equally rich body of 'women in politics research' finding that getting women into office is not enough to have an impact on either policy or legislative behaviour."[29]

The counterargument is that while women are not homogenous, and while they may not openly advocate feminist agendas, they do have specific shared interests, different values, outlooks, and approaches to men. The mere presence of women in decision-making can be an impetus for transformation. However, the danger of isolation is that women are less likely to want to challenge the status quo. The focus on feminists or gender activists as the sole source of transformation overlooks the vital role that other women play in supporting such agendas and the fact that with additional empowerment, they too, could be advocates of such change.

[27] Mtintso, T (1999) "Women in Decision-Making: A Conceptual Framework" in "Women in Politics and Decision Making in SADC: Beyond 30 % in 2005", SADC: p35-52 and Mtintso, T (1999) "Women in Politics- A Conceptual Framework" in "Redefining Politics: South African Women and Democracy", Commission on Gender Equality: p33-51.
[28] DAW, Public life: women make a difference in "Women 2000", No 2 (1992) pp.5
[29] Britton, H., From Resistance to Governance: South African Women's Transformation of Parliament, (2003) pp. 219, unpublished

Figure 1.1: Thenjiwe Mtintso's WPP Conceptual Framework



Effective participation - agency

A common assumption is that more women in political decision-making will result in better laws and policies that benefit women and children. While this could be the case, it would be incorrect to presuppose that all women in power will use this power to advance women's rights. Even when women enter politics with the best intentions, they are ultimately often beholden to their political party, or they face backlash and resistance.

While women politicians may get their *foot in the door* through favourable electoral systems and quotas or temporary special measures, research has shown that this does not necessarily result in women having, and/or being able to use their decision-making power to advance their agenda, including women's rights.[30]

There are significant barriers to women's effective participation, including:

- Political factors, such as support from the party and party structures;
- The openness of society and culture (including the media) to women in leadership;
- Institutional factors, including leadership and management roles within the institutions, and links and networks with organisations outside parliament.
- Personal agency, such as individual backgrounds, values, and capacity.



Women politicians from Rodrigues, Mauritius, demand effective participation during a Fifty Fifty Symposium in April 2024. *Photo: Gender Links Mauritius*

Activists seek to convert every one of these barriers into an enabler. Enlightened families, political parties, media, parliaments and civil society that embrace diversity and promote women's equal and effective participation can help to create equal, safe, creative and productive spaces for WPP.

Transformation

Transformation is a long-term project and requires a great deal of effort and commitment from those in power. When we try to change deeply entrenched systems to transform society, we come up against extraordinary resistance. The attachment to the ways of the past works against real transformation.[31]

This framework argues that deep-seated and sustainable transformation is more likely to occur when significant numbers of women are involved in decision-making and when a conscious effort is made to facilitate their participation.

[30] Tam O'Neil and Pilar Domingo , The power to decide - Women in decision making and gender equality, ODI, September 2015
[31] Human, P. Yenza: a blueprint for transformation. Oxford University Press Southern Africa, Cape Town. 2001

The transformation of gender relations is understood to consist of two core components:

- The empowerment of women to take their equal and rightful role in all areas of social, economic and political endeavour; and
- Changes in the attitudes of men to allow women to take their rightful place as well as free men of those burdens of masculinity that prevent them from working as equal partners with women.

Transformation in gender relations is incremental and can be measured in three areas: institutional change; personal change (for women and men) and the extent to which gender is integrated into critical tools of government including laws, policies and services.

It is essential to underscore that the areas of transformation measured in the study are limited to the personal and institutional changes experienced and actions taken by political decision-makers. Government actions do not guarantee fundamental changes in how people think, act, and conduct themselves.

Normative frameworks

Across Africa, national governments have signed, ratified, and agreed to several international, continental, and regional instruments that promote women's political participation. In some cases, these have been incorporated into national legislation and other mechanisms and measures, reflecting a positive trend of growing support for improving women's full and effective participation in democratic processes.

Table 1.1 highlights the following:

- There are at least six global, two African, and four sub-regional instruments - 12 instruments in total that commit African countries to achieving gender equality in political decision-making.
- Eight of these provide for affirmative action of some kind.
- Nine of these include specific targets. These targets have evolved from 30% women in decision-making. (for example, in UN Economic and Social Resolution 1990/15; ESAR Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005 to 2015) to equal participation (SDGs; the two African instruments; the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, the East Africa Gender Bill and the Supplementary Act Relating to Equality of Rights Between Women and Men for Sustainable Development in the ECOWAS Region).
- The majority of African countries have made efforts to domesticate these provisions through Constitutional or Legislative measures.
- The domestic instruments have also generally avoided the 50% target and have been biased towards local rather than national politics.

Table 1.1: International, African and Sub-Regional Instruments for Gender Parity

Instrument	Year adopted	How applicable to Africa	General provisions	Affirmative action	Specific targets	Time frames
UNITED NATIONS						
The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)	1979	All African countries except Sudan and Somalia have ratified CEDAW	**Article 7** states that States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right: (a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies.	No	No	Not time bound
The UN Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/15	1990	Applicable to all	Calls on governments, political parties, trade unions, and professional and other representative groups to adopt a 30 percent minimum proportion of women in leadership positions, with a view to achieving equal representation.	Yes	30 %	Not time bound
The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action	1995	Applicable to all	Outlines 12 strategic objectives and critical areas of action including "Women in power and Decision Making". Among the critical areas of insufficient progress identified in Beijing Plus Twenty is the "participation of women in power and decision-making at all levels."	No	No	Not time bound
The 2003 UN General Assembly resolution on women's political participation (A/RES/58/142)	2003	Applicable to all	**(A/RES/58/142)** **Article 1 (e)** To promote the goal of gender balance in all public positions and to take all appropriate measures to encourage political parties to ensure that women have a fair and equal opportunity to compete for all elective and non-elective public positions.	Yes	Equal participation	Not time bound

Instrument	Year adopted	How applicable to Africa	General provisions	Affirmative action	Specific targets	Time frames
The 2011 UN General Assembly resolution on women's political participation (A/RES/66/130)	2011	Applicable to all	**Article 4.** Calls upon States in situations of political transition to take effective steps to ensure the participation of women on equal terms with men in all phases of political reform, from decisions on whether to call for reforms in existing institutions to decisions regarding transitional governments, to the formulation of government policy, to the means of electing new democratic governments.	Yes	Equal participation	2030
The 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	2015	Applicable to all	SDG 5 underscores women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making. It picks up from where MDGs 3 left off, calling for the gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. Women's political participation is identified as a main indicator.	Yes	Equal participation	
AFRICAN						
The African Charter for Democracy, Elections and Governance	2007	Botswana, Cameron, Malawi , Tanzania and Seychelles have not signed	This Charter establishes the African Union's standards and norms on elections, democracy and governance.	No	Equal participation	
The African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR) on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol)	2003		This Protocol was adopted to complement and strengthen the African Charter by prompting women's rights. Article 9. 1 calls on state parties "to take specific positive action to promote participative governance and the equal participation of women in the political life of their countries through affirmative action, enabling national legislation and other measures to ensure that women participate without any discrimination in all elections; and women are represented equally at all levels with men in all electoral processes." State parties are urged to go beyond numbers by ensuring "increased and effective representation and participation of women at all levels of decision-making."	Yes	Equal participation	

Instrument	Year adopted	How applicable to Africa	General provisions	Affirmative action	Specific targets	Time frames
REGIONAL						
The SADC Protocol on Gender and Development	2008	All but Mauritius in Southern Africa have signed the updated Protocol	**Article 12** requires all state parties to endeavour to have at least fifty percent of decision-making positions in both private and public sector occupied by women by 2015. **Article 13** goes further and advocates that state parties "use special legislative measures to enable women to have equal opportunities with men to participate in all electoral processes including the administration of elections and voting".[32]	Yes	Equal participation	Not time bound but aligned to SDGs, AU Agenda 2063 and Beijing + 20
East Africa Gender Act	2016	Passed in the East Africa Legislative Assembly. EAC countries yet to pass it in their respective parliaments	Respect for gender parity in power and decision-making by 50-50 ratio.	Yes	Equal participation	Not time bound
The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Treaty	1975 original Treaty 1993 revised Treaty	Revised Treaty has been signed by all 15 Member States	**Article 66** Women and Development 1. Member States undertake to formulate, harmonise, co-ordinate and establish appropriate policies and mechanisms for the enhancement of the economic, social and cultural conditions of women. 2. To this end, Member States shall take all measures necessary to: a) identify and assess all constraints that inhibit women from maximising their contribution to regional development efforts; and b) provide a framework within which the constraints will be addressed and for the incorporation of women's concerns and needs into the normal operations of the society.	No	None	Not time bound

[32] ESARcountries

Instrument	Year adopted	How applicable to Africa	General provisions	Affirmative action	Specific targets	Time frames
Supplementary Act relating to Equality of Rights between women and men for sustainable development in the ECOWAS Region	2015 (May)	ECOWAS Regional Supplementary Act relating to equality of rights between women and men for sustainable development	Chapter III: Governance and decision-making **Article 11:** Representation 1. Member States shall institute affirmative action to ensure effective gender equality in decision-making positions in public and private sectors. 2. Member States shall take all necessary measures at all levels to establish the critical link between gender-balanced representation, good governance, democracy and sustainable development. **Article 12:** Participation in electoral processes 1. Member States shall adopt legislative measures and other strategies to ensure equal participation of women and men in all electoral processes, including the administration of elections and voting; 2. Member States shall ensure equal participation of women and men in the appointment of political representatives and decision-making through the adoption of laws and implementation of policies, strategies and programmes aimed at: (a) Strengthening women's capacity to participate effectively through training, leadership mentoring and awareness creation on gender issues; (b) Strengthening the capacity of young people through training, leadership mentoring and civic engagement; (c) Setting up structures to improve gender mainstreaming in civic education.	Yes	Equal participation	Not time bound

Source: Gender Links 2024.

Methodology

The research used a Mixed-Method Research methodology. The research gathered quantitative data, information, and qualitative evidence through interviews and case studies. GL deployed this mixed method to corroborate the evidence gathered and show how the barriers, successes, and opportunities are interrelated. Research parameters and the methodology were presented and approved at a Reference group meeting of the *Enhancing the Inclusion of Women in Political Participation in Africa* consortium partners.

Quantitative data collection

GL undertook desktop research to collect data on ten quantitative indicators of women's political participation at all levels in Central, East, Horn, North, Southern, and West Africa.

Quantitative indicators

1. Women's representation in the upper houses of parliament
2. Women's representation in the lower houses of parliament
3. Women's representation in parliament (both houses)
4. Women's representation in local government
5. Sex disaggregated data on top three political leaders in the ruling and main opposition party
6. Sex disaggregated data on EMB
7. Proportion of Women Speakers
8. Women's representation in Cabinet
9. Women at the top - presidents, vice presidents and prime ministers
10. Women mayors in the 54 capital cities of Africa

The study drew quantitative data from the global ranking of women in parliament by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), with analysis of Parliament limited to the figures of the lower houses of parliament only. The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) website provided data on electoral systems and websites. Political party data came from respective political party websites with some based on online desktop research. Data verification included triangulating information gathered from the respective sources.

Qualitative data

GL gathered qualitative data on the reality, experiences and barriers to women's political participation through interviews with African politicians, country-specific case studies, analyses and profiles. GL gathered 31 Case Studies from 26 countries: two from Central, three from the East, one from the Horn, three from North Africa, 16 from Southern, and six from West Africa.

Data analysis

For data analysis purposes, countries are in regional clusters based on the African Union (AU) Regional Economic Communities (RECs) guidelines. The AU recognises eight RECs. Several countries belong to multiple RECs. The classification used for this report identifies the four main RECs: The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the East African Community (EAC), the Southern African Community, and the Maghreb (North Africa).

Tanzania is located in both East and Southern Africa. As these are well-established RECs, Tanzania is counted in both. The classification is summarised in **Annex 4**.

Limitations

- ***Scope:*** While the Barometer covers the whole of Africa, it was not possible to conduct in-depth Situation Analyses and case studies for all 54 countries. Where possible, we have made an effort to include new and relevant data for most countries.

- ***Data on local government:*** While more data is available, particularly the UN Women database, some information could not be verified, especially the latest election data.

- ***Data on political parties*** is scarce. Some data was available for the main political parties. However, most of them do not have official websites, and in some cases, the content is sparse. Political party manifestos were not available online.

- ***Changes in parliament and cabinet portfolios*** due to deaths, changes in government, or cabinet shuffles result in data becoming dated. This is especially true where there are low numbers of women in political decision-making.

- ***Indicators for effective participation:*** Requires more primary research and expansion of indicators.



Group WPP consultation on constitutional review in Lobatse, Botswana. *Photo: Mboy Maswabi*

ELECTORAL SYSTEMS AND TEMPORARY SPECIAL MEASURES

2



Meeting of the candidate Bourhane Hamidou about the quota in Comoros.
Credit: Oustadh Padré

KEY FACTS

- Electoral systems and Temporary Special Measures (TSM)/quotas can have a profound impact on women's political representation and participation.
- At the national level (lower house), 19 countries use the First-past-the-post (FPTP) system; 16 use the Proportional Representation (PR) system, and 12 African countries use a combination of the two systems.
- The situation is similar at the local government level where 20 countries use the FPTP system; 17 countries use the PR system, and 11 countries use a combination of the two systems.
- Forty-one African countries have constitutional, legislated, or voluntary party quotas.
- Six of the top ten performing countries on WPP follow the Proportional Representation (PR) electoral system. Two countries in the top ten, Senegal and Tanzania, have a mixed system. The other two countries in the top ten (Ethiopia and Uganda) have the First Past the Post (FPTP) system.
- Voluntary party quotas in the PR system yield the best results for WPP. Conversely, this form of quota is least effective in the FPTP system.
- Reserved seats in any of the systems yield good results because such a system guarantees the numbers. However, reservations of any kind are open to legal challenge. This is especially so in the case of FPTP systems where seats reserved for women only debar male candidates.
- TSM are named as such because they are not a panacea. Several other measures need to work together to bring about sustainable solutions for WPP.

Women's political participation and representation in Africa varies greatly from country to country. Over the past few decades, WPP advocacy has yielded tremendous results in some countries, but not in others. Electoral systems and affirmative action for women's political participation, often referred to as *Temporary Special Measures (TSM)*, or *quotas* play a key role in bringing about immediate changes. Across the globe, women fare better in countries using the PR electoral system compared to the First Past the Post (FPTP) system. Many countries are also looking to a combination of the two systems to derive the best benefits from both. Gender should be a central consideration in these debates.

African countries have tested a wide variety of quota types (legislated, constitutional and voluntary) in all three electoral systems with mixed results. In some countries like Rwanda, South Africa, Namibia, and Mozambique, quotas have contributed to rapid increases in WPP. However, in other countries such as Mali, Lesotho, Somalia, and others, quotas have been less effective, mainly due to a lack of implementation and political will. This warrants a critique of quotas and further exploration of the factors that influence the implementation of quotas.

Several studies show how quotas can enhance WPP but also caution against their limitations. Scholars agree that the effectiveness of quotas largely depends on their design. International Idea's seminal work on *Designing for Equality*[1] rings true and informs the pages that follow.

The chapter sets out the different electoral systems and quotas in Africa. The data is derived from the detailed country tables for parliament (Annex 2) and local government (Annex 3). The chapter makes the links between the combinations of electoral systems and quotas and WPP, outlines some of the barriers that continue to exist in the implementation of quotas, and provides some insights into how these might be addressed.

Electoral systems

In Africa, three main types of electoral systems are used - Proportional Representation (PR) Constituency or "First Past the Post" (FPTP)/ plurality/majority systems, and a mixed system using both PR and constituency systems.

Proportional Representation (PR) or "list system" is based on the proportional allocation of seats in an elected body according to the proportion of votes received by a particular political party. Candidates are elected according to where they sit on the list and all PR systems require the use of multi-member districts. There are two major types of PR systems, List PR and the Single Transferable Vote (STV).

There are two types of List or PR systems - In an "open" list system, voters determine where candidates appear on the list. In a "closed" list system, the party determines where candidates appear on the list, usually through a democratic nomination processes within the party. The use of the zebra system in which political parties alternate men and women on a closed list is an effective method for ensuring women are equally represented.

Single Transferable Vote (STV) is a preferential candidate-centred system where candidates that surpass a specified quota of first-preference votes are immediately elected. In

[1] Larserud, S and Taphorn, R., Designing for Equality: Best-fit, medium-fit and non-favourable combinations of electoral systems and gender quotas (International IDEA, 2007)

successive counts, votes are redistributed from the least successful candidates, who are eliminated, to successful candidates, until sufficient candidates are declared elected.

First Past The Post (FPTP) - is the simplest form of plurality/majority electoral system, using single-member districts and candidate-centred voting. In this system, the winning candidate is the one who gains more votes than any other candidate, even if this is not an absolute majority of valid votes.

Majoritarian systems - Are designed to produce an absolute majority (50% plus 1) of votes.

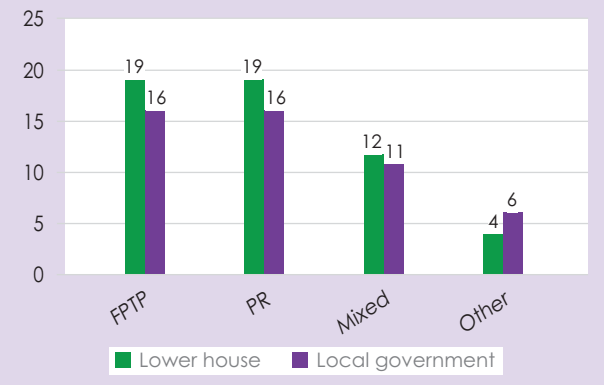
Plurality/majority systems - Plurality/majority systems are based on the principle that a candidate(s) or party with a plurality of votes (i.e. more than any other) or a majority of votes (i.e. 50% plus one - an absolute majority) is/are declared the winner(s). There are several sub-systems.

Mixed systems attempt to maximise the benefits of the two systems. Voters elect representatives through two different systems, one proportional representation system, and one plurality/majority system. There are two kinds of mixed systems: Parallel systems and Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) systems.

In the parallel system - A mixed electoral system utilises a mixture of these two methods to elect representatives: one system based on plurality/majority and the other on proportional representation. Because the system is mixed, the overall result does not necessarily reflect the proportion of votes that each party receives.

Under the ***MMP system***, each voter gets two votes. One vote goes to a constituency candidate through the First-Past-The-Post or winner takes all system. The second vote goes to a regional or national party list. For these seats, the electoral authority awards parties seats in proportion to the votes that each party receives.

Figure 2.1: Electoral systems used in Africa (lower house and local government)



Source: GL with data from the WPP Africa Barometer.

Figure 2.1 shows that, for the lower house, the majority of the 54 African countries (19) use the FPTP and PR electoral systems; 12 mixed and four use some other form of electoral system. At the local level, 16 countries use the PR and FPTP electoral system and 11 mixed. An emerging trend is the growing number of countries adopting mixed systems, a combination of FPTP and PR (12 countries at national, and 11 countries at local level).

Four countries at the national level and six at the local level are post-conflict/ in transition or have no elected government officials. **Central African Republic** has not held local government elections. The ongoing conflict in **Eritrea** has resulted in elections being postponed indefinitely. **Libya** has not held national elections since 2014 and parliament is in a transitional status.[2] **Seychelles** does not have elected local government due to the small size of the population. In **Somalia**, MPs are not directly elected. **South Sudan** has a 550-member Transitional National Legislative Assembly appointed by the President.[3] **Sudan** has not held local government elections.

[2] Interparliamentary Union, Parliamentary database (IPU) https://api.data.ipu.org/parliament/ly?chamber_id=13429, accessed 12 March 2024
[3] Interparliamentary Union, Parliamentary database (IPU) https://api.data.ipu.org/parliament/ss?chamber_id=13580, accessed 12 March 2024

The evidence shows that the electoral system followed in a country has an impact on women's representation in decision-making. Each of the systems has advantages and disadvantages for women.

Table 2.1: The gendered nature of electoral systems

System	Advantages	Disadvantages	Gender considerations
FPTP	Good for accountability -Representatives reside in and champion their locality.	Bad for inclusion - The winner takes all. Parties can get a significant percentage of the vote but still have no seats.	The cards are stacked against women in this system because it is heavily dependent on finance, influence, and the "boys" networks.
PR	Inclusive and facilitates minority groups and parties' access to representation.	Weak on accountability - failure to provide a strong geographical linkage between an MP and the MP's electorate.	Parties are able to use the lists to promote the advancement of women politicians. When combined with voluntary or legislated quota, results in rapid increase in women's participation
Mixed	Seeks to derive benefits from both systems.	The dual system can create two "classes" of MP with PR candidates regarded as token because they did not "run the race" in the same way as FPTP candidates	Women more likely to succeed on PR lists; this adds to the notion of tokenism.

Source: Gender Links.

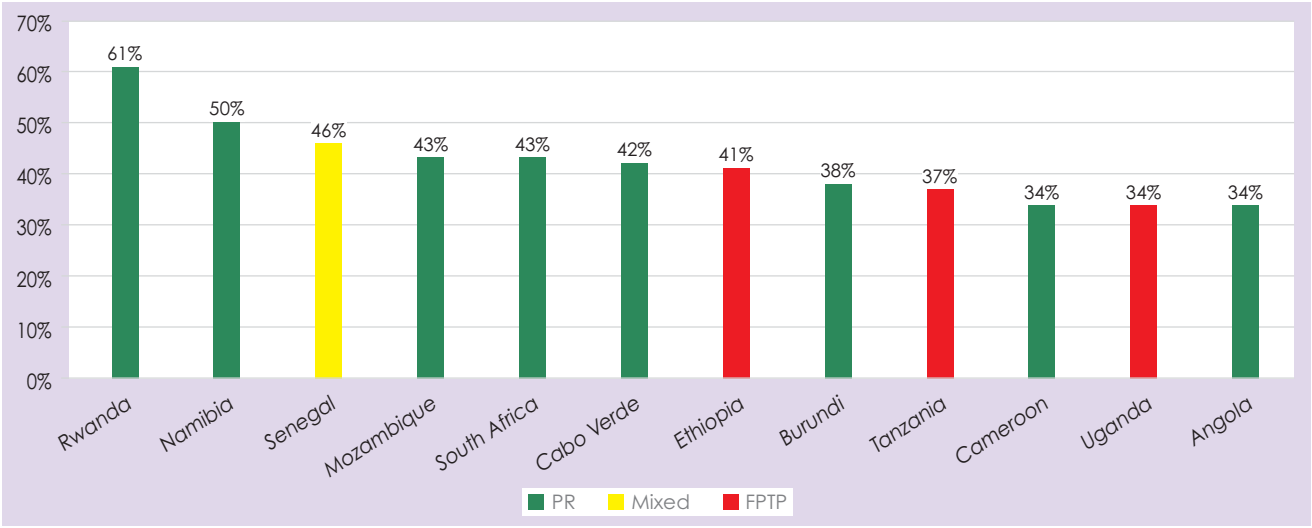
There is overwhelming evidence internationally to suggest that women have better opportunities/ chances of getting elected under the PR (and especially the closed list PR system) as opposed to the constituency electoral system,[4] in which in-built social, cultural beliefs and prejudices work against women. In the PR system parties can use the lists to promote the advancement of women candidates and have the backing of party policies and financing, which works in favour of women, at least in getting their foot in the door. However, this is only possible with the political will of the male-dominated decision-making spaces.



Eswatini general elections 2023 at polling station in Mbabane, Eswatini. *Credit: Eswatini Observer*

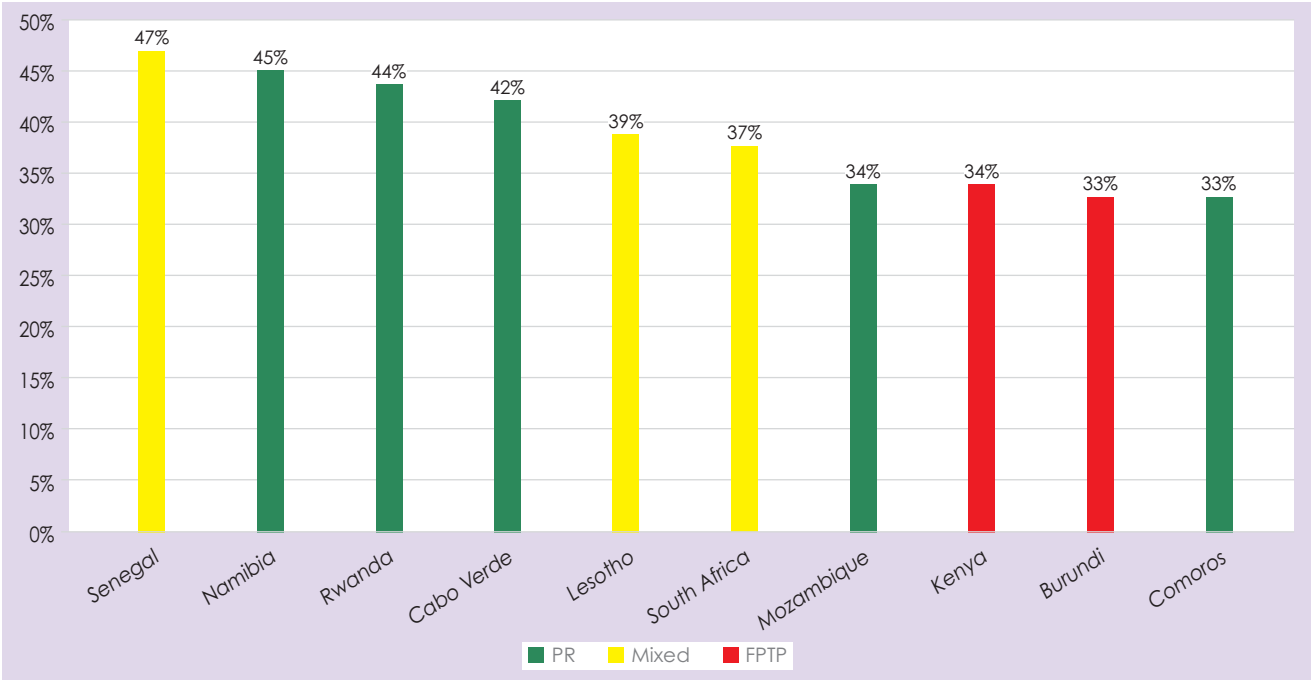
[4] International IDEA, Comparative global data on TSM for women in politics, https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/quotas, accessed 11 March 2021

Figure 2.2: Top ten women in parliament in Africa by electoral system



Sources: GL with data from IPU, and UNW in Local Government database.

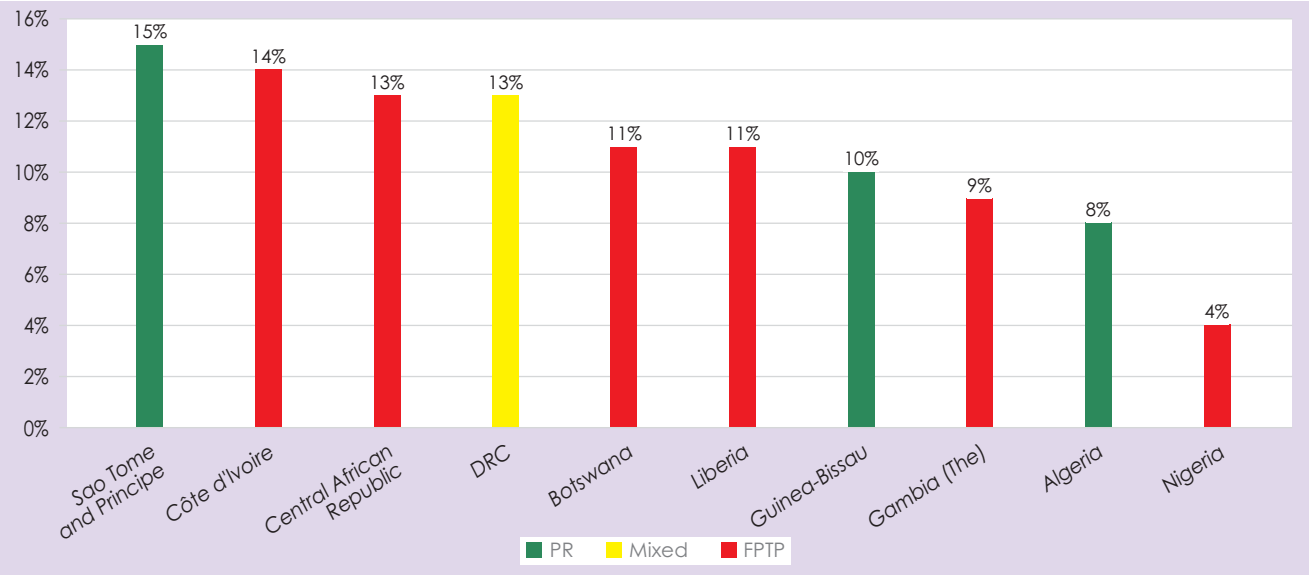
Figure 2.3: Top ten women in local government in Africa by electoral system



Sources: GL with data from IPU, and UNW in Local Government database.

Figures 2.2 and 2.3 illustrate the correlation between electoral systems and WPP by colour coding the electoral systems in the top ten African countries for WPP in the lower houses of parliament and local government. Figure 2.2 shows that eight out of the top ten women in lower houses (including the top two) follow the PR electoral system. In local government, five out of the top ten follow the PR system. Senegal, which features in both, follows a mixed system. Lesotho and South Africa have a mixed system at the local level. Only three countries in the top ten at the national, and two at the local level, use the FPTP electoral system.

Figure 2.4: Bottom ten countries for WPP (Lower House) in Africa



Sources: GL with data from IPU, UNW in Local Government database.

Figure 2.5 Bottom ten WPP in local government in Africa by electoral system



Sources: GL with data from IPU, UNW in Local Government database.

Conversely, Figures 2.4 and 2.5 illustrate that, of the ten countries with the lowest levels of WPP six at the national level and four at the local level used the FPTP system. The graphs also show that the PR system is not a panacea: three countries in the lowest ten both at national and local level follow the PR system but still have low levels of women's representation. Electoral systems only work effectively for women when combined with TSM and other measures.



In **Algeria**, which has a PR system, women's political participation has generally been relatively high in the past due to a quota system implemented in 2012 mandating that 20% to 50% of candidates for national and local elections must be women.

This law led to a rapid increase in women parliamentarians immediately following its adoption. However, these numbers have been decreasing. In 2021 women's representation decreased by 18 percentage points from 26% to 8%, following the scrapping of the electoral law requiring gender parity on party lists.[5] Culturally, Algeria is a patriarchal society, with deeply ingrained beliefs about the roles of men and women. These societal norms can be a significant barrier to women's political participation.[6] What happened in Algeria is an example of the government removing TSM's too early, before the practice of WPP had become normalised.

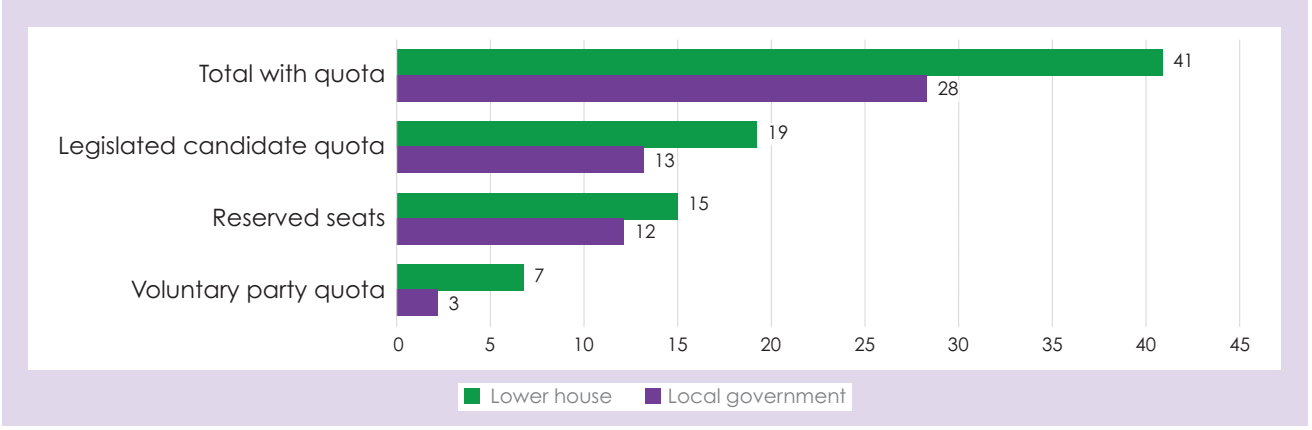
Quotas or Temporary Special Measures (TSM)

In 2004, the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) made a general recommendation that "states parties are obliged to adopt and implement TSM [...] if such measures can be shown to be necessary and appropriate to accelerate the achievement of the overall, or a specific goal of, women's de facto or substantive equality."[7]

Quotas or TSMs in politics set targets for a certain number or percentage of women in decision-making structures, whether it is a candidate list, a parliamentary assembly, a committee, or a government.[8] The measures aim to help level the playing field.

According to the latest Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) *Women in Parliament* report, in 2021 countries with some form of gender quotas elected (on average) 31.9% to their lower/single house, while those without quotas elected 19.5% women cumulatively.[9] This research shows a similar trend in Africa. Forty-one of the 54 African countries have TSM of some kind for WPP at the national level, and 28 states have such measures at the local level.

Figure 2.6: African countries using quotas

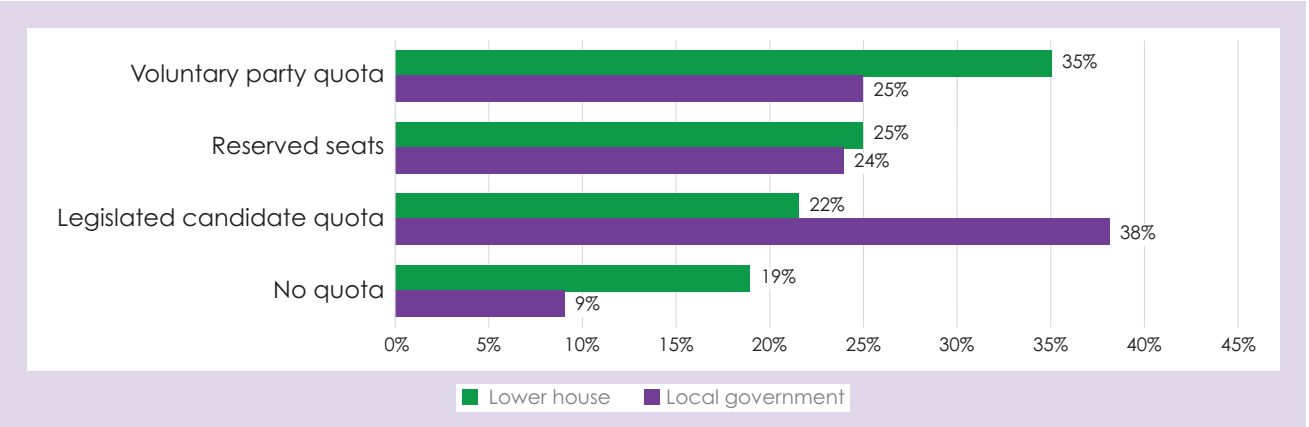


Source: Compiled by GL with data from WPP Africa Barometer.

[5] Fikra Forum, Women in Politics in Algeria: One tep forward two steps back, https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/women-and-politics-algeria-one-step-forward-two-steps-back , accessed 16 January 2024
[6] Ibid
[7] Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation no. 25 on Article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, on temporary special measures.
[8] International IDEA, Gender quotas database, https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas-database/quotas 21 May 2024
[9] Inter parliamentary Union, Parliamentary database (IPU), Press Statement, More-women-in-parliament-and-more-countries-with-gender-parity 2024, https://www.ipu.org/news/press-releases/2022-03/new-ipu-report-more-women-in-parliament-and-more-countries-with-gender-parity accessed 17 January 2024

Figure 2.6 shows that 41 African countries have quotas of some kind for WPP at the national level, and 28 at the local level. At the national level, 19 countries have legislated candidate quotas; 15 have reserved seats for women and seven have voluntary party quotas. At the local level, 13 countries have candidate quotas; 12 have reserved seats, and three have voluntary party quotas.

Figure 2.7: WPP in Africa by type of quota



Source: Compiled by GL with data from WPP Africa Barometer.

Figure 2.7 shows that countries with some form of gender quota at the lower house and local government levels have a higher proportion of women in elective positions than without quotas, making a case for adopting gender quotas to increase WPP. The graph shows that voluntary party quotas yield the best results (35%) at national level and legislated candidate quotas (38%) at the local level. Overall, these figures show that, at least on paper, there is a high level of commitment to increasing WPP in Africa.

Electoral system and quota combinations

The combination of electoral systems and quotas play a significant role in increasing the number of women elected to decision-making bodies. However, as this section will demonstrate, a favourable electoral system and quota alone do not necessarily guarantee the desired outcome. We analyse some of the factors that influence the effectiveness of these systems and combinations thereof.

Table 2.2: Possible combinations of TSM and electoral systems

Type of quota	FPTP	PR system	Mixed PR and FPTP
Voluntary party TSM	E.g. Ruling party in Ethiopia	E.g. Frelimo in Mozambique	E.g. South Africa local government - ANC voluntary quota
Constitutional or legislated TSM-reserved seats	E.g. The Uganda Constitution creates an additional tier of constituencies contested by women only	In the senate in Zimbabwe, 60 of the 80 senate seats are distributed on a PR basis	E.g. The Tanzanian constitution reserves 30 % of seats for women (distributed on a PR basis)
Constitutional or legislated TSM-reserved candidature	In the local elections in Mauritius, one third of the candidates have to be a different sex	E.g. In the local government elections in Namibia, one third of the candidates have to be women	In the national elections in Lesotho, women must comprise at least 50% of the PR candidates (who constitute 40% of the total)

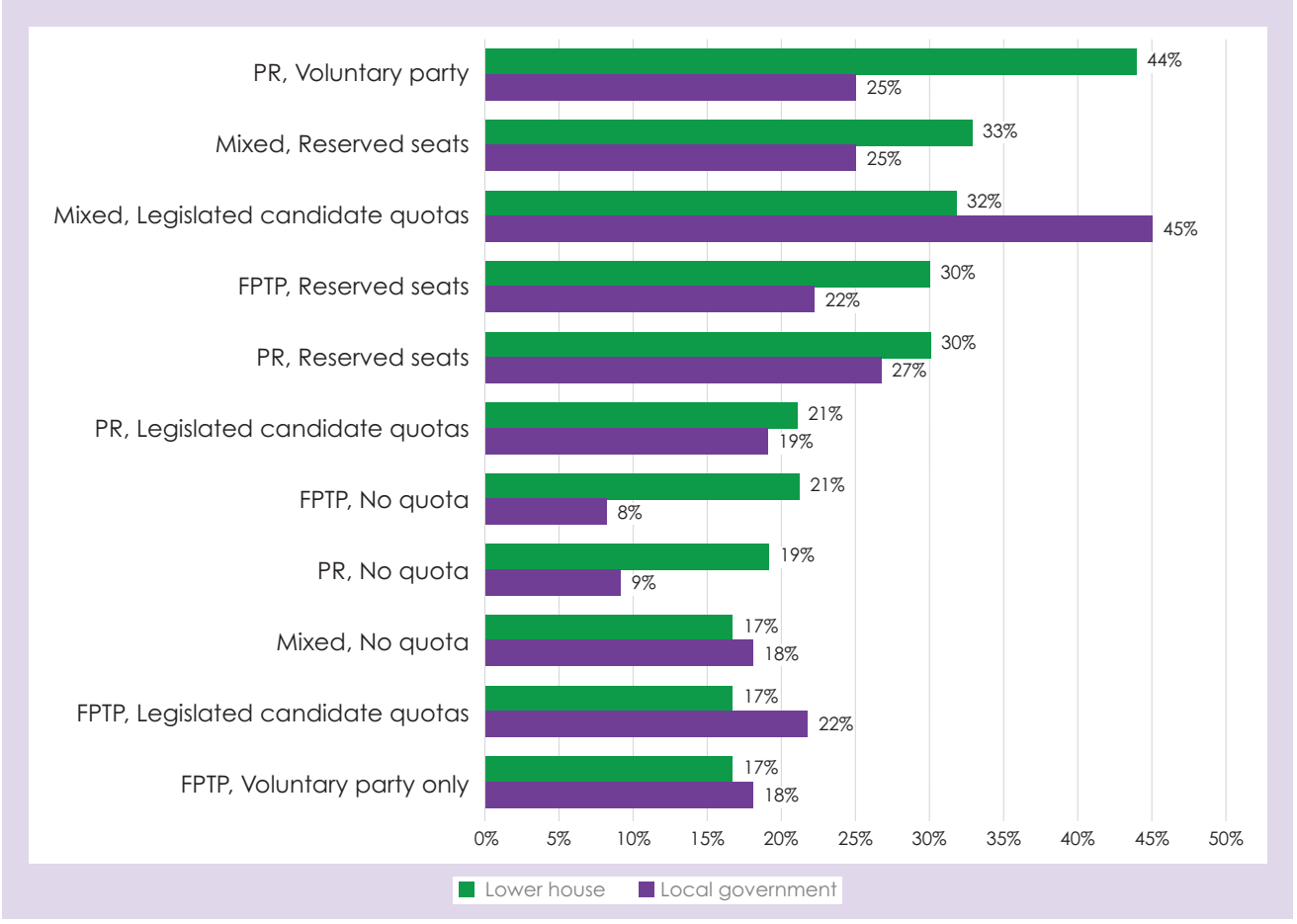
Source: Gender Links 2021.

Table 2.2 shows that it is possible for any type of quota to be combined with any type of electoral system to increase women's political representation. **Voluntary party quotas** have been applied in the PR system (e.g. Mozambique); FPTP (e.g in Ethiopia) and the mixed system (e.g SA local government).

Constitutional and legislated quotas take two main forms: reserved seats (in which a certain proportion of seats are reserved for women) or reserved candidature (in which a party must field a certain proportion of women candidates). **Seat reservation** can be applied in the FPTP system (for example in Uganda); in the PR system (for example in the Zimbabwe senate) or in a mixed system (for example the parallel systems in the Zimbabwean and Tanzanian parliaments).

Candidate reservation can also be applied in the FPTP system (for example local elections in Mauritius); the PR system (for example local elections in Namibia) or the mixed system (for example the national assembly in Lesotho). The sections that follow will dissect each of the prevailing electoral systems, and the TSM used with these systems - from none at all to the combinations that have the greatest impact.

Figure 2.8: WPP in Africa by electoral system and quota type



Source: Compiled by GL with data from WPP Africa Barometer.

Figure 2.8 shows that the best combination for increasing WPP in Africa at national level is voluntary party quotas in the PR system. Women constitute 44% of MPs in countries with this combination. At the local level, the mixed system with legislated candidate quotas has proved to be the most effective. In the FPTP system voluntary party quotas have been shown to be the least effective, while most effective quota in the FPTP system is reserved seats for women. The sections that follow examine these different combinations and outcomes through use of case studies and examples.

Quotas in the FPTP electoral system

Making quotas work effectively in the FPTP system is fraught with many challenges. In the winner-takes-all system no matter what the stipulated number of women candidates, there is no guarantee that they will win, unless parties field the candidates in constituencies where they are likely to win. In this highly competitive system, parties put up candidates in constituencies whom they think are most likely to win. Often the cards are stacked against women. In many cases, political parties simply do not observe the quotas in the FPTP system. There is only one way that quotas can be effective in this kind of system. This is for certain constituencies to be reserved for women. Such an approach is open to constitutional and legal contestation.

Table 2.3: Quotas in the FPTP system in Africa

QUOTA	EXAMPLE	PROS	CONS
No quota	Comoros, Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Zambia	No accusations of tokenism	Progress is slow
Voluntary Party	Botswana, Malawi, Liberia, Mauritius (national)	Accountability, party ownership	Heavily dependent on one party; what happens if that party loses ground?
Legislated Candidate Quota	Central African Republic, Congo-Brazzaville, Cote d'Voire, Ethiopia, Gabon, Mali, Mauritius (LG (gender neutral) Eswatini, Kenya	Fixed, hard to change	Not observed
Reserved seats	Sierra Leone, Uganda	Guarantees the quota; women can compete in general	May be seen as discriminatory against men

Source: Gender Links 2024.

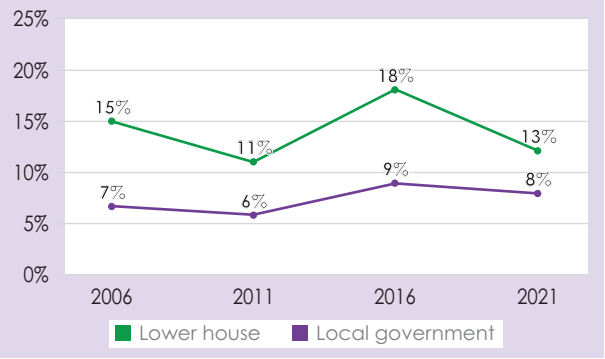
As illustrated in Table 2.3, Africa has examples of all the possible combinations of types of quota with the FPTP system, from no quota, to voluntary party quotas, to legislated candidate quotas to reserved seats. The sections that follow provide insight into each.



No quota in the FPTP system

Out of the 20 African countries that have a FPTP system, eight countries do not have quotas of any kind. These countries have the lowest representation of women in politics on the continent. Zambia, which uses the FPTP electoral system with no quota, is one such example. Despite decades of advocacy, Zambia has less than 15% women in the lower house and in local government, well below the target of 50%.

Figure 2.9: WPP in Zambia over the last four election periods



Source: Gender Links.

Figure 2.9 shows that women's representation has vacillated between 15% and 18% in the lower house and 7% and 9% at the local government level over 15 years from 2006 to 2021.



The principle of gender equality is clearly defined in **Zambia**'s Gender Policy of 2014, which highlights three measures to increase WPP, including reviewing the electoral system, revising political party manifestos to promote the nomination of women candidates, and lobbying for a quota system. None of these proposals have been taken up, making Zambia a clear example of why there is a need for quotas and electoral systems that are more conducive to women entering parliament.

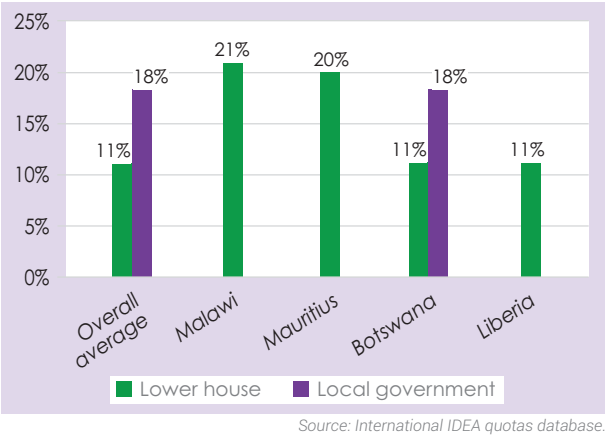
Zambia went to the polls on 12 August 2021 to elect a President, Members of Parliament, Mayors/Council Chairpersons, and Councilors. The elections took place after the debates on the change of the current First Past the Post (FPTP) electoral system to a mixed electoral system. Parliament failed to pass Constitution Amendment Bill 10, missing an opportunity to commit to increasing WPP in Zambia.

Voluntary party quota in the FPTP system

While voluntary party quotas work well in PR systems, they are less effective in the FPTP system, which is highly competitive, dependent on resources and influence.

Figure 2.10 shows that four African countries with the FPTP system have adopted voluntary party quotas. None of the countries using this combination have managed to achieve more than 21% at either level of government. While political parties may provide for quotas in their constitutions or manifestos, these are not obligatory. In the heat of elections, parties field candidates in constituencies they believe they will win. Often, these candidates are not women.

Figure 2.10: Voluntary party quotas in FPTP African countries



Source: International IDEA quotas database.



Botswana uses the FPTP system both at national and local level. The law does not oblige political parties to have gender quotas. Two parties, the Botswana Congress Party (BCP) and Botswana National Front (BNF) have had voluntary quotas since 1999, but have not complied with these.

Table 2.4: Election results for the last two elections

Year	Parliament			Local government		
	Total	Women	% women	Total	Women	% women
2014	63	6	9.5%	589	116	19%
2019	63	7	11.1%	609	111	18%

Source: (IEC, 2014, 2019), Botswana SADC Gender Protocol Barometer, 2015.

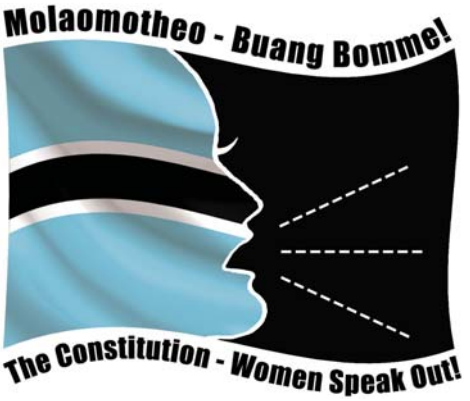
Table 2.4 shows that women in parliament increased marginally from 9,5% to 11.1% from 2014 to 2019 and dropped from 19% to 18% in local government.

In December 2021 President of Botswana, Dr. Mokgweetsi Masisi, appointed the 19-member Commission of Inquiry into the Review of the Constitution of Botswana or Dibotelo Commission, tasked with identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the Constitution; assessing its adequacy including the promotion of equality; and making recommendations to the President by September 2022.

Botswana's 1966 Constitution is at best gender blind; at worst contains discriminatory clauses at odds with its international obligations. Several UN reviews point out areas that need review and strengthening. A review of the Constitution provides a unique opportunity for Botswana to strengthen provisions on equality and non-discrimination as well as provide for affirmative action (broadly) and enhance women's political participation (WPP) specifically.

In July 2023, as part of the II-led Africa WPP Consortium, women from all five major political parties, women's rights organisations, and civil society partners presented their submission to the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into the Review of the Constitution. The submission provided recommendations on key areas including:

- Equality and non-discrimination
- Standalone provisions on women's rights
- Political participation
- Citizenship
- Protection from violence
- Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)
- Marriage and family life
- Economic participation, property, inheritance, and land tenure
- Gender equality machinery and
- Domestication and implementation of international commitments



With regard to WPP, the women recommended that the Constitution:

- Provide a general authorisation for the use of gender affirmative action, including quotas and preferential treatment.
- Replace nominated MPs with a PR system for women and men.
- Introduce gender parity candidate quotas for all electoral systems and at all levels of decision-making values.
- All political parties should adopt gender-sensitive policies and Constitutions that promote gender equality and women's human rights.

After extensive consultations, the final report in September recommended that aspects of the Constitution require revision. Civil society and human rights advocates are concerned that the Commission did not pay enough attention to recommendations made by international monitoring bodies. Critics say that some of these recommendations went beyond the scope of the Commission's mandate and terms of reference. The President accepted the report which will form the basis of a government white paper.[10]

Legislated candidate quotas in the FPTP electoral system

There is a growing number of examples of legislated candidate quotas, in which political parties are obligated to field a certain number or proportion of women candidates. As these candidates may either not be fielded at all (failing to respect the law or constitutional provisions) or fail to win after they have been fielded the results are mixed.



Congo-Brazzaville, which has a FPTP system, adopted a 30% quota in 2016. This resulted in a four-percentage point increase in WPP from 7% to 11%. In August 2022, at the opening of the 15th legislature of the National Assembly, the percentage of elected women rose from 11% in the 14th legislature to 15%, despite the 30% quota. This result shows that in the FPTP system, a legislated quota is no guarantee of the stated desired outcome.



Since the military coup in **Mali** in August 2020 the country is under a transitional government called Conseil National de la Transition (CNT), with members appointed by the Transitional President. Before the coup, the country used the FPTP system with a 30% legislated quota. WPP increased in the CNT from 10% before the coup to 28% in 2020. Head of the CNT, Prime Minister Choguel Kokalla Maiga, almost reached the 30% target but fell short by two percentage points.



Eswatini is a Monarchy in which political parties are banned. The country uses the FPTP electoral system for both the lower house and local government, with a 30% quota for women in the National Assembly.

According to Section 86(1) of the Constitution of Eswatini, if the House of Assembly does not meet the 30% threshold for women's representation in Parliament, four women from the country's regions shall be elected. This section led to the enactment of the Election of Women Members to the House of Assembly Act of 2018.

[10] https://constitutionnet.org/news/win-status-quo-botswana

However, contrary to the requirement of Article 86 of the Constitution the composition of the parliament has not complied with this principle. In the 2023 national elections, there were 280 women candidates. Just 46 of these won primaries and just eight came through the secondary vote, winning 11% of the available 74 seats in the lower house. The Act stipulates that at least half of the 10 appointees by the King should be female. But the King only appointed four of the required five, with the result that representation in the lower house is 22%.[11] Eswatini is an example of the inherent weakness of candidate quotas in a FPTP system. There is no enforcement mechanism when the elections fail to deliver the quota target.

Reserved seats in the FPTP electoral system

Reserving seats for women specifically, provided for through the national constitution or legislation, yields the best results in the FPTP system. However, reserved seats are open to legal contestation. In 2011, Lesotho abandoned a system of reserving 30% seats for women only in local elections to be rotated over three elections when a male candidate contested this in court, claiming that he had been unfairly treated. Uganda has a dual system of FPTP seats openly contested by women and men and another layer of seats for women only. Kenya has 47 seats reserved for women by the Constitution. But this clause has never been properly enacted, with the result that Kenya still falls short of the desired 30% target, as detailed below:



Article 27 (8) of the 2010 Constitution of **Kenya** provides for affirmative action, to ensure that "not more than two-thirds of the members of elective or appointive bodies shall be of the same gender". The Constitution also clearly sets out the measures for this to be achieved, namely:

> "Forty-seven **reserved seats** for women, each elected by registered voters of each county constituting a single member constituency as well as twelve members nominated by parliamentary political parties according to their proportion of members of The National Assembly to represent special interests, including youth, persons with disabilities and workers.
>
> Parliament shall **enact legislation** to promote the representation in Parliament of women; persons with disabilities; youth; ethnic and other minorities; and marginalised communities;
>
> The State shall **take legislative and other measures to implement the principle** that not more than two-thirds of the members of elective or appointive bodies shall be of the same gender.[12]

The Constitution further provides for the "dissolution of parliament, as many times as it takes, until the house fully complies with the requirement."

In addition to the Constitutional requirements, the electoral law provides that political parties should alternate between male and female candidates on their party lists. The Political Parties Act provides that a party is ineligible for public funding if more than 2/3 of its elected officials are of one gender.

[11] Mthembu M.V. (2018). Participation of Women in the Traditional Public Sphere, Sibaya, in the Kingdom of Eswatini.
[12] Interparliamentary Union, Parliament database, https://api.data.ipu.org/parliament/ke?chamber_id=13438 accessed 8 April 2024

Since the adoption of the Constitution in 2010, women's representation in the 222 member Kenyan parliament has increased from 10% to 23% - below the required 30%.The Attorney General has raised the issue of non-compliance since 2012. The Supreme Court held that the two-thirds gender rule required progressive implementation and advised Parliament to enact the required law by August 2015.

In 2017, the Kenyan Parliament passed the Representation of Special Interest Groups Act to facilitate the realisation of the two-thirds gender principle. In September 2020, the chief justice advised the president to dissolve parliament in accordance with the constitution, based on parliament's failure to enact the law to give effect to the two-thirds gender rule. Despite several court rulings, parliament has not observed the gender rule nor has the President dissolved parliament. The Kenyan case raises concerns of non-compliance at many levels: with the Constitution and court rulings.

Quotas in the PR electoral system

The electoral landscape in Africa is fast changing. On a continent once dominated by the FPTP system, 19 African countries now have a PR electoral system - one country less than the number of countries with a FPTP system. Globally, the PR electoral system has proven to be more conducive to the inclusion of women, other minority, and marginalised groups. The combination of the PR and FPTP system and quotas generally yields good results for women.

In the PR system, parties are allocated seats based on the percentage of their vote. In an open list system, voters choose the people on the list as well as determine through the percentage of the vote whether or not those selected make the cut. In the closed list system, parties put up lists of candidates in rank order. This order is normally established through a voting process within the party. Parties are allocated seats based on the percentage of the vote they garner. Where the candidate is found on the party list is the key determinant of success.



Often men dominate the top positions in the list. By using the "zebra" or "Zipper system" to distribute women evenly across the list, parties can guarantee that women get elected. This can be done voluntarily, or through constitutional or legislative means (that need to be enforced in order for them to work). Candidate reservation (i.e. obliging parties to field a certain percentage of women candidates) works well in the PR system, as long as women are interspersed throughout the lists. It is also possible to have seats reserved for women only, and distributed to parties according to the proportion of the vote they achieve. This is often used in parallel with the FPTP system to circumvent the pitfalls of reserved seats in that system (see mixed systems).

Table 2.5: Countries using the PR electoral system with some form of quota

TMS	EXAMPLE	PROS	CONS
None	Equatorial Guinea, Tunisia	No allegations of tokenism	The system alone does not guarantee increases in WPP
Voluntary party quotas	Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa	Party ownership of the zebra system	Women's representation is at the whim of parties; ideally quota should be legislated
Legislated Quotas	Algeria, Angola, Burkina Faso, Carbo Verde, Cameroon, Guinea-Bissau, Sao Tome and Principe, Togo Burundi, Egypt, Morocco, Niger, Rwanda	Can deliver excellent results	It is important to specify where women are located on the lists

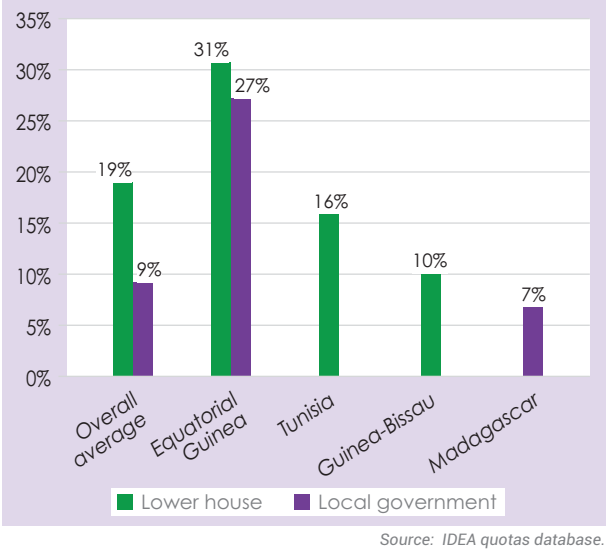
Source: Gender Links 2023.

Table 2.5 shows that of the 19 countries using a PR system for the lower house, only two have no quota system. Three, all in Southern Africa, have voluntary party quotas practiced by the dominant parties that led the liberation struggles in those countries. The remaining countries have legislated candidate quotas.

PR electoral system with no quota

Even though the PR electoral system may be more conducive for women being elected, if there is no quota, progress is slower than when a quota is adopted and implemented.

Figure 2.11: PR electoral system with no quota



Source: IDEA quotas database.

Figure 2.11 shows that on average women constitute 19% of MPs in the lower houses of and 9% of councillors in countries using the PR electoral system. Equatorial Guinea is the exception, with 31% women in the lower house, and 27% in local government.

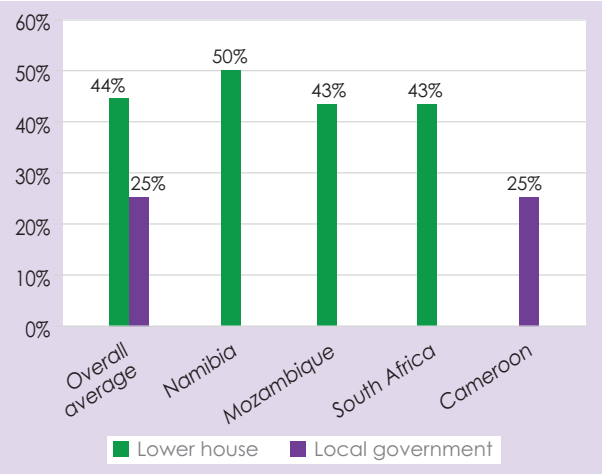


Tunisia has been in a period of transition since the Jasmine Revolution of 2011. However, the gains achieved since then are fragile, and the country is currently facing an economic and social crisis. Part of the rollback includes a new electoral law, introduced by the Tunisian President Kais Saied, in December 2022 that eliminates the parity regulation in the elected assemblies of the country. WPP dropped by ten percentage points from 26% to less than 16%.

Voluntary party quotas in a PR Electoral system

The data shows that voluntary party quotas in the PR system are effective in increasing WPP especially at the national level because of the ownership this bestows on the party.

Figure 2.12: PR, Voluntary party quotas *



*Countries, where political parties have only adopted quotas (i.e. no other quota is applied) have been included in this figure.

Source: IDEA quotas database.

Figure 2.12 shows a correlation between countries with high levels of representation and dominant parties adopting quotas. The four countries (South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique, and Cameroon) where the main parties have adopted a quota are in the top ten African countries with the highest levels of women's representation in parliament. The overall average of WPP in the lower house is 44%, the highest of all combinations of electoral systems and quotas. The downside of this system is that women's representation is linked to the fate of the parties implementing the quotas. For example, South Africa experienced a decline in WPP in both local (2023) and national (2024) elections as the African National Congress (ANC) lost ground in both elections.



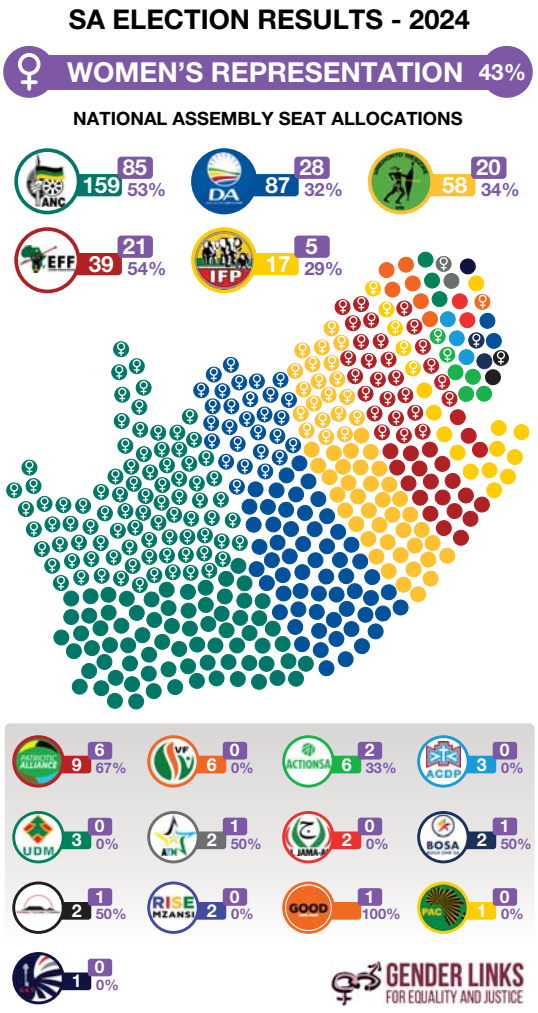
Women's representation in South Africa's National Assembly dropped from 46% in 2020 to 43% following the 29 May 2024 elections that witnessed the ANC winning less than half (40%) of the votes for the first time.

As a result, South Africa also drops from twelfth to twenty-second place in the global ranking of WPP. In the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, South Africa drops from first to third place, with Namibia leading the way, followed by Mozambique.

The watershed 2024 election was the most contested since the advent of democracy thirty years ago, when the ANC won 63% of the vote.

As predicted, the party lost significant ground in South Africa's 30- year anniversary elections, losing its outright majority for the first time since it came to power in 1994. This shifts the country from a one-party dominant state to a multi-party democracy. The ANC has now formed a Government of National Unity with the centrist Democratic Alliance (DA) and the Inkatha Freedom Party that has its roots in KwaZulu Natal.

Women now comprise the majority of the ANC parliamentarians, at 53%. The Economic Freedom Front (EFF), a radical breakaway from the ANC, also surpassed the fifty percent mark, with 54% of its parliamentarians being women.



Five smaller parties have 50% or more women. These include Patricia de Lille's GOOD Party (which won just one seat, a woman); Build One South Africa (BOSA), African Transformation Movement (ATM) and the Patriotic Alliance (PA). GOOD is the only South African political party led by a woman.

Other more conservative parties have not observed the principle of equality. In particular, the DA and Jacob Zuma's uMkhonto weSizwe Party (MKP), have 32% and 34% women, respectively. The Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) has just 29% women in parliament. Six small parties, with one to three seats, have no women at all.

South Africa's electoral system has also undergone a change. In 2019, the New Nation Movement, along with Chantal Revel, princess of the Koranna Royal Household of the Khoi and San First Nations people, challenged the Electoral Act in the Constitutional Court. The First Nations People argued that political parties are alien to them and do not give them a voice in national affairs.

The court ruled that the Electoral Act was unconstitutional because it did not allow independent candidates to stand for national or provincial elections. The law was changed in time for the 2024 elections to allow for independent candidates to stand. Only two of the six independent candidates were women. None of the six independent candidates won a seat in parliament. Chantal Revel did not run for office, despite her mark in history as an indigenous woman who changed South Africa's electoral system.

"The irony that a woman who fought for the voice of her community in the elections does not feature cuts to the heart of women's continued exclusion from mainstream politics, even in modern day South Africa," Gender Links noted in a statement.

As parties jockeyed for power in the new coalition government, a high powered group of individual women and women's organisations from across South Africa made a submission to political parties to "ensure women's equal, effective, transformative participation in all structures and processes" in the ensuing negotiations.

"We are supportive of the call to convene a Multi-stakeholder National Dialogue in the first quarter of the 7th Administration in 2024 as a constructive way of pulling the country together, collectively developing strategies to deal with South Africa's socio-economic and social cohesion challenges, and for ensuring that peace and stability prevail," the women said.

Legislated candidate quotas in a PR electoral system

Legislated candidate quotas in a PR system mean that all parties are required to put forward a certain proportion of women candidates on their lists, interspersed in such a way that women stand a chance of winning. This system is effective, as long as the quotas are observed, as illustrated in the examples that follow:



The **Zimbabwe** senate is an example of a candidate quota in a mixed system. In the Zimbabwe Senate, members are elected through the PR system with a legislated candidate quota - gender parity - using the zebra list, a system that has constantly yielded the best results for women. This explains why (see Figure 2.14 in the Zimbabwe case study later in this chapter) women's representation in the senate is the highest of all the spheres of elected political office, ranging from 40% to 45% since the adoption of a new Constitution in 2013.



Comoros presents an interesting case, as the country uses two different electoral systems. At the national level, the FPTP is used, with no quota, while at the local government level, there is a legislated candidate quota in the PR system. The result is that there are 33% women in local government compared to 17% in the lower house, illustrating the need for quotas in the short term to level the playing field.



The case of **Côte d'Ivoire** shows that where political parties place women on their candidate lists in the PR system can make a big difference to the outcomes. In 2019, the country adopted a gender quota law that compels political parties to present 30% women candidates. However, representation remains low at both levels, 14% in the lower house and 15% in local government because the quota is not observed and political parties continue to select few women as candidates.

After a thorough examination of the candidacy lists of all the parties and political groupings for the 2023 municipal elections, the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) rejected the party lists because they did not comply with the law.

All political parties then had to draw up lists with 30% women candidates. Parties put up 1670 women out of the 5225 candidates (**32%**) for **regional elections**. For the **municipal elections**, of 30,084 candidates, 10,235 were women (**34%**). But political parties continue to place men at the top of their lists.

As a result women constitute only 15% of local elected officials. Only two women were elected president of regional councils (6%), and only 24 women were elected as mayors (11%). This shows that even where there is compliance with the law, unless there is political will to increase WPP, representation of women will remain low.[13]



Algeria is an edifying example of the impact of quotas, and the types of quotas, on WPP. Following the Arab Spring, Algeria adopted a new elections law establishing a gender quota, mandating that one-third of seats in parliament and local government be **reserved** for women only. This resulted in an 19 percentage point increase in WPP at the national level, jumping from 7% to 26% in 2017. However, the law was widely criticised because it led to many female MPs coming in without any prior experience, and did not result in a significant shift in women's substantive participation in party politics and government.

[13] Case study by Augustin Tapé

In June 2020, Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune announced an amendment to the electoral law, replacing the reserved seat system with a **legislated candidate quota** system, requiring half of the candidates on party lists to be women. However, Article 317 of the new electoral law creates a loophole around Article 202 of the old electoral law, which requires that gender parity be a necessary condition for candidate lists to be accepted. The new law allows both party lists and independent lists that have not met the gender parity requirement if the election authority is informed.

This new law adopts an **open list system where voters determine where candidates appear on the list**, which is a challenge in a patriarchal society like Algeria where there is strong averseness to WPP in the country. This system has led to political parties ignoring the provisions. In the last People's National Assembly elections in 2021, following the amendment of the electoral law, women's representation decreased by 18 percentage points from 26% to 8%.

Culturally, Algeria is a patriarchal society, with deeply ingrained beliefs about the roles of men and women. These societal norms can be a significant barrier to women's political participation. Women often lack the political support or backing to advance in this male-dominated sphere, and voters may be less likely to vote for women due to ingrained biases. The role of government and political parties is significant. If they do not encourage, support or invest in female candidates enough, this hinders their chances of being nominated or elected.[14]

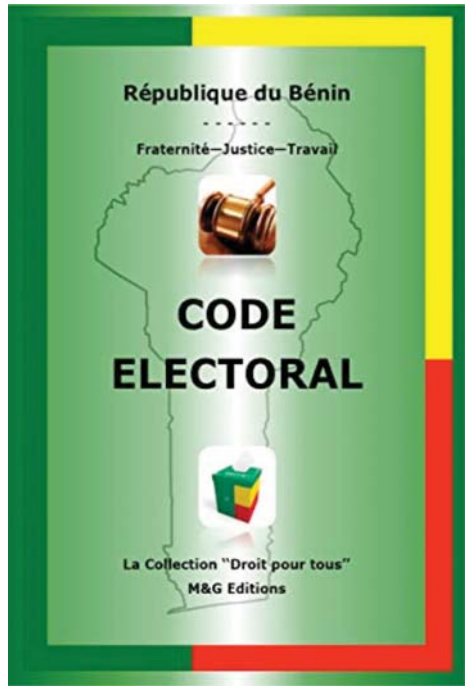
Reserved seats in a PR electoral system

Reserved seats in a PR system imply that a certain percentage of the seats are reserved for women only (as opposed to candidate quotas in which parties intersperse women candidates in their lists).



The **Benin** Constitution and Electoral Code (2019) introduced a reserved seat quota in the lower house that resulted in the largest increase in women's representation in Africa, from seven percent before to 28% in 2023, an increase of 21 percentage points.

The special measure in the electoral code stipulates that: "The number of Parliamentarians at the National Assembly is 109, including 24 seats **reserved** exclusively for women." The national territory is divided into 24 electoral constituencies.



Benin Constitution and Electoral Code.

[14] Fikra Forum, Women in Politics in Algeria: One Step Forward, Two Steps Back, https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/women-and-politics-algeria-one-step-forward-two-steps-back, accessed 24 March 2024

"Political parties wishing to take part in legislative elections shall present lists of candidates in all electoral constituencies. Each list shall have a number of candidates equal to the number of seats to be filled, including one woman and her substitute specially presented for the reserved seats". This means that 24 women (24%) and their alternates must be included on the electoral lists, in addition to the 85 seats to be filled by men and women.

While the progress is commendable only 29 of the 109 MP are women, just five more than the required 24. The low number of women winning openly contested seats points to ongoing challenges for women being selected and where they are placed on party lists. Women are still under-represented (4%) in decision-making at the communal and municipal elections held in 2020, where the quota does not apply.[15]

Quotas in the mixed electoral system

Eleven countries in Africa use the mixed electoral system along with some form of quota at the lower house and local government level. Quotas in mixed systems, as with all the electoral systems, yield varying results. While the mixed system presents the "best of both worlds" for women (FPTP and PR), whether there is a quota, the type, and how it is implemented directly impacts its effectiveness.

Table 2.6: Quotas in the mixed electoral system

QUOTA	EXAMPLE	PROS	CONS
No quota	DRC, Chad, Madagascar, Seychelles	Avoids the criticism of tokenism	Results in constant fluctuation in WPP
Voluntary Party	South Africa local	Party ownership and buy-in	Women do better in PR than FPTP seats although this is improving
Legislated Candidate Quota	Lesotho, Senegal	Ensures maximum advantage for women in PR seats	Does not deliver good overall results, if FPTP is 50% or more
Reserved seats	Zimbabwe, Lesotho local, Djibouti, Sudan	Guarantees the quota; does not infringe the rights of male candidates	Women who come in on PR may be seen as "token"

Source: Gender Links.

No quota in a mixed system

As with the other electoral systems, using a mixed system without a quota yields poor results for women. On average, women's representation in the mixed system with no quota is 17% at the national level (lower house) and 18% at the local level.

Voluntary party quotas



South Africa has a mixed system at the local level. There are no legislated quotas. However, the ANC has enforced its voluntary party quota at the local level. Illustrating the greater efficacy of voluntary quotas in the PR system, there is a

[15] UN Women, Local Government database, https://localgov.unwomen.org/country/BEN , accessed 18 March 2024

higher proportion of women in the PR than in the ward seats in South Africa. However, this gap is gradually closing, showing that as WPP is normalised, the playing field becomes more even for women in the ward seats. As in the case of national elections, the downside to voluntary quotas is that the extent of WPP is linked to the fate of the dominant party. In the 2021 local elections, the ANC lost ground at the local level, in the same way it lost ground in the national elections in 2024. As a result, women's representation in local government dipped from 41% to 37%.

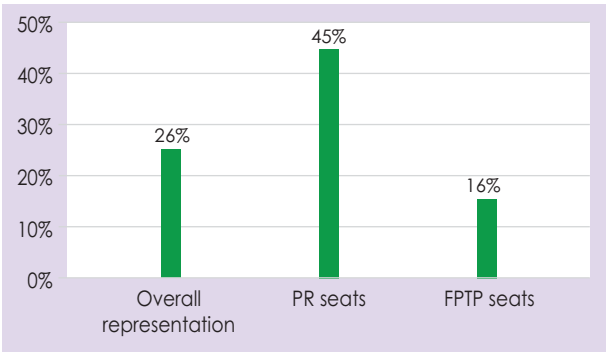
Legislated candidate quota in a mixed system

Legislated candidate quotas in a mixed system are quite effective for increasing WPP. The challenge is that legislated quotas are more easily applied to the PR than the FPTP seats.

Lesotho has 120 seats in the National Assembly - 80 constituency seats and 40 PR seats of which half of those on the lists should be women, using the 'zebra list' system.



Figure 2.13: WPP in Lesotho in lower house by electoral system



Source: Gender Links.

The legislated candidate quota is limited to only 40 PR seats (33%) of the 120-member National Assembly. Women won 18 of the 40 seats (45%). The reason is that most political parties give the first seat to men, who are generally the party leaders. Out of 61 parties, women led seven. Only one women-led party managed to get a seat in the 2022 elections. Constituency seats are open to both sexes, but remain unfavourable for women, who won just 13 of the 80 seats available.[16] This gives an overall representation of women in the lower house of 26%.

In contrast to Lesotho, **Senegal** has a quota system for both FPTP and PR seats. The West African country has a unicameral parliament, a mixed electoral system, and legislated quotas for the single/lower house and at the sub-national level. The "First Past the Post" system operates in single-member districts (in total 105 seats, 15 of which are for Diaspora) and "List PR" using largest remainder method in national list (60 seats).[17]



Electoral Law 92-16 of 1992, as amended by law 2012-01 of 2012, Article L.145, mandates parity in all candidate lists for the general elections. Candidate lists must be composed of alternating male and female candidates. This applies to both the FPTP and the PR seats. If the number of seats contested in a constituency is odd, the parity rule applies to the immediately lower odd number (e.g. in a multi-member constituency with 5 seats, a party must have at least 3 women in its list of 5 candidates). Candidate lists which do not comply with the provisions of Article L.145 (parity and gender alternation) will not be admitted.

[16] 'Nyane H and Rakolobe M, EISA, Women's representation in Lesotho's Legislative Bodies - A Politico-Legal Analysis of the Effectiveness of Electoral Gender Quotas, 2021 DOI: 10.20940/JAE/2021/v20i2a5
[17] International IDEA, Electoral system for national legislature - Senegal <https://www.idea.int/answer/ans130355735697995> accessed 11 March 2021

The 2012 amendment to the electoral law provides for alternation between female and male candidates on the electoral lists[18]. As a result of this law, the proportion of seats held by women in national parliament has increased significantly from 19.2% in 2001 to 43% in the 2017 elections, a level that has been sustained in subsequent elections. This marks a major step forward in the struggle for gender equality and the promotion of women's rights and makes Senegal a leader in women's political participation in Africa.[19]

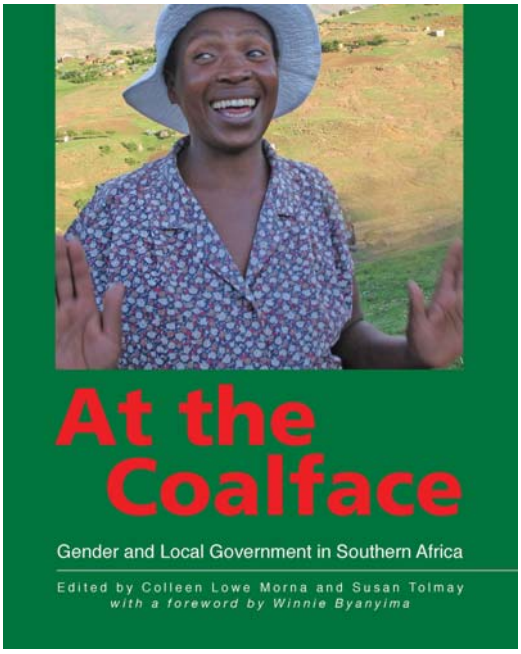
Reserved seats in a mixed system

Several countries with FPTP systems have turned to reserving seats for women on a PR basis as a way of circumventing the challenges of reserved seats in FPTP systems. In doing so they create a mixed or parallel system. Examples include Lesotho (local), Tanzania and Zimbabwe (national). This has the advantage of guaranteeing the 30%. However, as with any kind of "reserved" seats, this system creates two tiers of women MPS or councillors: the few who win constituency seats, and those who are put forward by their parties on PR seats. The latter are invariably viewed as inferior.



Lesotho uses a mixed electoral system at both levels, with a legislated candidate quota at the national level (see earlier section) and reserved seats for local government. This is an interesting example of how different quota systems, and how they are implemented, can yield different results, also underscoring some of the shortfalls of these systems.

At the **local level**, Lesotho has had a quota since 2005 when parliament amended Local Government Elections Act to provide for the 30% quota for women in local councils. The law provided that one-third of the seats in each council had to be reserved for women, meaning in some electoral divisions - those reserved for women - men would be completely debarred from standing for election. This method of implementing the 30% quota met with strong resistance, with opponents saying it violated the rights of men to stand for elections.



Matau Moreki. *Photo: Colleen Lowe Morna*

The High Court and the Court of Appeal rejected the legal challenge to the law as being unconstitutional. In the 2005 elections, women surpassed the 30% and attained 58% of positions: 30% through the quota and 28% through the constituency seats.

However, following pressure from political parties, parliament changed the law in the run-up to the 2011 local government elections to abolish reserved FPTP seats and instead have

[18] International IDEA, Gender quotas database <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/country-view/269/35> accessed 11 March 2021
[19] UN Women, Senegal <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/west-and-central-africa/senegal> accessed 11 March 2021

30% seats allocated on a PR basis to women only in proportion to the percentage vote garnered by each party. The electoral divisions - based on the first-past-the-post system - remained open to both sexes. In practice very few women win the constituency seats. In the last election women won only 191 out of 940 (20%) of the constituency seats in the "winner take all" system contested against women and men, and just 37 of the 152 (24%) elected chiefs were women. The majority of women (320) came in through the reserved PR seats, In total women constitute 548 of the 1412 councillors (39%).[20] This is a decline on the 58% in the 2005 elections. The figure is also below the parity target.



Zimbabwe uses reserved seats in a mixed system for both the lower house and local government with similar results, just over 30% at each level. As mentioned earlier Zimbabwe has a legislated candidate quota in a PR electoral system for the senate.

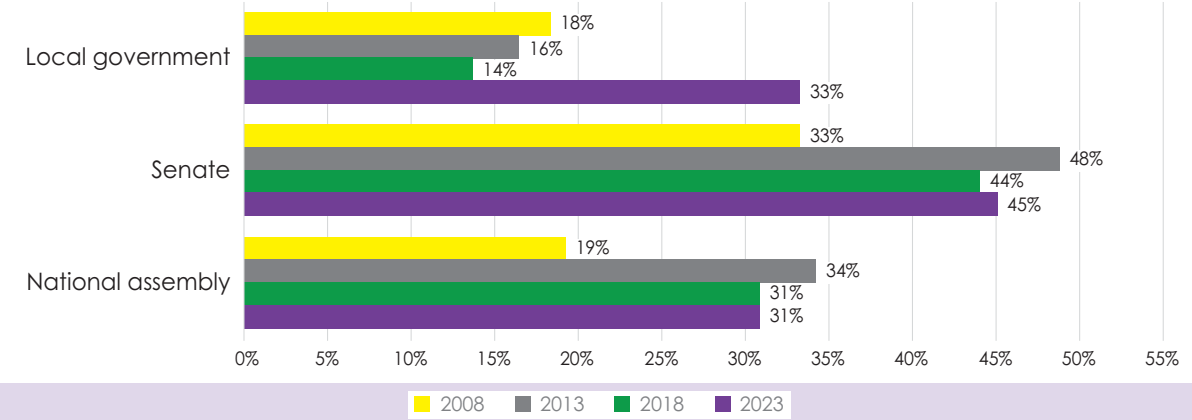
Table 2.7: Electoral systems and quotas in Zimbabwe

Level	Electoral systems & quota		FPTP seats	Total seats	Women reserved (PR)	Youth reserved		Total seats
						F	M	
Senate (upper)	PR	Leg candidate quota (Zebra list)		80				80 (45%)
National Assembly (lower)	Mixed	Reserved seats	210		60 (23%)	5	5	280
Local government	Mixed	Reserved seats	1969		602 (23%)	n/a	n/a	2571

Source: Gender Links.

In 2019 the Zimbabwe parliament introduced the Constitutional Amendment Bill No. 2 which extended the quota at the national level by two additional terms after 2023. Zimbabwe expanded this quota to the local level ahead of the 2023 elections, after a concerted campaign by the Women in Local Government Forum supported by Gender Links.

Figure 2.14: WPP in Zimbabwe 2008-2023



Source: Gender Links.

[20] WPP. Sources: Gender Links Lesotho 2022/23 Elections Report; EISA, Women's representation in Lesotho's legislative bodies – A Politico-Legal Analysis of the Effectiveness of Electoral Gender Quotas.

Figure 2.14 shows progress in WPP at the three levels of elected political office in Zimbabwe over the last four elections. The results illustrate quite starkly the effect of quotas, and their relationship to electoral systems.

At the **national level**, 210 of the 280 available seats are open to contestation by women and men through the FPTP system. A further 60 seats are reserved for women from a party list on a PR system based on the constituency votes gained in a province. The Constitutional Amendment added 10 seats for the youth quota (5 females; and 5 males) in parliament starting with the 2023 elections. The 65 reserved seats available to women make up 23% of the available seats.

The 2023 elections witnessed a slight decline in WPP in the national assembly from 34% to 31%. The Zimbabwe 2023 election witnessed a decline in the number of women contesting for seats at all levels of governance. Only 70 women (12%) contested the 210 national assembly seats under the (FPTP). Women only won 8% of the seats in the openly contested FPTP seats. The majority of women in the national assembly came in through the 23% reserved PR seats.

At the local government level, there are 2571 seats available, 1969 FPTP seats and 602 seats reserved for women only (23% of the available seats, the same proportion as the national level). At the local level, just 747 of 4951 candidates (15%) who contested the FPTP seats were women. It is therefore no surprise that women's representation remains low. In results very similar to those at the national level, only 8% women councillors came in through the FPTP, while the balance came in through the 23% PR seats reserved for women.

As illustrated in figure 2.14, this did constitute a considerable improvement on past local elections run purely on a FPTP system in which women's representation had been declining, from 16% in 2013 to 14% in 2018. At both national and local level the concern is how to ensure that more women get in through the FPTP elections.

Most women vying for the FPTP local government seats lost in the primary elections, thus raising questions about whether there was sufficient support for women to participate in the 2023 elections. Some of the challenges that women faced include, the lack of support from political parties, none or low participation of female voters in the primary elections, lack of finance for campaigning, and lack of information regarding the conduct of primary elections. As a result, most women lost to men.

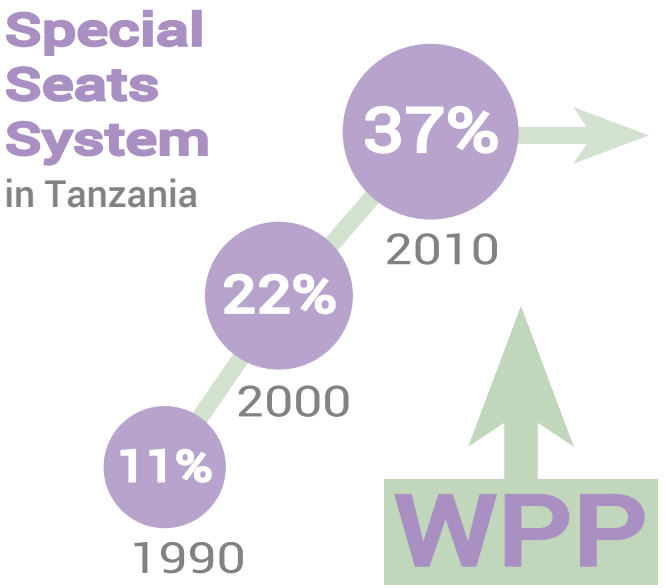
Despite Zimbabwe having a Political Parties Finance Act that provisions for political parties to receive financing, it is not clear how the funds are shared between women and men. The exclusion of women is evidence of the deep-rooted patriarchal nature of Zimbabwean society reinforcing stereotypes. This is also exacerbated by the economic disparities, and poverty among other factors that hinder women's participation in politics. The violent nature of politics in Zimbabwe is another deterrent for women.

Source: Gender in the 2023 Zimbabwe Local Government Elections Report

> “
>
> Most women and young women who wanted to join politics see no value in participating in politics. After seeing the experience I had, they are now coming to me saying that they do not think that they can survive in politics. Married women have said they do not think their spouses will allow them to participate in politics. It is going to take a lot of work to try and convince these women and young women to venture into politics.
>
> ***Beauty* (not her real name)***
> ***- 2023 prospective local government councillor***



Tanzania has a very similar system to Zimbabwe, both at national and local level. The elections are held on an FPTP basis, with seats reserved for women on a PR basis. The East African nation has made progress in increasing women's representation in both the lower house and local government since the Special Seats System (SSS) was introduced in 1995, increasing 11 percentage points from 11% in 1990 to 22% in 2000. Since 2010 WPP has hovered around 37%, with the majority of women coming in on the reserved seats rather than through the constituency seats.



The National Assembly consists of 350 members - 102 (30%) are reserved for women, while 239 are elected through single-member constituencies.[21] There are 147 women MPs of 393 available seats (37%), showing that only 45 women (19%) came in through the 239 openly elected constituency seats.

Political parties propose and submit names of eligible women candidates for nomination. Critics of the system raise concerns about how the SSS system is being implemented as no legal framework or guidelines have ever been provided since the system began. Opponents have criticised the system for questioning whose interests these women serve and who they are accountable to.[22] "Parties' internal special seats nomination and endorsement process has been accused of nepotism, favoritism and corruption.[23] This situation has created an environment where women in reserved seats are disadvantaged and undermined by the system and their political parties.

The consequences of the absence of clear procedures and guidelines for nomination and endorsement include some or all of the following:

Lack of constituency involvement and connection raises concerns about whose interests they serve - their political party or the constituency. There are no mechanisms for constituents to hold these MPs **accountable. Financial discrimination**, women SS MPs do not receive a Constituency Development Fund (CFD) allocation for development activities in constituencies. Because seats are nominated, critics argue that these are **not merit-based** and that unnecessary resources are being used for SS. **Territorialism** of Constituency MPs makes it difficult for women to engage in or undertake development activities in their wards for fear that they will use the opportunity to promote themselves in their constituencies. All of these factors hold women back from advancing from the special seats to the openly elected seats.

[21] International IDEA, Gender quotas database, https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas-database/country?country=221 , accessed 17 March 2024
[22] Makulilo, AB 2017, 'The independent candidate case by the African Court of Human and Peoples' Rights revisited', International Journal of Human Rights and Constitutional Studies, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp.130-143.
[23] Swai, IL, Anasel, M & Masue, O (2013). 'Achievements and challenges of women special seats arrangement in Tanzania', Journal of Policy and Leadership, Vol. 2, pp. 121-135

Another critical gap in the system is that there is no timeframe for the quota, which is purposed to be temporary to lay the foundation for women to gain experience, build a constituency, and compete for openly elected seats. The framework/guidelines should provide an evaluation process to determine if the SSS is achieving its original intention or should be replaced with other mechanisms.[24]

Swai, Anasel, and Masue note that the case of Tanzania, applicable in many other African contexts, points to key issues to consider when designing and adopting reserved seats for women:

- **Terminology** is important - the term 'special seats' immediately creates the impression of the difference between these and FPTP seats, which may contribute to misconceptions. Correct terminology 'temporary special measures' should be used appropriately.
- A **clear rationale** for the quota should be communicated to the electorate for them to understand its purpose.
- **Accountability** measures are essential and **geographic locations and constituencies** that women will serve should be clear.
- There should be a **term limit** to ensure that more women can access these seats.[25]

Conflict, post-conflict, and transitional governance

Several African states are either experiencing conflict or are post-conflict in a period of transition. While there are real opportunities to increase WPP, especially in peace and security processes, there are several other complex factors that influence the effectiveness of quotas in these situations.



Burkina Faso experienced two coups in 2022, and is currently under a Transitional Legislative Assembly (TLA). The West African country has a PR system. WPP in Burkina Faso more than tripled from 6% in 2020, to 17% in 2022 after the State adopted a quota of 30% in 2020 for women in legislative and municipal elections. The law stipulates that "each list of candidates presented for legislative or municipal elections must be alternated between men and women or between women and men."

Annick Laurence Koussobé, a women's rights activist and president of the board of FEMIN-IN, says "the introduction of this quota is a significant step but the cultural and social barriers still limit the participation of young girls in politics". She adds that the elections scheduled for the end of the transition period will provide an opportunity to evaluate the relevance of the quota system.

Meanwhile, members of civil society are lobbying for an effective application of the quota law. **Martine Yabré** is helping to strengthen the leadership of young women, so that they can participate in the governance of their country.



Martine Yabré. *Photo credit: CCOAGPGF*

[24] Ibid
[25] Ibid

Commenting on the quota law, she invites political leaders to publicise this better and work towards its effective application. She believes that "party lists for the elections should be rejected if they do not respect the 30% quota for women. This is the only way the law will be respected. And if the law is respected, women will have the opportunity to prove their ability to contribute to equitable governance of their country."[26]



Somalia presents an unusual case because of the complex political situation that the country has experienced over the last 20 years, following the collapse of the central government in 1991. In 2004, a transitional process began with the establishment of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), supported by the international community. Efforts were made to restore stability, establish a federal system, and expand political representation.

There are no direct elections; 135 traditional elders select the 275-member lower house[27] but the Garowe Principles (2012) provide for 30% reserved seats for women. Despite some progress over the last ten years, representation of women remains low, increasing just six percentage points from 14% in 2012 to 20% in 2021. In the last elections, only 54 (20%) women were selected, falling short of the 30%. This case underscores the importance of designing the electoral system in conjunction with the quota. This system is exclusionary because a small group (135) of traditional leaders select the members. Clan-based politics play a central role in voting systems where voting based on clan interests is encouraged, often to the disregard of women.[28]

The Somalia case, once again, illustrates that there are myriad other factors involved in increasing WPP, reinforcing the fact that having a special measure such as a quota is not sufficient to increase women's representation, but that the quality and workings of the institutions are equally important.[29]

Conclusions and recommendations

Electoral systems and quotas have a profound impact on WPP both in terms of getting more women elected as well as creating an enabling environment for them to operate in. However, these measures are only effective when implemented in line with the mandate provided for in either the national constitution or other legislation. Whether or not quotas are voluntary, political will is key.

The majority of African countries now have a quota of some kind, however, this research shows that merely having a quota does not result in increased WPP. A multitude of factors influence how effective quotas will be and require a holistic approach to address the persistent challenges women face when entering and participating in decision-making spaces.

While reserved seats are a sure way to increase WPP, they need to be coupled with policy framework and guidelines on how women will be nominated, who their constituency will be, what their function will be, and how they differ from and relate to the directly elected constituency MPS. Addressing some of the unintended negative consequences of reserving

[26] Case study by Isabelle OTCHOUMARE
[27] Inter Parliamentary Union, Parliamentary database, https://api.data.ipu.org/node/158/basic-information?chamber_id=13573 accessed 17 March 2024
[28] Badibanga B, Hamandishe, A and Tip, I. Why Gender Quotas Don't Work In Somalia? The Influence Of The Electoral System And Clan Politics, EISA, 2022
[29] Ibid

seats specifically for women is crucial to yield optimal results. Political will and prevailing cultural and social beliefs about WPP also need to be addressed through campaigns and awareness raising.

Quotas can inadvertently result in discrimination against women in special seats. It is crucial to ensure that women MPs that come through the reserved seats system have a well-defined constituency, with whom they can connect, and mechanisms to ensure they are held accountable. Any reserved seat system should ensure that women MPs are not financially discriminated against under the belief that they do not represent a constituency. Policies and processes that discriminate against women should be sanctioned.

Quotas/TSMs, by definition, are supposed to be temporary, to level the playing field and provide access for women in political decision-making, and to lay the foundation for women to gain experience to compete for elected constituency seats. Where TSMs have been in place for more than three or four electoral cycles an assessment should be undertaken to determine how effective the system is and to make amendments as necessary.

Constitutions and electoral systems in Africa are dynamic, with many being dated and due for updating. This offers the opportunity for states not using a quota to consider putting in place measures to improve WPP. There is ongoing debate about the efficacy of quotas and what system works best in each country's context, but there are many lessons to learn from across the continent.



Eswatini: Young women leaders want a better chance. *Photo: Thandokuhle Dlamini*

Recommendations

- Addressing the social and cultural barriers to WPP is as important as implementing TSMs. Accelerate education and awareness on the gender dimensions of electoral systems and TSM and their link to women's representation, especially among legislators; policymakers, and civil society advocates.
- States, where no TSM applies, that are undergoing Constitutional review or electoral reform should consider adopting a TSM that fits their context and will yield the best results.
- Political parties need to ensure that they not only substantively observe quotas, but create an enabling environment for women to overcome the entrenched and informal systems and structures that keep them out of decision-making.
- Constitutional and legislated TSMs should be accompanied by enforcement mechanisms including incentives and sanctions.
- Where governments have opted for a mixed system with seats reserved for women on a PR basis, there should also be a candidate quota in the FPTP seats in which women continue to perform dismally. While these candidate quotas do not guarantee that women will win, they begin to create a culture of challenging the notion that women are incapable of running for constituency seats. When such quotas are accompanied by vibrant civil society advocacy and support, they begin to break the myth that women can only win elections through reserved PR seats.

POLITICAL PARTIES

3



Women unite across the political parties during the WPP Academy in Palapye, Botswana, 2022.
Credit: Mboy Maswabi

KEY FACTS

- In the three years since the 2021 Barometer, women's representation in executive positions of main political parties across the African continent dropped by three percentage points, from 12% to 9%.
- Southern Africa is the only region in which women in executive positions in political parties increased, from 14% to 19%. The only other region with a double-digit score is East Africa, with 11%, a slight drop from 15%.
- The Horn of Africa, which in the last barometer scored highest at 17%, had a dramatic drop to zero percent, joining North Africa, which remained at no representation of women in the top three positions in the leading political parties. Other regions recording a drastic decline to zero percent are West Africa and Central, which had in the previous Barometer, scored 11% and 7% respectively.
- The 2024 Barometer covered all 54 countries, assessing 104 political parties - the ruling and main opposition, where available.
- Only three main parties have 50% or more representation of women in the top three positions of president, secretary general and deputy secretary general. Kenya's ruling United Democratic Alliance is unique in having 66% women in its top structures.
- Barriers to women's leadership of political parties include but are not limited to patriarchy, lack of financial muscle, unclear and at times no gender or affirmative action policies, sexual harassment and lack of support.
- Women in political party central committees are found mainly in the co-opted positions of additional members.

Political parties constitute the bedrock of constitutional democracies. This institution is essential for the functioning of modern representative democracy, inclusive participation and accountability. Generally, people get involved in public life through political parties and support candidates and parties that reflect their views and interests.

While the debate over whether political parties make democracy more democratic continues in many countries, what is not in dispute is that political parties are instrumental for advancement to national leadership. Political parties drive the recruitment, nomination and election of candidates for public office, socialisation of prospective political representatives and leaders, disseminating political information and exposing citizens to politics.

While in the main, auxiliary structures such as women and youth wings act in advisory roles, most of whose presidents sit in the higher party structure, central or national committees, real power lies in the executive positions, or the 'Top Five' - the president, secretary general, chairperson, treasurer and deputy secretary general.

At independence from colonial rule in the fifties and sixties, in the first wave of democratisation of the African continent, women were absent in government institutions, in parliaments, councils and other spheres of governance. The power base of political parties remained the domain of men.

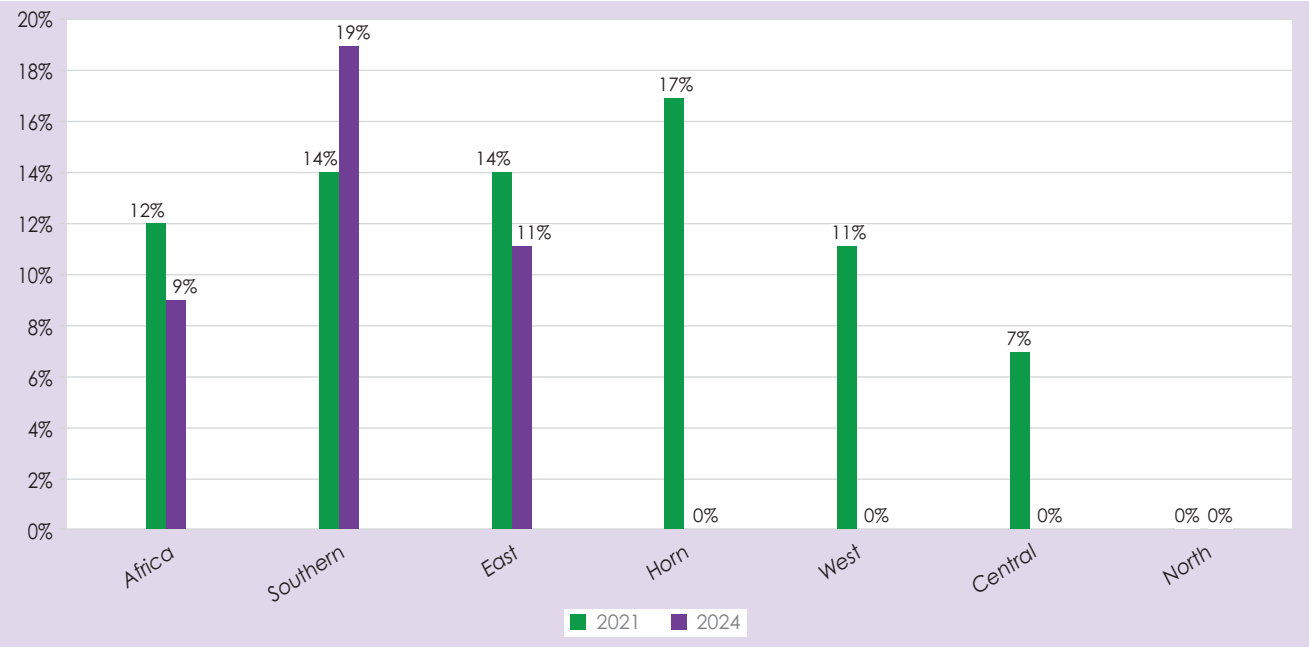
The second and third wave of democratisation that started in the nineties witnessed some changes, with constitutions and laws changing to ensure gender equality and parity in all spheres. Countries introduced gender quotas in compliance with international and regional instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Maputo Protocol and Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Gender protocol. Forty-one African countries have legislated gender quotas of some description, ranging from 20% to 50%; and Special Temporary measures such as Affirmative Action and reserved seats.

Governments, including from conflict-ridden blocs of the Horn of Africa and North Africa, continue to introduce legislated quotas. These, however, do not seem to cascade to political parties, the primary source of public office. Where political quotas exist, there is little or no pronouncement on the highest positions in the parties - president, vice president, chairperson, secretary general, deputy secretary general and treasurer. When women do get elected or appointed to fulfil the party constitutional obligations, they are found in the main in the Deputy Secretary General (DSG) or additional member positions.

Women in political party leadership

In the 2024 Barometer, we have again compiled information on political party leadership for the ruling party and main opposition from party websites and other news sources from December 2023 to May 2024 (see **Annex 7**).

Figure 3.1: Women in top three positions of political parties in Africa



Source: Political party websites.

Figure 3.1 shows a decline in women's leadership in political parties across the continent, from 12% to 9%. Southern Africa is the only region registering an increase (five percentage points, from 14% to 19%).

The most dramatic drop comes from the Horn of Africa region, from 17% to zero. Two other regions that dropped to zero in the 2024 review are West Africa and Central Africa, from 11 and seven percent, respectively. North Africa remains at zero percent. East Africa has gone down from 14% to 11%. The only region with upward movement is Southern Africa, moving five percentage points to 19%.

Barriers to women's participation in political parties

On paper, most political parties in Africa declare their intention to ensure women's participation and leadership in different structures. But these commitments are not reflected in party leadership structures. The presidency of political parties is overwhelmingly occupied by men. The only exception is Tanzania, where President Samia Suluhu Hassan is the leader of her political party, Chama Cha Mapinduzi.

As the bedrock of politics, political parties have the monopoly on real power. All the factors that inhibit WPP, formal and informal, come into sharp focus in this realm of decision-making. The internal jockeying for positions frequently excludes women. Parties do not perceive of women as credible faces for their parties. They lack the financial muscle to run successful campaigns. Party structures do little to support women and may even vilify them. Parties schedule meetings at times insensitive to the dual role that women play. They support quotas in parliament and local government, without walking this talk in their own structures.

Voluntary party gender quotas

Constitutional and legislated quotas are instrumental in ensuring participation of women in all spheres of governance, including the national assemblies and local government. An assessment of political party constitutions, policies and election manifestos revealed less commitment from the political parties.

Table 3.1: Voluntary party gender quotas in Africa

Country	Party	Acronym	Details, quota provisions
Algeria	National Liberation Front	FLN	In each province, two out of the first five names on a list must be women in each of the 48 provinces.
Angola	National Union for Total Independence	UNITA	ARTICLE 13.3.3 states that, Having verified other requirements in the lists of candidates for the organs and bodies of the party, a positive representation of the female gender must be observed up to 50% and a representation of youth of not less than 30%.
	Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola	MPLA	Article 109 (representation of gender) in the lists of candidates for the representative bodies of MPLA a gender composition of not less than 40% must be observed.
Benin	Republican Bloc	BR	Article 51 of the party statute stipulates that offices of the bodies of the party must be composed , as much as possible, of 30% women members.
Botswana	Botswana Congress Party	BCP	At formation in 1999, BCP introduced a 30% quota for women on electoral lists.
	Botswana National Front	BNF	In 1999, BNF introduced a 30% quota for women in electoral lists.
Burkina Faso	Alliance for Democracy and Federation	ADF	In 2002, ADF introduced a 25% quota for women in electoral lists.
	Congress for Democracy and Progress	CDP	In 2002, CDP introduced a 25% quota for women in electoral lists.
Cameroon	Social Democratic Front	SDF	SDF has adopted 25% quota for women.
Côte d'Ivoire	Ivorian Popular Front	FPI	Since 2001, FPI has a 30% quota for women at all levels of its structure, including electoral lists
Kenya	Democratic Party	DP	The DP has an Affirmative Action policy that reserves one third of all seats for women.
	Jubilee Party	JP	Article 28(2): In constituting party organs, no one gender shall comprise more than two thirds (2/3) of membership.
	Orange Democratic Movement	ODM	Article 12.0.1: All party structures shall implement an Affirmative Action program including provision of a quota of not less than one third women in all organs, appointments, committees and nomination lists to ensure effective participation.
Liberia	Congress for Democratic Change	CDC	In 2022, the national executive committee of the CDC, adopted a resolution requiring 40% political participation of women in all leadership structures.

Country	Party	Acronym	Details, quota provisions
Malawi	Malawi Congress Party	MCP	The MCP aims to allocate 33% of seats to women at all levels of the party structure. Additionally, in the party 2004 manifesto, MDC promised to ensure that at least 30% seats will go to women in all decision-making, policy and managerial positions in government.
	United Democratic Front	UDF	The UDF aims to have 25% of its parliamentary seats held by women.
Mali	Alliance for Democracy in Mali	ADEMA-PASJ	ADEMA-PASJ has a 30% quota for women.
Mauritius	Mauritian Militant Movement	MMM	Article 3(1) of the party constitution states; "The MMM, in view of its principles and its historic fight for equality, undertakes to achieve gender parity as soon as possible. As a transitional measure the MMM, will strive to achieve the threshold of one third of female representation. The party will gradually increase to 40% in 2020, and to 50% in 2025."
Mozambique	Front for the Liberation of Mozambique	FRELIMO	FRELIMO has used gender quotas since 1994. The party policy requires that 40% of candidates to the national assembly and local government should be women. There is also a commitment to balance distribution of men and women through the electoral lists.
	Mozambican National Resistance	RENAMO	Article 28(2) of party statutes states that in the process of electing members of the National Council, the principle of representation of provinces and gender is observed.
Namibia	South West Africa People's Organisation	SWAPO	SWAPO has a 50% quota with a zebra-system (alternation between men and women) for women on electoral lists for local elections.
Somalia	Qaransoor Party		Women shall be 35% in staff and functionaries of the party and the councils (Article 42(4) of party statute.
South Africa	African National Congress	ANC	In 2006, ANC adopted a 50% gender quota in local elections. The quota was extended to national elections of 2009. Article 6(1) reads: "The provision of quota of not less than fifty percent in all election structures"
Tanzania, United Republic of	Revolutionary Party (Chama cha Mapinduzi)	CCM	SECTION 204 of the 2010 CCM manifesto set out to attain 50% women representation in all elective bodies by 2015.
Uganda	National Resistance Movement	NRM	In election of leaders, Article 42.1 of the NRM constitution stipulates that, "40% of the positions shall be reserved for women except in cases where it is impractical to do so".
Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front	ZANU-PF	ZANU-PF is committed to ensure that at least one-third of all candidates are female. However this quota is not systematically applied.

Source: International IDEA Gender Quota database.[1]

[1] https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas-database/voluntary-overview. (2024). International IDEA

Table 3.1 shows that only 26 (less than one third) of 104 of main political parties in Africa have adopted special measures to ensure women's representation in leadership. The table shows that most political parties are not aligned to national commitments, a factor that can be attributed to continued low representation of women leaders at both party and national level.

Women in political party leadership in Southern Africa

There is, however, some correlation between party leadership representation and voluntary quotas. Southern Africa takes the lead on voluntary quotas. The region also leads in representation of women in leadership of political parties at 17%. However, this is well below the gender parity target.



As one of the newer and most participatory democracies in Africa, **South Africa** makes a good case study for women's rise to the top. In keeping with the pattern in many post conflict countries, South Africa follows the PR electoral system at the national level. Thanks largely to the African National Congress' (ANC) fifty percent voluntary party quota the country has a relatively high representation of women in all spheres of governance.

However, the ANC has never had a woman leader and only has a 30% woman presence in its top tiers. In the 2024 elections, only one party, Patricia de Lille's GOOD party, had a woman leader. The party won one seat, occupied by its leader. Patricia de Lille, a veteran politician with liberation movement credentials, first came to Parliament in 1994, under the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania ticket. Before forming GOOD in 2017, De Lille led a party called the Independent Democrats, and served as the Mayor of Cape Town. In the 2019 elections, GOOD only managed to send two representatives to the 400-member legislature.

In South Africa's Sixth Parliament, one other woman-led party, the National Freedom Party also had a seat. Sadly the party leader and legislator, Zanele KaMagwaza-Msibi passed away in 2021.

The 2019 ballot also featured Women Forward, which first appeared on the 2009 ballot. Nana Ngobese, a long time gender advocate and granddaughter of Chief Albert Luthuli, one of the founders and former president of the ruling African National Congress (ANC), founded the feminist party that stood out for its strong stand in the fight against Gender Based Violence. In the days leading up to the 2019 elections, Ngobese was widely quoted in the media saying "I actually think rapists should be executed, but castration is the second best. Rape is the worst of all crimes and at the moment the law's response is pitiful." The party failed to make it to either the National Assembly or the Provincial legislatures.

AGANG SA, founded in 2013 by liberation movement veteran Dr Mamphele Ramphele, also featured on the 2019 ballot. In the 2014 elections, the party got only two seats in the National Assembly. Five years later, AGANG SA, emerged worse off, with no seat, now under the new male leader, Andries Tloumma.

The only time South Africa came close to having an elected female president was in 2014, when under the leadership of Hellen Zille, the main opposition, Democratic Alliance (DA), got 22.23% vote to the ANC's 62.25%. Zille, opted not to go to the National Assembly, but continued as Western Cape Premier, the post she held from 2009 to 2019. Two men have since led the DA. These examples go to show that even in one of Africa's most progressive democracies, women's leadership of political parties remains rare.



Rare faces of women on South African political party posters.
Photo: Colleen Lowe Morna

Zimbabwe went to the 2023 elections with one woman out of 11 presidential candidates. Initially two women raised their hand, but the electoral process pushed one out of the race. **Elizabeth Valerio**, president of United Zimbabwe Alliance (UZA), put forward her candidature. A businesswoman Valerio had to fight to gain entry into the race. When the Nomination Court barred her from participation for late submission, she took the legal route, and the Electoral Court granted her permission to contest.[2]


Elizabeth Valerio.
Credit: unitedzimbabwe.org

"This win means so much to me personally, but it is also a win for women. It reaffirms my belief in the power of perseverance and the importance of standing for what is right," Valerio said stepping out of court. Valerio launched UZA in 2022, "to bring all Zimbabweans together" to build the country and its communities.

According to the UZA website,[3] Valerio is no stranger to politics. The party states that her late mother "was the first women in history to challenge the power of an African president." An American-educated biochemist, Valerio is an environmentalist, known for promoting tourism in Zimbabwe. She has devoted time and resources to science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) programmes, intended to improve access to quality education. The party website states that Valerio founded the Entrepreneurial Initiative for Sustainability in Africa (ELISA), and is a frequent speaker at entrepreneur and career focused programs.[4]

Valerio was not the only women presidential hopeful. Her counterpart, Linda Masarira, the leader of the Labour, Economics and African Democrat (LEAD), also took her exclusion from the presidential contest to court but lost. Masarira, a former spokesperson of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC-T), is a human rights defender, known for advocating for gender equality, women and children's rights, inclusion and economic and political freedom of the marginalised.[5]

2 Victory for Zimbabwe's only female candidate in the presidential race (timeslive.co.za)
3 unitedzimbwe.org
4 https://unitedzimbabwe.org/elisabeth-valerio
5 en.m.wikipedia.org

Women in political party leadership in Central Africa

As mentioned earlier, WPP in party leadership dropped from 7% in the first WPP Africa Barometer to zero percent now. Examples from Republic of the Congo and Cameroon illustrate why this is the case.



Despite rhetoric to the contrary, women's political participation remains low in the **Republic of the Congo**. Article 17 of the Constitution states that "a woman has the same rights as a man, the law guarantees parity and ensures the promotion, as well as the representation of a woman in all political, elective and administrative positions".

The constitutional pronouncements, however, do not seem to have impacted on the political parties. Women are still underrepresented in the political bodies in Congo Brazzaville. There are, however, exceptions.

Before and after independence in the Congo Republic, men in power made some room for women. Before independence, in the Congo, women had an often significant place in politics. For example, men surrounded the late Queen Ngalifourou in the Téké kingdom. The early anti-colonial political movements always had women's associations within the parties, supervised by the political leaders. In the 1960's, men encouraged literate women to create associations like the Movement for the Emancipation of African Women, the Democratic Movement of Women of Congo, and the Revolutionary Movement of Women of Congo.

Today, the Organisation of Women of Congo (OFC) and other non-governmental organisations and women's political associations exist within political parties, notably the Pan African Movement for Social Democracy and the Congolese Movement for Democracy and Integral Development. Women lead these wings in political parties - created by men.

Pierre François De Paul Kibongui Saminou, managing director of the national centre of radio and television in Brazzaville, whose mother, Jacqueline Mpolo, now 82, was actively involved in politics with the support of her family, says:

"I've always admired my mother's courage when she joined the Revolutionary Movement of Women of Congo (URFC) in Mossaka, back in 1964. I'm very proud of her, especially as she encountered many difficulties during the meetings she had to run in Mossaka, which is a landlocked and flooded area, as well as in all of the surrounding localities. I remember that my brothers and I used to accompany her in makeshift pirogues to meet potential voters and pass on political messages. She persisted, despite the fact that men did not like seeing her getting involved in politics. For them, it was a field reserved for men."

Julia Tseke, a young woman in her twenties, has not forgotten how her mother, **Félicité Tseke**, was an influential member of the Congolese Movement for Democracy and Integral Development (MCDDI), an opposition party in Madibou in the eight district of Brazzaville.



The late Félicité Tseke. *Credit: NathalieFoundou*

"When my mother started to attend political meetings, I was really scared that something bad would happen to her because politics is a dangerous world. I remember one day, after a meeting where things had gotten out of hand, my mother came home with a nasty wound in her hand. I was so scared that I asked her not to participate in political gatherings again. But

she kept going. As much as my elder brothers Biko and Yves encouraged her, when she was wounded, they forbade her to go to the meetings, but she ignored them." Julia Tseke recalls that in 2021, the political party which her mother was active in, was about to nominate her as a deputy candidate in her district for the 2022 parliamentary elections. Unfortunately, she died before as a result of an intestinal obstruction. Could her political opponents have had something to do with it?" Julia Tseke doesn't answer, but bursts into tears.

In spite of the socio-cultural burdens, the prejudices and the paralysing fear of entering active politics because of the violence inherent in this sphere, some women in the Republic of Congo are asserting themselves politically. Two women created their own political parties. Claudine Munari, is president of MUST and **Destinée Hermellia Doukanga**, president of the Patriotic Party, which has since been disbanded. Doukanga, who works as a pilot, served as Minister, parliamentarian and president of the Patriotic Front that she had founded in 2015. Now she is with the Congolese Party of Labour.



Congo Republic, Destinée Hermellia Doukanga. *Credit: NathalieFoundou*

Doukanga claims that she would not have ventured into politics without the support of male colleagues in the party. "It is with the support of Pierre Ngolo, who was at the time secretary general of the Congo Labour Party, of the comrades Pierre Moussa, Jean Marc Tchistere Tchicaya and the now president Denis Sassou Nguesso, that we women, have been able to emerge from anonymity and become politically involved.

The head of State is one of those men who encourage the emergence of women. I made a point of mentioning their names because silent recognition serves no purpose. All these men have supported me and continue to support me in my political endeavours. I have not had much support from my family, but I have been accompanied by friends."

Some of them, she adds, helped her but with the aim of deriving a profit from it, "and I even paid a high price for it because the friends I propelled into politics, and even helped at a certain level, sided with my opponents. What can I say? It's all part of the political apprenticeship. These are the lessons I've learned and I've come out of it all the stronger."[6]



The Electoral Commission of **Cameroon** (ELECAM) has set a one-third female representation quota as the minimum threshold for gender mainstreaming. But Cameroon has no legislated quotas for WPP in political parties. While there are more women getting involved in politics, the decision-making positions inside political parties continue to elude them, despite lobbying by numerous civil society organisations. This has forced some women to create their own political parties.

With a reputation for being hard working and meticulous, Hermine Patricia Tomaino Ndam Njoya is president of the Democratic Movement of Cameroon (UDC). Being a woman president of a political party in Cameroon is no easy task. "I have to deploy myself several times in places where a man wouldn't be asked to do so much," she says. This explains why the gender parity rule has been introduced: "At UDC, parity is effective. It is a culture embedded in our practices and statutes. Our grassroots structures are mixed: independently, you can be president or chairwoman. There are no party bodies for men and women," says Ndam Njoya who is also mayor of the town of Foumban in western Cameroon.

[6] Report by : Christine Nathalie FOUNDOU



Launch of the 16 days of activism against gender violence campaign by UN Women, the 26th November 2023 in Yaoundé. *Credit: Cameroon Tribune*

The Cameroon Party for National Reconciliation (PCRN) has also made the advancement of women a priority in the party and in politics in general. "The party's structure places particular emphasis on the development of women. For example, we have a vice-president in charge of gender and minorities", states Rolande Ngo Issi Mbock, who describes herself as a 'cabraliste' political entrepreneur (named after the party's president, Cabral Libii). According to her, women's representation in the party structures is 40%, over the 30% generally recommended as a critical mass.

The ruling party, the Democratic Rally of the Cameroonian People (RDPC), of President Paul Biya, has made efforts to integrate more women into its structures. According to Andry Stiven Rostand Ngbwa, secretary general of the Youth Movement of RDPC (OJRDPC) there is gender parity in this structure, but he admits that women members are not in decision-making.

Thérèse Assomo, deputy secretary of the Sangmélima commune in Cameroon's Southern region, and an influential member of the Movement for the Renaissance of Cameroon (MRC), explains "where men predominate, women are always intimidated". She is trying to change this attitude and mindset in the party by working with women, particularly the Bayam Sellam (women who sell food in urban markets) of this locality. It's an arduous task, "given that I'm in Mvomeka, my parents' region and the birthplace of President Paul Biya, and that I am in the opposition. As a result, even if women are interested in politics, they're afraid to get involved openly."

Paul Oyono, a party colleague, agrees. "There are numerous women who are encouraging us but they do not want to go public because if it becomes common knowledge that they are supporting us, they might get problems in their households or in their workplace." In order not to get retaliation or to be judged, women prefer to remain low profile and outside politics.

Not only must women assert themselves in a male-dominated world, but measures must be taken to punish misconduct or discrimination against them because of their gender. "We must always be on the alert to prevent women from continuing to be 'infantilised', to prevent men from putting obstacles in their way or harassing them. We make sure of this, and any case reported in this way is punished", says Hermine Patricia Tomaino Ndam Njoya.[7]



Chad, a landlocked country in Central Africa, is facing major political, social and security challenges against a backdrop of political transition, which began in April 2021. At the heart of these political challenges is the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5, which aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

[7] Report by: Nadine Guepi

Representation of women in political parties is poor in Chad despite government's signature and ratification of conventions and treaties. Strong stereotypes still prevent the full participation of women in politics. Out of over 150 political parties in Chad, fewer than five are presided over by women. Parties led by women include the Party for Integral Democracy and Independence, led by Beassemda Lydie, founded in 1999, the Action for the Republic, Development and Democracy of Naimbaye Alixe, and the Citizen Party of Chad of Damnodji Irene. Women in politics are often perceived as adventuresses or explorers by the Chadian society.

There is underrepresentation of women in the political bureau of the most important political parties of the country. “We, women, are underrepresented in the structures of our parties", says Mbaiadéné Providence, activist of the opposition. Beassemda Lydie, president of PDI, agrees. “The place of women in our parties is still very marginal, it is an accessory. She's mostly there cheering or to make up the numbers. And even if a woman, as competent as a man or even more so, occupies an important position in a party, she is not viewed as capable but they say she got the job out of favour".

This assertion is however disputed by the Patriotic Salvation Movement, the party that led Chad from 1990 to 2021. Amsadené Hangatti, secretary general and third deputy responsible for mass organisations, considers that “today, the facts are very clear: women are taking power alongside men. And in our party, women are at the forefront."

Despite these mixed views, it's undeniable that women's place in the Chadian political arena remains incidental. "Our patriarchal socio-cultural context is such that women politicians bloom very little in politics," argues Mbairamadji Romain. Some observers acknowledge the timid advances made but stress the need for a policy of action rather than mere rhetoric.

Numerous political actors have noted a lack of mobilisation around the gender issue within political parties. They argue that it is imperative to pool together and stimulate political mobilisation. "As women, we must unite our efforts to actively promote our cause", pleads Fatimé Boukar Kossei, Minister of National Solidarity.

It is also necessary to "introduce quotas or parity in party statutes". In addition, "political players need to organise political training courses specifically adapted to women. This is how we can promote female leadership", says Dr Masra Succès, President of the Transformateurs party. He adds that "in the digital age, we need to put information technologies, especially social media, at the service of women. This means using these tools to spread positive messages about women's participation in politics and generate interest. We also need to create mentoring platforms where experienced female politicians can offer advice and guidance to women newcomers, thus fostering the development of female leadership."

For Beassemda Lydie, the train is on the "right track". Now we need to "get it moving". "With a strong will, we will make our political parties examples of female politics. I encourage all my sisters to carve out a place for themselves. We don't have to wait for others to do it. Our position must be conquered, not conceded!"[8]

[8] Report by: Adelph Mbaindang-roa Djekornonde

Women in political party leadership in North Africa

North Africa remains behind in women's political participation and leadership, despite legislated gender quotas that came about post the "Arab Spring". The region, still under Islamic systems of governance, has zero representation of women in political party structures. Patriarchy, culture, religion and limited financial independence seem to be the root cause of the absence of women in leadership.

Women in the Arab societies have lived under patriarchal systems, having limited or no access to opportunities such as formal employment, education, and political participation.[9] The uprisings, which started in 2010, in the North African states, referred to as 'The Arab Spring' were viewed the world over as the necessary wave of change, with oppressive regimes falling to open space for democracy.

The Arab Spring revolution had a profound effect on WPP. Although women did not immediately take up high positions in the transitional governments, they found their voices, enjoying political freedoms, as many took part in platforms of free expression such as demonstrations and organised opposition.[10]

However, hope for greater and more prominent participation of women in different spheres of socioeconomic life is diminishing. Women in North Africa face profound challenges. Ongoing conflict, destabilising the region, has left women worse off, faced with among other things; gender-based violence, exclusion in economic activity, religious, cultural and family restrictions, and political participation.[11]



Morocco is a multi-system party since gaining independence from France in 1956. The two main political parties are the National Rally of Independents (RNI) and Authenticity and Modernity Party (Parti Authenticité et Modernité, PAM,) lead by Aziz Akhannouch and Fouad Ali El Himma respectively. Traditional gender roles and societal expectations have a profound bearing on WPP. Party leadership is still the domain of men. Morocco has legislated gender quotas; 30 seats reserved at national and local level for women.[12] While political parties originally fielded only men in constituencies reserved for youth, they have since opened for women. Since women were in the past not active in political party structures, the introduction of gender quotas and reserved seats led to an unprecedented demand for women candidates. Political parties became proactive in recruiting and investing in women in order to fill the candidate lists.[13]



In **Tunisia**, the two main political parties are the Ennahda Movement and Heart of Tunisia. Neither of these have voluntary party quotas. Men lead the two parties in all key positions. In 2021, Tunisia appointed its first female prime minister, Najla Bouden-a first for the Arab region. However, a new electoral law that eliminates the principle of gender parity, resulted in WPP in the lower house dropping from 27% to 16%.

"This is the first time in Tunisian history that women get excluded in this way," said Sana Ghenima, head of Femmes et Leadership, a non-profit group that promotes women's political participation.In fact, a new law, Decree No. 55, passed in September 2022 further reverses the gains in women's political participation. (Aljazeera, 2022) The law requires that a candidate should secure 400 signatures from registered voters in their constituency in order

9 Zuhur, S. (2003). Women in the Arab world.
10 Karman, T. (2016). women and the Arab spring. United Nations.
11 Abdallah, A. (2017). What's holding Arab women back from achieving equality? Reuters.
12 Benbelli, S. (2023). https://www.researchgate.net/publWomen's experiences of representation and marginalization in Morocco: taking stock and outlining future trajectories.
13 Raba Sobhini, D. (2021). Gender quotas and women's political representation: lessons from Morocco. Georgetown Institute for women, peace and security.

to contest. The new law, according to the Tunisia director of Human Rights Watch, Salsabil Chellali, goes against the constitutional provisions: "The new law strips gender parity provisions from the previous electoral law that strove to ensure equal representation between men and women in Tunisia elected assemblies."



Following the assassination of **Libya**n leader Mu'ammar al Qaddafi across board, there are legislated gender quotas, as well as attempts for inclusivity in different spheres of governance. These remain, however, in the control of political parties, that continue to exclude women who operate in private spaces, the home, away from public activities. The political space in a patriarchal system is still closed to women's involvement. Political change is in its infancy. It may take a while to bring women to leadership, let alone into the executives of political formations.

Women in political party leadership in West Africa



WPP in Africa remains low, and this extends to political parties. A study by the National Democratic Institute on Violence Against Women in Political Parties (VCF-P) shows that in **Cote d'Ivoire** violence against women, in the form of abuse, verbal aggression, psychological attacks, harassment, threats and pressure, is prevalent across the political divide.[14]



In the March 2024 elections in **Senegal**, 93 candidates showed presidential interest. Six were women, according to an ACCORD report. The constitutional council, however, approved only 20, of whom two were women. But Rose Wardini pulled out when her nationality was questioned, leaving Anta Babacar Ngom to test the waters. She did not win, but voters hailed her candidacy as progressive in a country that had never fielded a woman in the presidential race.[15]

Women in political party leadership in the Horn of Africa

In 2023, media reported that more than 22 million people from countries such as Ethiopia, Djibouti, Eritrea and Somalia face severe hunger due to prolonged drought in the region. This, compounded by political strife and wars, has contributed to decline in political participation, and electoral processes remain in limbo.[16] Challenges in accessing political party websites, made it difficult to ascertain the level of women's political participation, let alone leadership.

Selection of women candidates



As noted in earlier chapters, political parties hold the key to the selection of women candidates, whether in PR or FPTP systems (or indeed in mixed systems). In 2002, the Carter Centre reported that several respondents in their survey in **Kenya** complained about the relative exclusion of women aspirants from the candidate nomination process. Only 44 women out of 1,305 candidates contested the 210 seats.[17]

[14] Abdallah, A. (2017). What's holding Arab women back from achieving equality? Reuters.
[15] Babington, K. (2024). Women's Participation in 2024's Electoral Politics in Africa. AACORD.
[16] R, K.-N. (2021). Kandawasvika-Nhundu R, International IDEA, Role of political parties on women's participations and representation". Published 2021. Accessed: December 2024. International IDEA https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas-database/voluntary-overview. (2024). International IDEA.
[17] Ohman, M. and C. Lintari. 2016. Political party financing and equal participation of women in Kenyan electoral politics: a situation overview. Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy. The Hague.

In an opinion piece shared in the 2022 International IDEA report, headlined *"Breaking the bias in candidate selection in African political parties,"* the author Samson Itodo, argues that the secretive nature of selection of political party candidates to the election lists disadvantages women. The article, originally published in the *Premium Times* on March 10, 2022[18], says for fairness, a more transparent system of nomination is required.

"To lessen gender disparities in party politics, parties are encouraged to uphold transparency and accountability in candidate selection. The credibility of a party's candidate selection process impacts the level of electoral success a party achieves. Clear guidelines and regulations on party management, selection processes, and safeguarding gender inclusivity are integral to breaking the bias against women in politics," the author said.

Women's Wings

Women's wings constitute an important auxiliary structure of political parties. Traditionally, women's wings in political parties were concerned with promotion and advancement of women in the structures, as well as advancing social issues such as women's health and education. The structure had little or no power to influence policy and leadership within the political party. Most tended to play on the sidelines.

A research paper on "Political Parties and Women's participation in West Africa", by Adebajo Adeola Aderayo,[19] notes that out of the 104 ruling and main opposition parties in Africa, only 34 have women's wings that play a significant role, not restricted to social activities such as organising, singing and cooking for male party leaders.

Generally, women's wings in Africa have served as the "hospitality" arms of parties. However, the liberation struggles in the continent saw a new face and structure of women's groupings emerging. Women fought alongside men on the battle fields, and slowly gained more power. These became more evident in "new" democracies such South Africa and Namibia, where women's wings of ruling parties, the African National Congress (ANC) and the South West African Peoples' Organisation (SWAPO) played significant roles in pushing the gender agenda to even influence the national programme for gender equality.



In **Namibia**, women in SWAPO founded the SWAPO Women's Council (SWC) in 1969. SWAPO inaugurated this as a wing to support the liberation struggle in 1976. During the liberation struggle, the SWC did much more than run social programmes in the refugee camps, such as kindergartens and clinics. SWAPO women actively engaged in combat.

Post-independence in 1990, the SWAPO women took up positions in government, parliament and other spheres of governance. But, as with many "new "democracies, the role of the wings got swallowed in the national agenda. SWAPO women seemed to loosen the grip of power internally. Recently women in the Council started pushing the gender agenda, to change the face of representation. The Women's Council became instrumental in pushing for the 50% gender quotas within the party and into the constitution. In the recent national congress,[20] the women's wing declared its commitment to pushing

[18] R, K.-N. (2021). Kandawasvika-Nhundu R, International IDEA, Role of political parties on women's participations and representation". Published 2021. Accessed: December 2024. International IDEA.
[19] https://periodicos.ufba.br/index.php/feminismos/article/download/47653/25974/187630. (page 309)
[20] https://www.nbcnews.na/news/swapo-party-womens-council-take-charge-economic-empowerment-women.1947

programmes for the economic empowerment of women - a new frontier in the work of women's wings in the continent.



The Zuma presidency raised troubling concerns for women's rights.
Photo: Colleen Lowe Morna



In neighbouring **South Africa**, the once strong and vibrant **African National Congress Women's League (ANCWL)** is but living to its past glory of a powerful flag bearer of women's rights. During the heated campaign towards the ANC elective congress in December 2022, the current First Deputy Secretary general of the ruling party, Nomvula Monkonyane, was quoted by local television station, eNCA[21] saying the weak and fragmented women's league has worsened the entrenched patriarchy in the party. She decried the fact that the ANCWL had become a thorn in the flesh of women contesting leadership positions in the main party.

Founded in 1948 to advance the agenda of women in the exiled ANC, the women's league vacillated in the decades leading to the unbanning of the liberation movements in South Africa in 1990. In the run up to South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, the ANCWL played an important role in the constitutional and legal reforms on gender.

But the League has since come under heavy criticism, particularly for its support of former President Jacob Zuma who was acquitted of raping a young woman in a case that raised huge concerns about the polygamist president's commitments to women's rights. In a paper written for the South African History Online,[22] Meghan Knapp traces the many stages of internal and external struggles the League underwent, and the role it played in pushing gender equality in the different spheres of governance.

The current leadership of the league is reportedly weak. Once active and influential structures nationwide are non-existent. In 2022, a report by a party commission led by cabinet minister Thandi Modise, recommended that the ANCWL disband.[23] Although the ANCWL is still in existence, its reputation is seriously in need of a facelift.

Funding and support for women candidates

A 2018 paper by International IDEA analysing funding for women in political parties[24] notes that financial obstacles deter WPP. Women often lack the necessary resources to contest elections interparty and in the general elections. Lack of support, financial and in kind, is a major hindrance for women contesting for political office. In developed democracies, such as in Japan and Canada, political parties, and governments, have introduced subsidies and waivers for nomination fees for women to level the playing field. Such subventions are still rare in Africa.

21 Patriarchy highly entrenched in the ANC - Nomvula Mokonyane - eNCA
22 The ANC Women's League in the Struggle for Women's Rights in South Africa by Meghan Knapp | South African History Online (sahistory.org.za)
23 Thandi Modise punts dissolution of ANC women's league but NWC refuses - The Mail & Guardian (mg.co.za)
24 gender-targeted-public-funding-for-political-parties.pdf (idea.int)

The 2021 study by Democracy in Africa, titled *"Funding demands and gender in political recruitment: what parties do in Cabo Verde and Ghana"*,[25] noted that parties in both countries recognised that funding was a source of inequality. While the electoral systems and level of financial burden on candidates differ, there was a general appreciation, that women are the most disadvantaged in running for office - at primaries and general elections - thus need their parties' support.



As early as 2015, two political parties in **Ghana** introduced a 50% subsidy for women contesting the primaries. One of the parties adopting this model was the ruling National Democratic Congress (NDC), who have since reported a higher number of women candidates. A multi-party meeting in 2021 put forward a proposal to the government to introduce 10% subsidies to political parties to support women candidates in the general elections.



The electoral system in the smaller nation of **Cabo Verde**, of Proportional Representation, is much friendlier for women than Ghana's First Past the Post. But political parties were failing to get more women in the candidate lists, because contesting for the list internally is still financially draining. Government subsidy is not enough for smaller parties and impacts on chances of more women making it to become candidates.



A situational analysis by the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy on political party financing and equal participation of women in **Kenya**n electoral politics,[26] noted that political party finance has impact on the equal or lack thereof, participation in politics. The 2016 study recognises that financial resources and support is essential for success in political party participation and success in the elections, but women are disadvantaged. Candidates receive little or no support from political parties, despite the pledges.

> "Leadership is not for the poor."
>
> *- respondent in study on political party funding in Kenya*

The former ruling party, the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) had in 2007, promised to support women candidates by accompanying and campaigning for them, but little came of this. The study quotes Moira Chemkok, saying that in the 2013 elections, her party, ODM, gave her less money than her male counterpart. In the absence of political party funding, political parties in Kenya, however, are reported to mitigate heavy personal financial burden by waiving nomination fees.



In **Botswana**, the third largest political party, the Botswana Congress Party, has since introducing the 30% gender quotas for all levels of leadership, introduced incentives for women's participation in national elections, by subsidising the primary election fees.



Botswana Voter Registration - Sepopa 2024 - Maun Central, Botswana.
Credit: Oarabile Malapela

[25] (Vibeke Wang, Ragnhild Muriaas & Gretchen Bauer) What can African parties do to address gendered funding inequalities? | Democracy in Africa
[26] political-party-financing-and-equal-participation-of-women-in-kenyan-electoral-politics.pdf (idea.int)

Conclusions and recommendations

A drop in representation of women in political party leadership, from 12% to nine percent in just three years is a major cause of concern. Even more concerning is the fact that only two regions, Southern Africa and East Africa, have recorded any representation of women in party executive positions, albeit still low, at 19% and 11% respectively. In all other regions WPP stands at zero per cent.

Political parties play a crucial role in nurturing leadership, and the low numbers of women leaders in political parties could mean the national assemblies and all other structures of governance continue to be led by men. While there are no statistics on women's membership of parties, anecdotal evidence suggests that women constitute as many if not more of party members.

An assessment of political party statutes, policies and election manifestos, shows that where parties have voluntary quotas in elective structures and electoral nomination lists, these are vague and often ignored. The highest level most women get in leadership is the position of deputy secretary general. Most women in decision-making in political party structures find themselves in additional member or co-opted positions. Key recommendations include:

Observing country constitutional and legislative provisions

- Political parties across the continent should develop and implement actionable and voluntary quotas, affirmative action and other special temporary measures to drive the process of gender equality, in all structures and at all levels of decision-making.
- Where the constitution and electoral law provides for gender quotas, political parties should operationalise these in party constitutions and apply them to all party structures.

Electoral/legislative reform

- In FPTP electoral systems, the law should require that parties field equal numbers of women candidates in FPTP seats and distribute women and men in a "zebra" style in the PR lists.
- Ensure affirmative action is applied at both the national and local government level and is stipulated within electoral laws.

Promoting gender aware policies, norms and standards

- Political party Constitutions and manifestos should specifically include provisions to advance women's political participation e.g. quotas on nominations of women candidates and leadership within political parties
- Political parties should have clear guidelines on how they seek to achieve gender inclusiveness. This will require a review of party constitutions and re-alignment of women's leagues so that they can play more active roles to enhance women's engagement within the parties beyond dancing for party leaders.
- Policies should include prohibition of Violence Against Women in Politics (VAWP) and equal distribution of party resources for campaigning.
- Provide capacity building for political parties on women's rights and various principles in the constitutions and election laws.

Support to women candidates

- Provide timely financial support for women contestants during campaigning.
- Reduce nomination fees for women candidates.
- Field women candidates across the board-presidential, legislature and local government.
- Expose and train women on electoral processes and procedures, campaigning, media engagements, public speaking and fundraising.

- Ensure equal opportunities for media airtime/visibility for both men and women candidates.
- Establish or strengthen women's wings through stipulations in party constitutions and allocate a certain percentage of party funds to the women wings.

Safety and security of women candidates

- Political parties should adopt codes of conduct on or that include firm measures to address sexual harassment and gender violence in all party, political and election conduct and that these are effectively implemented.
- Conduct capacity building for political parties and women leaders to understand dimensions of VAWP and available mechanisms for reporting and accessing justice.
- Investigate allegations of violence, assault or harassment of women elected officials and candidates and create an environment of zero tolerance for such offences. To ensure accountability, take all appropriate steps to prosecute those responsible.



Protest for the liberation of Abir Moussi in Tunisia. Getting into politics is not safe in Tunisia. Abir Moussi, president of the Parti Destourien Libre, has been jailed since October 2023 for her political opinion and her opponents believe that it is a way of keeping her out of the presidential elections, which are supposed to be held in November 2024.
Photo credit: Parti Destourien Libre (PDL)

ELECTORAL LAWS AND MANAGEMENT

4



I voted in Mozambique!
Credit: Rochan Kadariya, UNDP Mozambique

KEY FACTS

- Women constitute 29% of election commissioners in the Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs), compared to 28% in 2021. This ranges from 57% in Tanzania to none in Zanzibar.
- Women's representation in EMBs in Africa varies across regions, with disparities between regions and specific cultural, institutional, and political challenges.
- Of 11 countries whose EMBs were audited, only two, Tanzania (4 out of 7) and Zimbabwe (5 out of 9), had more women commissioners than men.
- Malawi's Election Commission (MEC) had a significant drop in female commissioners, from five women in 2021 to only two women commissioners as of March 2024.
- African countries are increasingly linking gender quotas to public funding for elections.
- The quality and diversity of candidates and elected representatives can be influenced by the state's and other actors' electoral funding.
- Efforts to promote gender equality in politics include developing gender policies for EMBs and ensuring gender sensitivity and compliance with legal requirements.
- UN Women has provided technical support in various African countries to develop gender strategies, ensure gender-inclusive electoral processes, and promote women's political rights and representation.
- The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has developed a Congolese Sign Language (CSL) handbook to enable people who are deaf or hard of hearing to participate in the electoral process, addressing communication barriers.

Table 4.1: Gender dimensions of State obligations about elections[1]

State obligations on elections	Gender dimensions
✓ Provide for the holding of legislative elections at regular intervals;	✓ Institutionalisation of periodic elections across the continent has increased women's opportunity to access political office and embedded their right to vote.
✓ Establish a neutral, impartial mechanism for the management of legislative elections;	✓ Gender-aware EMB play a crucial role in preventing VAWP and other barriers to participation by women in elections.
✓ Establish an effective, impartial and non-discriminatory procedure for the registration of voters;	✓ Gender-aware EMB ensures that women can register as voters, that voters receive gender-aware education, and that they can exercise their choice freely.
✓ Stipulate clear criteria for the registration of voters, among other things, age and citizenship;	✓ There are often gender dimensions to citizenship, e.g. men married to nationals being denied citizenship.
✓ Make regulations governing the formation, registration and functioning of political parties;	✓ Political parties are crucial in facilitating or inhibiting women's political participation.
✓ Establish the conditions for competition in elections on an equitable basis;	✓ Direct and indirect barriers to women's free and fair participation in elections must be removed.
✓ Provide for and regulate the funding of political parties and electoral campaigns to ensure the promotion of equality of opportunity;	✓ Funding is a crucial barrier to women's participation. Ensuring that funding is distributed openly and transparently and does not supersede election issues is critical to ensuring women's effective participation.
✓ Ensure parties and candidates have equal access to government-controlled media;	✓ Persistent gender biases in the media (see Chapter Eight) are a vital barrier to women's participation. Monitoring media fair play needs to include gender dimensions.
✓ Ensure that voters have a free choice by maintaining the viability of political parties through public funding or free time in the media;	✓ This should include equal access, space, and airtime for female candidates.
✓ Ensure the electorate becomes familiar with electoral issues and procedures through national civic education programmes.	✓ This should include the importance of women's participation in decision-making for the success of democracy.

Source: Commonwealth Secretariat: Gender Inclusive Elections in Commonwealth Africa.

Table 4.1 summarises the state's obligations throughout the electoral process, including developing laws, policies, and guidelines that regulate electoral financing and ensure equal access to media. The right-hand column of the table highlights the gender dimensions of each stage. This chapter examines how electoral laws can facilitate or impede women's political participation. It also discusses the role of EMBs in ensuring compliance with the laws and the mainstreaming of gender throughout the electoral process.

[1] Lowe Morna, C. The Commonwealth 50/50 by 2030: A Guide for Gender Inclusive Elections in Commonwealth Africa (Commonwealth Secretariat, June 2017)

This chapter provides a comprehensive and critical analysis of electoral laws and the role of Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) in Africa. The chapter highlights the legal frameworks and institutions responsible for managing elections, exploring provisions and mechanisms to ensure that elections are gender-inclusive[2], fair, accessible, and credible. The chapter covers a range of countries, including both developed and developing democracies and assesses the effectiveness of such measures in promoting electoral integrity. The aim is to offer recommendations to address the complexities, challenges, and potential unintended consequences of measures to promote genuine electoral integrity, transparency, and accountability. The information is sourced from official electoral reports, legal documents, and authoritative organisations, ensuring high credibility and accuracy in the analysis and recommendations provided.

Additionally, the chapter explores the crucial role of EMBs in ensuring transparent, inclusive, and accountable electoral processes. It emphasises the importance of independent, impartial, competent electoral bodies in fostering public trust in democratic institutions. The chapter also reflects on the challenges electoral management bodies face, such as limited resources, political interference, and emerging threats like disinformation and cyber-attacks.

The chapter also reflects on the potential impact of political funding mechanisms on broader gender equality issues and women's empowerment. It raises concerns about the potential for tokenism, superficial compliance, or unintended incentives that may not lead to genuine gender inclusivity.

Election management bodies



EMBs play a crucial role in ensuring the credibility, integrity, and legitimacy of elections. *Photo: Gender Links*

Electoral management bodies are the institutions or organisations responsible for conducting and supervising the electoral process in a country. EMBs play a crucial role in ensuring the credibility, integrity, and legitimacy of elections, as well as promoting the inclusion and participation of traditionally underrepresented groups, such as women and persons with disabilities. EMBs can also influence the quality and diversity of the candidates and the elected representatives, as well as the level and nature of competition and representation in the political system. EMBs can play an essential role in ensuring gender equality throughout the electoral process by:

[2] Lowe Morna, C. The Commonwealth 50/50 by 2030: A Draft Guide for Gender Inclusive Elections in Commonwealth Africa (Commonwealth Secretariat, June 2017)

- Mainstreaming gender equality within their organisational structure, such as ensuring women's representation at all levels of decision-making, collecting and analysing sex-disaggregated data, and adopting a gender policy.[3]
- Promoting women's participation and representation in the electoral process, such as providing voter education and outreach to women, facilitating women's registration as voters and candidates, and ensuring women's access and security at polling stations.[4]
- Enforcing electoral laws and regulations that are gender-sensitive and non-discriminatory, such as applying eligibility criteria that do not exclude women, linking public funding to gender quotas, and addressing violence against women in politics.[5]

Appointments

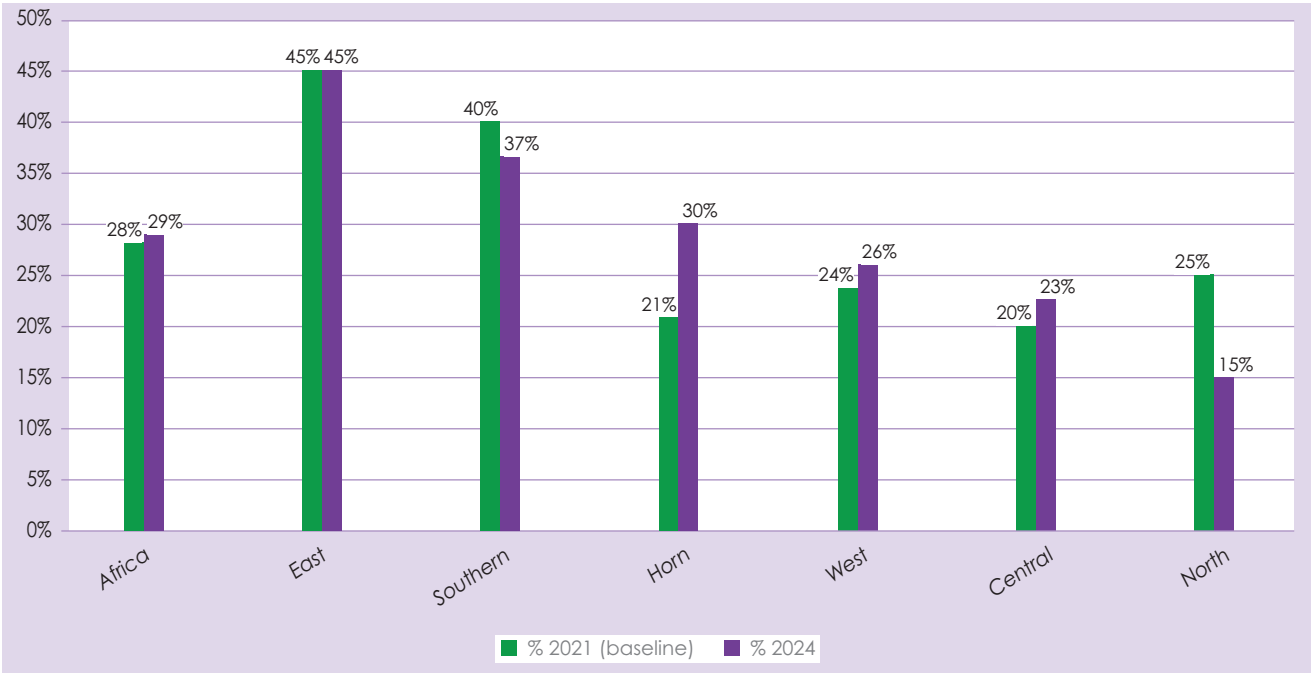
Women's representation in EMBs is essential to ensuring gender equality and promoting women's political participation. However, despite progress in some regions, women's representation in EMBs remains low.[6] Women face various challenges and barriers in accessing leadership positions in EMBs, the institutions responsible for organising and conducting elections. Some of the factors and barriers that affect women's representation and participation in EMBs in Africa are:

- The legal framework and the type of EMB, such as whether it is independent, governmental, or mixed; the appointment and selection process and criteria for EMB members and staff, such as whether it is based on merit, quota, or nomination.[7]
- The political environment and the level of democracy and stability in the country.[8]
- The social and cultural norms and attitudes that shape the expectations and stereotypes of women's roles and abilities in public life can also affect their representation in EMBs. For example, in many African countries, patriarchal attitudes and gender stereotypes can limit women's opportunities to advance in political careers.
- Personal and professional challenges women may face in seeking and advancing their careers in EMBs. For example, they may face discrimination and bias in recruitment and promotion processes or struggle to balance family responsibilities with work commitments. These challenges have limited women's representation in EMBs in some African countries. For instance, in Kenya, women's representation in EMBs has been low due to limited opportunities for professional advancement[9].

This section examines the current status and trends of women's representation in EMBs across different African regions since the last publication of the WPP Barometer in 2021.

3 Inclusive Electoral Processes: A Guide for Electoral Management Bodies on Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Participation (no date) UNDP. Available at: https://www.undp.org/publications/inclusive-electoral-processes-guide-electoral-management-bodies-promoting-gender-equality-and-womens-participation (Accessed: 29 January 2024).
4 Electoral laws and management - genderlinks.org.za. https://genderlinks.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/8WPP-Africa-CHAP4fin2.pdf.
5 ibid
6 Inclusive Electoral Processes: A Guide for Electoral Management Bodies on Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Participation (no date) UNDP. Available at: https://www.undp.org/publications/inclusive-electoral-processes-guide-electoral-management-bodies-promoting-gender-equality-and-womens-participation (Accessed: 29 January 2024).
7 ibid
8 ibid
9 Kasomo, D. Factors Affecting Women Participation in Electoral Politics in Africa, Copyright © 2012 Scientific & Academic Publishing. All Rights Reserved. Available at: http://article.sapub.org/10.5923.j.ijpbs.20120203.01.html.

Figure 4.1: Percentage of women in EMBs in Africa by region



Source: Gender Links statistical compilation and analysis of different country EMB websites.

Figure 4.1 shows that the percentage of women in EMBs varies across African regions. The Africa region has 29% women in EMBs, with a slight one percentage point increase from the 2021 baseline. However, there are significant disparities between regions, with East Africa having the highest representation of 45% (no change from baseline). North Africa has the lowest at 15% (a notable ten percentage points decrease from the baseline). Southern Africa has seen a three percentage points decrease in women's representation in EMBs. The Horn of Africa has 30% (a significant increase of nine percentage points from the baseline). The Central African regions gained a three percentage points increase from the baseline, while the West African region gained increased women in EMBs by two percentage points.



In **Mali**, the democratic space has been shrinking due to several coups. The transitional government established an Independent Electoral Management Authority (IEMA) in January 2023 to address this issue. However, only four of the 15 members of the IEMA are women.

The impact and outcomes of women's involvement in EMBs on the quality and credibility of elections are not easy to measure or quantify, as they depend on many other factors and variables. However, some of the possible benefits and advantages of having more women in EMBs are:

- Enhancing diversity and inclusiveness within EMBs.
- Improving gender responsiveness and sensitivity within EMBs to address the specific needs and concerns of women and other marginalised groups in the electoral process.
- Increasing trust and confidence of women and the public in EMBs and the electoral process.
- Inspiring and motivating more women to participate and engage in the electoral process as voters, candidates, and officials.

Table 4.2: Gender Audit of Electoral Commissions in 11 selected African countries (2024)

Country/EMB	Is gender mainstreamed in your EMB?	Gender policy	Gender Focal Points (GFP)	Legal provisions for gender balanced recruitment	No women commissioners/ total	Chair M/F
The Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante CENI, **Burundi**[10]	No	No	No	None	2/7	M
National Elections Board of **Ethiopia** (NEBE)	Partially	Gender Strategy supported by UNDP	No	None	2/5	F
Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission of **Kenya** (IEBC)	No	No Gender Strategy supported by UNDP	No	None Exists in separate law (but within the Constitution of Kenya 2010)	3/7	M
Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC)	Yes, but not adequately	Planned	No	None	2/7	M
Mozambique Comissão Nacional de Eleições (CNE)	Partially	N/A	No	None	4/11	M
National Electoral Commission of **Tanzania** (NEC)	Yes but inadequately	In progress	Yes	No specific legislation	4/7	M
Zanzibar Electoral Commission (ZEC)	Yes but inadequately	Yes	Yes	No specific requirement	0/7	M
National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC) **Somalia**	Partially	Not yet	No	No	2/7	F
Electoral Commission of **Uganda** (EC)	Yes, but not adequately	No	No	Guidelines for inclusion of people with disability	3/7	M
Electoral Commission of **Zambia** (ECZ)[11]	Yes, but inadequately	Yes	Yes	None	2/7	F
Zimbabwe Electoral Comission (ZEC)[12]		Yes	Yes	Yes (Article 17 of the Constitution)	5/9	F
TOTAL		5/11	4/11		**29/81**	**36%**

Source: Gender Links and Commonwealth Africa Gender and Elections Handbook 2018; Country Election Commission websites.

As reflected in Table 4.3, in the 11 African EMBs countries reviewed:[13]

- Women lead four of the 11 electoral commissions (36%) analysed: Somalia, Ethiopia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. At the time of writing, the term for Zimbabwe's chairperson had been extended by another six years after the August 2023 elections[14].
- Of the 11 countries analysed, Tanzania with 4 out of 7 and Zimbabwe with 5 out of 9 are the only two countries with more women commissioners than men
- Malawi's number of women commissioners significantly dropped, from five in 2021 to only two as of March 2024.

[10] 'Swearing-in performance of the members of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI). - Independent National Electoral Commission of Burundi', Available at: https://www.ceniburundi.bi/2024/01/17/prestation-de-serment-des-membres-de-la-commission-electorale-nationale-independante-ceni/ (Accessed: 3 February 2024).
[11] 'Commission - Electoral Commission of Zambia'. Available at: https://www.elections.org.zm/?page_id=2360 (Accessed: 3 February 2024).
[12] 'Commissioners - Zimbabwe Electoral Commission'. Available at: https://www.zec.org.zw/category/commissioners/ (Accessed: 3 February 2024).
[13] The Commonwealth 50/50 by 2030: Handbook for Gender Inclusive Elections in Commonwealth Africa, 2017
[14] Reporter, S. (2024) 'Mnangagwa extends ZEC boss Priscilla Chigumba's term by 6 years - ZimStar News', 26 January. Available at: https://zimstarnews.com/2024/01/26/mnangagwa-extends-zec-boss-priscilla-chigumbas-term-by-6-years/, https://zimstarnews.com/2024/01/26/mnangagwa-extends-zec-boss-priscilla-chigumbas-term-by-6-years/ (Accessed: 1 February 2024).

Developing gender policies

Having a stand-alone gender policy is crucial for organisations like EMBs to promote gender mainstreaming and ensure that gender-related concerns are addressed effectively. A stand-alone gender policy exists independently of individuals who may champion gender causes within the organisation. This is essential because policies that depend on specific individuals or their goodwill can be easily undermined if those individuals leave or change their positions.

Ideally, a gender policy should be reflected in the vision and mission of EMBs, which sets the direction and goals for the organisation. By incorporating gender concerns into their vision and mission statements, EMBs can ensure that gender mainstreaming is a priority aligned with the organisation's overall electoral objectives.

In addition to a stand-alone gender policy, developing strategic plans that address gender throughout the electoral process and are aligned with relevant electoral legislation is critical for EMBs to tackle gender issues effectively. This means that gender concerns should be integrated into every stage of the electoral process, including voter education, candidate nomination, election administration, and post-election activities. The strategic plans should be guided by relevant electoral laws and regulations to ensure that EMBs comply with legal requirements while promoting gender equality.

Through its collaborations with gender and election stakeholders in various countries, UN Women provides technical support, advisory services, and capacity-strengthening to promote gender equality, increase women's representation, and level the playing field.

UN Women works with gender and election stakeholders to promote women's political participation in East and Southern Africa



Uganda: The UNWomen Country Office provided technical support to the Electoral Commission to develop a gender strategy informed by a comprehensive gender assessment. The assessment ascertained the extent to which the Commission mainstreamed gender equality into its policies, systems and practices, focusing on the external environment within which the Commission executes its mandate, including the status of women's participation in politics and the relevant legal framework. It also reviewed the Commission's internal systems and capacities, including senior management's commitment to gender equality, technical capacity, and human resource policies and practices. A wide range of gender and election stakeholders were consulted. The gender strategy is now an institutional tool that the Election Commission utilises to promote women's participation in politics to increase women's representation and level the playing field.



Ethiopia: In 2021, UN Women launched an initiative titled "Ensuring Gender Inclusive Electoral Process in Ethiopia's 6th General Election". In partnership with the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), and the Ethiopian Network of Women's Associations (NEWA), UN Women supported gender-inclusive electoral processes.

Support to these institutions included advisory services and capacity-strengthening for key electoral stakeholders to ensure a gender-sensitive electoral process. UN Women launched its electoral support project with the support of UNDP in 2019 and by partnering with NEBE. The collaboration focused on empowering women political party members, capacity-building for journalists, and assigning a gender focal point within the Election Board to undertake a gender assessment of electoral normative frameworks and support gender mainstreaming in the election. UN Women's collaboration with NEBE also includes supporting awareness platforms and knowledge generation on political parties' gender responsiveness and prevention of violence against women in elections.

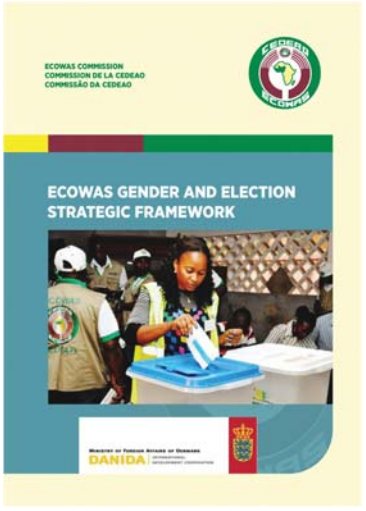


Somalia: UN Women is supporting advocacy for the adoption and implementation of TSMs, specifically the implementation of the 30% quota, as well as capacity-strengthening of men and women parliamentarians on legislative drafting and promotion of women's participation. In preparation for the 11th Parliamentary elections in 2020-2021, UN Women and partner agencies held focused trainings for female political aspirants on transformative leadership and advocacy skills to prepare them as candidates and delegates. UN Women further supported a national coordination platform between civil society groups and the Somali Women Parliamentary Association to promote women's political rights.

Source: UNWomen[15]

As part of efforts of the **ECOWAS Commission** to build long-term capacity and advocacy for women's political participation in West Africa, it conducted national workshops in **Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Nigeria,** and **Togo** in collaboration with the various government ministries responsible for gender. This brought together non-government organisations, security agencies, and EMBs, among others, to assess the barriers confronted by women in the electoral process in West Africa.

Source: ECOWAS Gender and Election Strategic Framework.[16]



The ECOWAS network of electoral commissions (ECONEC[17]) encourages EMBs to have a well-resourced Gender Desk to assist in addressing significant barriers that women face in the electoral process. Every EMB should have an effective gender policy. Equitable recruitment of women as polling station officials and party agents should be encouraged.[18]

[15] In Brief: Women's Political Participation, East and Southern Africa Regional Office, UN Women - Africa. Available at: https://africa.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/09/in-brief-womens-political-participation-east-and-southern-africa-regional-office (Accessed: 10 February 2024).
[16] extension://ngphehpfehdmjellohmlojkplilekadg/pages/pdf/web/viewer.html?file=https%3A%2F%2Fecowas.int%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2023%2F04%2FECOWAS-GENDER-AND-ELECTION-STRATEGICFRAMEWORK-ACTION-PLAN.ENGLISH.pdf
[17] ECONEC-RESAO. Available at: https://resao-econec.org/en/who-we-are/about-us.html (Accessed: 26 May 2024).
[18] ibid

Gender Management Systems

Many EMBs have made progress in tackling gender issues by either appointing a Gender Focal Person (GFP) or establishing a committee to address gender concerns, (for instance, **Ghana, Lesotho, Malawi,** and **Sierra Leone**). However, it is crucial to take this initiative further by including gender considerations in senior staff's job descriptions, performance agreements, and GFP's specific terms. Additionally, EMBs must have gender expertise, awareness, capacity-building programmes, and budget allocations to mainstream gender into their work. This should involve collecting and analysing sex-disaggregated data on various aspects, such as voter registration, voter turnout, candidates (especially Transgender, Sex, and Minorities), and staffing data. Although gender mainstreaming efforts in EMBs are still inadequate, some good practices demonstrate what should be done to establish gender-responsive institutions.



Kenya's IEBC forms a team to promote women's involvement in 2022 polls

In preparation for the 2022 elections in Kenya, the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) partnered with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) to launch the Women's Coordinating Committee for Elections. This committee aims to address issues related to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) that may arise during the election period. Furthermore, it seeks to increase voter education among women by encouraging more women to register and vote and mobilising them to run for political office. As a gender-responsive measure to promote the inclusion of women in political leadership, the IEBC reduced the nomination fees for women candidates by 50%.

Source: Nation News[19]

Electoral systems and legislative reforms

Electoral systems are the rules and procedures that determine how votes are cast, counted, and translated into seats in a representative body, such as a parliament or a council. Electoral systems can affect women's political representation and participation in various ways, such as by influencing the number and type of candidates, the level and nature of competition, the incentives and strategies of political parties, and the preferences and behaviours of voters.

EMBs wield significant influence over the legislative landscape in African politics, primarily through their role in overseeing electoral processes and ensuring adherence to democratic principles. By setting the standards for fair play, EMBs can indirectly shape the laws that govern political funding, candidate eligibility, and the overall integrity of elections. Their recommendations often lead to reforms that enhance transparency and accountability,

[19] IEBC forms team to promote women involvement in polls (2022) Nation. Available at: https://nation.africa/kenya/news/gender/iebc-forms-team-to-promote-women-involvement-in-polls-3688568 (Accessed: 3 February 2024).

reinforcing the legal framework underpinning the continent's diverse political systems.

EMBs can lead and support the creation of electoral procedures that do not discriminate against women. It is crucial to provide training to all agencies involved in elections, including police investigating electoral malpractice, to respect women's rights. Election management bodies should receive sufficient resources to implement gender-related programmes. Additionally, EMBs can provide evidence for electoral and legislative reform based on their experience from previous elections.



Mauritania has made efforts to enhance women's participation in politics through legal quotas. Despite progress in the number of female candidates in the 2023 elections, the representation of women in political positions remains low. Atikatou Dieng, from the Electoral Independent Commission, advocates for promoting positive masculinity to support women in politics. As the following case study will show, young female politicians like Jamila Al-Naha and Wane Khadijetou bring fresh political perspectives, emphasising education and inclusive campaigns.

Mauritania: Many women candidates, but few elected



Campaign poster for Khadijetou Wane Mauritania.
Credit: INSAF party

Mauritania is a country that upholds equality for both men and women before the law and ensures freedom of conscience for all its citizens. However, women are still underrepresented in some decision-making spheres, particularly politics. Laws and regulations protect women from discrimination, and they have the right to vote and stand for election in all elective offices. In 2006, Mauritania passed a law to promote women's involvement in decision-making, which imposed a minimum quota of 20% for women on each municipal and legislative list in a proportional representation system by:

- increasing the use of proportional representation on polling lists in legislative elections,
- creating a national list of 20 women candidates for legislative elections, and
- introducing financial incentives for political parties that elect more women.

In the May 2023 elections, over 10,000 women contested elections. Women comprised 32.57% of those on the municipal elections lists and 35.10% of those on the lists for the legislative elections. Women won 23% of the seats in the National Assembly in the 2023 elections.

However, Atikatou Dieng, who oversees citizen education at the Electoral Independent Commission, is unsatisfied with these results. According to her, the representation of women in politics is poor because there have been more women candidates than women elected. Despite women comprising 56% of registered voters, women are not adequately represented in the municipal councils, regional councils, and at the National Assembly. For instance, out of 248 mayors' seats, there are only two women mayors. At the National Assembly, there are only 41 women parliamentarians.

Atikatou Dieng believes positive masculinity should be promoted to reverse the situation. Convincing men to support women's candidacies and emergence in politics is crucial. Unfortunately, everyone thinks only about themselves in that world, and it is somewhat challenging to make men understand that once women are elected, they will support men's battles.

Source: A case study by Amy FOFANA

The case study reveals the importance of implementing and enforcing laws promoting women's participation in decision-making. EMBs have an important role to play in ensuring that quotas are enforced. They can also promote financial incentives for political parties, and other strategies to increase women's representation in elected offices.

Furthermore, the story emphasises the role of EMBs in fostering positive masculinity and encouraging men to support women candidates in politics. This underlines the broader societal challenges EMBs must consider in promoting gender equality and inclusivity in electoral processes.

Voter registration



Voter Registration 2024 Moshupa Central Botswana. *Photo Mboy Mswabi*

EMBs play a crucial role in the electoral process. One of their most essential functions is registering voters. In countries where voter registration is required in person, it is necessary to ensure that the process is easily accessible, well-publicised, and uses channels of communication that are most likely to reach women voters. This is especially important as women are often underrepresented in the electoral process and face unique challenges in accessing voter registration services.

One way to address this challenge is to invest in mobile registration units. For example, in Uganda, Kenya, Zimbabwe, and South Africa, EMBs have successfully used mobile units to register voters in remote and hard-to-reach areas. This approach can efficiently accommodate women's dual roles at home and in the workplace, providing greater flexibility and convenience.

Technology is playing an increasingly important role in the voter registration process, thanks to the use of technological solutions by EMBs. Various technologies are employed to collect, compile, enter, match, recognise, share, store and transmit data. Biometric registration, for instance, involves using technologies to capture voters' physical features. Biometric particulars of voters are stored on magnetic tapes, disks and drives. Imaging technologies, on the other hand, are used to capture or match data of specific voters. Geographic information systems (GIS) are another technology used to assign voters to specific geographic locations and ensure voter data quality, integrity, and security. *Source: The Administration and Cost of Elections (AEC)[20] Electoral Knowledge Network*

[20] Voter Registration. Available at: https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/vr/onePage (Accessed: 14 February 2024).

Ensuring data protection and integrity

EMBs handle vast amounts of personal data during voter registration. To safeguard citizens' privacy and rights, data protection laws are crucial. While technology enhances voter registration efficiency, EMBs must balance innovation with robust data protection measures. Public scrutiny of voter registers ensures credibility and trust in electoral processes. For example, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) ensures accurate voter placement, maintains data integrity by linking it to geographical coordinates, and enhances security by managing sensitive location-based information.[21]

Moreover, EMBs must pay special attention to registering displaced persons, who may face additional barriers to accessing voter registration services. These individuals may be living in refugee camps, displacement centres, or other temporary settlements, making it difficult to register them in person. EMBs should work with local organisations and community leaders to identify displaced persons and ensure they can access the necessary documentation and assistance to register for voting.

Finally, EMBs have a crucial responsibility to protect the rights of naturalised citizens, including foreign husbands of women residing in the country during the election period. Women often bear the brunt of discrimination, and their foreign husbands, who are naturalised citizens, may also face additional challenges when trying to register to vote. Therefore, EMBS must ensure that all citizens, regardless of gender, nationality, or background, have equal access to the electoral process. EMBs should take proactive measures to identify and address any barriers that may disproportionately affect women and other marginalised groups. Some examples of voter registration exercises conducted by electoral management bodies in Africa include:



Voter registration campaign, Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) of South Africa, 2024. *Credit: IEC*



The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) of **South Africa** has been actively involved in voter registration campaigns. Ahead of the 2024 elections, they partnered with civic advocacy groups to encourage voter registration, especially among the youth. Initiatives like the *X_Change* voter registration campaign were set up in places like Maponya Mall in Soweto to attract unregistered voters, particularly the youth.[22] Additionally, the IEC launched an online voter registration campaign to make the process more accessible. Citizens can now register to vote online from the comfort of their homes. This is important as the youth and women can register online, reducing the need for physical visits to registration centres.

[21] https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/the-use-of-new-technologies-in-electoral-processes.pdf
[22] 'South Africa has over 14 million unregistered voters, mainly youth - SABC News - Breaking news, special reports, world, business, sport coverage of all South African current events. Africa's news leader.' (2024), 4 February. Available at: https://www.sabcnews.com/sabcnews/south-africa-has-over-14-million-unregistered-voters-mainly-youth/ (Accessed: 14 February 2024).



In the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**, voter registration has been conducted as a part of the electoral process. The Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) initiated a voter registration exercise targeting almost 50 million people across 26 provinces in preparation for the December 2023 elections. However, the Reuters news agency observed that at the start of registration, most registration stations in the capital, Kinshasa, and other provinces failed to open as scheduled due to a lack of staff and material.[23] To speed up the process and prevent long queues that formed during past polls, the CENI has introduced a new mobile phone pre-registration system that leverages technology. Iris scans have also been added to limit fraud.[24] It is essential to leverage technology to streamline voter registration processes, enhance accuracy, and promote inclusivity to strengthen democratic processes. These exercises ensure eligible citizens are included in the voter rolls and can participate in elections.



The Carter Center's report[25] on the 2022 **Tunisia** voter registration indicates that the voter registration process in Tunisia proceeded smoothly. However, the High Independent Authority for the Elections (ISIE) still faces significant operational challenges, including allocating voters to polling stations and the need for a campaign to disseminate voter information to the public. The Center recommends that the ISIE and other organisations intensify their public outreach efforts to help Tunisians navigate the electoral process. A credible and successful electoral process will be crucial to democratic transition and stability in Tunisia. Despite various challenges, such as initial technical issues with the online registration system, delayed appointment of Regional Independent Authority for Elections (IRIE) members, a late start to the outreach campaign, and inconsistencies in the implementation of procedures, particularly regarding the requirement for individuals to personally register, the voter registration process was conducted peacefully across the country.



In **Mauritania**, three conditions must be met to be registered as a voter on the electoral lists: 1) possess Mauritanian citizenship, 2) be 18 years old or older, and 3) hold a national identity card. Under the former system, electoral lists were made from updated administrative censuses. The Law 2012-027 creating the National Independent Electoral Commission CENI indicates that the commission, in cooperation with the relevant sections of the General Office for the Support of the Electoral Process within the Ministry of Interior, controls the preparation, supervision, and management of electoral lists and electoral censuses, and validates related operations. The CENI shares these powers with the Ministry of Interior but retains the final authority over validating the electoral lists produced for polling stations from the general electoral database.

Source University of Florida Trans-Saharan Election Report[26]

[23] Early voter registration in DRC marred by kit shortages (no date) Al Jazeera. Available at: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/12/26/congo-voter-registration-marred-by-early-kit-shortages (Accessed: 14 February 2024).
[24] Early voter registration in DRC marred by kit shortages (no date) Al Jazeera. Available at: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/12/26/congo-voter-registration-marred-by-early-kit-shortages (Accessed: 14 February 2024).
[25] https://www.cartercenter.org/news/pr/tunisia-090111.html
[26] Voter Identification and the Electoral Lists - Mauritania (no date). Available at: https://tsep.africa.ufl.edu/voter-identification/mauritania-3/ (Accessed: 26 May 2024).

These examples highlight the importance of voter registration as a first step in African democratic processes. Most countries regard registering in the voter list an eligibility criterion for voters.[27] Ensuring the registration of women voters fosters their participation. Generally, more women than men register to vote in Africa. For instance, in Mozambique, sex-disaggregated data revealed a higher percentage of female registered voters (53.38%) than male voters (46.62%).[28] This trend closely aligns with the country's national population census data, which indicates that women constitute 52% of the population. Voter registration statistics from South Africa show that women voters outnumber men voters in every age group.[29] However, voter registration and turnout can vary widely across regions and elections.

Sex disaggregated data

Sex disaggregated data is collected and presented separately for women and men and sometimes for other gender categories, such as transgender or non-binary. Sex disaggregated data provide a more accurate and comprehensive picture of women's and men's representation and participation in the electoral process and their challenges and opportunities. Sex disaggregated data can also help EMBs and electoral stakeholders design, implement, monitor, and evaluate gender-responsive and inclusive electoral policies and practices and comply with their legal obligations and commitments to uphold human rights and democratic principles. However, not all EMBs keep sex-disaggregated data in their electoral management.

While collecting and disseminating sex-disaggregated data is crucial for inclusive election management, it is not universally practised. Some EMBs have developed tools and received training to collect such data, which helps assess gender balance in the electoral process and plan strategies and policies. However, there are still gaps in data availability, and not all EMBs[30] have the capacity or systems to gather this information effectively[31]. This can be due to various reasons, including a lack of resources, training, or awareness of the importance of gender data in elections. Therefore, while some EMBs maintain sex-disaggregated data, it is not a standard practice across all EMBs in Africa.[32]

As part of ECONEC's efforts to strengthen member countries' capacities, the organisation requires all Electoral Commissions, regardless of type, to aim for equal representation of males and females at national and sub-national levels. Additionally, data on women's participation in the electoral process is a standing agenda item after every election. ECONEC will also require election results in all member Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) to include specific information:

- Number of males and females registered;
- Number of males and females who were presented (PR) or presented themselves (FPTP) as candidates for all elections at all levels (national or local);
- Number of males and females who voted in any election;
- Number of males and females who got elected in any legislative election; and
- Challenges women faced in registration and voting processes and possible remedies.

[27] https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ge/ge1/ge14/ge144
[28] https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/mz/undp-mz-women-elections-en-2020.pdf
[29] ibid
[30] https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ge/ge4/sex-disaggregated-data-and-statistics
[31] https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ge/ge4/sex-disaggregated-data-and-statistics
[32] https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ge/ge4/sex-disaggregated-data-and-statistics



In the 2024 presidential election of **Comoros**, approximately 338,940 individuals were registered to vote, which amounts to roughly 42% of the total population.[33] The Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) does not provide specific data regarding the gender breakdown of voters. It is crucial to monitor and track men's and women's participation in shaping the democratic process of Comoros.



The **Zimbabwe** Electoral Commission (ZEC) 2023 Harmonised Elections report recorded eligible voters by province by sex[34]. Of the 6,623,511 registered voters, 3,069,450 (46%) are men, while 3,554,061 (54%) are women. This shows that women constitute the majority of voters in Zimbabwe. However, the 2023 election results for the presidential candidates are not broken down by gender. One of the provisions, aimed at promoting the participation of young women in politics, clearly states that the party list must include women below the age of 35.[35]

When data is disaggregated by sex, it is easier to analyse and see how women and men are represented in every facet of the election. In this example, the ZEC reported statistics from its nomination court proceedings where women and men from Zimbabwe's ten provinces successfully lodged their papers to be eligible for the election.

Table 4.3: Zimbabwe Elections 2023 Nomination court statistics by sex

Election	Women	Men	Total	% Women	% Men
Presidential	1	10	11	9	91
National Assembly	70	566	636	11	89
Women's Quota National Assembly	138	0	138	100	0
Youth Ouota	21	21	42	50	50
Senate	72	72	144	50	50
Provincial Council	100	100	200	50	50
Local Authority Contested	755	4191	4946	15	85
Local Authority Unopposed	10	80	90	11	89
Total	**1167**	**5040**	**6207**	**19**	**81**

*Source: Zimbabwe Election Commission 2023 Harmonised Election Report.*Percentage figures are the author's derivations from the ZEC reported figures.*

The statistics from the Zimbabwe Elections 2023 Nomination court reveal a significant gender disparity: out of 6207 nominations, there were 1167 women and 5040 male candidates. Only one female presidential candidate ran against ten male candidates. Additionally, 70 women competed against 566 male candidates for the national assembly. The data shows gender parity in the Senate, Provincial Council, and Youth Ouota categories. Out of the 4946 contested seats in local authorities, only 755 women and 4191 men ran for election. Only ten women and 80 men were elected unopposed in local authority elections. Women secured 19% of the total nominations, while men accounted for 81%.

[33] Africa: Comoros goes to the polls, incumbent expected to win - DW - 01/14/2024 dw.com. Available at: https://www.dw.com/en/africa-comoros-goes-to-the-polls-incumbent-expected-to-win/a-67977587 (Accessed: 10 February 2024).
[34] '2023 Harmonised Elections Report - Zimbabwe Electoral Commission' (no date). Available at: https://www.zec.org.zw/download/2023-harmonised-elections-report/ (Accessed: 11 February 2024).
[35] '2023 Harmonised Elections Report - Zimbabwe Electoral Commission' (no date). Available at: https://www.zec.org.zw/download/2023-harmonised-elections-report/ (Accessed: 11 February 2024).

Voter and civic education

Voter education provides information and guidance to voters on the electoral process and their rights and responsibilities as citizens. Voter education is essential for the electoral process and democracy because it can increase voters' awareness and understanding of the importance and benefits of participating in elections and the procedures and requirements of voting. Voter education can also enhance the credibility and legitimacy of the electoral process, the elected representatives, and the responsiveness and accountability of the government and public institutions.

The existing voter education strategies and activities of EMBs and other actors in Africa vary depending on the legal framework, the institutional design, the technical capacity, and the political context of each country. However, some of the typical voter education strategies and activities in Africa are:

- **Civic education:** This voter education strategy aims to provide voters with essential knowledge and skills about the principles and values of democracy and citizenship. Topics include human rights, the rule of law, and political participation.[36]

- **Media campaigns:** This voter education strategy uses various media channels and formats, such as radio, television, newspapers, social media, or mobile phones, to disseminate information and messages to voters on the electoral process and political issues.[37]

- **Voter information materials:** This voter education strategy uses various materials and tools, such as leaflets, posters, brochures, manuals, or calendars, to provide information and instructions to the voters on the electoral process and political issues. Voter information materials can also help the voters be familiar and comfortable with the voting process and the voting equipment, such as the ballot box, the voting booth, or the electronic voting machines used.

The UN Women Manual for EMBs provides the following guidance notes when planning voter outreach:[38]

- Plan gender-sensitive voter outreach programmes, messages, audiences, and delivery methods. For instance, in 2017, the The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) commissioned a baseline study which aimed to strengthen ZEC's capacity to mainstream gender and carry out women-specific activities.
- Deliver voter outreach programmes for women that consider the best delivery methods.
- Work with media on gender-aware outreach and reporting.
- Work with civil society organisations on gender-aware outreach.



In **Cameroon**, ELECAM encourages and enhances the role of women in politics. According to Frank Edward Ekotto, gender focal point at ELECAM, advocacy and awareness-raising are bearing fruit, but pitfalls remain, such as "stereotyping of women, lack of financial empowerment of women, low registration of women on electoral lists and lack of solidarity among women".

[36] Inclusive Electoral Processes: A Guide for Electoral Management Bodies on Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Participation (no date) UNDP. Available at: https://www.undp.org/publications/inclusive-electoral-processes-guide-electoral-management-bodies-promoting-gender-equality-and-womens-participation (Accessed: 10 February 2024).
[37] Inclusive Electoral Processes: A Guide for Electoral Management Bodies on Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Participation (no date) UNDP. Available at: https://www.undp.org/publications/inclusive-electoral-processes-guide-electoral-management-bodies-promoting-gender-equality-and-womens-participation (Accessed: 10 February 2024).
[38] extension://ngphehpfehdmjellohmlojkplilekadg/pages/pdf/web/viewer.html?file=https%3A%2F%2Fzimbabwe.ec-undp-electoralassistance.org%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2Fsites%2F33%2F2020%2F12%2FZEC-GEBS-REPORT.pdf

Voter education challenges for women

Voter education is a critical pre-election activity for EMBs. It involves some challenges, especially for those women who are poor, illiterate, live in rural areas, or are excluded from mainstream processes. One challenge is the lack of adequate and accessible information and education on the electoral process and the political issues for women. Another is the lack of sufficient and convenient voter education centres and facilities for women, lack of proper and secure identification and documentation for women, lack of protection and safety for women who face violence, intimidation, or harassment during voter education, and lack of representation and participation of women in the voter education staff and management.



A UNDP 2020 analysis of women's participation in elections in Mozambique shows that citizens generally consider politics a male domain. This is a barrier to women contesting as candidates in political parties.[39]

- Lack of capacity among women results in low participation.
- Women, as both voters and candidates, suffer election-related gender-based violence, including psychological violence.
- Loyalty to political parties limits women's effective engagement with the electoral process both at the candidate level and as elected officials because their party's agenda always takes precedence when there is a conflict between the gender agenda and the party's agenda.
- The UNDP's recommendations are closely related to voter education as they address the underlying factors that influence electoral participation and the quality of democracy, particularly concerning gender equality in Mozambique. These include:
- **Enhancing civic education programmes:** Voter education ensures that all citizens understand their rights and responsibilities in the electoral process. By improving civic education, the UNDP aims to empower voters, especially women, with the knowledge they need to participate fully in elections.
- **Implementing a mandatory quota system:** Quotas can ensure women are represented in political positions. Educating voters about the importance of such systems can increase support for gender equality and encourage more women to vote and run for office.
- **Analysing voter turnout data based on gender and age:** This analysis can reveal participation patterns among different demographics, informing targeted voter education campaigns to increase turnout among underrepresented groups.
- **Investing in women's skills and capabilities:** By focusing on women's empowerment, the UNDP advocates for education that builds women's confidence and skills to engage in political processes as voters and candidates.
- **Monitoring political parties to ensure gender equality:** Voter education includes raising awareness about the role of political parties in promoting gender equality[40]. Monitoring parties encourages them to adopt inclusive practices, which can be a focus of voter education efforts.

These recommendations contribute to a more informed electorate that can make decisions that reflect a commitment to gender equality, thereby strengthening the democratic process.

[39] Analysis of Women Participation in Elections in Mozambique UNDP. Available at: https://www.undp.org/mozambique/publications/analysis-women-participation-elections-mozambique.
[41] https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ge/ge5/gender-equality-in-civic-and-voter-education

Towards inclusive voter education

The right to participate in elections is a fundamental right in a democracy. Many with hearing impairments, including women, face difficulties in participating in the electoral process due to a lack of appropriate communication support. Countries such as South Africa, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), have made provisions for inclusive voter education and systems.



DRC develops Sign Language handbook

Congolese Sign Language (CSL) is essential for raising awareness and encouraging people with hearing impairments to participate in the electoral process. However, the lack of sign language communicators and appropriate communication support hurt the participation of people with hearing impairment in elections.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) with technical support from the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) developed the handbook to fill this gap at all stages of the electoral process. The manual contains 385 terms grouped into 11 chapters and six appendices. It covers the following topics:

- Fundamental Principles of the Electoral Process
- Legal context
- The institutions involved
- Stakeholders
- The Conduct of the Electoral Process
- Voter Registration
- The application
- Voting and counting
- The Results
- Conflict management

Although the handbook mostly benefits people with hearing impairments it can be valuable for sign language communicators, election officials, and organisations that work with individuals who have hearing impairments. *Source: CENI*[41]

Universal Ballot Template (UBT) for South Africa



To promote accessibility and inclusivity for people with visual impairments, the Independent Electoral Communication (IEC) has introduced a voting aid called the Universal Ballot Template (UBT) to assist persons with disabilities, specifically the partially sighted and blind, in casting their votes independently and maintaining the secrecy of their vote. According to the Electoral Commission, the UBT is a technology tool for aiding individuals with visual impairments in casting their votes. The UBT template aligns with the ballot paper, allowing voters to identify and mark their preferred candidate or party easily.

Source: The Citizen[42]

[41] Genre et inclusion_: Manuel de la langue des signes congolaise pour le processus électoral (no date). Available at: https://www.ceni.cd/genre-et-inclusion/2024/02/08/genre-et-inclusion-manuel-de-la-langue-des-signes-congolaise-pour-le (Accessed: 12 February 2024).

[42] Selane, E. (2024) The visually impaired, deaf and dyslexic can also vote: IEC fosters inclusive voting, The Citizen. Available at: https://www.citizen.co.za/news/south-africa/elections/the-visually-impaired-deaf-and-dyslexic-can-also-vote-iec-fosters-inclusive-voting/ (Accessed: 26 May 2024).

Candidates

Candidate selection is the process of choosing and nominating the individuals who will run for public office in an election. It is essential for the electoral process and democracy because it determines the quality and diversity of the candidates and elected representatives and the level and nature of competition and representation in the political system.[43]

The existing candidate selection mechanisms and criteria of political parties and independent candidates vary across African countries. However, some of the familiar candidate selection mechanisms and criteria in use are:

- **Primaries**: Internal elections within a political party where the party members or supporters vote to select the party's candidates for an election. Primaries can enhance the transparency and democracy of the candidate selection process and increase the participation and influence of the party's base. However, primaries can also be costly, time-consuming, and divisive and may favour candidates with more resources, popularity, or connections.
- **Conventions**: Meetings or assemblies of a political party where the party delegates or leaders vote to select the party's candidates for an election. Conventions can enhance the cohesion and stability of the candidate selection process and increase the representation and accountability of the party's structure. However, conventions can also be opaque, undemocratic, and elitist and may favour the candidates, especially men with more seniority, loyalty, or patronage.



Marie Josée Ifoku Mputa Mpunga registering her candidacy for the presidential election, DRC, September 2023. *Credit: CENI*

[43] Breaking the bias in candidate selection in African political parties (2022) The Cable. Available at: https://www.thecable.ng/breaking-the-bias-in-candidate-selection-in-african-political-parties (Accessed: 12 February 2024).

- **Nominations:** Decisions or recommendations by a political party or an independent candidate to select their candidates for an election. Nominations can enhance the flexibility and efficiency of the candidate selection process and increase the party or the candidate's responsiveness and adaptability. However, nominations may inhibit women as they tend to be arbitrary, inconsistent, and unregulated, favouring candidates with more power, influence, or charisma.

There are challenges to women's fair and equal representation and participation in candidate selection. These include: the structure of the political system; patriarchal nature of society, inadequate access to education and means of production; insufficient social capital; lack of protection and safety for women who face violence, intimidation, or harassment during candidate selection. The "Hobbesian" political environment (thuggery, gang wars, kidnappings, and political assassinations) also militates against the full expression and visibility of women in partisan politics.[44] In most cases, candidate selection is a product of decisions made by male politicians or party leaders.[45]

Role of EMBs in candidate selection

Electoral management bodies play a crucial role in ensuring the integrity and fairness of the electoral process. EMBs oversee various aspects of elections, including candidate registration, nomination procedures, campaign finance regulations, code of conduct enforcement, ballot design, dispute resolution, and ensuring equal access to media and debates for all candidates. These responsibilities are essential for upholding democratic principles and promoting transparency and accountability in the electoral process.

- **Candidate registration and eligibility**
  Election Management Bodies (EMBs) oversee the registration of candidates who wish to contest elections. They verify eligibility criteria, collect necessary documents, and ensure compliance with legal requirements. EMBs typically set rules related to candidate qualifications, such as age, residency, and criminal records. These rules vary across countries and electoral systems.
- **Nomination procedures**
  EMBs establish guidelines for candidate nominations, defining deadlines for submitting nomination papers, the required number of supporting signatures, and any associated fees. By setting clear nomination procedures, EMBs ensure the electoral process remains organised and accessible to all potential candidates.
- **Campaign finance regulations**
  In some cases, EMBs play a crucial role in regulating campaign financing. They set limits on campaign spending, monitor contributions, and enforce transparency. By establishing candidate fundraising and expenditure rules, EMBs prevent undue influence and promote a level playing field.
- **Code of conduct**
  EMBs often develop codes of conduct for candidates. These codes outline ethical behaviour, campaign practices, and adherence to electoral laws. Violations of the code of conduct can result in penalties

[44] Okoosi-Simbine, A.T. and Obi, N.N. (2021) 'Women in Political Parties in Africa', in O. Yacob-Haliso and T. Falola (eds) The Palgrave Handbook of African Women's Studies. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 315-334. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-28099-4_72.
[45] Breaking the bias in candidate selection in African political parties (2022) The Cable. Available at: https://www.thecable.ng/breaking-the-bias-in-candidate-selection-in-african-political-parties (Accessed: 12 February 2024).

or disqualification. EMBs ensure that candidates adhere to these standards.

- **Ballot design and candidate placement**
  EMBs determine the layout of the ballot paper, including the order in which candidates appear. This placement can impact voter choices. To maintain fairness, EMBs establish rules regarding candidate order (e.g., alphabetical or random).
- **Dispute resolution**
  EMBs handle disputes related to candidate eligibility, nomination, and other issues, providing a mechanism for resolving conflicts.[46] In cases where candidates challenge decisions, EMBs ensure due process and impartiality.
- **Equal access to media and debates**
  EMBs promote equal access to media and debates for all candidates, setting guidelines for candidate participation in televised debates and interviews. Ensuring equitable exposure helps voters make informed choices.

Findings from liberal parties in eight African countries attest to the complexity and power struggles associated with candidate selection within political parties. Candidate selection is usually a private affair of party leaders and godfathers who are predominantly men and often biased against women. Using the instrumentality of party machinery, party leaders introduce unfair policies and practices to limit the emergence of female candidates.[47]



In **Mozambique**, the UNDP has found that loyalty to political party limits women's effective engagement with the electoral process both at the candidate level and as elected officials because the agenda of their party always takes precedence in situations where there is conflict between the gender agenda and the agenda of the party.[48]



Age eligibility requirement: To be nominated as a senator of the **Zimbabwe** National Assembly, one must be at least 40 years old.[49] This age requirement could potentially discourage young women with the abilities and leadership qualities required for senatorial duties from pursuing a political career. Some may view this minimum age requirement as unjustified age discrimination, as it may prevent young aspirants from entering politics altogether.

Enforcing gender quota laws

Electoral management bodies have a dual role in this context; they can either perpetuate these barriers through inaction or help challenge them by implementing inclusive policies and practices. Some EMBs have taken active steps to ensure that political parties comply with gender quota laws, rejecting candidate lists that do not meet the requirements.[50] For example, the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) of Côte d'Ivoire has set a powerful precedent in enforcing gender quotas in political representation. After thoroughly examining the parties' candidacy files and political groupings for the 2023 local, municipal, regional, and senatorial elections, the CEI rejected those that did not comply with the law. The CEI forced them to review their lists to meet the 30% women quota, demonstrating a firm commitment to upholding the law and promoting gender equality.

[46] https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/lf/annex/lfc/kenya-the-role-of-the-emb-in-electoral-reform
[47] Breaking the bias in candidate selection in African political parties (2022) TheCable. Available at: https://www.thecable.ng/breaking-the-bias-in-candidate-selection-in-african-political-parties (Accessed: 12 February 2024).
[48] UNDP Factsheet Women Participation| Mozambique Elections 2019.
[49] List of Annexures to the ZEC Report on 2023 Harmonised Elections.
[50] Bauer, G. and Bauer, G. (2018) Gender quotas and women's representation in African parliaments | Democracy in Africa, Democracy in Africa | A Resource for the Study of Democracy in Africa. Available at: https://democracyinafrica.org/gender-quotas-womens-representation-african-parliaments/.



IEC compels political parties to abide by the legislative quota

The Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) of **Côte d'Ivoire** plays a pivotal role in enforcing gender equality in political representation. Despite a legislated quota for women since 2016 and a law adopted in 2019 mandating political parties to present 30% of women in elected assemblies, women's political representation has been dwindling.

Political parties largely ignored the quota in the 2021 legislative elections and the 2023 municipal elections. However, the CEI took a firm stand. After examining the candidacy files of parties and political groupings for the local, municipal, and regional elections of 2 September 2023 and the senatorial elections of 16 September 2023, the CEI rejected those that did not comply with the law. The parties were forced to review their lists to meet the 30% women quota.

This intervention by the CEI led to a significant increase in the number of women candidates in the regional and municipal elections. However, the quota was not respected in the senatorial elections. The final results showed a low representation of women in high-level positions, with only two women elected as presidents of regional councils and 24 women elected as mayors. At the Senate level, there were 24 women senators, and a woman, Kandia Kamissoko Camara, was elected president of the Senate.

The underrepresentation of women in political parties is attributed to cultural aspects and strategic calculations by party leaders who believe voters are less likely to vote for a female candidate. Women in political parties are often relegated to grassroots activism and entrusted with menial tasks rather than high-level responsibilities. The issue of women's participation and representation is still confined mainly to political discourse and is not reflected in the statutes and internal regulations of various political parties.

In conclusion, the CEI's role in enforcing the legislated quota for women is crucial in promoting gender equality in political representation. However, overcoming structural obstacles such as systemic discrimination and lack of financial resources and support systems for women candidates remains a challenge. The CEI's actions are a strong example of how EMBs can actively contribute to overcoming the barriers women face in electoral funding and political participation by adopting and enforcing policies that promote gender equality.

Source: Case study by Augustin Tapé



Rwanda's National Electoral Commission has been instrumental in promoting gender equality by enforcing gender quotas, leading to Rwanda having one of the highest representations of women in parliament globally.[51]



South Africa's Independent Electoral Commission has ensured that electoral processes are inclusive by providing voter education emphasising women's political participation.[52]

[51] Bauer, G. and Bauer, G. (2018) Gender quotas and women's representation in African parliaments | Democracy in Africa, Democracy in Africa | A Resource for the Study of Democracy in Africa. Available at: https://democracyinafrica.org/gender-quotas-womens-representation-african-parliaments/.

[52] Inclusive Electoral Processes: A Guide for Electoral Management Bodies on Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Participation (no date) UNDP. Available at: https://www.undp.org/publications/inclusive-electoral-processes-guide-electoral-management-bodies-promoting-gender-equality-and-womens-participation.

These examples demonstrate how EMBs can actively contribute to overcoming the barriers women face in electoral funding and political participation by adopting and enforcing policies that promote gender equality.

Opportunities related to candidate selection

Although selecting candidates presents numerous challenges, specific opportunities can help boost women's participation in political roles. These include increasing awareness and demand for women's political rights and positions, the availability of best practices and lessons learned from other countries and regions, and regional and international frameworks and standards that support and guide the selection of women candidates.



For instance, during elections in **Liberia**, the Unity Party provided a platform for female candidates. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who ran for the presidency on the Unity Party ticket, became the first female elected president in Africa. The party's support and mobilisation efforts encouraged more women to participate in politics actively.[53]

Electoral financing

Electoral funding is the provision and use of financial resources for the electoral process, either by the state, the political parties, the candidates, or other actors. Electoral funding is essential for the electoral process and democracy because it can affect the quality and diversity of the candidates and the elected representatives, as well as the level and nature of competition and representation in the political system. Electoral funding is required in all the processes, from nomination to campaigning and reaching out to voters.



Ethiopia is interesting because although the country does not have any form of legislated quota, political parties receive funding for female candidates, resulting in the share of WPP in parliament more than doubling in the election following the introduction of gender-targeted public funding. While women constituted some 42% of the ruling Prosperity Party candidates overall, most opposition parties reportedly struggled to include women candidates in their lists. Some political parties adopted specific gender policies, however, only 13 parties successfully reached the 20% threshold of registered women candidates to qualify for additional funding. This underscores that providing incentives for including more women candidates on lists may be more effective in encouraging political parties to increase WPP, than legislated quotas, where they are not enforced.

[53] Okoosi-Simbine, A.T. and Obi, N.N. (2021) 'Women in Political Parties in Africa', in O. Yacob-Haliso and T. Falola (eds) The Palgrave Handbook of African Women's Studies. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 315-334. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-28099-4_72.

Funding challenges

In the context of electoral funding, African women face several barriers that can hinder their participation in politics. Women may have less access to financial resources, which is crucial for funding election campaigns.[54] Women's lower socioeconomic status and gender socialisation roles contribute to a lack of funds, access to money networks, and credit.[55] "I can tell you, perseverance pays," said Bernadette Gomina, who ran for the Central African Republic legislature in 2005 and 2010 before being elected in 2015 and re-elected in 2020. "Women parliamentarians face challenges at many levels, including lack of finances and discriminatory behaviours and mindsets, but we have our part to play; we must work together to change this situation."[56]



In some countries, notably **Nigeria**, and to some extent Ghana, Kenya and others, the high costs of engaging in politics led to the phenomenon known as "Godfatherism", where men with money and influence, known as Godfathers, use these to promote other men (their godsons) to being in power. Godfathers are almost always in the background, but they exert massive influence over elections - who is nominated, who the electorate votes for and who ultimately comes to power. The lack of Godfathers' support resulted in the defeat of many candidates in the 2019 elections. It is challenging for women to compete against and or be supported by these Godfathers. Those who can find such support are bound to do the bidding of the Godfathers who supported them.[57]



Respondents in a study on political party financing in **Kenya** did not feel that money alone determined whether men or women participated in politics. Still, they noted that it is a critical factor. There is a belief that there are significant returns to be made from investing in a career in politics, which encourages some to spend large amounts. A 2021 study by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy and Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy, *The Cost of Politics in Kenya* has found that candidates in Kenya spend as much as USD390 000 to win a legislative seat in parliament[58] which deters those unable to raise such resources. Women generally have relatively lower resources, and political parties provide smaller amounts to women than men. Further, without enough support from their political parties, many spend even more on the party's primary campaign than on the actual election. Additionally, the creation of reserved seats for women has meant that, in some instances, the constituency seats are now perceived to be 'reserved' for men. Women who attempt to represent a party for these seats must raise and spend even more money during the nomination phase[59].



A study in **Zambia** found that lacking resources impedes women's political participation more than deeply engrained negative attitudes. While attitudes are slowly beginning to change, the need for resources is constant. Further, politicians require resources throughout their political careers.[60]

[54] Kasomo, D. Factors Affecting Women Participation in Electoral Politics in Africa, Copyright © 2012 Scientific & Academic Publishing. All Rights Reserved. Available at: http://article.sapub.org/10.5923.j.ijpbs.20120203.01.html. (Accessed: 18 April 2024).
[55] Ballington, J and Kahane, M., Women in politics: financing for gender equality in Funding of Political Parties and Election Campaigns: a Handbook on Political Finance, Elin Falguera, Samuel Jones and Magnus Ohman, eds. (Stockholm, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2014) pp. 304. (Accessed: 18 April 2024).
[56] Impact Story: Ensuring women's participation in electoral processes in the Central African Republic - Central African Republic | ReliefWeb (2021). Available at: https://reliefweb.int/report/central-african-republic/impact-story-ensuring-women-s-participation-electoral-processes (Accessed: 13 February 2024).
[57] Ibid.
[58] Kanyinga, K. (2022) Want to run for office in Kenya? Here's how much it'll cost you, The Conversation. Available at: http://theconversation.com/want-to-run-for-office-in-kenya-heres-how-much-itll-cost-you-183683 (Accessed: 26 May 2024).
[59] Ohman, M. and C. Lintari. 2016. op cit.
[60] Demo Finland, Attitudes and resources affect women's political participation in Zambia, News, Zambia, 21 April, 2020. https://demofinland.org/en/attitudes-and-resources-affect-womens-participation-in-zambia/ Accessed 10 January, 2024.

Restrictive candidate nomination fees

Restrictive candidate nomination fees present a significant hurdle in the path to political office, often disproportionately affecting women and reinforcing existing power structures. In August 2023, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) published Statutory Instrument (SI)144 of 2022, which increased the nomination fees for presidential candidates by a staggering 1,900 per cent.[61] From June 2023, the ZEC required presidential candidates in Zimbabwe to pay an exorbitant $20,000, while candidates for the National Assembly were required to pay $1,000. This fee increase is a significant deterrent for most women who cannot afford such high costs. In the previous election of 2018, aspiring Presidential candidates paid a nomination fee of $1,000, while National Assembly members paid $50. The Southern African Development Community Elections Observer Mission (SADC SEOM) cited concerns by stakeholders who viewed the amounts "as duly restrictive to less well-off community members such as women who lack the means."[62]

Table 4.4: Nominations fees for the president, members of parliament, and local councillors for selected African countries

Country	Category	Presidential (USD)	Members of Parliament (USD)	Councillors (USD)
Zimbabwe	All	20,000	1,000	0
Zambia	Male	5,873	927	93
	Female	4,636	835	62
	Youths	3,709	618	62
	Persons with Disabilities	3,709	618	62
Kenya	All	1,666	167	42
	Females, Youths, Persons with Disabilities		83	
Malawi	Male	1,945	486	39
	Female	973	243	19
	Persons with Disabilities	833	243	19
	Youths		365	29
Namibia	Independent Candidate	670		0
	Political Party Candidate	134		0
South Africa	All	0	31	125
Botswana	All	0	39	8

Source: ZimFact[63]

Table 4.4 outlines the nomination fees for various categories of political candidates in seven African countries. Zimbabwe has the highest nomination fees, with presidential candidates paying $20,000, members of parliament paying $1,000, and local councillors paying nothing. This high fee could limit individuals' ability to participate in the political process, especially women without significant financial resources.

Zambia is the second highest, with the fees varying between males, females, youths, and persons with disabilities. Kenya has uniform

[61] Mhuruyengwe, N. (2022) 'Factsheet: Zimbabwe poll fees among highest in Africa', ZimFact, 8 December. Available at: https://zimfact.org/factsheet-zimbabwe-poll-fees-among-highest-in-africa/ (Accessed: 12 February 2024)
[62] SADC Electoral Obesrver Mission to the Republic of Zimbabwe: Report on the 2023 Harmonised Elections in the Republic of Zimbabwe.
[63] Mhuruyengwe, N. (2022) 'Factsheet: Zimbabwe poll fees among highest in Africa', ZimFact, 8 December. Available at: https://zimfact.org/factsheet-zimbabwe-poll-fees-among-highest-in-africa/ (Accessed: 12 February 2024)

fees for all categories, with slightly lower fees ($83) for females, youths, and persons with disabilities aspiring to become Members of parliament.

Malawi also has varying fees, and Namibia distinguishes between independent and political party candidates for Presidential aspirants. South Africa has no fees for presidential candidates but charges $31 for members of parliament and has the highest fees ($125) for local councillors. Botswana, on the other hand, charges $39 for members of parliament and $8 for local councillors.

The varying nomination fees for different categories of candidates can significantly impact the inclusivity of the political process. Higher nomination fees for specific categories, such as presidential candidates, may create financial barriers that limit individuals' participation, especially women from less affluent backgrounds, potentially excluding them from the political process. Conversely, lower nomination fees for categories like youth, women, and persons with disabilities can promote inclusivity by reducing financial hurdles and encouraging a more diverse range of candidates to participate in the political arena.

The payment of nomination fees often creates a gap between financial contributions and actual campaign financing for candidates. While candidates pay these fees to secure their place on the ballot, parties may not always provide commensurate support during the campaign. This disconnect can impact the overall financial resources available to candidates. Additionally variations in nomination fees can significantly influence representation in political leadership across different categories such as gender, socioeconomic status or ethnicity. Higher costs for specific categories may disproportionately affect the representation of marginalised groups, potentially leading to their underrepresentation. Conversely, lower nomination fees for underrepresented groups can enhance their ability to compete in elections, ultimately contributing to greater diversity and inclusivity in political decision-making.

Political finance as a catalyst to promote inclusive politics

To ensure that women and other marginalised groups, including people living with disabilities and the LGBTIQ, have equal opportunity to participate and make decisions, financing for women in public life must rise. Legislation governing political finance can either aid or impede women's political representation in decision-making. Encouraging financial equality, particularly for women, is critical to preserving a fair and democratic political system. One woman from Congo Brazzaville mentioned, "Political leaders must provide funding and support for political parties run by women if parity is to be achieved in the political arena of Congo Brazzaville."

Source: Case study by Christine Nathalie FOUNDOU

Figure 4.2: Status of direct public funding and gender-targeted public funding



70 % of countries provide **direct public** funding to political parties



However, only **17 %** of countries have **gender-targeted** public funding to promote women's political participation

Source: International IDEA.[64]

The International IDEA has analysed data from 180 countries globally. Data shows that 70% of countries worldwide provide direct public funding to political parties. Of those with a public funding system, approximately 30 countries (17%) have gender-targeted (specific) public financing, including **Albania, Brazil, Costa Rica, France, Georgia, Kenya** and **South Korea**. International IDEA has been advocating for gender-targeted public funding as an effective instrument to encourage women's involvement in politics.

A look at the sources and forms of electoral funding in Africa shows that funding includes public and private donations and in-kind support.



In **Ghana**, a statement made after a multi-party meeting in 2011 proposed directly allocating 10 per cent of public funds to political parties for women candidates and significantly reducing their fees.[65]



Targeted public funding for marginalised groups in Kenya: Article 26.1 of the Political Parties Act 2011, states that at least thirty per cent of the direct public funding provided to political parties should be used for 'promoting the representation in Parliament and the county assemblies of women, persons with disabilities, youth, ethnic and other minorities and marginalised communities'. It is unclear whether the Electoral Management Body (EMB) monitors compliance with this provision. Even if some parties may comply with this legal requirement on funding allocation, monitoring mechanisms both within parties and by the IEBC and the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties must be in place to ensure that funds are spent on initiatives that will indeed improve women's participation and success in elections.[66]



The **Zimbabwe** Political Finances Act (Chapter 2.11) is a law that regulates the funding of political parties and candidates in Zimbabwe.[67] It has the following main provisions:

- The State provides financing to political parties meeting specific criteria, such as obtaining at least 5% of the votes in the last general election. The amount of money allocated to each party is proportional to the number of votes it receives.
- Political parties and candidates are prohibited from receiving foreign donations, defined as

[64] Reforming Political Finance for More Diversity in Political Office | International IDEA (no date). Available at: https://www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/reforming-political-finance-more-diversity-political-office (Accessed: 13 February 2024).
[65] Funding and campaign support for women candidates. Available at: https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ge/ge3/g33 (Accessed: 13 February 2024).
[66] International IDEA
[67] Political Parties Finance Act (Chapter 2:11) (no date). Available at: https://www.law.co.zw/download/political-parties-finance-act-chapter-211/#google_vignette (Accessed: 13 February 2024).

donations from anyone who is not a permanent resident or citizen of Zimbabwe or a company or association not incorporated or based in Zimbabwe.
- Political parties and candidates must disclose the sources and amounts of their donations to the public and the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission.
- The Act also empowers the Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs to make regulations for implementing the Act.
- The Act aims to promote transparency, accountability, and fairness in the political process and to prevent foreign interference or influence in Zimbabwe's elections.[68] Some have criticised the Act for being insufficient, ineffective, or biased. They argue it does not address critical issues such as campaign spending, media access, or electoral violence. In the August 2023 elections, supporters of the opposition Citizen's Coalition for Change harnessed digital technology to raise funds for their candidates. These platforms include the global GoFundMe platform and local money transfer platforms such as Ecocash.



Addressing the WPP gap in Sudan

Despite the existing legal and regulatory framework that has opened opportunities for women to participate in the electoral process and to hold public office, WPP in Sudan remains low. In the 2020 elections, only 18 per cent of the elected representatives were women, and male candidates won 46 out of the 48 competitive races for local district leadership positions. The participation of women in Sudanese politics is hampered by the lack of investment in candidates by political parties. There is also need to reform internal regulations and protocols that ensure equal participation for men and women. In 2021, International IDEA Sudan's programme released an insightful study that examines political parties' internal policies and structures and their impact on women's access to positions of power and decision-making at all levels, starting from within the political parties themselves. International IDEA notes that political parties in Sudan have not allocated significant resources to support female participation in the electoral process and have not identified potential female candidates to back.

Women in positions of power often strive to shape a new norm that normalises other women's participation, allowing for meaningful progress in public policy initiatives. Female politicians bring a unique perspective to public policy, emphasising social issues such as health, education, and welfare. This can have an immediate and powerful impact on the lives of the Sudanese people and positively affect social cohesion and economic growth.

Source: Sami Ahmed, International IDEA[69]

[68] Political Parties Finance Act (Chapter 2:11) (no date). Available at: https://www.law.co.zw/download/political-parties-finance-act-chapter-211/#google_vignette (Accessed: 13 February 2024).
[69] Sudanese Women 116 Years Long Fight for Equity (no date). Available at: https://www.idea.int/news/sudanese-women-116-years-long-fight-equity (Accessed: 13 February 2024).



In **Senegal**, authorities initially rejected **Amsatou Sow Sidibé**'s candidacy for the presidential election, citing sponsorship disability. Sidibé asserts that Senegal quasi-excludes women from the highest decision-making sphere, particularly the Presidency of the Republic. She points out that in the 2012 presidential election, only two women (out of 14 candidates) contested: stylist Diouma Dieng Diakhtaté and herself. They were the pioneering female candidates in a presidential election. In the March 2024 elections in Senegal, only one female candidate participated in the presidential race. Anta Babacar Ngom, the head of Sedima (one of the country's largest food companies), made history by being the first woman to appear in Senegal's presidential ballot since 2012. Although she did not win, her presence reflects the increasingly forceful role of women in Senegal's politics, a country that boasts one of the highest percentages of female legislators globally.



Professor Amsatou Sow Sidibé. Her Presidential candidate was rejected in Senegal, 2023.

Linking public funding to gender targets

Several African countries have implemented financing provisions tied to gender quotas. Typically, the provisions seek to reward or provide funding to political parties based on the number of women candidates they elect at national and subnational levels. Algeria, Guinea, Mali, and Togo currently use this approach. However, the specific mechanisms and funding percentages linked to gender quotas vary between countries. In Algeria, political parties receive state funding based on the number of women candidates elected.[70] Burkina Faso penalises parties not meeting quotas by cutting public funding while rewarding those that exceed the 30% quota.[71] Cabo Verde awards public funding to parties with at least 25% women candidates.[72] Guinea distributes 5% of state funding to parties with elected women MPs and council members. Kenya's Political Parties Act 2011 restricts funding if the registered office bearers are predominantly one gender.[73] In Mali, 10% of public funding is shared among parties with women deputies or councillors.[74] Togo's public party funding allocation mechanism rewards successful female candidacy and reduces application fees for female candidates.



Voting for general elections in Mauritius. *Credit: Indian Ocean Times*

[70] Algeria: Loi organique n° 12-03 du 12 janvier 2012 fixant les modalités augmentant les chances daccès de la femme à la représentation dans les assemblées élues.
[71] https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas (country pages accessed 12 February 2024)
[72] Government of Cape Verde: Electoral Law No 56 /VII/2010
[73] Governemnet of Kenya, Political Parties Act, no 11 of 2011
[74] Government of Mali, Loi N° 05-047/ DU 18 Août 2005 Portant Charte Des Partis Politiques

Table 4.5: Provisions on financing linked to gender quotas

Country	Provisions on financing linked to gender quotas	% Women 2020	% Women 2024	Change
Algeria	Political parties can be awarded specific state funding according to the number of women candidates elected at the national and sub-national levels (Article 7).[75]	26%	8%	-18%
Burkina Faso	If a political party fails to meet the quota requirements, its public funding for election campaigns will be cut by 50% (Article 5). If a party reaches or exceeds the 30% quota, it will receive additional funding as prescribed by the regulations related to political parties' public funding (Article 6).[76]	6%	17%	11%
Cabo Verde	Article 431 (2) of the electoral law states that 'public funding will be awarded only to those political parties, coalitions or groups of citizens whose lists presented for municipal elections, if elected, contain at least 25 per cent women candidates'.[77]	26.4%	41.7%	15%
Guinea	Article 4 of the law for the political parties states that 5% of the total state funding for the political parties will be proportionally distributed to the parties that they have elected women MPs and in communal-municipal councils.[78]	17%	30%	13%
Kenya	The Political Parties Act 2011 states that a political party shall not receive funding from the fund if more than two-thirds of its registered office bearers are of the same gender (Article 25(2) (b))	22%	23%	2%
Mali	10% of public funding is proportionately shared among political parties, with women elected as deputies or municipal councillors, 5% of the amount is for female members of the National Assembly, and the other 5% is for female municipal councillors.[79]	27%	29%	2%
Togo	The allocation mechanism for public party funding rewards successful female candidacy: (i) 70% is distributed based on the share of votes in preceding elections; (ii) 20% is determined by the number of women elected for the party in the previous legislative elections; and (iii) 10% by the number of women elected for the party in the last local elections. The cost of application forms for parliamentary and local elections has been cut by 50% for women candidates, and political parties that meet parity on their lists are entitled to bonuses.	19%	0%	No recent election data

Source: International IDEA gender quotas database and Gender Links.

Table 4.5 demonstrates that in all countries where public funding is allocated to women candidates, except Algeria, which dropped by 18 percentage points, women's representation increased between two percentage points and 15 percentage points. However, the limited success of such measures may be because they are not enforced, and in many countries, public funding is insufficient. It is not a significant incentive or may only apply to parties relying heavily on public funds.

Moreover, there are potential unintended consequences and challenges associated with the financing provisions linked to gender quotas. In Burkina Faso, the provision for cutting public funding by 50% for political parties failing to meet the quota requirements may inadvertently affect the overall financial stability and operation of those parties. This could weaken democratic functioning by limiting the resources available for effective political participation. Additionally, in Cabo Verde, while the provision for awarding

[75] Algeria: Loi organique No 12-03 du 12 janvier 2012 fixant les modalités augmentant les chances daccès de la femme à la représentation dans les assemblées élues.
[76] Government of Burkima Faso Law no. 010-2009/AN of 16 April 2009 on Quotas for Legislative and Local Elections
[77] Cape Verde: Electoral Law Nº 56 /VII/2010
[78] Government of Guniea, Law Regulating Public Funding for Political Parties (no date)
[79] Trans-Saharan Elections Project, Gender and representation in Mali <https://tsep.africa.ufl.edu/gender-quotas-and-representation/mali/>accessed 12 March 2021

public funding only to political parties with at least 25% women candidates aims to promote gender diversity, it may inadvertently lead to tokenism or superficial compliance without substantial efforts towards gender inclusivity and empowerment.

In Guinea, the proportional distribution of state funding for political parties based on the number of elected women MPs and communal-municipal council members may inadvertently create incentives for focusing on meeting the quota requirement without addressing broader issues of gender equality and women's empowerment. Similarly, in Togo, where the allocation mechanism for public party funding rewards successful female candidacy, the abrupt decrease in the percentage of women elected in the previous legislative elections may indicate potential challenges or unintended consequences of the financing provisions. These provisions may need further scrutiny to ensure they effectively promote genuine gender inclusivity and do not inadvertently lead to superficial compliance or neglect of broader gender equality objectives.

Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the analysis in this chapter, it is clear that more efforts are needed to promote gender equality and representation in women's participation in politics. While some countries have made progress in achieving gender balance in Election Management Bodies, others have witnessed a decline in women's participation.

Women's participation

- Reform legal and regulatory frameworks to remove barriers limiting women's political participation. This could include quota systems, gender-sensitive legislation, and campaigns to promote women's political rights.
- Provide economic incentives to encourage women to participate in politics, such as funding for women-led organisations and campaigns and financial support for women candidates.

Digitalisation to enhance women's participation

Governments and civil society organisations (CSOs) should invest in digital literacy programmes tailored to promote women's participation. These programmes can provide training on digital tools, social media, and online platforms. CSOs can collaborate by organising workshops, webinars, and community-based training sessions.

Political parties and candidates should create gender-responsive online platforms. These platforms should:

- **Promote women's participation:** Highlight women's achievements, stories, and policy positions. Encourage women to share their perspectives and experiences.
- **Combat online violence:** Implement mechanisms to address online gender-based violence. This includes monitoring and reporting tools to protect women from harassment and threats.
- **Provide clear information:** Ensure that campaign websites and social media profiles provide clear information about women candidates, their backgrounds, and policy agendas.

Gender policies for EMBs

- African countries should also focus on developing policies that promote gender equality in Electoral Management Bodies and ensuring gender sensitivity and compliance with legal requirements. This could include providing training and resources to election officials to promote gender equality and sensitivity.

Candidate selection mechanisms

- Review and improve candidate selection mechanisms to address the patriarchal nature of African societies and political structures. Promote women's political participation through primaries, conventions, and nominations.

Inclusive electoral processes

- Ensure that electoral processes are inclusive and accessible to all, including people with disabilities. Creating sign language handbooks and other resources could help address communication barriers and enable more people to participate in the electoral process.

Law reform

- Conduct a review of electoral laws to ensure they align with international and regional commitments. Undertake a constitutional and legislative review to make sure laws related to elections are gender-sensitive and establish mechanisms to monitor and implement these laws.
- Parliamentarians should follow up on recommendations by EMBs after each electoral process. The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) has recommended amending Section 57 of the Electoral Act to include tactile ballot papers or voting devices.

Sex-disaggregated data

- Communicate and disseminate sex-disaggregated data to the public and the media. Raise awareness and understanding of the importance and benefits of sex-disaggregated data for the electoral process and democracy.

Electoral funding and Gender quota financing provisions

- Consider adopting gender quotas and using political funding as a reward or penalty based on the number of elected women candidates. This could encourage political parties to have more women in their candidate lists, increasing women's chances of being elected to political positions.
- Regularly review and evaluate the effectiveness of gender quotas towards achieving gender equality.
- Collaborate and partner with other actors, such as civil society, media, and international organisations, on electoral funding for women.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICS (VAWP)

5



Protest for the liberation of Abir Moussi (outspoken lawyer and politician) in Tunisia.

Credit: Free Destourian Party (PDL)

KEY FACTS

- In an II survey, 80% of the women parliamentarians interviewed from 50 African countries reported experiencing psychological violence online, and 67% faced sexist behaviour or remarks.
- Violence Against Women in Politics (VAWP) is influenced by historical, social, and political factors that affect the climate for women in politics.
- VAWP can take various forms, such as physical violence, aggression, intimidation, sexual coercion, psychological violence, and economic violence.
- VAWP negatively impacts women's political careers, their well-being, the quality and legitimacy of democracy, and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- The legal and institutional frameworks on VAWP vary in their effectiveness, depending on the context, the content, and the compliance of the frameworks. The frameworks include the international, regional, national, and institutional levels.
- Emerging forms of VAWP include social media and online abuse.
- Media, civil society, and international organisations can help raise awareness and support women in politics to combat VAWP.
- Men can be allies in preventing VAWP by challenging patriarchal norms and supporting women in politics.

Introduction

The advent of multiparty politics in Africa has not translated into an equitable playing field for women. The persistent spectre of VAWP continues to cast a dark shadow over the aspirations of gender equality in Africa. Despite affirmative action and the adoption of international gender instruments, women across the continent face relentless resistance in claiming their rightful place in political arenas, shackled by intimidation, violence, and harassment.

VAWP refers to any act or threat of gender-based violence, coercion, or intimidation that targets women because of their political involvement or views[1].VAWP can take various forms, such as physical, sexual, psychological, or economic violence, and can occur in public or private spaces, online or offline[2]. Violence against women in politics consists of "any act of gender-based violence, or threat of such acts, that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering" and is **"directed against a woman in politics because she is a woman, or affects women disproportionately"**.[3]

VAWP has multiple causes and consequences. Some of the factors that contribute to VAWP include patriarchal norms and stereotypes, political instability and conflict, weak legal and institutional frameworks, and lack of awareness and data[4]. VAWP can negatively impact on women politicians' personal and professional lives, undermining their credibility, confidence, and security, discouraging them from running for office or expressing their opinions and reducing their effectiveness and influence in decision-making[5].



1 Widespread sexism and violence against women in African parliaments according to new IPU report (2024) Inter-Parliamentary Union. Available at: https://www.ipu.org/news/press-releases/2021-11/widespread-sexism-and-violence-against-women-in-african-parliaments-according-new-ipu-report (Accessed: 18 February 2024).
2 Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Africa (2024) Inter-Parliamentary Union. Available at: https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/issue-briefs/2021-11/sexism-harassment-and-violence-against-women-in-parliaments-in-africa (Accessed: 18 February 2024).
3 Report by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women in politics, A /73/301, para 12
4 Rutherford, S. (2022) 'Political violence against women: A case from the Central African Republic', GIWPS, 24 January. Available at: https://giwps.georgetown.edu/political-violence-against-women-a-case-from-the-central-african-republic/ (Accessed: 18 February 2024).
5 ibid

VAWP is a challenge to democracy and development. It violates women's human rights and dignity and hinders their full and equal participation in political processes. VAWP also affects the quality and legitimacy of democracy, as it prevents the expression of diverse and representative voices and limits the accountability and responsiveness of political institutions. Moreover, VAWP impedes the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment and Goal 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions.

General Recommendation No. 35 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) notes that gender-based violence against women, including VAWP, whether committed by States, intergovernmental organisations or non-state actors, including private persons, remains pervasive in all countries of the world, with high levels of impunity.[6] VAWP violates women's human right to live free from gender-based violence in political and public life. It affects the realisation of all other human rights, including the ability of elected women to represent their constituents effectively.[7]

VAWP is not a new phenomenon, but it has gained more attention and visibility in recent years thanks to the efforts of various actors and initiatives. For example, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the African Parliamentary Union (APU) conducted a regional study in 2021 based on confidential interviews with 224 women parliamentarians and staff from 50 countries and one sub-regional assembly[8]. The study revealed that 80% of the women interviewed had experienced psychological violence, 67% had been subject to sexist behaviour or remarks, 42% had received death threats, rape threats, or threats of beating or abduction, and 23% had endured physical violence.[9]

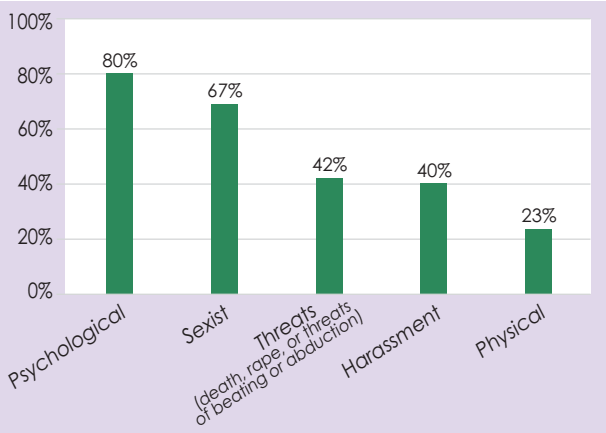
Urgent and comprehensive action to prevent VAWP is required from all stakeholders, including governments, parliaments, political parties, civil society, media, and international organisations. Adopting and enforcing laws and policies that protect and promote the rights of women in politics is an important first step. Other solutions include raising awareness and sensitisation on the causes and effects of VAWP; providing support and assistance to women victims and survivors of VAWP; strengthening the capacity and leadership of women politicians, and enhancing the monitoring and reporting of VAWP cases. This will go a long way to creating a more inclusive, democratic, and peaceful political landscape for all.

The extent of VAWP in Africa

The extent of VAWP in Africa is challenging to measure due to the lack of comparable data and indicators across countries and regions.[10] Governments tend to treat VAWP as isolated incidents rather than evidence of widespread, systematic exclusion and discrimination of women from political participation and public life. Often women politicians prefer not to report such cases due to fear of re-victimisation and ineffective remedies, especially with the political parties' dispute resolution frameworks.

6 General Recommendation No. 35 on gender based violence, updating general recommendation N0. 19, paragraph 6
7 Report by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women in politics, A /73/301, para 42
8 Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Africa (2024) Inter-Parliamentary Union. Available at: https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/issue-briefs/2021-11/sexism-harassment-and-violence-against-women-in-parliaments-in-africa (Accessed: 18 February 2024).
9 ibid
10 Data and violence against women in politics: Expert group meeting report and recommendations | Digital library: Publications | UN Women - Headquarters. Available at: https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/08/egm-report-data-and-violence-against-women-in-politics (Accessed: 12 February 2024).

Figure 5.1: Extent of VAWP in Africa



Source: IPU Study 2021.[11]

Figure 5.1, based on an IPU survey conducted in 2021 shows that 80% of African women parliamentarians interviewed said they had faced psychological violence, such as insults, threats, or harassment, in their parliamentary work; 67% have been subjected to sexist behaviour or remarks, 42% have received violent threats online, 40% have been sexually harassed, and 23% have endured physical violence. These statistics show that VAWP is a severe challenge to women's political participation and representation in Africa. Governments need to step up efforts to prevent and address this phenomenon.

Who perpetrates VAWP?

Women report that the majority of abuse stems from male parliamentarians, especially those from rival parties.[12] The National Democratic Institute (NDI) and UNWomen, finds however, that party colleagues can be among the most violent perpetrators. Other perpetrators include the family and friends of women parliamentarians; community and religious leaders; state security forces and the police.[13] Media outlets can also play an influential role in perpetrating violence - either through their reports or through disseminating violent messages about politically active women from other sources.[14] Sometimes, women in politics disappear mysteriously, as illustrated in the case study from the Republic of Congo by Christine Nathalie Foundou in Chapter Three.

Who is targeted by VAWP?

Those targeted by VAWP include:

- Women political aspirants, political campaign managers, candidates and staffers at party, by-election, general and presidential levels.
- Women parliamentarians living with disabilities, women under 40, unmarried women, and women from minority groups, as well as their families, face a higher incidence of violence.
- Women Members of Parliaments (MPs) who promote women's rights and gender equality.[15]



Eswatini march against Women and Girls Violence, as part of the *Walk in Her Shoes* campaign. *Credit: EYWA*

[11] Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Africa (2024) Inter-Parliamentary Union. Available at: https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/issue-briefs/2021-11/sexism-harassment-and-violence-against-women-in-parliaments-in-africa (Accessed: 18 February 2024).
[12] ibid
[13] https://www.iknowpolitics.org/sites/default/files/vawip_cr_0.pdf
[14] ibid
[15] Guidance note: Preventing violence against women in politics | Digital library: Publications | UN Women - Headquarters. Available at: https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/07/guidance-note-preventing-violence-against-women-in-politics (Accessed: 12 February 2024).

Drivers of VAWP in Africa

VAWP has multiple causes and consequences, and it intersects with other factors such as ethnicity, religion, class, age, and disability. These challenges underscore the broader issue of gender-based violence in political contexts, necessitating efforts to ensure the safety and equal participation of women in electoral processes.

Patriarchal norms and stereotypes: One of the main drivers of VAWP in Africa is the persistence of patriarchal norms and stereotypes that view women as inferior, subordinate, or unfit for political leadership. Cultural, religious, and traditional practices that discriminate against women and limit their access to education, health, and economic opportunities reinforce these stereotypes.[16] The CEDAW Committee, in General Recommendation 35, noted that gender-based violence against women is rooted in gender-related factors such as the ideology of men's entitlement and privilege over women, social norms regarding masculinity, the need to assert male control or power, enforce gender roles, or prevent, discourage or punish what is considered to be unacceptable female behaviour.[17] Women who challenge these norms and stereotypes by entering politics face resistance, hostility, and backlash from male-dominated political institutions, parties, and society. They are often subjected to sexist remarks, insults, threats, or violence that aim to discredit, humiliate, or silence them[18].



In **Senegal**, women candidates and MPs faced sexist remarks, insults, and discrimination during the 2019 elections. In another incident, a male legislator slapped one of the female MPs in parliament due to increasing political tensions in the country[19]. Despite all these challenges, Senegal has made strides in women's political participation, boasting the most significant proportion of female MPs in West Africa. With 46% women in parliament, Senegal ranks third in Africa after Rwanda (61%) and Namibia (50%)[20].

Political instability and conflict: Another driver of VAWP is the prevalence of political unrest and conflict in many parts of the African continent. Political instability and conflict create a climate of fear, insecurity, and impunity that increases the risk and severity of VAWP. It undermines the legal and institutional frameworks that protect and promote women's rights in politics. In these circumstances, armed groups, militias, or extremists often perceive WPP as a threat or a bargaining chip. Yet, findings have shown that the likelihood of civil war decreases when a more significant proportion of a country's politicians are female, as does the use of violence in the face of an international crisis and state-perpetrated human rights abuses.[21] Women also face violence from state actors, such as security forces, who abuse their power and authority to harass, intimidate, or harm women.[22]



In **Burundi**, the Imbonerakure, the youth wing of the ruling National Council for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) party, act as a violent pro-government militia. The Imbonerakure frequently target the opposition or those perceived to support the opposition, especially

[16] ibid
[17] General recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19, Paragraph 19
[18] Ballington, J. (2018) 'Turning the Tide on Violence against Women in Politics: How Are We Measuring Up?', Politics & Gender, 14(4), pp. 695-701. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X18000636.
[19] Politician slaps a woman MP in Senegal parliament, sparking brawl. Al Jazeera. Available at: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/12/1/politician-slaps-a-woman-mp-in-senegal-parliament-sparking-brawl (Accessed: 19 February 2024).
[20] Percentage of women in national parliaments in African countries 2022 (2023) Statista. Available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/1248493/percentage-of-women-in-national-parliaments-in-african-countries/.
[21] Gabrielle Bardall, "Breaking the Mold: Understanding Gender and Electoral violence," IFES White Paper (Arlington, VA: International Foundation for Electoral Systems, 2011)
[22] Rutherford, S. (2022) 'Violence Targeting Women in Politics: 10 Countries to Watch in 2022', GIWPS, 28 January. Available at: https://giwps.georgetown.edu/violence-targeting-women-in-politics-10-countries-to-watch-in-2022/ (Accessed: 19 February 2024).

around contentious periods like elections. In March 2020, members of the Imbonerakure raped and beat up a woman member of the National Congress for Liberation (CNL) party in Kirambi.[23]



In **Nigeria**, women candidates and voters faced intimidation, harassment, and violence during the 2019 elections in the context of ongoing insurgency and terrorism by Boko Haram. In the run-up to the 2023 elections, Human Rights Watch noted: "The elections are set to take place against a backdrop of impunity for abuses by security forces and other actors during the previous general elections in 2019. There have also been security threats from multiple groups across the country[24], including violent gangs in the northwest and groups in south-eastern Nigeria who have been trying to undermine the elections."[25]



On March 16 2023, a gang of assailants stormed the yard of Thokozile Dube standing for the main opposition, the Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) in the local government elections. The attack took place at twilight in Mawabeni community in Matabeleland South province, 480km (300 miles) away from the capital, Harare, **Zimbabwe**, ten days before the Zimbabwean parliamentary and local government by-elections.

Weak legal and institutional frameworks: A third driver of VAWP in Africa is the weakness of the legal and institutional frameworks that address VAWP. Many African countries lack specific laws or policies defining, prohibiting, and sanctioning VAWP.[27] They rely on general laws on violence against women or electoral offences, which are often inadequate, ambiguous, or inconsistent, poorly implemented or enforced due to a lack of political will, resources, or capacity.[28] In some countries, Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) have developed regulatory and normative frameworks to address VAWP (Table 5.1). Legislated codes of conduct seek to regulate the behaviour of various stakeholders in the electoral process, including political parties, independent candidates, political movements and the media. They can be binding, establish sanctions and include provisions explicitly addressing VAWP[29].



In **Chad**, Article 4 of the Code of Conduct forbids violence in all its forms. Its signatories commit not to maintain, finance, or use militias, auto-defence, or paramilitary groups for their protection, threaten, or commit acts of violence and harassment. They also commit to exercising restraint in their speeches, writings, attitudes, and behaviour during the electoral process, rejecting the use of inflammatory and abusive comments inciting violence or ethnic, religious, or gender-based hatred.[30]



The National Election Committee worked with several political parties in **Liberia** to develop a Code of Conduct. Among other goals, it aimed to avoid "the marginalisation of women through violence, intimidation and fraud." Political parties agreed to "the principle of non-discrimination, not to use abusive language, and not to agitate based on sex and gender."[31]

Lack of awareness and data: A fourth driver of VAWP in Africa is the lack of awareness and data on the prevalence and forms of VAWP in

[23] ibid
[24] 'Nigeria: Insecurity Grips Nation's Capital | Human Rights Watch' (2022), 9 August. Available at: https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/08/09/nigeria-insecurity-grips-nations-capital (Accessed: 22 February 2024).
[25] 'Nigeria: Impunity, Insecurity Threaten Elections | Human Rights Watch' (2023), 6 February. Available at: https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/02/06/nigeria-impunity-insecurity-threaten-elections (Accessed: 22 February 2024).
[26] https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/7/25/stereotypes-violence-keep-women-out-of-politics-in-zimbabwe
[27] Key concepts about violence against women in elections. Available at: https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ge/ge8/ge81 (Accessed: 19 February 2024).
[28] ibid
[29] ibid
[30] ibid
[31] Legal and policy reform to prevent and respond to VAWE. Available at: https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ge/ge8/ge82/legal-and-policy-reform-to-prevent-and-respond-to (Accessed: 25 February 2024).

different African contexts[32]. The media, civil society and the public often allow VAWP to go underreported, normalised or ignored. VAWP is also a relatively new area of research, with no global statistics or measurements available and a reliance on anecdotal evidence or case studies. The absence of commonly agreed definitions and indicators and the difficulty of collecting and analysing data on VAWP pose challenges for advancing knowledge, monitoring, and policy and programming responses in this field.[33]

Forms and manifestations of VAWP in Africa

This section examines the types of VAWP. It includes physical, sexual, psychological, and economic violence, whether in public or private spaces, online or offline and its impact on women's political participation, representation, and leadership. Some of the common forms and manifestations of VAWP in Africa are:

Physical violence: This refers to any act of bodily harm or injury inflicted on women because of their political involvement or views. Physical violence can range from minor assaults, such as pushing or slapping, to severe attacks, such as stabbing or shooting, including assassinations, kidnappings, and beatings, often with the intent to force women to resign or withdraw from political life.[34] Physical violence can occur in public or private spaces, such as at rallies, meetings, offices, or homes. Physical violence can have severe consequences for the health, safety, and dignity of women, as well as for their political careers and aspirations.



In **Kenya**, women candidates and MPs faced physical attacks, sexual violence, and online abuse during the 2017 and 2023 elections. Female politicians, like Liz Njue, faced physical attacks, exemplified by hair-pulling and assaults, even during party primaries. According to Reuters, Liz Njue, a Kenyan psychologist who wanted to stand for a county assembly seat, had just arrived to vote in her party primary when opponents attacked her, pulling her hair and tearing her blouse. She fled without casting her ballot and lost the race. Njue is one of the dozens of female candidates who were physically assaulted during campaigning for presidential, legislative and local elections.[35]

> Data is a necessary game-changer in terms of identifying ways to prevent, protect, prosecute, and develop policies combatting violence against women, including in politics.
>
> *- Dr. Sabine Freizer, Chief of Leadership and Governance Section, UN Women*

Sexual violence: This refers to any act of sexual coercion or exploitation imposed on women because of their political involvement or views. Sexual violence can include rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, or sexual blackmail. Sexual violence can occur in public or private spaces, such as at campaign events, workplaces, hotels, or in vehicles. Sexual violence can have devastating impacts on the physical, psychological, and emotional well-being of women, as well as on their political reputation and credibility.

[32] Ballington, J. (2018) 'Turning the Tide on Violence against Women in Politics: How Are We Measuring Up?', Politics & Gender, 14(4), pp. 695-701. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X18000636.
[33] ibid
[34] Guidance note: Preventing violence against women in politics | Digital library: Publications | UN Women - Headquarters. Available at: https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/07/guidance-note-preventing-violence-against-women-in-politics (Accessed: 12 February 2024).
[35] Mersie, A. and Omondi, J. (2022) 'Women candidates in Kenyan elections endure abuse and attacks', Reuters, 1 August. Available at: https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/women-candidates-kenyan-elections-endure-abuse-attacks-2022-08-01/ (Accessed: 19 February 2024).

Psychological violence: This refers to any act of verbal or non-verbal abuse or intimidation directed at women because of their political involvement or views. Psychological violence can include insults, threats, slander, defamation, cyberbullying, character assassination, and stalking.[36] Psychological violence can occur in public or private spaces, such as at media outlets, social media platforms, phone calls, or messages. Psychological violence negatively affects the self-esteem, confidence, and security of women, as well as their political expression and influence.



A Rapid Assessment of Violence Against Women in the 2021 elections in **Ethiopia**, conducted by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) with UNWomen, shows women's participation in election processes. Mainly, women political party candidates are vulnerable to various forms of gender-motivated verbal and physical violence online and offline.[37]

Economic violence: This refers to any act of financial deprivation or manipulation imposed on women because of their political involvement or views. Economic violence can include extortion, bribery, corruption, sabotage, denial of salary or political financing, property theft or damage.[38] Economic violence can occur in public or private spaces, such as at fundraising events, bank accounts, or businesses. This type of violence can have detrimental effects on women's economic and social status and opportunities, as well as on their political resources and performance.





In **Malawi**, the lack of a framework to defend citizens' right to participate in political parties, as well as the failure to financially support them, subjects women to a variety of abuses. However, women rarely denounce abuses in their political organisations. According to Barbra Banda, chairperson of the NGO Gender Coordination Network (NGOGCN), a collective of local organisations championing gender equality and women's empowerment in Malawi: "Political parties look for candidates who can fund political campaigns without squeezing the party." As a result, women have to find their own means of funding political campaigns, even though they carry party affiliations in the contest. Following primary elections, parties fail to back women financially or with essential party torchbearers, which weakens their campaigns. Women often fail to report such abuses because they wish to demonstrate their political clout.[39]

Source: Jenipher Changwanda, a Malawian journalist, with support from Gender Links under the Women's Political Participation Project

[36] ibid
[37] 'Gender based hate speech, violence against women participating in electoral process must be prevented - Ethiopian Human Rights Commission - EHRC' (2021), 8 March. Available at: https://ehrc.org/gender-based-hate-speech-and-violence-against-women-participating-in-electoral-processes-must-be-prevented/ (Accessed: 22 February 2024).
[38] Mersie, A. and Omondi, J. (2022) 'Women candidates in Kenyan elections endure abuse and attacks', Reuters, 1 August. Available at: https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/women-candidates-kenyan-elections-endure-abuse-attacks-2022-08-01/ (Accessed: 19 February 2024).
[39] AfricaBrief, T. (2023) 'GBV in Politics Pushing Women Out: Study', The AfricaBrief, 3 August. Available at: https://africabrief.substack.com/p/gbv-in-politics-pushing-women-out (Accessed: 25 February 2024).

Social media and new forms of VAWP

Social media is a powerful tool for communication, information, and mobilisation, but it also brings new forms of violence against women in politics in Africa. Social media can amplify and facilitate VAWP, as it enables perpetrators to reach, harass, or harm women more efficiently, anonymously, and online. Online abuse refers to any act of verbal or non-verbal harassment or intimidation directed at women on social media because of their political involvement or views.[40] The abuse can include insults, threats, slander, defamation, or cyberbullying through various social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, or Instagram.[41] Online abuse can have adverse effects on the self-esteem, confidence, health, safety, and dignity of women, as well as on their political careers and aspirations. This can lead to women stepping back from public conversations or self-censoring out of fear for privacy and safety.[42] This is covered in-depth in Chapter Six on Media and Social Media.



Anta Babacar Ngom, one of the two women candidates running for the March 2024 presidential elections, shared insights on VAWP in **Senegal**. "Violence against women in politics in Senegal is a worrying reality. My experience as a presidential candidate has highlighted challenges," she said. The violence against women has manifested itself through "intimidations, threats and campaigns of degradation aimed at undermining our credibility and public image," says Anta Babacar Ngom. She indicated that she analysed remarks by political scientists, critical and harsh press articles of certain chroniclers and comments of influencers and activists and found them denigrating. Her personal experience as a candidate shows that VAWP is regular. "I have seen television debates about my clothes, which would never be true for other male candidates."

"Social networks are virulent when it comes to discrediting the posture of a woman who engages in politics," she adds. "Verbal attacks, derogatory campaigns and disseminating false information are commonplace in Senegal."

Ngom is also critical of the mainstream media. "We are faced with sensational headlines and degrading comments in traditional media, which helps to make the atmosphere toxic. Fake news amplifies this violence. These obstacles hinder women's full participation in politics."



Anta Babacar Ngom, Senegalese Presidential Candidate
Credit: Junior Fieni

Yet, "we must work together to create a respectful and inclusive political environment by raising awareness and encouraging dialogue on these crucial issues," she says. To combat intimidation, threats, campaigns that denigrate women and any other form of VAWP, Ngom proposes measures such as "strengthening legislation to punish such behaviour, promoting a culture of respect and tolerance in political discourse. We also need monitoring mechanisms to identify and respond promptly to attacks and to raise public awareness of the consequences of such actions."

Source: Fatou Laye Mbaye Diop, writing for Gender Links Women's Political Participation Project

[40] https://cpdonline.co.uk/knowledge-base/safeguarding/online-abuse/
[41] https://cpdonline.co.uk/knowledge-base/safeguarding/online-abuse/
[42] What is online abuse? | eSafety Commissioner. Available at: https://www.esafety.gov.au/women/women-in-the-spotlight/online-abuse (Accessed: 23 February 2024).



Malawi: GBV in politics pushing women out

In Malawi, women find themselves victims of emotional, physical, and economic abuse, stifling their political potential and dissuading them from fully exercising their political rights, be it as voters, activists, candidates, party supporters, or public officials. Startling cases from recent years underscore the grim reality. During the 2019 General Elections campaign, thugs forcibly stripped naked a female member of the United Transformation Movement (UTM) Party in Mangochi, with the humiliation recorded and shared on social media. Prominent figures like former President Dr Joyce Banda and Patricia Shanil Muluzi, a former First Lady and ex-Member of Parliament, have also endured hate speech aimed at diminishing the stature of women. The heart-wrenching incidents leave no doubt that violence against women in politics is far from an isolated problem.

Chimwemwe Tsitsi, an astute political analyst based in Blantyre, warns of the dire consequences of this violence. "Violence against women in politics imperils the aspiration of achieving 50-50 representation, as it serves to deter potential women from entering the political arena," Tsitsi asserts. The NGO Gender Coordination Network (NGOGCN), a collective of local organisations championing gender equality and women's empowerment, highlights the deep-rooted barriers obstructing women's political participation. "Women possess the constitutional right to contribute to the country's development on par with all citizens," notes Barbra Banda, chairperson of NGOGCN.

Intimidation, gender-based violence, and hate speech form a toxic cocktail aimed at deterring women from engaging in political discourse. Central to this crisis are patriarchal norms that fortify gender-based violence in the political landscape. NGOGCN's Banda contends that these norms perpetuate a system favouring men and the privileged, particularly in Malawi, where familial and religious affiliations wield significant influence.

The financial implications of running for office also weigh disproportionately on women, often requiring personal security measures to ensure their safety. As Banda puts it, "In situations where a male candidate faces defeat from another male, the opponent might choose to target a female candidate, viewing them as an easier target."

According to the Coalition for the Empowerment of Women and Girls (CEWAG), a local NGO dedicated to ensuring women's rights and participation in public affairs, VAWP is rooted in social and cultural norms that confine women to domestic roles and undermine their leadership potential. "Social and cultural norms expect women to stay at home and do domestic chores rather than take on leadership roles," says Beatrice Mateyo, Executive Director for CEWAG. This also occurs in politics, where the public often view women as mere dancers.

Source: Jenipher Changwanda, a Malawian journalist, with support from Gender Links under the Women's Political Participation Project[43]

[43] Africa Brief, T. (2023) 'GBV in Politics Pushing Women Out: Study', The Africa Brief, 3 August. Available at: https://africabrief.substack.com/p/gbv-in-politics-pushing-women-out (Accessed: 25 February 2024).

VAWP impacts the personal and professional lives of women politicians, candidates, and activists, as well as the quality and legitimacy of democracy. It can negatively affect the political careers, aspirations, and well-being of women parliamentarians, candidates, activists, and staff in various ways in Africa. This section explores some of the impacts of VAWP in Africa.

Impact on political careers: VAWP can undermine the political careers of women by discouraging them from running for office, expressing their opinions, or performing their duties. VAWP can create a culture of fear, insecurity, and impunity that prevents women from pursuing their political goals or ambitions. VAWP can also affect women's political identity and agency in politics by challenging their legitimacy, autonomy, or authority or by imposing external expectations or pressures on them.



In **Senegal**, Aminata Toure, a former prime minister and MP of former Senegalese President Macky Sall's Alliance for the Republic (APR) party, cautioned that female pioneers always encounter resistance and suspicion in politics. "You're much more scrutinised... they don't forgive you for any mistakes. I think all women in power would tell you the same."[44]

Impact on well-being: VAWP can harm the well-being of women by affecting their physical, psychological, and emotional health. It can cause bodily injuries, illnesses, or disabilities, as well as psychological trauma, stress, or depression. VAWP can also affect the social and economic status and conditions of women in politics by isolating them from their families, friends, or communities or by depriving them of their income, assets, or opportunities.

Impact on democracy: VAWP can also adversely affect the quality and legitimacy of democracy in Africa by violating women's human rights and dignity in politics and hindering their full and equal participation in political processes. VAWP can affect the diversity and representation of voices and perspectives in political institutions, parties, and society and limit political actors' and stakeholders' accountability and responsiveness. VAWP can also affect the stability and peace of the political system and society by creating or exacerbating conflicts, tensions, or violence.

Impact on development: VAWP can also negatively impact on the achievement of the SDGs in Africa by impeding the progress and outcomes of various development sectors and indicators. VAWP can affect the empowerment and advancement of women and girls and the realisation of their rights and potential in areas such as education, health, or economic opportunities. According to UN Women[45], women's participation and leadership in all areas of life are essential for achieving the SDGs, which aim to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure peace and prosperity for all. Violence against women in politics has negative impacts on several SDGs, such as:

- **SDG 5:** Gender Equality. This goal calls for ending all forms of discrimination, violence, and harmful practices against women and girls and ensuring their full and effective participation and equal opportunities in leadership at all levels of decision-making (Target 5.5)[46]. Violence against women in politics violates these principles and hinders the progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment.



[44] AfricaNews (2022) Senegal leads way on women legislators but challenges ahead, Africanews. Available at: https://www.africanews.com/2022/09/11/senegal-leads-way-on-women-legislators-but-challenges-ahead/ (Accessed: 19 February 2024).
[45] Women and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). UN Women - Headquarters. Available at: https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs (Accessed: 24 February 2024).
[46] SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. UN Women - Headquarters. Available at: https://www.unwomen.org/en/node/36060 (Accessed: 24 February 2024).

- **SDG 16:** Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. This goal aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions.[47] Violence against women in politics undermines these objectives by creating a climate of fear, insecurity, and impunity and eroding the trust and legitimacy of democratic institutions.





- **SDG 3:** Good Health and Well-being. This goal seeks to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all ages.[48]

Violence against women in politics can have severe physical and psychological consequences for the victims, such as injuries, trauma, stress, depression, and anxiety, affecting their health and well-being.[49]

- To address VAWP, adopting and implementing laws, policies, and measures that prevent, protect, and prosecute perpetrators and support victims and survivors is essential. It is also crucial to raise awareness, challenge the social norms and attitudes that condone or justify this violence, and promote a culture of respect and solidarity among all political actors.[50] Doing so creates a safer and more enabling environment for women in politics and contributes to achieving the SDGs in African countries and beyond.

Prevention and response to VAWP

While increasing the number of women in parliament promotes WPP, this is not enough to ensure their safety and protection. Women political aspirants and parliamentarians also need a conducive legal and institutional environment, a culture of respect and tolerance, and effective mechanisms to prevent and address violence and harassment. The criminal justice system should treat VAWP as a severe offence that may lead identified perpetrators to be sanctioned from participating in future elections.

The IPU has noted that most parliaments lack adequate mechanisms to ensure the safety and protection of women who wish to speak out on various issues. Policies need to be more widely known and enforced.[51] As a result, many women may need more time to share their perspectives, which can ultimately limit the diversity and richness of public debate.

The existing legal and institutional frameworks that address violence against women in politics globally and in Africa vary in their effectiveness, depending on the context, the content, and the compliance of the frameworks.

International legal framework: CEDAW, the most widely ratified human rights treaty that addresses the rights of women and the responsibilities of states towards ensuring them, provides extensive guidance on VAW.[52] The CEDAW Committee, which monitors the

[47] Women and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). UN Women - Headquarters. Available at: https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs (Accessed: 24 February 2024).
[48] ibid
[49] Assessing Violence Against Women in the 2023 General Elections (2023) UN Women - Africa. Available at: https://africa.unwomen.org/en/stories/news/2023/06/assessing-violence-against-women-in-the-2023-general-elections (Accessed: 22 February 2024).
[50] Women and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). UN Women - Headquarters. Available at: https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs (Accessed: 24 February 2024).
[51] Widespread sexism and violence against women in African parliaments according to new IPU report (2024) Inter-Parliamentary Union. Available at: https://www.ipu.org/news/press-releases/2021-11/widespread-sexism-and-violence-against-women-in-african-parliaments-according-new-ipu-report (Accessed: 18 February 2024).
[52] Using the international and regional legal framework to stop all forms of violence against women and girls. OHCHR. Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/03/using-international-and-regional-legal-framework-stop-all-forms-violence-against (Accessed: 25 February 2024).

implementation of the convention, has addressed the issue of VAWP in several of its existing general recommendations.[53]

Other human rights instruments and mechanisms, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention against Torture, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Human Rights Council, and the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, complement the international legal framework on VAWP.[54]

The international legal framework on VAWP effectively provides a normative basis and a monitoring mechanism for VAWP. Still, it faces challenges and gaps in ensuring states' ratification, reporting, compliance, and addressing the emerging and evolving forms of VAWP.[55]

Regional legal frameworks: The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol)[56], is the most comprehensive and progressive regional instrument on women's right. The Maputo Protocol protects and promotes the rights of women in Africa, including their right to participate in political and decision-making processes, free of violence. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights monitors compliance with the Maputo Protocol. Related instruments include the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, the African Union Commission, and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa.[57]

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) protocol on gender and development addresses the issue of VAWP under **Article 21**. This article states that state parties shall enact and enforce legislation to eliminate all forms of gender-based violence, including violence against women in politics, and adopt and implement policies and programmes to prevent, report, investigate, and punish perpetrators of such violence. The article also calls for the promotion of public awareness and education on the causes, consequences, and prevention of gender-based violence, as well as the provision of adequate resources and support services for survivors of such violence.[58]

The regional legal framework of VAWP effectively provides a context-specific and gender-responsive framework and mechanism for VAWP. Challenges and gaps often abound when ensuring states' ratification, domestication, and implementation and addressing the diversity and complexity of VAWP in different African contexts.[59]

National legal frameworks: Constitutional and statutory laws and policies in each country provide the framework for addressing VAWP. The scope and content vary depending on each country's political, legal, and social system. Most countries rely on general laws or guidelines that cover violence against women or electoral offences but lack specific laws or policies that define, prohibit, and sanction VAWP.[60] The national legal framework of VAWP is essential in providing a legal basis and a policy direction for VAWP. However, there may be gaps in ensuring the enactment, harmonisation, and enforcement of laws and policies and addressing the inconsistencies between the national and the international or regional frameworks that a country is signatory to.

[53] General recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19 (1992). OHCHR. Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/general-comments-and-recommendations/general-recommendation-no-35-2017-gender-based (Accessed: 25 February 2024).
[54] African Union Legal Frameworks aim to break the cycle of violence against women and girls. | African Union. Available at: https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20211125/african-union-legal-frameworks-aim-break-cycle-violence-against-women-and (Accessed: 19 February 2024).
[55] Guidance note: Preventing violence against women in politics | Digital library: Publications | UN Women - Headquarters. Available at: https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/07/guidance-note-preventing-violence-against-women-in-politics (Accessed: 12 February 2024).
[56] African Union Legal Frameworks aim to break the cycle of violence against women and girls. | African Union (no date). Available at: https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20211125/african-union-legal-frameworks-aim-break-cycle-violence-against-women-and (Accessed: 19 February 2024).
[57] ibid
[58] ibid
[59] Key concepts about violence against women in elections. Available at: https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ge/ge8/ge81 (Accessed: 19 February 2024).
[60] ibid



In **Mozambique**, Law no. 29/2009, of 29 September on Domestic Violence safeguards and defends women. For example, this law provides sanctions for the psychological and moral violence that women can suffer and, therefore, feel withdrawn from participating in political activities or even development for women. However, many women are afraid to file a complaint against the man, or if they do so, they immediately ask to withdraw the complaint.[61]

Some countries have dedicated structures and mechanisms that deal with VAWP, such as the National Gender and Equality Commission in Kenya, the Electoral Commission's gender desk in Uganda, or the Ministry of Interior's gender unit in Morocco. Other measures taken by African countries include:

- Developing and implementing legal and policy frameworks and mechanisms that define, prohibit, and sanction VAWP and protect and promote women's rights and freedoms in politics, based on international human rights standards and gender-responsive principles. They should involve the participation and consultation of women politicians, civil society, and other stakeholders.[62]
- Strengthening the capacity and resources of the legal and institutional actors and stakeholders responsible for addressing VAWP, such as the police, the judiciary, the electoral authorities, and the social media platforms. These actors and stakeholders should have the technical skills, tools, and personnel to monitor, investigate, or prosecute VAWP cases and provide protection and assistance to the victims.[63]

Institutional frameworks on VAWP can effectively provide a practical and operational framework and mechanism for addressing VAWP. However, they may not adequately address the lack of political will, resources, accountability, or capacity to prevent and combat VAWP.[64]

The following table analyses specific laws, policies, and general structures and mechanisms dealing with violence against women or electoral matters in 20 selected countries.

Table 5.1 shows that:

- Out of the 20 countries analysed, no country has a specific law on VAWP.
- Eight countries have Codes of conduct for Political Parties and Candidates.
- In addition to general legal frameworks, seven countries have institutional mechanisms to address VAWP through gender ministries, gender commissions or electoral management bodies.

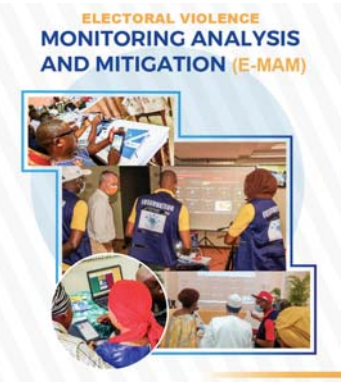
[61] Shiela Manjate, Mozambican consultant, GL WPP Project.
[62] Guidance note: Preventing violence against women in politics | Digital library: Publications | UN Women - Headquarters. Available at: https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/07/guidance-note-preventing-violence-against-women-in-politics (Accessed: 12 February 2024).
[63] 'Strategies to prevent and manage electoral violence'. ACCORD. Available at: https://www.accord.org.za/publication/strategies-to-prevent-and-manage-electoral-violence/ (Accessed: 25 February 2024).
[64] ibid

Table 5.1: National and institutional provisions to address VAWP in selected African countries

Region	Country	% of women in parliament (2024)	Specific Law on VAWP	Legal frameworks to address VAWP	Codes of Conduct	Institutional mechanism to address VAWP
West Africa	Burkina Faso	17%	No specific law or policy on VAWP	N/A	Code of Conduct for Political Parties and Candidates	
Central Africa	Chad	26%	No specific law or policy on VAWP	N/A	Code of Conduct for Political Parties and Candidates	
North Africa	Egypt	28%	No specific law or policy on VAWP	General laws on violence against women and electoral offences apply	N/A	National Council for Women monitors VAWP
East Africa	Ethiopia	41%	No specific law or policy on VAWP	N/A	Code of Conduct for Political Parties and Candidates	
West Africa	Ghana	15%	No specific law or policy on VAWP	N/A	Code of Conduct for Political Parties and Candidates	
East Africa	Kenya	23%	No specific law or policy on VAWP	Sexual Offences Act, Election Offences Act, Political Parties Act	N/A	National Gender and Equality Commission monitors VAWP
West Africa	Liberia	11%	No specific law or policy on VAWP	N/A	Code of Conduct for Political Parties and Candidates	
Southern Africa	Malawi	21%	No specific law or policy on VAWP	Gender Equality Act, Electoral Commission Act	N/A	
North Africa	Morocco	24%	No specific law or policy on VAWP	General laws on violence against women and electoral offences apply	N/A	
Southern Africa	Mozambique	43%	No specific law or policy on VAWP	N/A	Code of Conduct for Political Parties and Candidates	
Southern Africa	Namibia	44%	No specific law or policy on VAWP	N/A	Code of Conduct for Political Parties and Candidates	The Ministry of Interior has a gender unit to address VAWP
West Africa	Nigeria	4%	No specific law or policy on VAWP	Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, Electoral Act	N/A	
East Africa	Rwanda	61%	No specific law or policy on VAWP	Constitution, Organic Law Governing Elections, Law Relating to the Rights and Protection of the Child	N/A	
West Africa	Senegal	46%	No specific law or policy on VAWP	Constitution, Electoral Code, Law on Parity	N/A	
West Africa	Sierra Leone	28%	No specific law or policy on VAWP	N/A	Code of Conduct for Political Parties and Candidates	The Electoral Commission has a code of conduct to prevent VAWP
Southern Africa	South Africa	43%	No specific law or policy on VAWP	Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, Electoral Act, Electoral Code of Conduct	N/A	
Southern Africa	Tanzania	37%	No specific law or policy on VAWP	Sexual Offences Special Provisions Act, Election Expenses Act, Political Parties Act	N/A	
North Africa	Tunisia	16%	No specific law or policy on VAWP	General laws on violence against women and electoral offences apply	N/A	Independent High Authority for Elections has a gender unit to address VAWP
East Africa	Uganda	34%	No specific law or policy on VAWP	Prevention of Domestic Violence Act, Electoral Commission Act, Parliamentary Elections Act	N/A	The Electoral Commission has a gender desk to address VAWP
Southern Africa	Zimbabwe	31%	No specific law or policy on VAWP	Constitution, Electoral Act, Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act	N/A	Zimbabwe Electoral Commission has a gender policy to address VAWP

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union Open Data as of 13 February 2024, IKnowPolitics.Org,[65] ACE Electoral Knowledge Network.[66]

[65] https://www.iknowpolitics.org/sites/default/files/vawip_cr_0.pdf
[66] Key concepts about violence against women in elections. Available at: https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ge/ge8/ge81 (Accessed: 19 February 2024).



West Africa: Using data and visualisation to map election violence

The Electoral Violence Monitoring Analysis and Mitigation (E-MAM) 2023-2026 project is the third phase of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) Regional initiative to address electoral violence in West Africa. Implemented by WANEP in partnership with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), ECOWAS Network of Electoral Commissions (ECONEC), and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS). Funded by the European Union, the project targets 12 West African countries. It focuses on the role of elections in triggering violence, internal risk factors, and external context-related risks. The project aims to reduce electoral violence by enhancing regional and national capacities through early warning systems and rapid response mechanisms. It offers sub-grants for interventions involving Civil Society Organisations to mitigate threats to democracy in targeted countries.

The E-MAM project addresses the many internal and external risk factors associated with electoral violence in West Africa by focusing on the various management phases of elections and understanding the internal risk factors contributing to violence. The project recognises that elections can act as catalysts for violence due to the convergence of external and context-related risk factors. The primary strategy involves enhancing and mobilising regional and national capacities for preventing and mitigating political violence, with a critical emphasis on promoting and implementing early warning and rapid response mechanisms throughout the electoral process.

To achieve this, the project operationalises mechanisms for monitoring and analysing risks of electoral violence or threats to democracy in targeted countries, ensuring that the tools for early warning are in place and effective. The project supports specific activities to mitigate these risks, focusing on prompt responses to threats before, during, and after elections. By offering sub-grants for interventions or mini-projects benefiting Civil Society Organisations and various stakeholders, the project enhances inclusive responses to electoral violence and threats to democracy, fostering a safer and more stable electoral environment in West Africa.

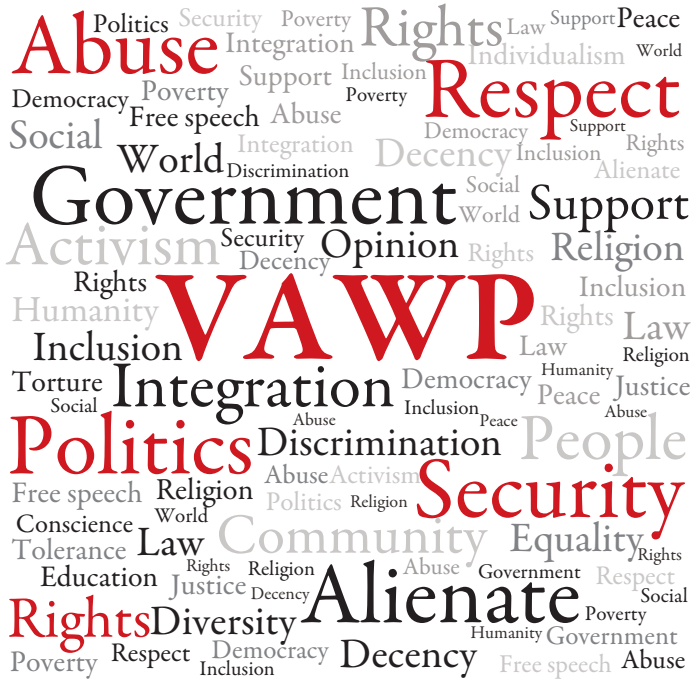
Before Election Day, WANEP trains its observers on the Survey 123 application to report any disruptions or violent conduct from the opening to the closing of the polls. The Election Situation Room (ESR) continues the monitoring processes. WANEP's ESR has four segments - Data gatherers, Analysts, Communication, and Decision-makers, each operating on a specific task during the elections.

- **Data gatherers** are comprised of young people who liaise with observers deployed on the field to collate and submit data to the Survey 123 application on potential incidents that could mar the peaceful conduct of the elections.
- **Analysts** from academia and civil society ensure that data/information from the field is well interpreted in the various reports to inform the decision-makers (Decision Room) on which actions to take after potential threats to the peaceful conduct of the elections have been identified.
- **The decision room** comprises eminent personalities, both women and men, who use their good offices, relationships, contacts, and influence to pre-empt or intervene after the monitoring identifies potential threats.
- **The Communication Room** comprises personnel from the mainstream media and social media specialists who disseminate reports from the ESR to partners and relevant stakeholders on time. They ensure publicity for visits by other observer missions and eminent personalities to the WANEP's ESR.

Source: WANEP[67]



Efforts to combat violence against women in politics in the **Central African Republic** (CAR) have seen the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in The Central African Republic (MINUSCA), with the support of UN Women, engaging women's organisations to establish 16 women's situation rooms and a 24-hour hotline.[68] These efforts helped enhance women's protection through tracking and reporting risks, threats and incidents of violence against women.



Raising awareness, monitoring, and reporting on VAWP in Africa

The media, civil society, and international organisations play a vital role in raising awareness, monitoring, and reporting on VAWP, as they can help to expose, prevent, and combat VAWP and support and empower women who experience it. Examples of measures taken to raise awareness on VAWP include:

- Campaigns, education, training, or advocacy that aim to challenge the patriarchal norms and attitudes that fuel VAWP and promote women's recognition, respect, and support in politics.[69]
- Supporting and empowering women who experience VAWP by providing them with legal aid, health care, psychosocial counselling, or other forms of assistance. This can also include creating networks and coalitions of women politicians and activists who can share their experiences, challenges, and strategies and advocate for their rights and interests.[70]
- Coordinating and collaborating with different actors and stakeholders, such as governments, parliaments, political parties, civil society, media, and international organisations, to prevent and combat VAWP. This can include sharing information, data, and good practices, establishing joint mechanisms or platforms, and developing common standards or guidelines.[71]

[67] 'Electoral Violence Monitoring, Analysis and Mitigation (E-MAM) 2023-2026 - West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)' (2023), 20 November. Available at: https://wanep.org/wanep/electoral-violence-monitoring-analysis-and-mitigation-e-mam-2023-2026/ (Accessed: 18 February 2024).
[68] Rutherford, S. (2022) 'Political violence against women: A case from the Central African Republic', GIWPS, 24 January. Available at: https://giwps.georgetown.edu/political-violence-against-women-a-case-from-the-central-african-republic/ (Accessed: 18 February 2024).
[69] Guidance note: Preventing violence against women in politics | Digital library: Publications | UN Women - Headquarters. Available at: https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/07/guidance-note-preventing-violence-against-women-in-politics (Accessed: 12 February 2024).
[70] ibid
[71] 'Strategies to prevent and manage electoral violence'. ACCORD. Available at: https://www.accord.org.za/publication/strategies-to-prevent-and-manage-electoral-violence/ (Accessed: 25 February 2024).



In **Kenya**, the Women's Situation Room is a women-led initiative that monitors and prevents violence during elections and that involves women survivors of VAWP as peace ambassadors and mediators.[72] UN Women developed a draft training facilitator manual 2017 with UNDP support to strengthen duty bearers' capacities to support VAWP survivors using existing protocols and measures for reporting, responding to, investigating, and prosecuting VAWP.[73] The manual responded to post-election violence experienced by women and girls in the 2007 electoral process and as part of broader initiatives to fight VAWP in the country. With a survivor-centred approach, the manual covers issues such as providing direct support to those affected by VAWP. It also includes information about Kenya's relevant legal framework and health, security, and justice sector responses to VAWP cases.[74]

Police response to VAWP

The role of the police as an enforcement institution in addressing VAWP in Africa is multifaceted and involves both protective and investigative functions. The police are responsible for ensuring the safety of women in politics, preventing acts of violence, and investigating incidents when they occur. However, police intervention varies across countries influenced by factors such as legislation, societal attitudes, and the resources available to law enforcement agencies.



In **Kenya**, the National Police Service (NPS) is undergoing significant reforms to create a gender-transformative service and better manage GBV response. It recently launched a one-stop shop for reporting GBV services, known as the POLICARE initiative[75], which aligns with the government's commitments under Generation Equality[76]. There is also a forensic lab at the criminal investigation headquarters to strengthen investigations of SGBV cases in time for the election. Fundamental changes also include a new directorate for psychosocial support for staff and supplying all areas with vehicles, which was not a given before.

According to the head of the NPS Elections Security Secretariate, Commissioner Dominic Kisavi, "The biggest challenge for the NPS is a lack of resources and internal resistance to change. However, attitudes are changing, and there is a realisation that reforms are designed to help us serve the public better. We have established a new directorate on gender at the headquarters, which is being duplicated at the county level. Around 50% of police stations now have a gender desk. We have also established a police leadership academy to train them on leadership, management, and human rights and a strengthened internal affairs unit to enhance operations and investigate internally."



In 2019, the Supreme Court of **Malawi** ordered police authorities to pay compensation to 18 women allegedly raped by officers during post-election violence.

[72] Women's Situation Room: Africa's unique approach to reducing electoral violence (2015) Africa Renewal. Available at: https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/april-2015/women%E2%80%99s-situation-room-africa%E2%80%99s-unique-approach-reducing-electoral-violence (Accessed: 24 February 2024).
[73] Legal and policy reform to prevent and respond to VAWE. Available at: https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ge/ge8/ge82/legal-and-policy-reform-to-prevent-and-respond-to (Accessed: 25 February 2024).
[74] Legal and policy reform to prevent and respond to VAWE. Available at: https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ge/ge8/ge82/legal-and-policy-reform-to-prevent-and-respond-to (Accessed: 25 February 2024).
[75] Kenya Elections: National Police Service on elections safety, sexual violence and reform (2022) UN Women - Africa. Available at: https://africa.unwomen.org/en/stories/feature-story/2022/04/nps-on-elections-safety-sexual-violence-and-reform (Accessed: 23 May 2024).
[76] Generation Equality Forum (2024) Generation Equality Forum. Available at: https://forum.generationequality.org/ (Accessed: 23 May 2024).

Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter has discussed VAWP in Africa, which is a severe and widespread problem that affects the rights and freedoms of women in political and public life. The chapter has explored the drivers, the forms and manifestations, the impact, the legal and institutional frameworks, the emerging and evolving trends, the role of media, civil society, and international organisations, and the involvement of men and boys in preventing and combating VAWP. The chapter has provided some conclusions and recommendations based on the existing research, evidence, and good practices on VAWP. The main message of the chapter is that VAWP is a human rights violation and a significant barrier to women's political representation and participation in Africa and that it requires urgent and comprehensive action from all stakeholders, including governments, parliaments, political parties, civil society, media, and international organisations, to create a more inclusive, democratic, and peaceful society for all. Recommendations include:

Governments

- **Understand and address the causes of VAWP:** Investigate the root causes of VAWP in each country, region, and context and implement targeted measures to prevent and address it.
- **Legal and policy frameworks:** Develop and implement legal and policy frameworks and mechanisms that define, prohibit, and sanction VAWP and protect and promote women's rights and freedoms in politics. Use oversight powers to ensure strict implementation; strengthen the capacity and resources of the legal and institutional actors and stakeholders to address VAWP. This includes adopting internal regulations, codes of conduct and zero-tolerance policies for perpetrators of any form of VAWP, including sexual harassment and violence perpetrated through media releases and statements.
- **Capacity building:** Enhance the capabilities and resources of legal and institutional bodies to tackle VAWP effectively.
- **Online violence:** Update legislation and policies to address emerging forms of VAWP, particularly online and social media-related violence.

Civil Society Organisations (CSO)

- **Holistic approaches:** Advocate for a broad strategy to combat the various forms and manifestations of VAWP.
- **Elevate survivor voices:** Elevate the experiences of women who have survived VAWP in advocacy and policy development.
- **Conduct awareness campaigns:** Increase awareness regularly on the issue of violence against women in politics and the role that male parliamentarians and other stakeholders can play in preventing VAWP.
- **Utilise AU and UN Special Procedures:** Advocate for the ongoing use of African Union (AU) and United Nations (UN) special procedures, such as appointing Special Rapporteurs, to monitor and report on VAWP.
- **Document VAWP incidents:** Systematically document VAWP cases to build a robust evidence base that can inform policy and advocacy work.

Regional Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs)

- **Impact assessments:** Monitor and protect women's political rights to ensure their full participation and representation.
- **Policy oversight:** Use oversight powers to guarantee the strict application of VAWP-related policies and regulations.

Political Parties

- **Internal regulations:** Adopt internal codes of conduct and zero-tolerance policies against VAWP, including sexual harassment and media-related violence.

- **Accountability:** Hold members accountable for their actions and attitudes towards VAWP and encourage positive behaviour towards women in politics.

Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC PF)

- **Innovative strategies:** Develop new strategies to address and prevent VAWP, considering the evolving nature of political violence.
- **Men and boys engagement:** Educate and involve men and boys in understanding VAWP's impact and promoting gender equality and respect for women in politics.



White march against violence in Madagascar. *Photo: Zotonantenaina RAZANADRATEFA*

MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA

6



Marie-Josee Ifoku the only woman presidential candidate in the 2023 DRC elections talks to the media.
Photo credit: CENA

KEY FACTS

- Media plays a critical role in promoting Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5: to "ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life".
- The extent to which the media reflects the views and voices of women is a critical measure of voice.
- The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) remains the largest and longest longitudinal research study on gender equality in the news media in world, spanning from 1995-2020.
- The data reveals a significant underrepresentation of women in news stories, with only 25% of women featuring as news subjects and sources in mainstream news. In Africa, women make up only 22% of news subjects and sources.[1]
- Politics and government news constitute 30% of the news coverage across Africa's newspapers, television, and radio broadcasts.[2] This trend extends to online news platforms, where approximately 25% of the news content focuses on political matters.

[1] World Association of Christian Communicators. (2020) Who Makes the News. Global Media Monitoring Project 2020.
[2] https://whomakesthenews.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/GMMP2020.ENG_.FINAL20210713.pdf Accessed 15 January 2024.
Ibid

Introduction

This chapter examines the relationship between media and women's political participation (WPP) in Africa, including the challenges and opportunities. It also assesses the double-edged sword presented by social media for WPP. Online media enables women in politics to engage with voters, promote their agenda, and counter criticisms. Yet women politicians frequently experience misogynistic attacks. The chapter borrows from news articles, case studies, media monitoring reports and latest research to weave a picture of the relationship between media and politics and in particular women in politics. This chapter also incorporates an advocacy component within its recommendations section, offering strategies aimed at promoting WPP through mainstream as well as online media.



Egyptian journalist Shahira Amin and Libyan journalist Fatma Ghandour conduct a media monitoring exercise during a Women Peace and Security workshop held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 2016. *Photo: Tarisai Nyamweda*

The African Union's Agenda 2063 underscores the significance of WPP as an essential driver of growth, prosperity, and sustainability on the continent. Under Aspiration 6, Agenda 2063 advocates for the establishment of a more inclusive society characterised by the active participation of all its citizens. In pursuit of Aspiration 6, the African Union is implementing the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Strategy 2018 - 2028. Within this strategy, Pillar 4 aims to strengthen women's leadership by giving them more voice and visibility.[3]

African journalism still faces challenges in promoting gender equality and equity, despite some progress made in reporting and newsgathering practices. Compared to other regions of the world, Africa's journalism sector lags behind in its contribution to addressing gender disparities. Gender imbalances in news content and within media institutions persist. This includes continued fewer women reporters and editors in hard news beats such as politics. The gender disparity among reporters and editors results in a significant gap in the representation of women's voices and perspectives in political reporting.

Research consistently demonstrates a close correlation between media content and the perspectives of those who produce it. The underrepresention of women in newsrooms often

[3] Nkoa, BEO., Beyene, B.O., Simb, J.FN., & Eloundou,GN., (2023) Does social media improve women's political empowerment in Africa?,Telecommunications Policy,Volume 47, Issue 9, 2023,102624,

results in their perspectives on political issues, policy priorities, and lived experiences being marginalised or overlooked. The absence of women reporters and editors in political journalism contributes to a lack of nuanced analysis and understanding of gender-related issues in politics. There is an insufficient cadre of gender sensitive and responsive leadership who are either women or men who may be willing to push for gender equality in news content or within media institutional composition. Additionally, there is a growing trend of cyber misogyny targeted at women journalists as well as women politicians. Feminist media activists have consistently highlighted the lack of women's voices, limited portrayal and perpetuation of stereotypes experienced by women globally. Media continues to restrict or overlook women's right to freedom of expression and opinion, resulting in women's voices being unheard in the news. Factors such as the sensationalisation of media, weak ethical practices, male dominance, violations of women's rights, and a lack of gender mainstreaming in both editorial as well as institutional practices further hinders progress towards achieving gender equality in and through the media and ICTs. Online GBV, which disproportionally affects women in particular women journalists and politicians, is a new threat.

Political news coverage

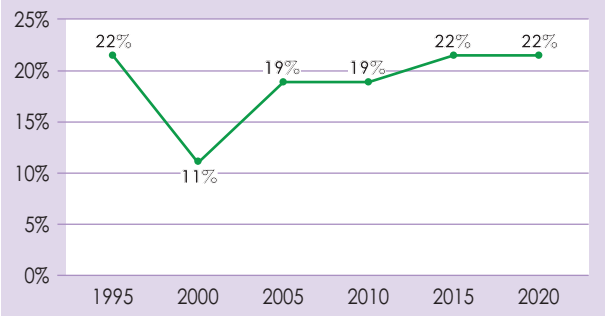
According to the 2020 GMMP, news on politics and the government constituted 30% of the news in Africa. This is much higher than the overall global average of 24; Asia (25%); Caribbean (21%); Europe (25%); Latin America (21%); Middle East (27%); North America (25%) and the Pacific (18%). Politics and government also constitute 25% of the news topics carried on online platforms such as X.

Political news includes political instability, conflict, coups, attempted coups, and terrorism across the continent, especially in the Sahel region. Coups further political instability at the national and regional levels, continue to cripple already fragile economies, and to displace hundreds of thousands of people.

Women in the news

According to the 2020 GMMP, globally, "between 2015 and 2020, the needle edged one point forward to 25% in the proportion of subjects and sources who are women. The single point improvement is the first since 2010."[4] The same media monitoring study reveals that when it comes to women's voices Africa is below the global average of 25%. The overall presence of women in African media across different media types, including print, radio, and television news, between 1995 and 2020 stagnated at 22%.

Figure 6.1: Women sources in the news in Africa 1995 - 2020



Source: GMMP 2020.

[4] World Association of Christian Communicators.(2020) Who Makes the News . Global Media Monitoring Project 2020. https://whomakesthenews.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/GMMP2020.ENG_.FINAL20210713.pdf Accessed 15 January 2024.

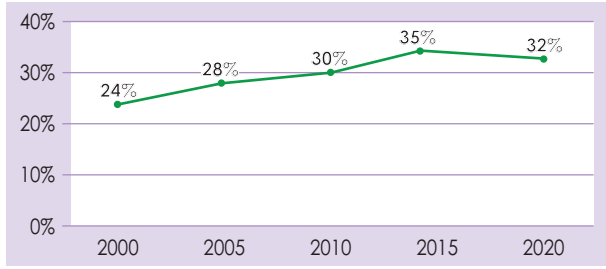
Figure 6.1 tracks women sources in the news from the 1995 to the 2020 GMMP reports. The GMMP is a one day media monitoring initiative which has taken place once every five years since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. Figure 6.1 shows a stagnation followed by a plateau on women's sources. The denial of voice perpetuates the notion that women's perspectives and experiences are less significant or worthy of attention, contributing to the marginalisation of women in society. Fewer voices of women result in a limited diversity of perspectives presented in the media. Furthermore, the underrepresentation of women's voices limits diversity, hampers the richness and depth of discussions on various issues, as their unique insights and viewpoints are overlooked.

Women reporters

Throughout Africa, the media industry still lags in embracing gender diversity, with figures suggesting that achieving full diversity may require several years and more concrete and deliberate effort. Only in a few countries, for example South Africa, do figures of women and men in media houses come close to parity.[5]

Figure 6.2 tracks women reporters in Africa over the last twenty years, as reported by the GMMP 2020. The GMMP shows that the percentage of women reporting news increased from 24% to 35% over a span of fifteen years. However, there was a decline from 35% to 32% in these proportions during the most recent monitoring phase.

Figure 6.2: Women reporters in Africa - GMMP 2020



Source: GMMP 2020.

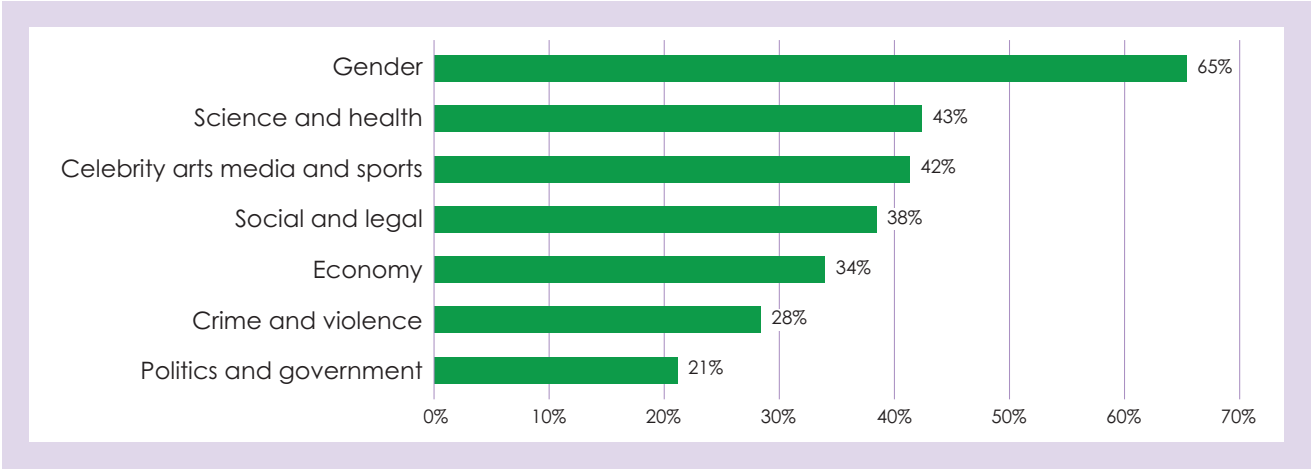
Political reporting

Globally, the gendered division of labour in newsrooms is an ongoing concern. Despite the fact that women journalists are covering a wider variety of topics compared to previous years, there is still a gender gap in coverage of the "serious" beats.

Political reporting remains male-dominated. According to the GMMP 2020 report, women comprise only 35% of those who report on politics and government.[6] A study by African Women in Media (AWIM) in Rwanda decried male journalists covering almost all the "big" political stories.[7] The research suggests that the lack of women in editorial leadership contributes to such a scenario. The insufficient numbers of women reporters in newsrooms adds to these inequalities. This may also then affect how women politicians are covered and to what extent their voices are heard in the media. It is crucial for women reporters to have equal representation in newsrooms and to contribute to the coverage of significant topics such as politics.

5 Daniels, G., Nyamweda, T., Nxumalo, C., and Ludman, B., (2018). Glass Ceilings: Women in South Africa newsroom. Gender Links. Johannesburg.
6 Ibid
7 African Women in Media https://africanwomeninmedia.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/FoJo_RwandaGenderStudies_Print_SinglePage2-1-1.pdf

Figure 6.3: Women Reporters by topics in Africa - GMMP 2020



Source: GMMP 2020.

Figure 6.3 reflects women reporters in Africa by the topics they cover in mainstream media for the 2020 GMMP. It shows that women comprise only 21% of those who cover Politics and Government news topics. The only topic category in which women predominate is gender equality (65%).

Portrayal of Women in Politics in the media

The media often propagates societal stereotypes that men have a monopoly on competitive politics, overshadowing efforts by women politicians. When covering women politicians' campaigns, or efforts, the emphasis tends to be on their perceived flaws, hyper-sexualisation, exaggerated emotional nature of their remarks or actions, rather than what they are actually doing right or policy positions they have.[8] This public narrative creates the perception of female politicians lacking credibility and political competence.

A 2016 study by the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) that covered 39 countries and five regions across the world found that in Africa, over 27% of the respondents believed that the traditional media had disseminated images of, or comments about them that were highly contemptuous or sexually charged.[9] That proportion rose to 41.8% in the case of images or comments disseminated through social media (Twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook, etc.). In the case of social media, such acts are usually anonymous although the perpetrators sometimes indicate their political tendencies. In the same study, participants reported instances of photomontages depicting them nude, photos paired with derogatory remarks, obscene sketches of themselves, or information circulated on social media insinuating marital discord and personal failures.[10] Although this research may seem limited and may not be representative of all countries in Africa, or of the world, the results revealed how immense the challenge is. Below are some examples:

[8] IPU 2016 Sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians. http://archive.ipu.org/pdf/publications/issuesbrief-e.pdf Accessed 20 February 2024
[9] Ibid
[10] Ibid



Joanna Bérenger is forging her own path in **Mauritian** politics, despite her family heritage. She is the youngest daughter of Paul Bérenger, former Prime Minister and leader of the Mouvement Militant Mauricien (MMM), one of the main opposition parties. Public opinion overwhelmingly views Bérenger's entry into the political arena as being associated with her father. Bérenger, a parliamentarian in Mauritius, refuses to be reduced to the simplistic image of political heiress. She weighs up the challenges facing female politicians, who are often judged through the prism of family relationships rather than their skills and personal contributions.



Joanna Bérenger protesting in Maurtius.
Crédit photo: Beekash Roopun

"Many times, I have explained in the media that my father had never initiated or boosted my entry into politics, even though I am conscious that being his daughter has given me visibility and sympathy from voters during the early days of my political engagement. However, having to repeat it again, today, when the question is never asked to the many 'sons of' politicians, is a sad reminder that the legitimacy of women in politics is always and constantly questioned." She added that, "I am proud to have a father whose honesty and hard work is recognised and valued. He has always taught us to fend for ourselves and this is why I have never had any special advantage in the party. I had to make my way up the ladder in the MMM and I must continue to prove myself in Parliament and in the field. But the expectations are high when you bear that surname."

Extract from a story written by Karen Walter for GL WPP Project.



Fyness Mangonjwa is the youngest Member of Parliament (MP) in **Malawi,** elected into office in 2019 at the age of 22.The slow development of her hometown in Machinga motivated her to enter politics. However, this decision was not without its challenges. Coming from Machinga where cultural practices often restrict women from ascending to higher positions, she faced additional hurdles. "I fought on three fronts during the campaign - persuading voters to support me while contending with objections about my age and the prevailing notion that a woman cannot lead. The constituency had not been led by a woman at that time," she said. Mangonjwa noted the challenges of dealing with male politicians, party members and opponents who attempt to take advantage of her gender, often underestimating her capabilities.

Her initial encounter with the media did not go well as she struggled to find the right words. This resulted in a video that went viral making her the subject of national ridicule. "Emotionally hurt by the experience, I sought English lessons from a personal teacher, which significantly aided me. Over the past three years in power, I've grown to understand my role and now, I've committed to making politics my profession, investing heavily in my career," she said. Mangonjwa stressed the importance of raising awareness for women to participate in decision-making. To all women, she said it is time to be part of the bigger picture. She also suggests awareness campaigns where female MPs speak and encourage other women to contest as Malawi looks ahead to upcoming elections.

Extract from story written by Faith Kaunde a Malawian journalist, with support from Gender Links under the Women's Political Participation Project and published in the Nation Malawi[11]

[11] Kaunde, F. (2024) Navigating Politics as a woman. https://mwnation.com/navigating-politicsas-a-woman/ Accessed 30 January 2024.

Elections coverage

The media disseminates information to the electorate, enabling informed decision-making when citizens cast their votes. It is therefore imperative that the media exhibits fairness and impartiality. Gender gaps in coverage continue despite the sensitisation and mentoring of journalists. Media monitoring helps to highlight the gaps and strengthen training efforts.



In the 2023 **Zimbabwe** elections, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) found that despite women constituting the majority of voters, their representation as both candidates and subjects in news coverage remained minimal.[12] The report noted that media coverage of women is often characterised by negative and stereotypical portrayals, predominantly emphasising their competence and personalities. Men constituted the majority of experts consulted. Additionally, the report highlighted that the voices and perspectives of marginalised communities, youth, and individuals with disabilities received insufficient attention and coverage. Another media monitoring study conducted by Media Monitors Zimbabwe and UNESCO yielded similar results. The media monitoring study found that women candidates constituted only 7% of news sources, while male candidates comprised 93% of news coverage. This partly reflected the decline in participation of women as candidates.[13]



Even though the 2022 **Kenya** elections witnessed the largest turnout of female candidates in Kenya's electoral history and three out of the four presidential candidates had female running mates, the deficit of women's voices in election coverage remained high. Male voices dominated across all media types.[14] Elections media monitoring conducted over a four-month period in Kenya by the African Centre for Media Excellence shows that women constituted 13.7% news sources in print media; 12.9% in radio and 12.4% in TV.[15]



Media billboard advert on coverage of the August 2023 Zimbabwe elections at D Square, Mpopoma High School in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.
Photo: Tarisai Nyamweda

[12] Zimbabwe Electoral Commission.(2023) Media Monitoring Committee Report on media coverage of the 2023 Harmonised elections. https://www.zec.org.zw/download/2023-harmonised-elections-elections-media-monitoring-report/ Accessed 20 January 2024.
[13] Media Monitors Zimbabwe and UNESCO.(2023). Reporting on Zimbabwe's 2023 Harmonised Elections
[14] A summary analysis of the media's performance during The 2023 harmonised elections in Zimbabwe. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000389071. Accessed 20 April 2024.
African Centre for Media Excellence (ACME) .(2022). Kenyan Media coverage of the 2022 elections. https://acme-ug.org/wp-content/uploads/KENYA-MEDIA-COVERAGE-REPORT-revised-1.pdf Accessed 24 February 2024.
[15] Ibid



In their analysis of the 2023 **Sierra Leone** elections, the European Union Observer mission commended the public debates for female candidates, but decried women's underrepresention in media coverage. The EU Election Observer Mission reported a gender imbalance in coverage of women across the media they monitored. For example, prime-time news did not devote any time to the female presidential aspirant. Women contesting other races were also barely visible in the national media with the exception of the First Lady who canvassed for the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) during the elections. She often featured in both broadcast and print media and was promoted on social media. The coverage of female political actors is another example of women's underrepresentation in public and political life, while in the electoral context it shows how little information voters had about women contesting various races.[16]



Regardless of the type of elections, gender disparities in voice persist in the **South Africa** media. Media Monitoring Africa (MMA) found that while women make up 51% of South Africa's population and 55% of registered voters, women constituted only 19% of news sources in the 2021 South Africa Local Government elections. MMA found that transsexual and transgender sources accounted for just 2% of the voices heard in the media.[17]



In their analysis of the 2023 **Nigeria** elections, the EU Observer Mission reported that media exposure of women candidates remained scant. On TV and radio, it barely exceeded two per cent of the total prime time programming devoted to the electoral contestants. Prime-time discussion shows did not tackle issues related to the advancement of women's participation in public and political life. Impediments from abuse and intimidation, including online, are widely reported. Ahead of these elections, at least two women candidates, including one for governor, faced unsuccessful efforts by their parties to exclude them. Female candidates did not actively campaign on social media, in part reportedly due to fears of gender-based online harassment.[18] Following the 2023 Nigeria elections the International Republican Institute (IRI) and National Democratic Institute (NDI) Election Observer Mission recommended that the media should prioritise inclusive media coverage, featuring the voices of women, young people, persons with disabilities and internally displaced persons as candidates and voters.[19]

Citizen attitudes and perceptions on WPP in Southern Africa

In 2023/2024, Gender Links conducted a citizen gender attitudes and perceptions survey on WPP across all 16 Southern African countries with over 20,000 respondents. This aimed to explore prevailing attitudes, perceptions, and barriers that hinder or promote women's engagement in politics. By identifying these factors, the survey provided valuable insights for policymakers, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders to develop targeted interventions and policies that can enhance women's political participation. The survey also included an assessment of gender attitudes on women in politics and the media. The survey showed the following results.

[16] EU Election Observation Mission Sierra Leone Final Report General Elections, 24 June 2023. Accessed 6 February 2024 https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/279777/Sierra-Leone-EEAS-Final-report.pdf
[17] Media Monitoring Africa (2021). Elections in a time of tumult. Analysing South Africa's media coverage of 2021 local government elections. https://mediamonitoringafrica.org/wordpress22/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/LGE21-Elections-Report-.pdf Accessed 6 February 2024
[18] EU Election Observation Mission Nigeria Final Report https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eom-nigeria-2023/european-union-election-observation-mission-nigeria-2023-final-report_en?s=410279 Accessed 6 February 2024
[19] International Republican Institute (IRI) and National Democratic Institute (NDI). (2023). International Election Observation Mission To Nigeria . Final Report of the 2023 General Election. https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/IRI_NDI%20Final%20Report_2023%20Nigeria%20IEOM.pdf Accessed 6 February 2024

Figure 6.4: The media is more interested in how women in politics dress and look than is the case with men in politics



Source: Attitudes towards Women's Political Participation 2023.[20]

Figure 6.4 shows that within the Southern African Development Community (SADC), 61% of women, in comparison to 54% of men who responded in the attitudes survey, agreed or strongly agreed that the media exhibits a greater interest in the appearance of women in politics than it does for men in political positions.

Figure 6.5: The media is often unfair in its coverage of women in politics



Source: Attitudes towards Women's Political Participation 2023.[21]

Figure 6.5 shows that 62% of women and 55% of men agree or strongly agree that the media is often unfair in its portrayal of women in political positions. This finding suggests a shared concern among both women and men regarding potential biases and injustices in how the media represents women in political roles. The higher percentage of women agreeing with this statement may reflect a heightened awareness, relatability or personal experiences of gender-based bias or discrimination in media coverage. Conversely, the slightly lower percentage among men may suggest a recognition of the issue but perhaps to a lesser extent or with different perspectives.

Overall, this finding underscores the need for critical reflection on media practices and emphasises the importance of promoting fair and equal coverage of women in politics. Addressing these concerns is crucial for fostering a more inclusive and representative political landscape within the SADC region.

Figure 6.6: Female politicians are threatened and insulted on social media more than male politicians



Source: Attitudes towards Women's Political Participation 2023.[22]

Figure 6.6 shows women's and men's perceptions regarding online violence against women and men politicians. When it comes to perceptions and attitudes on online violence experienced by women and men politicians in the region, 65% of women and 59% of men, agree or strongly agree that women politicians face a higher frequency of threats and insults on social media compared to their male counterparts. The higher percentage among women agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement likely reflects a first-hand awareness or experiences of the disproportionate harassment and intimidation faced by women politicians in online spaces. Women in politics may face targeted attacks based on their gender, ranging from sexist remarks to explicit threats

[20] Gender Links 2023 Attitudes towards Women's Political Participation thttps://lookerstudio.google.com/u/0/reporting/e361e966-7207-49c5-aa43-997ba25cd840/page/p_degtpdb4dd?s=r_XZmLXSxd0
[21] Ibid
[22] Ibid

of violence and intimidation. This perception underscores the challenges that women politicians encounter in navigating online platforms and highlights the urgent need to address online harassment and abuse.

Meanwhile, the substantial percentage of men agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement suggests a recognition of the gendered nature of online harassment and a willingness to acknowledge the disproportionate challenges faced by women politicians in the digital realm. This awareness and recognition among men is essential for fostering solidarity and collective action to combat online misogyny and create safer online environments for all individuals, regardless of gender.

Overall findings from the survey underscore the pressing need for multiple stakeholders including media organisations, politicians, policymakers, and civil society actors to address gender bias in media representation and portrayal, promote equitable coverage of all politicians, and create inclusive offline and online platforms that encourage women's active participation in politics. Challenging stereotypes and promoting a more positive narrative about women politicians may result in a change in public perception and treatment of women in politics.

Social Media platforms and Women's Political Engagement

The Internet is rapidly emerging as a significant force in journalism and broader society, offering an alternative platform for communication.[23] There is a paucity of data on how women politicians use social media and its intersection with politics, both on the African continent and globally.[24] Generally, online spaces strengthen women politician's power to both communicate and directly engage with citizens and vice versa. However, this digital realm presents new and evolving challenges for women in politics, such as the prevalence of online violence targeting them.

This section explores the democratising potential of social media, examining how these platforms provide a space for women to amplify their voices, mobilise networks, and engage in political discourse. At the same time, it also tackles the issues of online harassment, misinformation, and biases that hinder women politicians' participation in online spaces.

Social media and the elections

In 2024, The Association of African Election Authorities (AAEA), with support from the South Africa Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) adopted[25] the *Principles and Guidelines for the Use of Digital and Social Media in Elections in Africa*. The principles leverage the potential benefits of digital and social media while mitigating potential risks. They acknowledge the risks of misusing social media and promote responsible use and accountability among both platform owners and users. The principles and guidelines outline clear and comprehensive strategies for responsibly using social media during election campaigns.

[23] Nyamweda, T (2023) Gender equality in and through the media in Southern Africa. Wiley Publishers
[24] Matsilele, T & Nkoala, S., (2023). Metavoicing, trust-building mechanisms and partisan messaging: a study of social media usage by selected South African female politicians, Information, Communication & Society, 26:13, 2575-2597, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1369118X.2023.2252862
[25] South Africa Government News. (2024). African nations adopt digital and social media guidelines. https://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/african-nations-adopt-digital-and-social-media-guidelines Accessed 20 April 2024.

In terms of gender equality, the principles and guidelines advocate for various actions among different stakeholders, including the state, EMBs and the media. The principles and guidelines advocate for the following:

Protection of the rights of women in the context of elections, noting that

3.8.1 All women have the right to fully participate in political life and to take part in the conduct of public affairs in line with the principles of non-discrimination and equal enjoyment of human rights.

3.8.2 Electoral stakeholders should take appropriate measures to counter online and offline violence and intimidation that have a negative impact on women's enjoyment of their rights.

3.8.3 Women's participation in elections should be understood not only in reference to voting and securing seats, but also to a wide range of other activities, including working with election management or related bodies or interfacing with civil society, online and offline media, as well as political parties in relation to national and local elections. All relevant electoral stakeholders should support women in the full enjoyment of this participation.

Part 5 of the guidelines advocates that

9.1 The state should create an enabling environment to protect rights online and offline, and take measures that give equal protection to all stakeholders in the electoral processes, including opposition parties, candidates, citizens and vulnerable or marginalised persons. This includes addressing gender-specific concerns faced by women candidates and journalists engaged in the electoral process, such as sexual and gender-based violence, intimidation and harassment.

Part 6 of the guidelines advocates that

10.9 EMBs should take gender equality into consideration and facilitate equal access to elections-related information for men and women, and develop mechanisms to monitor and ensure the accountable use of digital and social media to prevent and sanction election-related attacks on women.

To journalists and news media advocate that:

6.2 Media owners and editors should put measures and systems in place to protect journalists, especially women journalists, online and offline, during the entire election cycle.

6.3 Media owners and editors should create measures and systems to promote gender-sensitive reporting and the equitable coverage of men and women candidates during elections.

Social media is a double edged sword for women in politics. Platforms such as Facebook and X offer opportunities for political participation and visibility previously not possible. Social media has democratised communication by providing a free space to speak out and share, bringing those at the periphery of communication into the centre to engage, dialogue, make their voices heard and increase their visibility. Social media can be used to advance political agendas. Through the use of social media, women politicians have the ability to circumvent gatekeepers, who have excluded their stories or their voices in traditional media, extend their reach to a broader audience, and actively engage in developing a different public discourse.



Aspiring women politicians in **Liberia** received social media and digital marketing skills ahead of the October 2023 elections in training facilitated by UN Women Liberia in collaboration with Orange Digital Center. The women politicians were equipped to use social media and digital marketing tools, Facebook, WhatsApp and Tik Tok, among others, to advance their political careers, communicate and run effective campaigns ahead of the October 2023 general elections. Aspirants from various political parties in Liberia attended the training. Speaking on the benefit of the training for their political journeys, aspirants noted that "I learnt how to use WhatsApp to broadcast messages to many people and how to use digital tools to create an event on Facebook, says Siah McCarthy Hare, an aspiring candidate. "I am happy that we have completed the training and will be able to demonstrate what we have learnt. I want to assure UN Women and Orange Digital Center that what they have imparted to us will not be wasted. They will see the positive results. The digital skills I learnt will help to boost my campaign and help me to reach out to people online through different platforms," she said.

"Before the training, I could not use some functions of the phone. I have learnt how to send messages to many people in a minute. I used to pay people to design fliers and plan events for me. With the knowledge I have acquired, I can now create events on Facebook on my own," said McCarthy.

Another participant, Victoria Torlo Koiquan, said she would use the digital skills she acquired to enhance her campaign and to help people know that she is running for a Senatorial post during the upcoming elections.

"I had never posted a message on my WhatsApp status, but during the training, I posted a message, and within minutes, I received more than 100 messages in response. This means we can showcase our work in the community through WhatsApp. Some people are not on Facebook, but they are on WhatsApp. I will continue sharing messages on various social media platforms because I want more people to know I am running," she said.

Koiquan highlighted that she learnt a lot of things during the training. "I learnt to post on my story, broadcast messages through WhatsApp and create events," she said.

Comfort Lamptey, UN Women Liberia Country Representative, applauded the female political aspirants for their decision to stand as candidates and embracing social media as a tool to advance their political careers and carry out more effective campaigns and fundraising in the upcoming elections.

"In today's world, social media and digital platforms are critical tools for connecting with voters, building a strong campaign, and sharing messages with a broader audience," said Ms. Lamptey.

Zaza Mulbah, Orange Digital Centre's Senior Manager, said his organisation was proud to be associated with women who want to make a change. He encouraged the aspirants to embrace social media and set a good example so their voices could be heard, and the training could be extended to women in other parts of the country. "If you have aspired to go into politics and want to advance your career, there is no way you can avoid social media," he said.

Case study courtesy of and adapted from UN Women who partnered with the Orange Digital Center and the Government of Sweden to strengthen the capacity of female aspirants contributing towards women's equal participation as candidates ahead of the October 2023 elections in Liberia[26]

[26] https://africa.unwomen.org/en/stories/feature-story/2023/05/aspiring-female-politicians-acquire-social-media-and-digital-marketing-skills-ahead-of-general-elections

In **South Africa**, Matsilele and Nkoala (2020) in their study titled *Meta-voicing, trust-building mechanisms and partisan messaging: A study of social media usage by selected South African female politicians* assert that utilising social media platforms enables women in politics to extend their reach beyond conventional legacy media outlets, ensuring their voices resonate with a wider audience. However, they also argue that women politicians, particularly those holding government positions, are utilising the digital public sphere much as they have employed traditional media. They argue that women politicians mainly share information about government programmes and initiatives, as well as updates on government activities. One of Matsilele and Nkoala's key findings is that female voices remain underrepresented, as they tend to use meta-voicing as a means to convey their messages.[27] Meta-voicing on social media involves expressing opinions through actions such as liking, commenting, and rating for the original content: a way of demonstrating support for what a social media user has said. Women politicians often utilise this strategy as a defence against online trolls. By reposting or sharing content rather than generating it themselves, they can shield themselves from harassment while still expressing solidarity with relevant viewpoints.


FOCUS ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

How women MPs use social media to reach their audience

Daily News article of 8 March 2022 focusing on how women MPs are using social media.

The downside of social media

Women politicians across the African continent are facing an onslaught of online violence against them as they try to engage their audiences. Cyber misogyny has become a huge component of the incivility that women in politics encounter as they engage on the internet. Misogynist attitudes in cyber space deride WPP and are central to the issues of violence against women in politics. The intent or consequence of the cyber misogynistic attacks is to silence women on social media and in other public arenas, whether online or offline, ultimately compelling them to retreat from political engagement.

In 2021, the Inter Parliamentary Union conducted a study titled *Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Africa*. Based on interviews conducted with 224 women from 50 African countries (it included 137 women parliamentarians and 87 female members of parliamentary staff) the study reveals that 46% of women parliamentarians have been the target of cyber misogynistic attacks.[28]

[27] Ibid
[28] IPU (2021) Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Africa, https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/issue-briefs/2021-11/sexism-harassment-and-violence-against-women-in-parliaments-in-africa



In **Tunisia**, the digital platforms once celebrated for their equalising and democratising potential are now coming under scrutiny, as disinformation and online hate become ever more common.[29] Since the 2011 Arab Spring, Tunisia has undergone an unprecedented democratic transition, spotlighting the role of women in politics. Traditional and social media have bolstered the visibility and influence of women politicians, who have also benefited from the 2014 electoral law guaranteeing gender parity.

Women politicians used Facebook to run their campaigns during the 2023 local government elections. "Facebook has become a vital tool for the women politicians who use it to communicate with the voters, to make themselves known, to mobilise support and to air their programmes and achievements and to respond to critics", noted Rym Louati a candidate in the 2023 elections in the rural zone of Bizerte. This young woman working as a radio journalist in Bizerte noted that, "social media offers greater visibility to women, and interactivity than traditional media. Social media also enables them to bypass the obstacles linked to funding, media access, gender stereotypes and sexist violence that I experienced during my election campaign."

Hate speech towards women politicians decreased during the 2023 local elections, attributed in part to legal measures. However, certain laws sparked controversy, like decree-law no. 2022-54, argued to be restricting freedom of expression. The electoral campaign of the first round of the 2023 local elections showed a significant decrease in hate speech towards women politicians on social media, says the coalition Awffiya for democracy and integrity of elections. Its president, Brahim Zoghlami, attributed this trend to the decree-law no. 2022-54, which punishes offenses related to information and communication systems.

Despite its benefits, social media also exposes women politicians to cyberbullying and threats. Abir Moussi, president of the Free Destourian party, faced such harassment and filed complaints under Tunisia's laws against violence against women.She denounced these practices as an attempt to intimidate and muzzle her. She filed a complaint against her harassers, citing law No. 2017-58 of 1 August 2017 on the elimination of violence against women, which punishes moral or sexual harassment, including online harassment, with two years' imprisonment and a fine of 10,000 dinars ($3200).

Moussi's treatment on media and social media varies based on political alignment, ranging from favourable, unfavourable, and neutral coverage. Favourable coverage showcased her courage, will and her charisma It also presented her as a credible alternative to the present regime. This type of attitude comes from media and social media who share her political vision. For instance, the website Tunisie Numérique that defines itself as an independent media regularly publishes positive stories of Moussi.

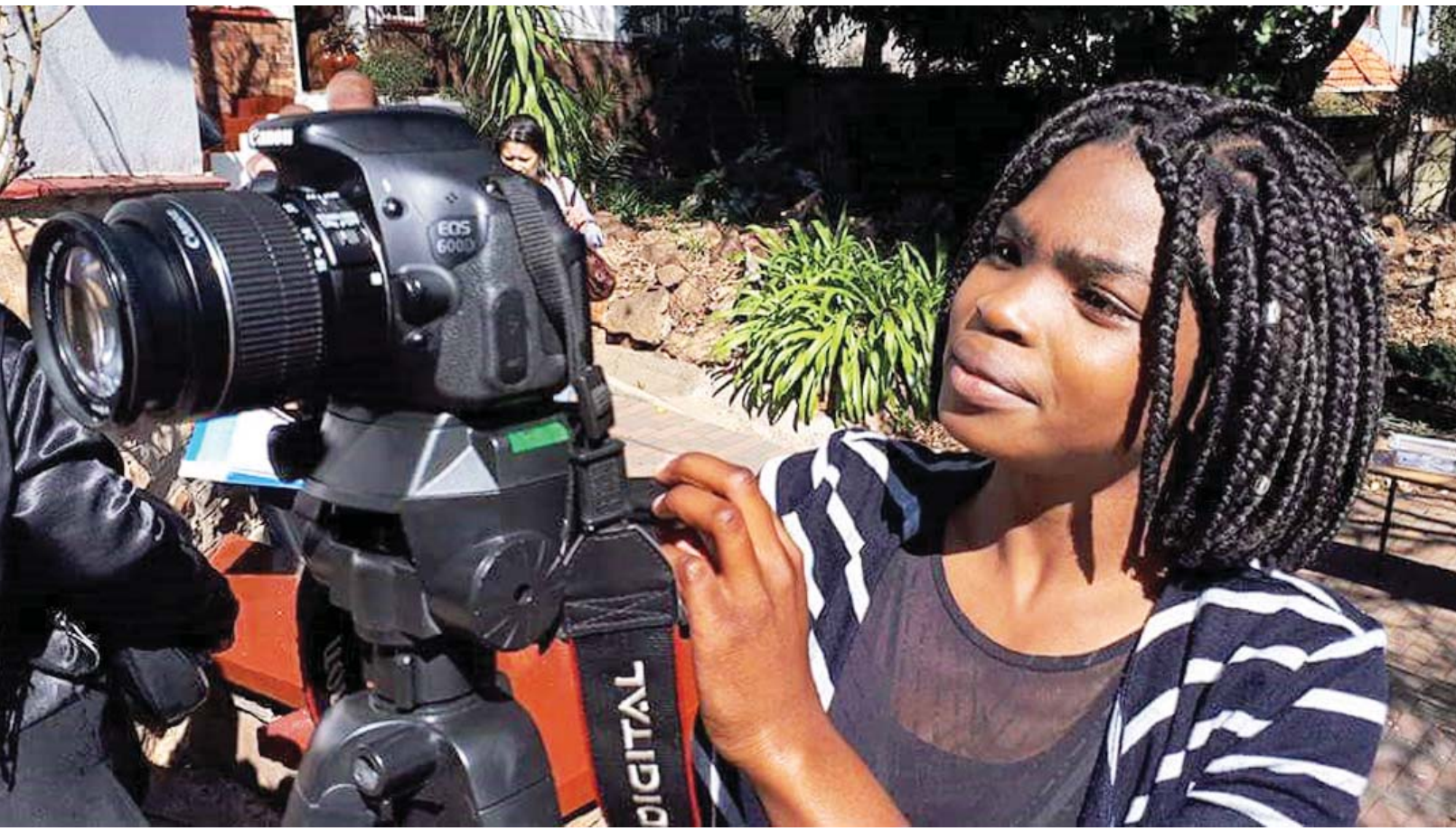
She also often receives unfavourable treatment where she is presented as being *"nostalgic for the past"*, *"a dangerous populist"* and *"an unscrupulous opportunist"*. Her political standing and methods are criticised and the violence against her is minimised or justified. This attitude comes from media and social media opposed to her political vision. For

[29] Di Meco, L and Hesterman, S. (2023) From catalyst for freedom to tool for repression: Gendered Disinformation and Online Abuse Against Women in Politics in Tunisia

instance, the website Kapitalis that defines itself as a progressive and democratic media regularly publishes negative articles on Abir Moussa where she is called a "*fascist*", a "*racist*" or a "*liar*".

There are, however, women politicians who have had a more positive experience with the media. For example regional radio Jawhra FM interviewed Rym Mahjoub, recently elected head of her party Afek Tounes, on her rise in the party. Her party claims to be a progressive one, putting women and men on an equal footing by offering a favourable and stimulating environment for them to do politics. Dialogue and collaboration between media, social media and women politicians has the potential to promote a positive and balanced image of women politicians in Tunisia.

By Mona Ben Gamra, writing for the GL WPP Project



Petronell Ngonyama, aspiring journalist shoots a video at a Gender and Media Diversity Centre consultative meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa.
Photo: Zotonatenanina Razanandratefa

Conclusion and recommendations

Progress toward achieving women's equal and effective participation in decision-making is slow. This chapter explored the role of media and social media as both part of the problem but also potentially part of the solution. These tools provide women in politics with opportunities to better their participation in politics but also expose them to abuse such as cyber misogyny.

The core message is that the media and social media are a significant factor in how women participate in politics. They have a pivotal role to play in shaping political discourse and influencing public perceptions on women's political participation. The state, media institutions, technology companies, civil society and political parties need to work together to create a media in which there is equal representation and participation for all whether offline or online.

Misogynistic attitudes and regressive gender norms that undermine women's political participation are at the centre of online violence against women politicians. Social media platforms exacerbate this culture. There is need for a new understanding of how women in politics can be empowered through the use of media going beyond numerical representation, to how are they portrayed in the news we read, the films we watch, or social media content we engage with.

Recommendations

- **Promote gender sensitive reporting through capacity strengthening:** Continuous training of journalists in order to create a gender responsive cadre of journalists who are able to tell as well as retell the stories of women in politics and dismantle stereotypes. The aim is to ensure media coverage that reflects the diversity and richness of the society. Capacity strengthening will also need to go beyond women journalists to also include women politicians.

- **Foster collaboration** between media organisations and women's rights and feminist advocacy groups to facilitate the development of inclusive editorial policies which promote improved representation and positive portrayals of women in politics. Furthermore, collaboration may include with policymakers, civil society organisations, the media, and technology companies to promote media diversity, digital skills and security and support initiatives that amplify women's voices. Moreover, strategic alliances can facilitate the creation of supportive networks, mentorship programmes, and leadership opportunities for both women in media and politics.

- **Promote media and digital literacy:** Media and digital literacy are indispensable for enabling women to leverage media and social media platforms effectively for their political participation. Capacity strengthening initiatives for women politicians should be tailored to promote women's digital and information literacy and skills, as well as media literacy competencies. This includes providing training on online advocacy, social media campaigning, fact-checking, digital storytelling as well as digital security. By equipping women politicians with the necessary tools and knowledge, they can actively engage in political discourse, counter disinformation, and advocate for their interests online.

ROLE OF MEN IN WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

7



A growing number of campaigns emphasise men as allies in WPP.

Credit: Trevor Davies

KEY FACTS

- Men are the gate-keepers to most of the barriers to women's participation in politics: in the home, political parties, electoral mechanisms, political appointments.
- Politics is about power. No one gives up power without a fight. The challenge is to convince men that power sharing is a win-win formula, at all these levels.
- Male dominated governments have adopted many international and regional instruments that call for increased participation of women and have made some legislative changes to implement these commitments.
- The African Union (AU) has launched a Heads of State initiative to promote positive masculinity. Some male Heads of State have used their positions to appoint more women to leadership.
- Some local level councillors are promoting gender equity and women's participation.
- In Africa, there is still much respect for and trust in traditional and religious leaders. It is strategic to engage with these leaders - especially around changing norms, which is slow work at best. There are a few examples of programmes that are working at this local level with traditional leaders to influence them first and then for them to influence their congregations and communities.
- Junior councils are a good way to build women's leadership from the ground up, as well as provide a platform for young women and men to realise the power of working together.

Introduction

There are many barriers to the participation of women in politics examined in detail in other chapters of this Barometer. These result in gender gaps in almost all forms of participation - from engaging with politicians to raising issues, to voting (although this gap is much lower than other gaps), to seeking to become candidates at any level of the political process. The gender gaps stretch from local government through to the highest national offices. Reports over several decades[1] consistently point to the same factors being responsible for this gender gap - patriarchal social norms, political institutions and individual resources that interact to create complex social systems that inhibit women from being active in almost all forms of political engagement.

This chapter briefly reviews how men are the gatekeepers to all the barriers, then examines how some men in government, political parties, families and heads of state as well as other levels of government are supporting women to participate more in politics. The chapter makes the case that we need to work with men as allies to change gender norms that are at the heart of all these barriers.

Men gate-keep most of the barriers to WPP in that:

- Gender norms and attitudes hold that politics is in the public "male" sphere, with women relegated to the private domain of the home as caregivers. These norms spawn other barriers. The custodians of culture that promotes these norms are traditional and religious leaders, the majority of whom are men.
- The political apparatus controlled by men in politics is generally not welcoming of women, nor does it attempt to promote their participation.
- Support or lack of support from family and close friends and community members is critical and those with the greatest possibility to provide such support are male.
- Women are also subject to extensive electoral violence, including psychological violence at the hands of the mainstream and social media. Men are generally the instigators as well as the perpetrators of this violence.

Pervasive patriarchal norms underlie all the barriers, with specific urban - rural, regional and religious nuances. The custodians of patriarchal societal norms are mainly traditional and religious leaders, the majority of whom are still male. Men in the family - fathers, fathers-in-law, husbands and brothers- reinforce these norms. Patriarchy is so deep that women may also reinforce these deep norms.

The public generally views politics as a public "male" domain relegating women to the role of wife, mother and caregiver within the "private sphere" of the home. This line of thought holds that women's domestic and care giving responsibilities preclude them from having enough time to devote to politics. The public at best frown on women who go into politics; at worst actively denigrate them including in all forms of media. The public perceives politics to be a "rough" game, with violence a given.



In rural Koinadugu district, **Sierra Leone**, it is taboo for a woman to inherit or purchase land, rent a house in her own name, stand for a political position, or speak in meetings. No woman had ever represented the Koinadugu district in the nation's Parliament.

[1] See for instance: Consolidated reply of the e-Discussion on Engaging Male Champions to Support Women's Political Participation Co-hosted with International Gender Champions December 2017 Available at https://www.iknowpolitics.org/sites/default/files/consolidated_reply_male_champions_e-discussion_december_2017_1.pdf (Accessed 14 January, 2024) New Approaches Needed to improve WPP in Zimbabwe Available at https://hivos.org/opinion/new-approaches-needed-to-improve-womens-political-participation-in-zimbabwe/ (Accessed 25 January, 2024)

Hawa Conteh who is Koinadugu's first woman Member of Parliament, has witnessed the obstacles to women's leadership in Koinadugu: "There are so many who search for political positions, but they are being intimidated by some males outside. Even their own husbands. Some husbands do not want their wives to be part of the decision making process because they have a stereotyped way of thinking about women, that women should not be in the front, women should always be at the back. Some religious leaders think women should always be at the back and not the front row. Our cultural beliefs also support the idea that women should not be at the front, they should be at the back; that women should not be in the decision-making bodies."[2]

Political institutions: As discussed in detail in Chapter 3, men control most major political parties. Many provide, at best, for one or two female representatives on their governing committees, often to represent women and ensure that women vote. Without representation in the leadership and decision-making bodies of the political parties, women's voices are muted. Further, they do not gain valuable political or leadership experience that would catalyse their nomination for elected office. Women find it difficult to get parties to nominate them to contest elections. Political parties seldom actively solicit for women candidates and they may nominate women for seats where the chances for their party to win are slim.

The primary process for selection of candidates to represent the party in the election is also fraught and frustrating. There are many anecdotal stories of party strongmen bullying and intimidating women to withdraw their candidacy or of women attacked verbally as well as physically during the primary processes.

Educational attainment: Although entry into school is generally becoming more equal, progression to higher levels of education is often less equal. Fathers or brothers failing to promote or prioritise the education of their daughters and sisters is a critical factor in educational attainment. Many women find that lack of higher qualifications dissuades them from aspiring to venture into politics. Beyond formal education, women generally have less access to information and knowledge about the political systems that are necessary to formulate an effective campaign strategy and platform. Men generally control these platforms.

The cost of being nominated, of campaigning and, sometimes, of being in office is prohibitive. Voters expect and demand material incentives to vote. Chapter Four discusses unequal access to funding from the government and political parties. Women struggle more than men to access political funding. In general, women earn less than men and seldom have access to the same resources as men do. In Nigeria, for instance, women on average earn 58,4% as much as men do.[3] Women are much less able to borrow money from banks for political endeavours, they have less access to property to use as collateral. The majority of candidates rely on financial support to be able to mount an effective campaign - women often need this from husbands, brothers or fathers.

Social capital and networks are critical for all aspiring politicians and even more critical for women who must negotiate access into the political arena and overcome considerable barriers to having their voices heard. For women this often means having close family members, such as parents, siblings, husbands, who are already in the political arena. At minimum women need support from their husbands and family. Many men are actively and even violently opposed to their wives' political participation. A husband who does not support a wife's entry to politics is often the death knell to her endeavours.

[2] Facilitating historic outcomes for women in Sierra Leone Available at https://www.ndi.org/our-stories/facilitating-historic-outcomes-women-sierra-leone (Accessed 20 January, 2024)
[3] Ette, M. and P. Akpan-Obong, "Negotiating Access and Privilege: Politics of Female Participation and Representation in Nigeria". Journal of Asian and African Studies 2023, Vol. 58(7) 1291 -1306. Available at https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/00219096221084253 (Accessed 15 January, 2024)



A study of participation in local government in **Uganda** found that most local government leaders (62.5% of women and 53.4% of men) had parents (reported by 39.4% of the leaders), siblings (reported by 36.2% of the leaders) or other relatives who were already involved in politics. This suggests that having relatives who occupy political positions provides the social capital and entry to political networks that are so critical[4].

The same study found that more female leaders (about 21%) than male leaders (less than 1%) had lost a spouse. This may indicate that some women only join politics after their husbands have passed on; before then, they keep away from politics to safeguard their marriages[5].

Political violence is widespread and impedes many women from considering entering politics. As detailed in Chapter Five, gender-based intimidation routinely confronts female candidates and their supporters. This creates an aggressive climate and pushes some women to abandon their campaigns. Men are usually the instigators as well as the perpetrators of the violence. As detailed in Chapter Six, the **media**, mostly controlled by men, is often unfair and derogatory. Rather than challenging stereotypes, the media perpetuates them.

Action taken by governments and political parties

There are some examples of steps that men have taken and are taking at different levels that are supporting progress in WPP. The initial support of men for women's political participation is often adoption by male dominated governments of various international, continental and regional agreements and protocols that include strong support for gender equity. Some of the most important of these are:

- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) 1979.
- The UN Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/15, 1990.
- The Beijing Platform of Action (BPA) 1995.
- The UN General Assembly resolution on women's political participation (A/RES/58/142), 2003.
- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2015 especially SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- The African Union Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) 2003.
- The Southern African Development Community (SADC), Protocol on Gender and Development signed in 2008 and revised in 2016.
- The East Africa Gender Act, 2016.
- Supplementary Act relating to Equality of Rights between women and men for sustainable development in the ECOWAS Region.

In many countries, the same male dominated governments have taken some steps towards implementing the policies. For example, as detailed in Chapter Two, male dominated parliaments have adopted Constitutional or legislative provisions for affirmative action to address the gaps in WPP.

[4] Economic Policy Research Centre (EPRC) (2021) Women's Participation in Politics at the Local Government level in Uganda. UN Women, Occasional Paper Number 53. Available at https://africa.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/06/womens-participation-in-politics-at-the-local-government-level-in-uganda (Accessed 10 January, 2024)
[5] Ibid

Some male dominated **political parties** have included gender provisions in their charters. Ruling parties in several countries, for example, South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique, Ethiopia and Cameroon, have adopted voluntary quotas of women to stand for election.

Support from family

As discussed above, support from the family is critical for women who are engaging in politics. This includes fathers, mothers, husbands, siblings and children. The support is in many forms - moral support, financial, as well as literally shielding the woman from verbal and physical attacks. The case study from the Congo Republic illustrates how family support has been vital for women to participate in politics.



There are men who go against tradition to encourage and support their mother, spouse, daughter or even women colleagues in the political parties to engage actively in politics. One such man is Pierre François De Paul Kibongui Saminou, managing director of the national centre of radio and television in Brazzaville, **Congo Republic**. Saminou's mother, Jacqueline Mpolo, now 82 years old, was actively involved in politics with the support of her family.

"I've always admired my mother's courage when she joined the Revolutionary Movement of Women of Congo (URFC) in Mossaka, back in 1964. I'm very proud of her, especially as she encountered many difficulties during the meetings she had to run in Mossaka, which is often flooded, as well as in all of the surrounding localities. I remember that my brothers and I used to accompany her to meet voters and campaign. She persisted, despite the fact that the local men did not like seeing her involved in politics. For them, it was a field reserved for men", he recalls.

Source: Christine Nathalie Foundou, 2023. Written for Gender Links Women's Political Participation Project



Women who achieved electoral success received financial support from many sources. Ekaete Ebong Okon, a former legislator in Akwa Ibom State, **Nigeria** said she prepared herself financially to fund her campaign but still needed support from family and friends: "I am an entrepreneur... When the person I was contesting against knew that I was buoyant enough to contest the election, I was able to start off. I had a ladder that sprung me up and my husband came to assist me, and friends also came to assist me."[6]



Young women also find support of their family is critical to be able to enter and stay in politics. **Jamila Al-Naha**, 34 years old, and a lecturer at the University of Nouakchott, **Mauritania**, became an activist by getting involved in the university union. From there, she became interested in politics. Her entry into that sphere began when she joined the INSAF party in 2022-2023. She received unconditional support from



[6] Ette, M. and P. Akpan-Obong, op cit.

her family, and despite her lack of prior experience in politics, her activism in the students' union helped to pave her way. Jamila Al-Naha's parents were already members of the INSAF party. She joined the party, which encourages women to participate in politics, to be on their list.[7]

Action by Heads of State and Government to support WPP

Some Heads of State are publicly taking a stand on gender issues, including WPP, both in their own nations as well as at the level of the African Union. Working at the level of the AU is an opportunity for some, whose approach is already more feminist, to exercise positive peer pressure on other Heads of State, nudging them to take bolder action. Action taken includes steps to address gender-based violence, economic empowerment, appointment of women to leadership roles in the cabinet as well as in other spheres such as the judiciary and reserve bank.

AU presidential initiative on positive masculinity, VAWG

South Africa's President, Cyril Ramaphosa, initiated this high level African Union (AU) initiative on positive masculinity during his tenure as Chair of the AU. The first conference on Positive Masculinity in Leadership for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) in Africa in 2020 had to be postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions on travel and meetings.

The first meeting took place in 2021 in the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**, chaired by President Felix Tshisekedi and attended by the Heads of State and Government of the Congo Republic, DRC, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania and Togo. This meeting adopted a declaration that pledged action and resources to address the scourge of Gender Based Violence which was adopted as a decision of the full AU Assembly in February, 2022. The AU named President Tshisekedi the first AU Champion on Positive Masculinity.[8]

The second high level meeting in Dakar, **Senegal**, in November 2022 led to a historic decision of the AU Assembly in February 2023 to negotiate an AU Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (AU CEVAWG). This is set to be the first continental legal instrument for the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls in the world.

Current Chair of the AU, President Azali Assoumani of the Republic of the **Comoros** and President Ramaphosa co-hosted the third meeting, preceded by meetings of women leaders, with the African Women Leaders Network (AWLN); young people; traditional and religious leaders; civil society organisations; academia and the private sector. Former President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Patron of the AWLN, played a critical role in promoting the initiative.[9]

The third meeting committed to continue working towards ending VAWG, with research

7 Amy Fofana, 2023. Case Study for GL WPP Project.
8 African Union (2023). 3rd Men's Conference on Positive Masculinity. Concept note. Available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/newsevents/conceptnotes/43262-CN-3rd_Mens_Conference_2023_landing_page1.pdf (Accessed 8 April, 2024)

and budgetary allocations as well as continued work to elaborate the AU CEVAWG, and has taken a broader perspective to issues of positive masculinity. Thus, commitments in the declaration include:

- Creating an environment for gender equality, women's empowerment, and leadership;
- Dismantling patriarchal systems that create inequalities, replacing these with positive masculinity to rebuild the African social fabric through processes that heal;
- Addressing historical and structural drivers of violence against women and girls in the economic, cultural, social and governance spheres;
- Expanding women's economic emancipation;
- Capitalising on the circle of champions to mobilise a wider circle of male leaders in various spheres to engage men and boys and
- Enhancing the participation and leadership of women in spheres of decision-making at all levels and in all sectors.[10]

Feminist president in DRC



President Felix Tshisekedi's official spokesperson, Tina Salama, a former journalist from Radio Okapi believes the president is a feminist. "In 2019, we had 17% women in state administrations and public enterprises. In 2023, we have reached 32%," says Salama. "It is the first time we see women in decision-making positions. We have a deputy chief of staff, and I am the first spokesperson. There is also a woman heading the Central Bank of Congo, a woman minister of the environment and another who is the minister of justice."[11]

Malangu Kabedi-Mbuyi, the first female governor of the Banque centrale du Congo, BCC (Central Bank of Congo) is one of only five female heads of central banks in Africa. The others are: Botswana's Linah Mohohlo (1999-2016), South Africa's Gill Marcus (2009-2014), Seychelles' Caroline Abel (in office since 2012) and Lesotho's Retselisitsoe Matlanyane (also in office since 2012).[12]

President Tshisekedi is one of three global HeforShe political champions (with the Heads of State of Japan and Ireland).[13] In June, 2023, the DRC launched Africa's largest cervical and breast cancer screening and treatment programme, with free pregnancy and childbirth programmes for all women in the DRC, which is an indication of the president's commitment to women's health and wellbeing.[14]

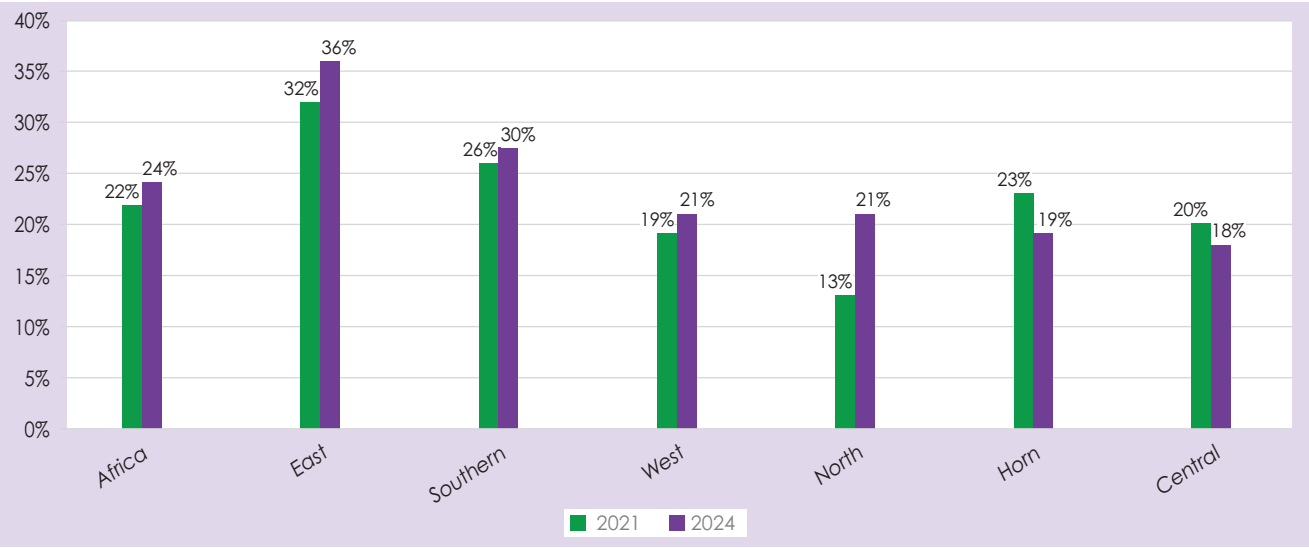
President Tshisekedi appointed Judith Suminwa Tuluka, the former Planning Minister, as the country's first female Prime Minister on 1 April, 2024,[15] confirmed on 29 May, 2024. In this final cabinet announcement, Tshisekedi appointed a woman, Therese Kayiwamba, who replaced Christophe Lutundula, as foreign minister. The new government has 16 women ministers out of 54 (30%, up from 7% before)[16].

[9] Ibid
[10] African Union (2023). Declaration of the Third Men's Conference on Positive Masculinity Leadership to End Violence against Women and Girls in Africa. Available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/newsevents/reports/43262-rp-DECLARATION-_3RD_MENS_CONFERENCE_ON_POSITIVE_MASCULINITY_ENGLISH.pdf (Accessed 11 April, 2024)
[11] Women's rights take centre stage in DR Congo election. 23 December, 2023. Available at https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/world/womens-rights-take-centre-stage-in-dr-congo-election/ar-AA1IBzE5 (Accessed January 10, 2024)
[12] Five things to know about DRC's first female central bank governor, July 9, 2021. Available at https://www.theafricareport.com/106337/five-things-to-know-about-drcs-first-female-central-bank-governor/ (Accessed 1 April, 2024)
[13] HeforShe Gender Champions Available at https://www.heforshe.org/en/champions (Accessed 4 April, 2024)
[14] Largest African cervical and breast cancer screen and treatment programme launched in DRC. 28 June, 2023. Available at HTTPS://WWW.BIZCOMMUNITY.COM/ARTICLE/196/335/239672.HTML (Accessed 4 April, 2024)
[15] DR Congo president names Judith Sumimwa Tuluka as first woman PM, 1 April, 2024. Available at https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/4/1/dr-congo-president-names-judith-suminwa-tuluka-as-first-woman-pm (Accessed 12 April, 2024)
[16] https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/dr-congo-announces-new-government-after-months-of-delay/3233704 (Accessed 16 June, 2024)

Cabinet appointments

Heads of state, the majority of whom are men, appoint cabinets. They are a site for decision-making in which governments can make progress towards gender parity relatively quickly, provided heads of state are committed to this objective. Cabinets are therefore a litmus test of commitment to the fifty-fifty principle at the highest level. However, appointments are to some degree a double-edged sword: on one hand they begin to normalise women in political leadership, while on the other, appointees may be beholden to the appointer.

Figure 7.1: Percent Women in Cabinet by Region, 2021 - 2024



Source: Gender Links, 2024.



South Africa has been progressing steadily to greater WPP at all levels since the first democratically elected government in 1994. Then, only three of 27 cabinet ministers were women. President Cyril Ramaphosa has shown his commitment through appointing equal numbers of women and men as cabinet ministers, though both President and Deputy President are men. Further, he has appointed women to powerful, non-traditional cabinet positions such as the Ministries of International Relations and Cooperation and Defence and Military Veterans.

President Ramaphosa has shown personal commitment to tackling the epidemic of gender based violence in South Africa.[17] He convened the first Presidential Gender Summit on violence against women and girls (VAWG) in November, 2018. This led to the National Strategic Plan on Gender Based Violence and Femicide 2020-2030 launched in 2020. Government has allocated funding for implementation of the plan and appealed to the private sector for additional funding. In November 2022, President Ramaphosa convened the second Presidential Summit on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF). The president stressed the importance of education, dialogues, outreach and awareness-raising activities and spoke about the need to redefine masculinity and to address the role of men in the fight against

[17] Rama, K. and C.L. Morna, (2019). Beyond numbers: Gender audit of the May, 2019. South African Elections. GenderLinks, Johannesburg. Available at chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://genderlinks.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/GENDER-IN-2019-SA-ELECTIONS-LR.pdf (Accessed on 5 April, 2024)

gender-based violence. As mentioned earlier, President Ramaphosa initiated the positive masculinity initiative during his tenure as Chair of the AU.



Between 2017 and 2022 President Nana Akufo Addo of **Ghana** appointed 46 female judges or 45% of the 102 judges that he had appointed. By 2022 there were five female judges on the 15 member Supreme Court, all of whom were appointed by President Akufo-Addo.[18]



Former President Hage Geingob of **Namibia** promoted women, including young women, in public positions. In the last cabinet, 38% of the ministers in President Geingob's cabinet were women, while 71% of deputy ministers were women, including 23-year-old Deputy Minister of Information and Communication Technology Emma Theofilus[19]. The Cabinet had a gender balanced "top four" with male President and deputy President and Female Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister. President Geingob is remembered as a moderniser who rejected homophobia that is prevalent in Namibia, refusing to sign an amendment passed by the National Assembly that would have invalidated a judgement of the Supreme Court which ruled in favour of equal treatment of two foreign same sex spouses married to Namibians[20]. In March, 2023, President Geingob announced that a woman, Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, would be the ruling party's candidate for president in 2024.[21]



In October 2018 the Prime Minister of **Ethiopia**, Abiy Ahmed, reviewed his cabinet, trimming it from 28 members with only four women, to a cabinet of 20 members, ten of whom were women. Prime Minister Abiy had promised women that he would speed up efforts to improve their participation.[22] Soon after parliament appointed Sahle-Work Zewde as the first female president of Ethiopia. In the same year, Ahmed appointed Maeza Ashenafi as the first female supreme court judge. Maeza Ashenafi has a track record of promoting women's rights in Ethiopia. One of her most famous cases as a lawyer resulted in outlawing the kidnapping and forced marriages of young Ethiopian girls. She also founded the Ethiopian Women's Lawyers Association and helped to initiate Enat Bank, the first bank for women.[23] However, in a 2021 cabinet reshuffle Ahmed reduced women's representation to 36%. This shows that leaders constantly juggle gender considerations against other political forces. As noted above, an appointer can easily reverse an appointment.

Engaging with men as allies

Given the crucial role of men as gatekeepers at all levels, there is clear need to engage more effectively with men in families, communities, schools, cultural and faith settings, in the media and political institutions to stimulate changes in attitudes and approaches that will convert these men into allies for women's political participation. These changes seek a "critical mass" of converted men to exercise peer pressure amongst other men leading to more women being elected to leadership positions.

[18] Kwasigah, S. "Full list: President Akufo-Addo scores high on appointment of female judges", 10 October, 2022. Available at https://www.fact-checkghana.com/full-list-president-akufo-addo-scores-high-on-appointment-of-female-judges/ (Accessed 1 April, 2024)
[19] Namibia narrowly misses 50% women in Parliament, 24 March, 2020. Available at https://genderlinks.org.za/news/namibia-narrowly-misses-50-mark-after-special-appointments/ (Accessed 2 April, 2024)
[20] Hage Geingob: Namibian president who played a modernising role, 4 February, 2024. Available at https://theconversation.com/hage-geingob-namibian-president-who-played-a-modernising-role-222730 (Accessed 2 April, 2024)
[21] Netumbo Nandi- Ndaitwah Available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/netumbo_nandi_ndaitwah (Accessed 15 January, 2024)
[22] Ethiopia's New Cabinet Is a Historic Win for Women in Government, 16 October, 2018. Available at https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/ethiopia-cabinet-ministers-women-abiy-ahmed/ (Accessed 10 February, 2024)
[23] Women Deliver Policy Brief (D4G brief) Available at https://womendeliver.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/D4G_Infographic_8.pdf (Accessed 20 January, 2024)



Men for change in rural Zimbabwe

Several organisations in Zimbabwe are engaging male traditional leaders to promote women's leadership from grassroots levels. "Involving women in our community programmes has brought a lot of positives in the village," said village head Elliot Khumalo of Gonye village 28, Nkayi district. "Since I lead the crusade on gender equality, I have seen a lot of men embracing the idea.

"We now have a number of women in leadership positions at schools, churches and political parties, thanks to the community, which now understands the role of women in community development."Khumalo, who is a male gender champion working with local gender organisation Padare/Enkundleni, said: "As traditional leaders, we are very influential and I would like to persuade some women here to take up leadership positions at various levels, including in politics."

He insists on representation of women in every development committee under his jurisdiction.

Headman Gudza of Buhera district is also a traditional leader advocating for gender equality. "At first I did not accept women empowerment because growing up I had the belief that women could not do what men do. "More so, I thought they can't be leaders at any level," said Gudza. "There has been a lot of transformation in the village and we are hoping to spread the message to other communities outside Gudza. We now have women making up the school development committees at our schools and the community has accepted that. My village court comprises five females and two males. We welcome the input from women because we believe it's progressive."

A female village head in Kondo, Chipinge district, Zvironzo Muyambo, said that she was making efforts to end some traditions and practices that hinder women's participation in politics. "We have embraced women's participation in leadership," said Muyambo. "We have representation of women in every part of our village committees, including the village courts where both male and female preside over court sessions."

Muyambo works with a number of organisations, including the Platform for Youth Development Trust. The Trust's gender and advocacy officer, Cynthia Gwenzi, said their advocacy includes discouraging social, economic and cultural traditional norms which keep women out of politics. "Our programmes start from the grassroots where we encourage women to take up positions in community programmes like school development committees," Gwenzi said. "We have a number of projects aimed at encouraging women to participate in politics in Chipinge. In the 2018 election we managed to have nine female councillors although we failed to have a female MP."

Self Help Development Foundation (SHDF) director Wadzanayi Vere noted: "traditional leaders are very strong in rural communities and command respect. If they declare in their communities that women can and should take up positions of leadership, this will have a great impact." SHDF is training traditional leaders on the constitution and the Traditional Leaders Act. "These trainings are exclusive to the traditional leaders so that we create a safe space to learn, debate and influence them to ensure that constitutional provisions are adhered to in the discharge of their duties," Vere said.

Adapted from an article by Moses Mugunyuki. Traditional leaders use authority to propel women to leadership positions. The Standard, 21 February, 2021

Engaging religious and traditional leaders at community level

The Afrobarometer (AB) was founded in 1999 when three survey research projects of Michigan State University, the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) and the Centre for Democratic Development (Ghana) joined forces. Since then AB has joined other regional barometers to form the Globalbarometer network and conducted 9 rounds of surveys in over 30 African countries. AB is widely acclaimed for the quality of its surveys which provide ordinary Africans the opportunity to contribute their views to the development of policy on critical issues. A 2022 Afrobarometer survey found that:

- Most (95%) Africans identify with a religion.
- Religious leaders are more widely trusted and less widely seen as corrupt than any other group of public leaders the survey asked about.
- More than two-thirds (69%) of Africans say they trust religious leaders "somewhat" or "a lot."[24]

Trust in religious leaders decreases with respondents' education level, from 80% among those with no formal schooling to 60% among those with post-secondary qualifications. Trust levels are higher in rural (75%) than in urban populations (62%) and increase with age, from 68% among 18- to 25-year-olds to 77% among those above age 65. Muslims (75%) are more likely than Christians (67%) to express trust in religious leaders.

A similar survey, also conducted by Afrobarometer across 31 countries in 2022 found that traditional leaders consistently receive higher positive ratings than the ratings received by elected counterparts (presidents, members of Parliament, and local government councillors) on trust, performance, listening, and lack of corruption.[25]

As might be expected, rural respondents, older respondents, and in those with lower levels of education had higher levels of trust in traditional leaders. However, all key demographic groups expressed confidence in traditional leaders including significant majorities across all age categories. Interestingly, men and women express nearly equal levels of trust.

Given the high levels of trust and confidence in traditional and religious leaders, who are also key gatekeepers of tradition and the views on gender, including on whether women should be in politics, it is strategic to engage with these leaders in efforts to challenge deeply held patriarchal attitudes. The intention is for these leaders to also reach the men and boys that they have direct influence with in the communities and thus to shift attitudes towards many gender issues including the education of both girls and boys, reduction in gender based violence, engagement of women in community committees and leadership fora, and ultimately women's participation in politics.

A number of civil society and UN programmes are working with local traditional and religious leaders across many countries in Africa on some of these issues. All of them will have an impact on women's political participation, some are directly targeting increasing participation. Some examples of these programmes include:

[24] Katenda, L. M. (2022). "For religious leaders in Africa, popular trust may present opportunity, challenge in times of crisis", Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 536 . Available at https://www.afrobarometer.org/publication/ad536-for-religious-leaders-in-africa-popular-trust-may-present-opportunity-challenge-in-times-of-crisis/ (Accessed 23 February, 2024)
[25] Logan, C. and K. Amakoh (2022) African citizens' message to traditional leaders: Stay in development, stay out of politics Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 5481 Available at https://www.afrobarometer.org/publication/ad548-african-citizens-message-to-traditional-leaders-stay-in-development-stay-out-of-politics/ (Accessed 23 February, 2024)

The **Voices4Change: Empowering Adolescent Girls and Women in Nigeria (V4C)** programme aimed to enhance the enabling environment for gender equality in four Nigerian states. It focused on norm change in three important areas: violence against girls and women, women's leadership and women's role in household decision-making.

Working with religious and traditional leaders was an important strategy in this programme for several reasons. Religious groups can instigate dialogue on gender issues through sermons, discussion groups, social and more traditional media. Such conversations can take on a life of their own, beyond the life of a funded programme. Some of the key lessons from the programme were:

- Gender aware religious leaders did indeed use different platforms (sermons, traditional media, online media) to share messages and promote discussions.
- Religious leaders had a greater influence on the parents of young women than on young women and men. This created an enabling home and community environment that accepted young people challenging existing norms and attitudes.
- Review meetings and lesson sharing sessions for religious and traditional leaders helped to encourage the leaders to continue challenging their congregations to take action to bring about gender justice and also inspired other leaders to join the movement.[26]

The Council of Traditional Leaders of Africa (COTLA) is a pan African network of leaders established in February 2019 with support from UNWomen and the Spotlight programme, which aims to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence. COTLA is committed to the eradication of negative and harmful practices such as child marriage and Female Genital Mutilation. National COTLA chapters, that are active in a number of countries, also support greater participation of women in politics.

King Adedapo Aderemi of **Nigeria** is the Convenor General of COTLA. Zonal Representatives of Traditional Rulers who met at a one day dialogue prior to the 2023 elections discussed Ending Electoral Violence against Women.

At the conclusion of the meeting the leaders issued a communique pledging their commitment to supporting women's participation in all elections and especially to preventing electoral gender based violence. The communique promised:

"Traditional rulers shall be intentional about encouraging women to participate in politics by mobilising participation that can be backed up by religious obligations supporting participation of women in politics. Traditional rulers shall lead community awareness and sensitisation efforts to enhance perception of women's participation in politics. They shall address religious misconceptions within their domain that inhibits women's unfettered participation in politics."[27]

> "Going forward, the best way is to engage men to be allies to the cause. We must not fight them. Actually, we need to have a conversation with men; they could be the voice that is missing. Let's create positive masculinity as we fight for numbers of women in politics and in positions to increase."
>
> *- Dr Thando Makubaza, PADARE*

[26] V4C Stories of Learning, 2017. Engaging Religious and Traditional Leaders for Gender Equality Available at https://jliflc.com/resources/engaging-religious-and-traditional-leaders-for-gender-equality/ (Accessed 5 February, 2024)
[27] Adapted from Traditional, Religious leaders commit to supporting women's participation in elections and preventing electoral gender based violence. 31 August, 2022. Available at https://nigeria.un.org/en/200830-traditional-religious-leaders-commit-supporting-womens-participation-elections-and (Accessed 10 February, 2024)



In **Kenya**, organisations such as the National Council of Churches now support WPP. The 2022 elections voted more women into office, although women's representation is still below the one third minimum. One of the women who was successful is Fatuma Achani, elected to be the governor of Kwale County. She credits the support she received from churches and sheiks with helping her to win a tough race against five men.The race was often bitter, with social media attacks, abuse and intimidation of Achani and her family. She says that she wants to be associated with efficient delivery, "Over the years I have tried to build a brand - I wanted to be sure people associated my name with delivering. We've managed to transform girls' enrolment - giving scholarships for school children in national schools and universities and giving bursaries. We have a budget of 400 million KSH [over US$3 million] every year to support students in schools."[28]

Promoting women's leadership at the grassroots in Kenya

Groots Kenya is a movement of grassroots women with programmes in a number of areas to promote women's participation, livelihoods and wellbeing. One Groots programme, "Champions for Transformative Leadership", targets men's support for gender equality in the election, nomination and appointment of grassroots women to decision-making platforms such as County Assemblies, County Executive, National and County committees, institutional boards, local administrators as well as national parliament. Male champions were active in supporting women's participation in the 2017 elections.

Laikipia county, 160 miles east of Nairobi, celebrated the first three women to be elected to the county and national assemblies in 2017.

"We are a movement of men committed to seeing more women in leadership positions in the county," said Pastor Charles Njogu, the chair of Men for Women Champions in Laikipia county. The movement, which began in 2012, identifies women who have shown an interest in politics and works with them to develop their manifestos.

"After we engage a woman aspirant, we conduct research on how the voters view them, what the voters need from them and then we brainstorm with the aspirants," Njogu said.

"It was a gruelling campaign, but [the male champions] accompanied me to youth, men's and women's meetings, churches and campaign meetings and offered security during forums and political rallies," Veronica Muthoni, member of the county assembly, said. "We form intelligence on the ground and neutralise any attacks planned before a forum," Njogu said. "We also form a human shield during the meetings, as well as educating the communities on the dangers and consequences of engaging in gender-based violence."

Emily Maranga, the GROOTS Kenya women and leadership programme manager, noted the work does not stop after elections. "To have more women elected in future, the current ones have to perform," she said. "We plan to work closely with the candidates and the men champions to ensure they implement their manifestos."

"The men champions will work as the link between the elected leaders and the communities to ensure every promise is delivered." Kennedy Wambugu, a public health officer and male champion, believes it is time communities changed mindsets and embraced more women in positions of leadership. "Gender equality needs to be approached from a perspective of women and men working together globally," he said.

Source: Adapted from: Sophie Mbugua, "Meet the Male Champions Supporting Kenya's New Women Politicians". The New Humanitarian. September 15, 2017

[28] Women's leadership slowed by patriarchal norms in Kenya elections. 3 March, 2023 Available at https://africa.unwomen.org/en/stories/feature-story/2023/01/womens-leadership-slowed-by-patriarchal-norms-in-kenya-elections (Accessed 21 January, 2024)



The USAID Integrated Land and Resource Governance programme in **Zambia** engaged traditional leaders in dialogue on land rights that began shifting norms and changing land rights in favour of women. Induna Jacob Phiri, from Mnukwa chiefdom, was the first to share his land after the first dialogue session, saying: "My wife had access to my land and planted crops of her own choice, but I never thought about what could happen to her if I died. I knew I needed to act while I was still alive, so I gave her a portion of land to be her own. After that, I felt empowered to tell people in my village to do the same."

Some of the indunas resisted changes in social norms, and it is important to invest enough time in supporting the indunas and headpersons to have a deeper understanding of existing gender norms, the harm which comes from them, and reasons for changing them.[29]



HeForShe is a global programme spearheaded by UN Women to engage leaders across the spectrum of the private and public sector in the fight against Gender Based Violence. A HeForShe chapter comprised of young men has been established in Mangoche, **Malawi**. These young men are leading community discussions involving community leaders, young people and other partners. The conversations aim to foster positive masculinity, challenge the status quo and lead to reduction of gender based violence. The discussions also cover how GBV impacts on HIV prevention.[30]

Men taking up gender concerns: Thenjiwe Mtintso's framework posits that the real test of gender parity and of women's effective political participation is when men take up gender concerns. Lesotho is a country with a long tradition of women's participation at the local level. Men in these councils have been empowered to take up even some of the toughest women's rights concerns.



Male councillor in Lesotho advocates for safe abortion

Former councillor Mohlomi Setlaba, a respected figure in the Motsekuoa Village, **Lesotho**, has long been a loyal advocate for his community's well-being. Mohlomi recognises the urgent need for progress, particularly in reproductive health. After he participated in a transformative Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights training that was organised by Gender Links while he was still a councillor, he became a trailblazer in advocating for safe abortion.

Mohlomi embarked on a mission to educate and empower his community, particularly young girls and their mothers, about their reproductive rights and options. During one of his campaigns, Mohlomi arranged an emotional event centred on the theme of "Emphasising the importance of providing comprehensive sex education and access to reproductive healthcare services to empower young people to make informed choices about their bodies and futures."

Undeterred by resistance or scepticism, Mohlomi has set his sights on working with local clinics to improve service delivery and forging partnerships with church clinics, ensuring that young girls have access to a range of healthcare options and support networks. Furthermore, his position as a board member in several schools provides him with a platform to advocate for safe abortion practices, particularly in schools where many girls are affected. If schools actively address these issues, it could facilitate their advancement to the parliament for further consideration.

Source: Gender Links

[29] Traditional leaders in Zambia shift gender norms and strengthen women's land rights, 30 June, 2021. Available at https://iied.org/traditional-leaders-zambia-shift-gender-norms-strengthen-womens-land-rights. (Accessed 30 January, 2024)
[30] Malawi Ignites Change With A Pioneering HeForShe Campaign Against GBV & HIV, 24 January 2024. Available at https://africa.unwomen.org/en/stories/news/2024/01/un-women-malawi-ignites-change-with-a-pioneering-heforshe-campaign-against-gbv-hiv (Accessed 15 February, 2024)

Zimbabwe: Junior Councils pioneer a new vision of power sharing

Shingirai Tanaka Chikazhe, the Executive Director of the National Junior Councils Association of Zimbabwe (NJCA), oversees 92 junior councils. The NJCA, composed of current and former junior councillors, serves as a watchdog ensuring local authorities address children's issues in local government service delivery and decision-making. The NJCA also trains young people to understand leadership roles and service delivery.



Shingirai Tanaka Chikazhe.
Photo: loverage Nhamoyebonde

Chikazhe started as a project coordinator, became President of the NJCA in 2014, then executive director in 2017. He credits his understanding and appreciation of gender issues in leadership to his female mentors.

The NJCA takes gender issues seriously, although it currently does not have a gender policy. The Association membership reflects a near 50-50 gender balance and has seen an increase in female leadership within junior councils, with many junior mayors and chairpersons being girls. This change has led to a more inclusive approach to addressing issues in local governance and service delivery. The NJCA also actively promotes gender equality through various programmes and taking part in international celebrations.

Chikazhe acknowledges the competence of women in leadership roles and strives to maintain a 50-50 gender balance in the NJCA. He encourages local authorities to consider gender equality during the junior councillors selection process, suggesting that if a male is elected mayor, a female should be elected deputy mayor, and vice versa.

He also emphasises the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in leadership positions. He notes that many young women participate actively in junior council but often withdraw after their term of office, suggesting a need for ongoing support and encouragement for these young women to maintain their confidence and continue in leadership roles.

Chikazhe identifies himself as a committed gender champion. He recognises the need to address gaps, such as supporting young women as they transition out of junior council. He appreciates the efforts of non-governmental organisations like Gender Links in promoting gender equality and learns from them to enhance his advocacy efforts.

The NJCA Executive Director emphasised the importance of unity and collaboration between men and women for development and progress. He argues that no issues are solely women's issues, as these issues affect the whole family and society.

Chikazhe acknowledges the existence of patriarchal practices, especially in rural areas, and the need for continuous advocacy through various media to promote gender equality. He hopes that more women will take up leadership roles, and would be happy to see a woman leading the NJCA in the future.

Chikazhe believes that effective decision-makers produce positive progress and development, and garner support from the majority. He argues that anyone in a decision-making role should be able to change lives and encourage others. He believes that women holding decision-making roles in politics bring diversity leading to better decisions. He says that some young men resist women's leadership, but emphasises the importance of educating and sensitising everyone about gender equality. He suggests that this education should start from a young age and continue through primary, secondary and higher education. Chikazhe envisions a future where everyone appreciates the importance of gender equality and where men and women work together in decision-making roles.

Source: Gender Links Zimbabwe

Gender equality as a win-win formula in decision-making

A new generation of young male leaders working side by side with women as equals is coming around to the realisation that gender equality is a win-win formula. In Zimbabwe, junior councils provide a training ground for the next generation of local leaders. These structures are taking a progressive view of the future.

Conclusions and recommendations

Effective action to address the very wide gender gap that exists in political participation with any speed will require unorthodox approaches. This chapter argues that these approaches need to include engaging with men as allies. This means convincing men of the contribution that women make to the national agenda when men share decision-making power with women. It also means engaging with men to adopt more positive and collaborative masculinity.

There are encouraging signs of moves to encourage positive masculinity emanating from the level of the African Union but such endeavours need wide publicity. The AU needs to widen the circles of champions in all countries. This includes engaging with traditional and religious leaders as individuals and through their representative bodies to begin the slow process of challenging entrenched gender norms. Leaders should encourage families and communities to support, encourage and enable more participation of women at all levels of political endeavour. This includes men, especially within families, supporting girls and women to improve their educational levels.

Within political parties, men should address the inhospitable environment for women and ensure doors are opened for the election of women within the parties. Political parties should also adopt voluntary quotas for participation of women at different levels. Men can support women to develop winning platforms. They can support women to raise sufficient finances to mount credible and winning campaigns. Men in political parties should denounce and tackle all forms of electoral violence - including psychological violence through the media.

The chapter has several examples of men supporting WPP within families, as community leaders and as national leaders. The media should applaud and amplify such efforts to encourage other men to provide similar support. Programmes to enhance such engagement need to be expanded, with peer pressure brought to bear on men at all levels to move faster as they change their attitudes and do much more to support women in politics.



Young women and men work side by side in the Harare Junior Council.
Photo: Gender Links Zimbabwe

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

8



Meeting of the candidate, Azali Assoumani Moroni, in Comores.

Credit: Oustadh Padré

KEY FACTS

- To make a difference women need not only to be in decision-making but in influential positions within decision-making.
- Women hold just 13% of top executive positions in Africa (President, Vice President, Prime Minister, and Deputy Prime Minister). The proportion ranges from 28% in East Africa to zero in North Africa.
- Women mayors of capital cities in Africa have increased by ten percentage points, from 19% in 2021 to 29% in 2024.
- Women constitute 25% of speakers of the different houses of parliament. This is an increase of four percentage points from 2021. East Africa has the most women Speakers, while North Africa and the Horn continue to have no women speakers.
- Women constitute 24% of cabinet ministers in Africa, up just two percentage points since 2021. Women tend to hold portfolios on women, family and children affairs, social inclusion and development, social protection and social security, and indigenous and minority affairs.
- More and more women are shattering the glass ceiling and using their positions to drive forward the cause of gender equality. Their efforts are not only commendable but also crucial for our society's progress.

Representation of women in political decision-making refers to the numerical presence of women in political institutions such as parliaments or cabinets. Substantive participation, on the other hand, refers to the meaningful involvement of women in the decision-making process and their influence on policies and legislation.

While representation is essential for ensuring that women's voices are heard in political institutions, substantive participation goes beyond mere presence, to consider the actual impact that women have on decision-making. This includes their ability to shape policies, advocate for gender equality, and address issues that specifically affect women. A question that arises is whether women have a responsibility to represent other women; whether or not they are more apt to do so, and whether they bring a different style to leadership.

Several recent studies suggest that greater female political participation improves the quality of democracy. Greater inclusion and a wider diversity of views encourages robust debate. A 2021 study compiled by the Global Institute for Women's Leadership titled *Women Political Leaders: The Impact of Gender on Democracy*, reviewed over 500 documents in English from 1995 (the year of the Beijing Platform of Action) to 2020. The study found that when "women are able to exercise political leadership in a manner that is authentic to them, there are gains not just for women and girls but for the whole of society."[1] The report notes that although the many barriers to women's participation in politics tend to encourage more participation from better educated and financially well-off women, the women who participate often have more interest in community wellbeing due to backgrounds in community service than men.[2]

Key findings of the report highlight the positive impact of having more women in political decision-making roles. Women politicians **engage more in constituency work**, which is well received by their constituents and leads to a perception of a more responsive government. Additionally, countries with higher levels of representation of women in political institutions tend to have lower levels of corruption, with **resources directed towards improved service delivery**. Women in politics generally **work harder and exhibit a leadership style** that is more **cooperative and inclusive**, fostering collaboration across party lines for common objectives.

> "Women continue to be excluded from decision-making bodies, despite the proven economic impact of their participation in decision-making bodies and electoral campaigns."
>
> *- Marie Odile Attanasso, former Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Benin, and author of the book "Women and Political Power, from Dahomean Origins to the Present Day"*

Marie Odile Attanasso, former Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research and author of the book « Women and Political Power, from Dahomean Origins to the Present Day" highlights that "over and above this provision, women are strongly urged to become more involved in politics to earn the positions they have been awarded. Women's participation in

[1] Cooper-Coles, Minna. 2021. Women Political Leaders: the impact of gender on democracy. The Global Institute for Women's Leadership and Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD). https://www.wfd.org/what-we-do/resources/women-political-leaders-impact-gender-democracy accessed 1 April, 2024.
[2] Ibid

political life is a challenge to be taken up by women and men alike". According to her, this provision of the new electoral law is undoubtedly a step forward for women's representation in the National Assembly. "However, it remains open to criticism as these new provisions show that in Benin there really is a glass ceiling totally anchored in mentalities and behaviours". Attanasso underlines that gender inequalities have an impact on economic growth. "Women continue to be excluded from decision-making bodies, despite the proven economic impact of their participation in decision-making bodies and electoral campaigns", she laments. To counter this situation, she proposes to "improve women's level of education, enabling them to become active players in political and economic life, and thus ensure their empowerment".[3]

Moreover, the research shows that women in politics **bring important women's rights issues** often considered private or domestic to the public policy level. These include advocating for equal rights, maternity leave, families, childcare, inheritance rights, land and property rights, children's citizenship from their mothers, sexual and reproductive health, gender-based violence, and legislation regarding abortion. In African countries, women politicians have been involved in legislation on limiting child marriage and female genital mutilation, demonstrating their dedication to addressing crucial societal issues. Furthermore, women policymakers prioritise policies that benefit the whole society and particularly the most vulnerable populations through healthcare, welfare, poverty alleviation, education, and access to water and sanitation.

The study found that women in political leadership focus less on militarism and more on aid, leading to lower rates of war and human rights abuses in their respective states. Moreover, the research highlights the importance of female politicians as role models inspiring more women to pursue political office.[4]

Political corruption refers to the abuse of public power for private gain. It encompasses various unethical and illegal practices in government and political processes, including bribery, embezzlement, favouritism, nepotism, cronyism, and extortion. Political corruption undermines the principles of democracy, transparency, accountability, and the rule of law and can have a negative impact on the economy, public services, and social welfare. It often results in skewed resource allocation, distorted decision-making, reduced trust in government institutions, and societal inequalities. Overall, corruption undermines women's political participation by reinforcing inequalities, perpetuating discrimination, and eroding confidence in democratic processes. Addressing corruption is essential for creating a more inclusive and equitable political system that promotes women's participation and representation.

Corruption has a negative impact on women in leadership. Women in leadership also have a role to play in combatting corruption. The Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) explored corruption and integrity through a series of publications. Series Paper Four on "Anti-corruption and Gender: The Role of Women's Political Participation" sheds light on the links between women's participation in decision-making and corruption.[5]

Their evidence demonstrates a clear correlation between higher levels of women in elected positions and lower levels of corruption within a country. While various factors influence this relationship and are not always straightforward, studies indicate that increasing the presence of women in political office can have a positive impact on reducing corruption at national, regional, council, and cabinet levels. Women's active participation in the political sphere is often effective in curbing political and bureaucratic corruption.[6]

3 Case study by Isabelle Otchoumare for GL WPP project.
4 Cooper Coles, Op Cit.
5 Dr Ortrun Merkle, 2022, Anti-corruption and Gender: the role of women's political participation' The Global Institute for Women's Leadership and Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD)
6 Mohamed, A. M. (2014). Personal integrity as a guiding principle for war against corruption. http://repo.uum.edu.my/13947/ accessed 30 march 2024

The impact of women in lowering corruption is contingent on the context in which they operate. Research shows that women's empowerment in tackling corruption is particularly significant in societies with high levels of gender inequality and weak bureaucratic principles. The presence of larger proportions of women in decision-making can disrupt established networks that are often at the heart of corruption.[7] This also enhances women's participation in decision-making processes.

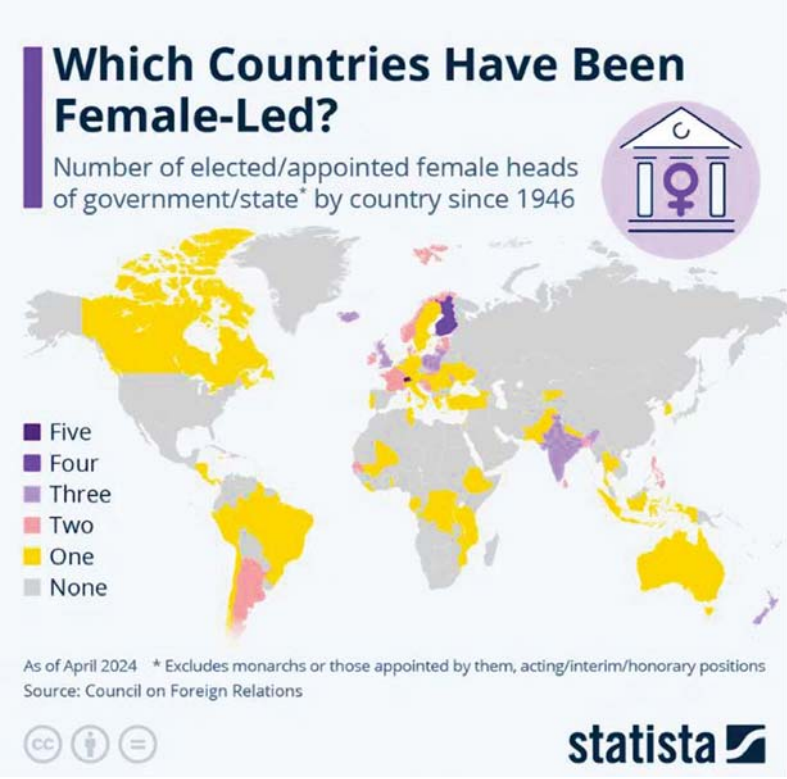
Women tend to prioritise topics men may overlook, such as service delivery, where combatting corruption is vital for ensuring effective service provision. Additionally, women often operate outside traditional networks and engage with civil society members and women's groups, who advocate for a stronger focus on anti-corruption measures and hold wrongdoers accountable. Their distinct approach to politics and influence can significantly promote transparency and combat corruption within governance structures. However, they are often victimised for speaking out against the government and in some cases pay the ultimate price, their life.

This chapter reviews the proxy indicators established in the first WPP Barometer to assess effective participation from executive leadership to municipal mayors. The chapter demonstrates women's gradual but increasing presence in leadership positions, such as presidents, vice presidents, ministers, speakers, and mayors. This chapter explores the extent to which women are breaking stereotypes and paving the way for young women leaders, as well as bringing new agendas and styles of leadership to decision-making.

Executive leadership

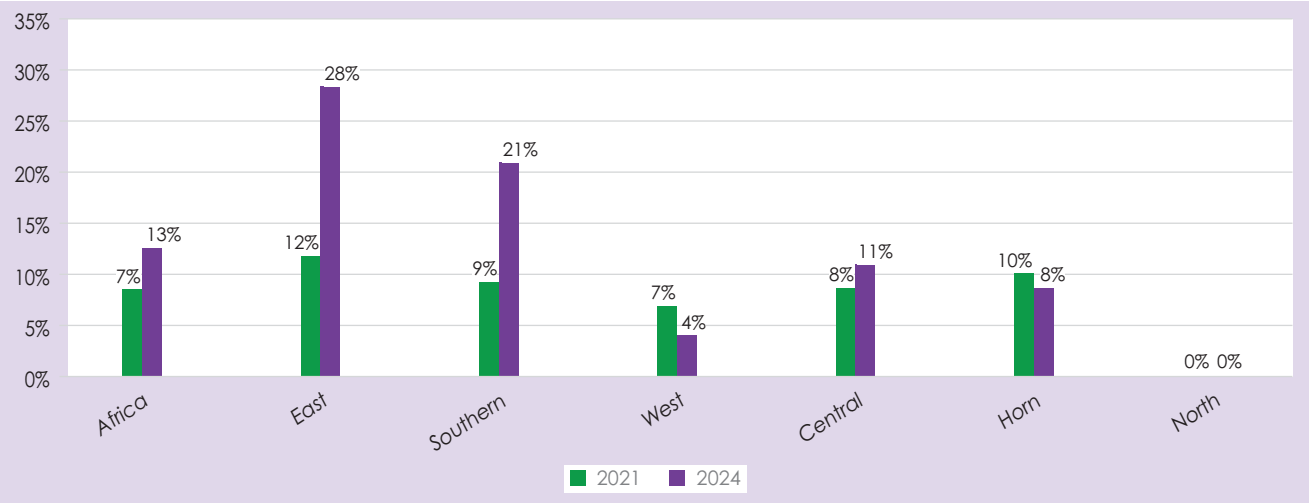
The highest level a politician can aspire to is the Head of State, as President or Prime Minister. Globally, as of 10 January 2024, 28 women served as Heads of State and/or Government in 26 countries. At the current rate, it would take 130 years to reach gender equality in the highest positions of power.[8]

While the number of women holding executive positions in government in Africa increased from 7% in 2021 to 13% in 2024, this proportion remains low. Of the 121 top executive positions (President, Vice President, Prime Minister, and Deputy Prime Minister) in 54 African countries, women hold only 17 such positions.[9] Generally, this is an elected position and requires a high degree of backing from one's party. Women are slowly reaching for the top and taking on the presidential race. But women still have a long way to go.



[7] Dr Ortrun Merkle, 2022, Anti-corruption and Gender: the role of women's political participation' The Global Institute for Women's Leadership and Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD)
[8] UN Women, at https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures#_edn1 accessed 4 February 2024
[9] See Annex 11.

Figure 8.1: Women in Executive leadership in Africa by region 2021-2024



Source: Compiled by Gender Links with information from government websites, see Annex 11.

Figure 8.1 shows that women hold just 13% of top executive positions (President, Vice President, Prime Minister, and Deputy Prime Minister). The proportion ranges from 28% in East Africa to zero in North Africa. East Africa also saw the most significant increase, while West Africa and the Horn declined.

Table 8.1: Top women leaders in African governments

Country	President	Vice President	Prime Minister	Deputy Prime Minister
Tanzania	Samia Suluhu Hassan			
Ethiopia	Sahle-Work Zewde			
Namibia		Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah	Saara Kuugongelwa	
Gabon		Rose Christiane Raponda		
South Sudan		Rebecca Nyandeng De Mabior		
Angola		Esperança da Costa		
Zambia		Mutale Nalumango		
Equatorial Guinea			Manuela Roka Botey	
Togo			Victoire Tomegah Dogbé	
Uganda			Robinah Nabbanja	Rebecca Kadaga
				Lukia Isanga Nakadama
Eswatini				Thulisile Dladla
Lesotho				Nthomeng Majara
Mauritius				Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun
DRC			Judith Suminwa Tuluka	

Source: Gender Links, Annex 11

Table 8.1 shows that there are currently 17 women in executive leadership positions. President Samia Hassan Suluhu of **Tanzania** is the highest-ranking official, who has held the position since March 2021. Sahle-Work Zewde is president of Ethiopia, but this is essentially a ceremonial position.

Netumbo Nandi Ndaitwa will be the presidential candidate for the ruling party SAWPO in **Namibia** in the upcoming general elections following the passing of Namibia's president, Hage Geingob. SWAPO elected Nandi-Ndaitwah vice-president of the Swapo Party during the party's 6th Congress, making history as the first woman

to serve in that capacity. She served as Deputy Prime Minister of Namibia from 2015 to 2024. She is currently the third vice president of Namibia.

Gabon, South Sudan, Angola, and Zambia also have female vice presidents. There are five women prime ministers and five deputy prime ministers.

More women contest top posts, but challenges remain

One way of ensuring women get into executive positions is by having female candidates selected as vice presidents or running mates for presidential elections. In countries with electoral laws permitting a vice presidential candidate, there is a greater likelihood of women being positioned closer to top leadership roles. Over time, this gradual increase in female representation can offer women the platform to showcase their governing capabilities.



The Republic of **Benin** has seen a significant increase in women's representation in decision-making bodies, highlighted by the election of Mariam Chabi Talata Zimé as Vice-President in the 2021 presidential elections. This position, created by constitutional amendments in 2019, demonstrates a significant advancement in the involvement of women in governance. The amendment stipulates that the electorate elect the President and Vice-President together, with the Vice-President able to assume the presidency in the event of a vacancy. This move marks a significant milestone in women's participation at the highest levels of government. Women's representation in the lower house increased 19 percentage points in the last election, from 8% to 27%.



Despite women's under-representation in politics in the Union of the **Comoros**, some have successfully held high state positions. In April 2019, Mhoudine Sitti Farouata made history as the first elected female governor, securing an impressive 70% of the votes. Moinaecha Youssouf Djalali boldly contested the presidency in 2016 amidst 24 male candidates, leveraging her dual identity as a woman and a member of the diaspora. In 2010, Zaharia Saïd Ahmed, a sports coach, made a pioneering bid for the presidency, although receiving less than 1% of the votes. Despite facing obstacles and pressures, these women garnered support from their communities, colleagues, and women's associations, demonstrating resilience and determination in pursuing political leadership roles.



The **Democratic Republic of Congo** conducted its fourth electoral cycle in December 2023, which included presidential, national, provincial legislative, and communal council elections. Only two of the 26 presidential candidates in 2023 were women: Marie-Josée Ifoku Mputa Mpunga and Joëlle Bile Batali.

Marie-Josée Ifoku Mputa Mpunga, a former provincial governor, made her second presidential bid in 2023 after a previous attempt in 2018. Despite securing only 0.15% of votes in 2018, her support increased to 0.8% in the latest election. Her electoral campaign advocated thoroughly reforming the country's institutions, including revising the Constitution. Ifoku Mputa Mpunga asserted that she would execute a "coup" to implement her agenda, believing that only a woman could drive tangible change in the DRC.

On the other hand, her female opponent, Joëlle Bile Bitali, emphasised the promotion of values in her campaign. Hailing from the civil society sector, she garnered only 0.04% of the votes. Bile Bitali's vision centered on establishing a Republic of values founded on combatting

corruption, enhancing the value of work, and ensuring justice in the DRC. In a surprising twist, just five days before the elections, Bile Bitali withdrew from the race and backed the incumbent candidate, Félix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo.

Recent elections in the DRC showcased limited participation by women in high-profile political races despite constitutional provisions affirming gender equality. The experiences of Marie-Josée Ifoku Mputa Mpunga and Joëlle Bile Bitali underscore the challenges faced by female candidates in navigating the political landscape and advocating for change in a country grappling with various issues, including corruption and violence.[10]

Violence against women in politics is another factor deterring women from entering this sphere. This violence is blatant and subtle but has a profound impact on women seeking political office.



Amsatou Sow Sidibé was one of two women, out of 14, presidential candidates who ran in the 2012 **Senegal** presidential election. The authorities rejected her candidacy for the presidential election of March 2024 for lack of sponsorship. She affirms that in Senegal, women are excluded from the highest decision-making sphere, the Republic's presidency. For the 2024 presidential election, only two women, Rose Wardini and Anta Babacar Ngom, ran for president.

While Senegal now boasts the second-highest representation of women in the lower house, Senegalese people still find it hard to accept a woman as president, according to Sidibé, a law professor and now Citizen Movement leader. She says that during her presidential candidacy in 2012, a religious leader expressed the view that a woman could not serve as the president of the Republic, citing restrictions preventing religious leaders from holding private meetings with women, even if they held the presidential position. These remarks had a negative impact on her. Another form of violence experienced by women who want to engage in active politics is economic. "Elections are costly, and many male candidates do not hesitate to plunge into the coffers of public funds to finance their election campaign, whereas women are more respectful of good governance," she said.

Women in Cabinet

Cabinet is the executive arm of government. As noted in Chapter Seven on the role of men, cabinet is a sphere of government in which heads of state have much greater leeway to increase the representation of women in decision-making. This is because heads of state appoint members, and having a high proportion of women in the cabinet is a clear sign of political will at the highest level.

Table 8.2 shows that women constitute just 24% of women in cabinet in Africa. The highest proportion of women in cabinet is Mozambique, with 50% women. Rwanda, Burundi, South Africa and Guinea Bissau all have 40% or more women in cabinet. The lowest proportion is Djibouti at 7%. East Africa (36%) has the highest proportion of women in cabinet followed by Southern Africa (30%). West Africa and the Horn (19% each) have the lowest proportion of women in cabinet.

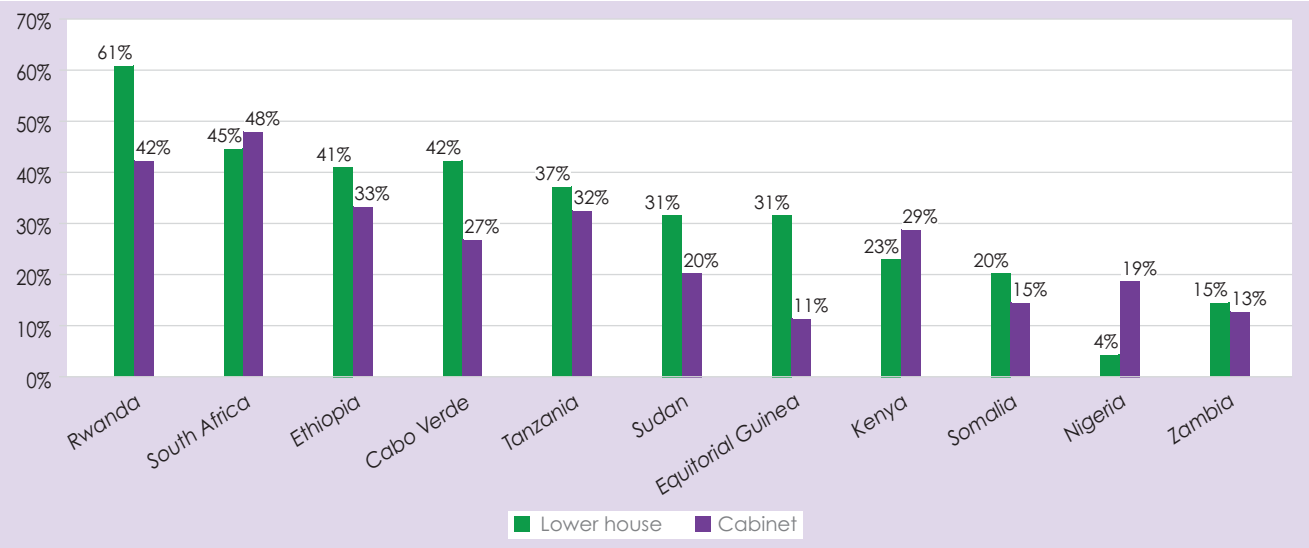
[10] Case study by Anna Mayimona Ngemba.

Table 8.2: Women in cabinet in Africa by region May 2024

Region	Country	Women	Men	Total	% Cabinet
East	Rwanda	14	19	33	42%
East	Burundi	6	9	15	40%
East	Uganda	10	17	27	37%
East	Tanzania	7	15	22	32%
East	Kenya	7	17	24	29%
Total East		**45**	**73**	**118**	**36%**
Southern	Mozambique	10	10	20	50%
Southern	South Africa	14	15	29	48%
Southern	Seychelles	5	8	13	38%
Southern	Malawi	8	14	22	36%
Southern	eSwatini	6	12	18	33%
Southern	Tanzania	7	15	22	32%
Southern	Namibia	6	14	20	30%
Southern	Madagascar	16	38	54	30%
Southern	Botswana	8	21	29	28%
Southern	Zimbabwe	4	13	17	24%
Southern	Angola	6	20	26	23%
Southern	Mauritius	9	14	23	18%
Southern	Zambia	3	15	18	17%
Southern	Lesotho	3	22	25	12%
Southern	Comoros	2	16	18	11%
Southern	DRC	1	9	10	10%
Total Southern		**107**	**247**	**354**	**30%**
North	Tunisia	8	15	23	35%
North	Morocco	6	19	25	24%
North	South Sudan	8	27	35	23%
North	Mauritania	5	18	23	22%
North	Sudan	4	16	20	20%
North	Egypt	6	26	32	19%
North	Libya	6	28	34	18%
North	Algeria	5	29	34	15%
Total North	Total North	**48**	**178**	**226**	**21%**
West	Cabo Verde	3	8	11	27%
West	Guinea-Bissau	7	11	18	44%
West	Sierra Leone	9	21	30	30%
West	Guinea	10	26	36	28%
West	Liberia	5	14	19	26%
West	Togo	8	23	31	26%
West	Senegal	7	25	32	22%
West	Ghana	5	19	24	21%
West	Benin	5	19	24	21%
West	Nigeria	9	38	47	19%
West	Burkina Faso	4	21	25	16%
West	Gambia (The)	4	21	25	16%
West	Mali	3	16	19	16%
West	Niger	6	32	38	16%
West	Côte d'Ivoire	6	41	47	13%
West	Equatorial Guinea	3	24	27	11%
Total West	Total West	**78**	**301**	**377**	**21%**
Horn	Ethiopia	7	14	21	33%
Horn	Somalia	4	22	26	15%
Horn	Djibouti	1	14	15	7%
Total Horn	Total Horn	**12**	**50**	**62**	**19%**
Central	Chad	6	28	34	18%
Central	Gabon	7	28	35	20%
Central	Sao Tome and Principe	6	26	32	19%
Central	Central African Republic	2	9	11	18%
Central	Cameroon	7	40	47	15%
Total Central		**21**	**91**	**112**	19%
TOTAL AFRICA		**309**	**969**	**1281**	**24%**

Source: Gender Links.

Figure 8.2: Women in cabinet vs parliament in select African countries



Source: Compiled by Gender Links with information from government websites.

Figure 8.2 compares women's representation in the lower house and cabinet in 12 selected countries with high and low levels of WPP from different regions of Africa. Rwanda, Ethiopia, Cabo Verde, Tanzania, Sudan, Equatorial Guinea, Somalia, and Zambia have more women in parliament than in the cabinet. Except for Ethiopia and Zambia, all these countries have some form of quota, either constitutional/ legislated or voluntary party. Conversely, in South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria there are more women in Cabinet. Interestingly aside from South Africa, the other two countries have low representation of women in parliament.

There is some correlation between the number of women in parliament and the number of women appointed as cabinet ministers. For instance, Rwanda has the highest proportion of women in the lower house and cabinet, while South Africa has almost equal representation at these levels. This correlation implies that countries with a higher representation of women in parliament are more likely to appoint women to cabinet positions. In many countries, a cabinet minister also has to be an MP. It follows that where there is a very low level of women in parliament, heads of state may face constraints in appointing women to cabinet.

A critical further test of commitment to genuine equality is the extent to which Heads of State appoint women to non-traditional posts. For example, women tend to hold portfolios on women, family and children affairs, social inclusion and development, social protection and social security, and indigenous and minority affairs.[11] These portfolios lack the resources, power and profile of cabinet portfolios typically led by men, such as defence, justice, finance, and foreign affairs.[12]



Voting in the 2023 general elections in Mbabane, Eswatini. *Credit: Eswatini Observer*

[11] UN Women, https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures , accessed 5 February 2024
[12] CEDAW, Draft General Recommendation No. 40: Equal and Inclusive Representation of Women in Decision-Making Systems, 2024

Table 8.3: Women's representation by ministry cluster

Country	Region	% Women overall	%W Finance, economic, planning and development	% W Foreign, justice, defence, security	% W Resources and infrastructure	Social (incl health, education women, children, sports, culture)
Overall		25%	24%	19%	16%	44%
Rwanda	East	50%	67%	22%	50%	75%
South Africa	Southern	48%	33%	57%	44%	57%
Ethiopia	Horn	33%	25%	0%	38%	50%
Tanzania	East/South	32%	50%	43%	11%	50%
Kenya	East	29%	40%	17%	25%	40%
Cabo Verde	West	27%	0%	25%	50%	33%
Sudan	North	20%	20%	20%	0%	29%
Nigeria	West	19%	40%	0%	4%	60%
Somalia	Horn	15%	0%	0%	11%	43%
Algeria	North	14%	0%	13%	15%	25%
Zambia	Southern	13%	25%	0%	0%	33%
Equatorial Guinea	West	11%	0%	20%	0%	20%

Source: Gender Links, with data from government websites.

Table 8.3 shows that in 12 selected countries from different regions of Africa, women dominate in the social clusters (including women's and youth affairs, health, education, sport and culture portfolios) at 44%. Of the other three clusters, women have the highest level of representation (24%) in the economic and planning portfolios followed by defence, justice, and security (19%) resources and infrastructure (16%). There are, however, some examples of where this trend is changing. For instance, in South Africa, there are more women (57%) than there are men in the foreign/justice/security cluster. In Tanzania, there is parity in the finance, economic, planning, and development clusters, while in Rwanda, women outnumber men in this important cluster.

Gender-aware perspectives and priorities

Women politicians often bring a unique gender perspective to policies and programmes due to their own lived experiences and understanding of gender-specific issues. Women in leadership positions may also be more likely to prioritise policies that address gender inequality, promote women's rights, and support initiatives to empower women and girls.

When women occupy non-traditional positions, they can also serve as role models and advocates for gender equality, inspiring other women and girls to pursue leadership positions and contributing to shaping policies that promote gender justice and social change.



Botswana: Woman Finance Minister rises to stardom



Hon Peggy Serame.
Credit: NEO MARUAPULE

Peggy Serame, Botswana's trailblazing Minister of Finance and Economic Development, received The Banker's Finance Minister of the Year for Africa award for 2024. This prestigious recognition is a testament to her exceptional leadership and effective management of the economy during a challenging year across the continent.[13]

With a career spanning over three decades, Serame's journey in public service began in 1994 as an assistant economist in the Ministry of Finance. Her dedication and expertise led her to the role of Deputy Permanent Secretary for Economic Diversification (EDD) at the Ministry of Trade and Industry in 2011. Finally, in 2021, she made history as Botswana's first woman Minister of Finance and Economic Development.

Serame says that despite being the first woman in Botswana to hold the position of Minister of Finance, she faced criticism and allegations of nepotism. During her campaign for election as a member of parliament, Serame encountered sexist remarks and harassment from both competitors and party supporters. Serame highlights challenges faced by women in politics, including unfounded criticisms, unfair comparisons, and harassment tactics, even from within her own party. Serame also highlights the financial challenges in politics, stating, "It's very difficult, and it is very expensive." She highlights the importance of having supporters who believe in you and are willing to offer financial assistance.

When she became a Minister, the public compared Serame to her male predecessor; some doubted her ability, saying, "You don't belong here because this isn't social. This is finance. It's really, really important". Serame acknowledges that "our society is patriarchal; therefore, some people assume that certain positions are preserved for men." She acknowledges facing some pushback from other ministers and individuals in her role. Still, she remains focused on her goals and emphasises her professional demeanour and commitment to producing results while staying true to herself. Serame's approach includes a strong focus on learning quickly, dedication to her role, and ultimately aiming to make a significant impact in their position. "I prioritise professionalism, results, and enjoyment in my work."

Serame commends her party, the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), for actively supporting women in politics through nominations and appointments in key leadership positions. In 2022, women in the BDP approached Serame to run for chair of the Women's Wing because they believed in her leadership qualities. She recalls that they said, "We are not necessarily looking for somebody who has been here the longest time, but we are looking for somebody we believe has leadership qualities. We believe you can bring the women together, we believe you can lead us into things that we've always looked to, we believe you can lead the transformation that we require as the BDP".

Initially hesitant, she sought advice from the president, who supported her decision to stand. She appreciates that her party's is encouraging more women to participate in politics and providing guidance and support to women candidates. She says, "The BDP's commitment to gender equality and empowerment is evident in its actions to promote women in leadership positions and create a more inclusive political environment."

[13] The Banker, https://www.thebanker.com/Finance-Minister-of-the-Year-2024-1704191400

Serame believes personality is a stronger determinant of leadership style than gender. However, she acknowledges that being a woman brings a different perspective and understanding of specific issues, leading to a more nurturing approach to decision-making. Some of the policy reforms she has championed are removing VAT on menstrual hygiene products, programmes to address challenges faced by young women, and initiatives for the informal sector.

Minister Serame prioritises building a strong and resilient financial sector to address emerging and systemic risks. Botswana has undertaken various reforms, including legislative adjustments and administrative improvements, to enhance efficiency and optimise public funds. Additionally, at COP28 in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Minister Serame emphasised the need for climate-resilient infrastructure and called for support from developed countries through the loss and damage fund, aligning with global climate change mitigation efforts.[14]

As more women start to occupy non-traditional cabinet portfolios and are able to demonstrate their skills and leadership abilities, the political landscape will start shifting. Increasingly, women are using the skills and expertise gained in the public and private sectors to advance rights and shape policies that address the diverse contexts and experiences of the entire society.



Fatma Zohra Zerouati is a prominent figure in Algerian politics and was Minister of the Environment and Renewable Energy from 2017 to 2020. She began her journey as an activist and politician by leveraging her communication skills and environmental expertise. Zerouati, a state engineer specialissng in ecology and the environment, entered politics in 2012 through the Tamajoue Amal El Djazair (TAJ) party, which she leads.



Fatma Zohra Zerouati. *Credit: FZZ*

Zerouati's multifaceted background enabled her to comprehend the intricacies of societal and environmental issues, fostering collaborations at national and international levels. This accumulation of experiences shaped her decision to engage in politics, culminating in co-founding the TAJ party in 2012. As a member of the party's Politburo, Zerouati spearheaded environmental initiatives, such as incorporating sustainable development into the party's agenda and organising related activities. Her dedication and contributions within the TAJ party ultimately led to her appointment as Minister of the Environment and Renewable Energy, a position she occupied from 2017-2020.

Reflecting on her political journey, Zerouati emphasised the significance of women in decision-making roles and their role in shaping policies and addressing national challenges. Her tenure as a female politician highlighted the importance of understanding diverse aspects and data related to the country's issues in formulating effective political strategies. Zerouati's pragmatic approach to politics underscores the necessity of holistic knowledge and comprehensive analysis when proposing viable policy solutions.[15]

[14] The Banker, Finance Minister of the Year 2024, at https://www.thebanker.com/Finance-Minister-of-the-Year-2024-1704191400 , accessed 28 February 2024
[15] Case study by Nassima BERRAYAH

Women Speakers/Presidents of Parliament

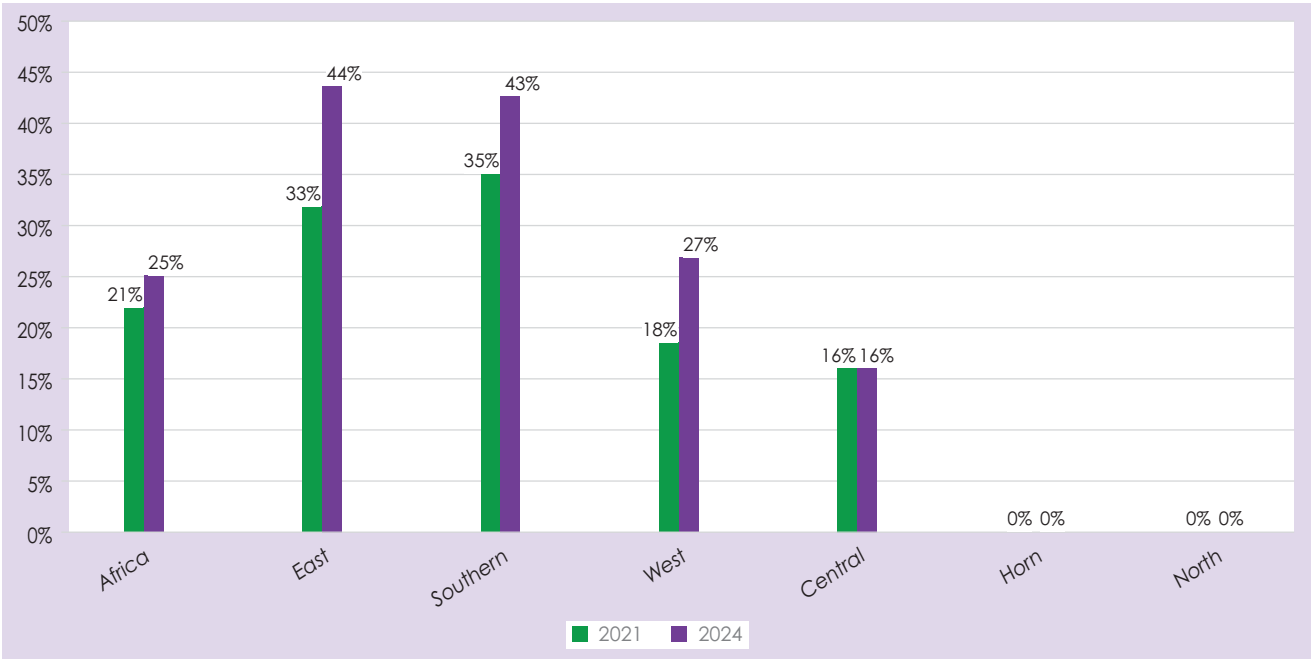
The Speaker is the principal office bearer and acts as Parliament's representative, spokesperson, and chief executive officer. The Speaker's role is essential in overseeing the conduct of parliamentary sessions. One of their key responsibilities is to preside over debates, ensuring that discussions follow parliamentary rules and that parliament gives all members the opportunity to voice their opinions.

Additionally, the Speaker maintains order in the parliamentary chamber and ensures that parliament conducts debates in a professional and respectful manner. The speaker is also responsible for upholding and enforcing parliamentary rules and procedures, making decisions on points of order, and ensuring that parliament conducts debates in compliance with established regulations.

Furthermore, the Speaker serves as the parliament's representative, acting as a spokesperson for the institution both within and outside its walls. In certain parliamentary systems, the Speaker may also possess the authority to cast a deciding vote in case of a tie, further underscoring their significant role in the legislative process.

Gender equality work involves providing space for effective women's parliamentary caucuses and encouraging partnerships between men and women parliamentarians to bring about legal and institutional reforms on gender equality. These efforts also serve as a source of inspiration for women who aspire to top decision-making positions in their respective countries.

Figure 8.3: Women speakers in Africa by region 2021-2024



Source: Compiled by Gender Links with information from parliament websites, see Annex 9.

Figure 8.3 shows that of the 76 African speakers of different houses of parliament, 19 (25%) are women, an increase of four percentage points from 2021. East Africa has the highest proportion of women speakers, while North Africa and the Horn continue to have no women speakers.

Bringing parliament to the people

Responsive governance ensures that government institutions, including parliament, are accountable, transparent, and accessible to the people they serve. By bringing parliament closer to the people, policymakers can better understand the needs and concerns of citizens, fostering a more inclusive and representative decision-making process. By engaging with constituents on a regular basis, parliamentarians can gain valuable insights into the lived experiences of ordinary citizens and tailor policies and legislation to address their specific needs. This bottom-up approach to governance not only enhances the legitimacy of government institutions but also strengthens the democratic process by ensuring that the voices of all individuals, including marginalised and underrepresented groups, are heard and taken into account in policymaking. Ultimately, bringing parliament to the people promotes greater transparency, trust, and collaboration between elected officials and the communities they serve, leading to more responsive and effective governance.



Championing women's rights and economic empowerment


Tšepang Tšita-Mosena.

Tšepang Tšita-Mosena describes taking the oath as the **Deputy Speaker** of the **Lesotho** parliament on 25 October 2022 as "the highlight of my life." She is the third woman to hold the position in the country. Tšita-Mosena joined politics in December 2016 at the formation of the Movement for Economic Change (MEC) as the Communications and Marketing Secretary. Her party elected her as the Deputy Leader in 2019. She first joined parliament through the proportional representation system in 2017 during the 10th Parliament, where she began to make her presence felt by pushing for economic growth; women and youth rights.

She joined politics because of a strong desire to have women's voices heard, to improve youth participation in politics, and to strive for legislative reform that would enable women to contribute meaningfully in all aspects of their lives, private and public. Tšita-Mosena points out that she has always had the courage to engage in debates in a male-dominated parliament where high testosterone levels are often on show. There has never been a day that she has felt too intimidated to voice her opinion and to raise important issues that are essential for improving the rights of women, such as gender-based violence, sexual reproductive health rights, and women's economic rights, just to mention a few.

Her desire is to rectify decades of marginalisation of women in different set-ups. For years, women have been pushed to the periphery of Lesotho's economy and side-lined on opportunities that seemingly benefit men only. She argues that they must create special zones for Basotho women to grow in leadership, economy, and politics. Parliamentarians, especially the women's caucus, must ensure that they enact laws and policies to make it easy for women to participate in economic, social, and political activities.

Tšita-Mosena says being a member of the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC-PF) during the 10th Parliament has empowered her to achieve the highest level of growth as a politician. She has benefited from her interaction with her peers while representing her country alongside other MPs, sharing country experiences, and even being appointed to chair committees that have made her steer the direction of policy in the SADC region. Through such interactions, MPs can learn and adopt new policies that empower women. Participating in regional, continental, and international spaces as part of her work has expanded her networks with other Members of Parliament from different countries, through which she is adamant that Lesotho can achieve more.

In her position, Tšita-Mosena engages robustly to influence appreciation of gender issues for her colleagues, especially the women's caucus, to take over the baton as custodians of gender equality in parliament and related spaces. She wishes to see the government working towards a vision that every Mosotho would be proud of, and that would bring more appreciation to partake in the democratic space for peace, stability, and opportunities for everyone. Tsita-Mosena says women should not be spectators on the terraces but should participate in socio-economic activities. One of the things that she is passionate about is i**nteracting with rural communities, particularly women and youth**. She states that the most satisfying part of the job, for her, is changing the lives of the people from the grassroots for the better. She always strives to see the rural communities, particularly women and youth, uplifted.

"I strongly believe that women have to go out there and make uncomfortable decisions of being at the forefront instead of just supporting in large numbers for real change to happen. I made a decision to be one of those women and will continue to push to ensure that women are claiming their spaces and making a change where it matters the most. If not me, then who? I have committed to being the voice of women, especially those who still suffer the consequences of marginalisation, inequality, poverty and unemployment, and gender-based violence," she says.

Profile by Mabetha Manteboheleng



Ezulwini Mayor, Bongile Mbingo, speaking at the Women In Local Government Forum Consultative Meeting in Eswatini. *Photo: Thandokuhle Dlamini*

Engaging in constituency work

Women politicians are known for prioritising grassroots organising, community engagement, and relationship-building with their constituents, which can involve a significant amount of constituency work. Additionally, women politicians may also emphasise issues related to social welfare and community development, which can further drive their engagement in constituency work.[16]

[16] Women Political Leaders AISBL, Representation matters: Women political leaders, no date, at https://www.oliverwymanforum.com/global-consumer-sentiment/2023/sep/representation-matters-women-political-leaders.html accessed 20 April 2024



Hon Beatrice Elachi.
Credit: Self



Using her space as an MP in Kenya

Beatrice Elachi, a Member of Parliament (MP) for Dagoretti North Constituency, **Kenya**, and former Speaker of the Nairobi County Assembly (2017-2020), has shown remarkable resilience and determination in the face of challenges. In an interview with Gender Links, she shared the hurdles she encountered as a woman joining politics. The community questioned her tribal heritage, marital status, and family background, scrutinising her personal life rather than her policies. Elachi describes overcrowded meetings, where infiltrators disrupted proceedings, demanding bribes or creating disturbances. Financial constraints, gender bias, and unified opposition from male counterparts compounded her struggles. Engaging disenchanted youth in slums poses further hurdles, as they prioritise immediate gratification over long-term vision.

On **quotas and political party support**, Elachi believes her political party, the Orange Democratic Party, supports women candidates by assessing their viability through opinion polls and providing opportunities for them to compete in constituency seats. Elachi, who originally came into parliament on a reserved seat believes that affirmative seats should be a stepping stone to competitive constituencies as it would allow them to have a more significant impact on policy decisions. She acknowledges the challenges faced by women in accessing resources and influence, emphasising the need for a more inclusive and competitive political landscape to ensure women's continued participation and leadership in politics. She also highlights the limitations of affirmative action seats and advocates for women's empowerment through increased opportunities for electoral competition.

Despite the obstacles, Elachi has remained steadfast in her commitment to serve her constituency and make a difference in Kenyan politics. She says, "One of the toughest barriers that I believe every woman in the country faces is when young people come, and they are not interested in hearing about politics. It can be quite a challenge to engage them in conversations regarding politics and educate them about the role of politicians without them expecting monetary or material benefits. My constituency is quite divided, with one side being quite rowdy and the other a slum. Working in a slum with young people is challenging because they come in with a lot of frustration."

Acknowledging the importance of delivering on promises and building trust, Elachi outlines strategies for connecting with youth, such as direct interactions and addressing their practical needs like car washing or garbage collection tools. Instead of providing money, Elachi supports youth initiatives by purchasing necessary resources and empowering them to take action. Through mentorship programmes and discussions on alcoholism, Elachi aims to instil confidence, combat negative behaviours, and foster a sense of responsibility and accountability within the youth community. "This holistic approach has led to a transformation in relations, with youth now showing receptiveness and understanding, ultimately shifting the narrative from confrontation to collaboration and mutual respect."

Elachi describes her **leadership style** as a blend of strength and charisma, emphasising her commitment to principles of education and economic empowerment for women. She prioritises honesty, objectivity, and accountability in decision-making, maintaining a balanced approach of assertiveness and collaboration, trust and inclusivity, continuity and development in the team. The programme nurtures talent through training programmes and internships while acknowledging and addressing individual weaknesses and strengths. This approach to leadership has enabled sustained teamwork and cohesion within the political office, ensuring longevity, trust, and effective communication. Elachi's leadership style highlights teamwork, mutual understanding, and investment in human capital for sustained success in the political arena.

Profile by Susan Tolmay

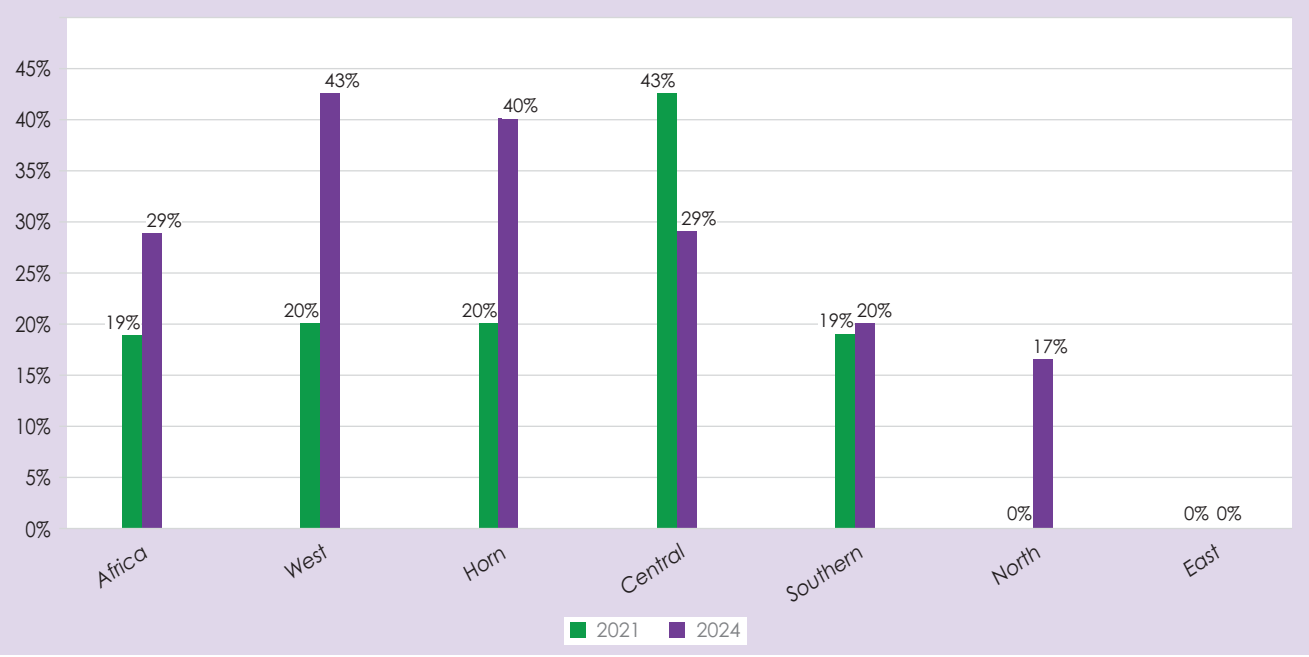
Women in local government

Local government is the arm of governance closest to the people. Local government positions are often more accessible to newcomers to politics, including women, as they typically require fewer resources and connections than higher levels of government. This makes it easier for individuals from diverse backgrounds and communities to participate in the political process.

Local governments are responsible for delivering essential services and making decisions with a direct impact on residents' daily lives, such as water and sanitation, electricity, education, public safety, transportation, and zoning regulations. These issues are also particularly important for women because of their reproductive and domestic roles in families. Serving at the local level provides an opportunity to effect positive change and improve the quality of life for community members.

Women comprise 25% of those elected to local government level and 29% of the Mayors of capital cities. Of the 51 capital cities in Africa for which we could find data, women lead only 15.

Figure 8.4: Women mayors of capital cities in Africa by region 2021-2024



Source: Compiled by Gender Links with information from capital city websites, see Annex 10.

Figure 8.4 shows that the number of women Mayors in African capital cities has increased by ten percentage points from 19% in 2021 to 29% in 2024. Five regions - West, Horn, North and Southern Africa- have witnessed increases in the number of women mayors. West Africa now has the highest proportion of women mayors; six of the 14 mayors are women; this region also witnessed the highest increase over the three years. Central Africa witnessed the biggest decrease from 43% to 29%. In East Africa, there are no women mayors of capital cities. Southern Africa and North sit at 20% and 17%, respectively.

Local government may be considered the training ground for politics and a stepping stone to parliament. Serving in local government allows women to gain experience in governance, policy-making, and community engagement, providing them with valuable skills and knowledge that can help prepare them for higher political office, including national parliament. Local government positions often involve working closely with constituents, addressing community needs, and collaborating with other government officials, offering women the opportunity to develop a strong foundation in public service and leadership. Serving in a local government position can also be a stepping-stone to higher levels of government, such as parliament as illustrated in the three examples that follow from Comoros, Zimbabwe and Lesotho.



Comoros does not have a quota at the national level but has adopted a legislated candidate quota at the local government level. Minister for Gender Promotion and Social Protection from 2008 to 2010, Said Islam Moinaécha Mroudjaé, was the first woman mayor of Bandamadji-Itsandra between 2003 and 2012. She laments the lack of political education and underhanded tactics men use to garner votes.

"I find it unacceptable that they called women only when there was an election. They were given shawls and promotional items to go and applaud and encourage the men candidates," she points out. "When the communal law was promulgated in the Assembly, I organised seminars with women to talk about it, to explain to them that we can take part in elections because the law allows it," explains Mroudjaé, later appointed a member of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI). As president of the National Platform of Women in Politics, Said Islam Moinaécha Mroudjaé has been sitting since 2022 at the regional level on the Elders' Committee of East African Standby Force (EASF).



Group Regional peer to peer learning event for local authorities hosted by International IDEA as part of the Enhancing Women's Political Participation project.
Photo: Gender Links



Manoeuvring through the high-speed world of politics in Zimbabwe



Councillor Mary Mliswa, Hurungwe Rural District Council Chairperson, Zimbabwe.

"Effectively manoeuvring through the complex landscape of politics while facing challenges related to discrimination and sexism requires a combination of strategic thinking, resilience and determination," says Councillor **Mary Mliswa**, Chairperson of the Hurungwe rural district council in **Zimbabwe**. She reflects on her journey from local to national politics.

"I was fortunate enough to be born in a family that had a keen interest in politics. My parents once served as liberation war collaborators, and our home served as a base for the liberation war fighters. My brother once served as a Member of Parliament for Mashonaland West province. The exclusion of women in structures motivated me to take on the challenge of contesting as a Member of Parliament for Hurungwe West constituency. I was later appointed the Minister of State for Provincial Affairs and Devolution for Mashonaland West Province.

"Another contributing factor that served as a driving force to my participation in politics was the male-dominated structures, which did not allow women to participate fully. I was determined to prove that women were equally capable and deserving of holding positions of power. In rural areas, there is a common belief that politics is reserved only for men. Despite the numerous challenges faced by women in politics, including discrimination and sexism, it is essential to develop a resilient attitude to navigate through these obstacles. I was resolute in my conviction that it was time for young women like myself to have a strong voice and challenge the prevailing norms.

"Holding leadership positions in politics, such as Minister of State, Member of Parliament, and Mayor, can be daunting for women, leading to self-doubt and concerns about performance. I overcome these challenges through continuous learning, a genuine interest in public service, and unwavering determination. I also encourage other women to possess these qualities to properly navigate the political landscape and achieve positive results.

"My current role as the Hurungwe Rural District Council Mayor is even more fascinating than my previous ones. Notably, less than 10% of women are Council Mayors/Chairpersons in Zimbabwe. In my council, only two female councillors were elected through the First Past the Post (FPTP), while 8, including myself, were appointed through the 30% quota system. This situation raises the question of how women can effectively manage in such circumstances. Despite my previous exposure and experience, transitioning from a ministerial role to working at the grassroots level has presented new challenges I am willing to take on. Now, I am directly dealing with the day-to-day service delivery issues.

"Balancing my personal life with political activities is a significant challenge that I face. As a mother, wife, and politician, finding equilibrium is crucial. I have had to engage in discussions with my children to ensure they understand the demands of my political responsibilities. It is essential to maintain open lines of communication and find ways to manage both personal and professional commitments effectively.

One of the top priorities in my new position is establishing effective coordination between Council officials and Councillors. Technocrats must be actively involved and practical in order to achieve tangible results. It is not enough to simply develop impressive work plans on paper, we must ensure that these plans are successfully implemented for better quality service delivery."

Source: Voices Amplifies: Women Driving Change in Zimbabwe



Lesotho: From Councillor to a Member of Parliament


Matiisetso Matsie.

"I have learned that nothing is impossible if you work hard for it. Hearing the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) returning officer call out my name as the winner of Taung constituency for the 2022 National Assembly elections was a dream come true," states **Matiisetso Matsie**.

From an early age, Matsie worked as a volunteer, assisting people from her village with many different things. Little did she know that providing community service would pave the way for her to become a leader!

During the first local government elections in 2005, Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) nominated her to stand as a candidate for her electoral division uncontested. She served her community despite councillors' strained resources. Her hard work paid off when she got elected in three consecutive elections, in 2005, 2011, and 2017.

"I worked very hard to serve my community during my term as a councillor despite the limited resources allocated to the council," says Matsie. In 2020, the Democratic Congress (DC) leadership approached her and asked her to join the party, which she accepted. She contested the 2022 National Election and won. Matsie is now transitioning from representing a specific electoral division to overseeing an entire constituency.

Matsie's vision is to advance women's rights and socioeconomic empowerment across her region, Taung-a constituency grappling with pervasive poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and essential services like water and electricity.

The challenging conditions result in precarious situations such as floods sweeping away individuals in rivers during heavy rainfalls due to the lack of footbridges. Addressing these pressing issues forms a core part of Matsie's agenda, as she prioritises initiatives to enhance infrastructure, ensure access to essential services, and foster economic opportunities for women through income-generating projects like piggery and poultry farming.

As a parliamentarian, Matsie is resolute in her mission to challenge the entrenched barriers faced by women in Lesotho, rooted in patriarchal systems and societal norms. She envisions leveraging her position to advocate for legislative reforms and policy changes that foster gender equality and empower women nationwide. Central to her agenda is the dissemination of information regarding the rights of women, mainly targeting rural women who may lack awareness of their entitlements. Matsie recognises the importance of dismantling cultural stereotypes and prejudices that undermine women's capabilities, steadfastly showcasing that women possess the capacity to enact transformative change and contribute significantly to societal progress.

Matsie's commitment to agriculture is a longstanding passion. By cultivating various crops for sustenance and supporting disadvantaged individuals, including those with disabilities, Matsie exemplifies her dedication to alleviating food insecurity and promoting self-sufficiency within her community. Her holistic approach to empowering women extends beyond legislative frameworks, encompassing tangible initiatives that uplift marginalised populations and facilitate socio-economic progress at the grassroots level.

Profile by Manteboheleng Mabetha

Role of civil society

Civil society plays a crucial role in advocating for women's rights to equal and inclusive representation in decision-making. It serves as a valuable source of expertise, dedication, and meaningful action in defending these rights. With its cultural, social, and political diversity, civil society is essential for ensuring inclusive and representative governance. It acts as a catalyst for transformation and should be recognised as a critical resource and partner in the implementation of a new inclusive and participatory governance model.[17]

Advocacy by women and girl activists in civil society provides a significant and growing number of women with the opportunity to join the culture of advocacy and activism and exercise direct responsibility in decision-making processes. This collaborative vision must include youth and illustrate the growing importance of global institutions in building for and with the younger generations.

Women's rights organisations play a central role in the work of UN bodies, Commissions, and Human Rights Mechanisms. To achieve equal and inclusive decision-making, it is important to enhance the participation of women and women's rights organisations, including girls and young women, by creating more inclusive governance spaces at both domestic and international levels.[18]



UN Women, whose presence in **Mali** has reduced since the coup of 2020, and several women's associations are lobbying the transitional government to enable Malian women to contribute to peace-building and sustainable development at local, national, and sub-regional levels. In a society where women are generally assigned to the roles of wife and mother, and where their political involvement is still perceived as being in contradiction with traditional and religious nor ms, some Malian women are nevertheless trying a breakthrough and to be visible in a different way by joining women's associations. These women's associations are becoming the preferred platform for women to express themselves.



Project Under the palaver tree: Discussions with women under the tree in Mali.
Credit: Abdoul Momini Bokoum

Between 2022 and 2023, well-known women's associations have taken initiatives targeting the political process. One of the most prominent incorporates the Mali Women's Group (COFEM), the Network of African Women Ministers and Parliamentarians of Mali (REFAMP), and the Coordination of Women's Associations and Non-Governmental organisations in Mali. These have started a project named *"Under the palaver tree: when the women of Mali speak out for the participation of Malian women in political life, reforms, and the electoral process, a guarantee of stability and a sustainable way out of the crisis."*

[17] CEDAW, Draft General Recommendation No. 40: Equal and Inclusive Representation of Women in Decision-Making Systems, 2024
[18] CEDAW, Draft General Recommendation No. 40: Equal and Inclusive Representation of Women in Decision-Making Systems, 2024



From civil society to parliament in Burkina Faso



Bénédicte Bailou. *Credit: Self*

Bénédicte Bailou's journey into politics included defending her candidacy in front of representatives of CSOs, who chose to put their trust in her. This Burkinabè, who is 33 years old, represents the new generation of political leaders in Burkina Faso. Despite the particular political context, she has shown resilience and strength.

Burkina Faso has experienced coups and political instability since 2022. A 71-member Legislative Transition Assembly (LTA), 17% women, followed the dissolution of the National Assembly.

In November 2022, the CSOs chose Bailou to represent them in the transitional parliament. The persons selected by the different sectors of society have the duty to defend the Constitution and support the Head of State and the government in the management of the affairs of the country.

Telling her story and explaining her interest in political activism, Bailou admits that politics has always fascinated her. “The more I progressed in my studies, the more I realised that women face many obstacles in their citizen engagement and, more specifically, in their political engagement. This realisation motivated me to research and, with a friend, set up the organisation FEMIN-IN Citizen Movement to overcome some obstacles, such as the lack of political training."

The FEMIN-IN Citizen Movement is a women's and youth organisation in Burkina Faso that aims to fight for women's rights and to promote young women's participation in politics and citizen engagement. FEMIN-IN is the contraction of the words "Femin" for women and "In" for "in." FEMIN-IN, therefore, stands for “Women in... politics."

Bailou's activism and dedication is one of the main reasons CSO members elected her as a member of the transition government. She has used her space to promote women's rights and gender equality. Bénédicte Bailou significantly contributes to sensitisation, training, and advocacy on women's issues. Her impact goes beyond the boundaries of civil society, extending also to the political sphere, where she has played a vital role in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment as a member of parliament representing women's organisations." adds Linda Traoré.

Annick Laurence Koussoubé, a women's rights activist and president of the board of FEMIN-IN, says that Bénédicte Bailou is a leading figure in the fight for gender equality in Burkina Faso. “I would say that Bénédicte is a feminist activist who has established herself as a leading figure in the fight for gender equality in Burkina Faso. As a member of the Legislative Assembly, she is a strong and resolute voice for women's rights. Bénédicte skillfully combines her activism with her role as a legislator, positioning herself as the voice of other women and girls. Her determination and unwavering commitment make her an essential driving force in promoting women's equality and emancipation in Burkinabe society."

The press depicts Bailou as an example of will and determination and a model for the youth of Burkina Faso. She specialises in the rights of women and the fight against Gender-Based Violence. She is also the first secretary of the Commission on Gender, health, social and humanitarian action and president of the Network of Women Parliamentarians. Bailou is a positive force on the Burkinabe political landscape, actively contributing to advancing women's rights in her country. Her commitment, leadership, and ability to turn ideas into action make her an inspiring role model for young women who dream of playing a key role in the political sphere.

Profile by Isabelle OTCHOUMARE

After negotiations with the traditional authorities and the local administration, this cluster has held talks for women under a big tree in the regions of Gao, Tombouctou, Mopti, Ségou, and Bamako. The leaders of these women's associations have also conducted several awareness-raising activities on the new electoral law (n° 2022-019) and the law on gender promotion (n° 2015-052). These talks have allowed women to express themselves about their expectations of the current transitional government and the upcoming electoral process. All this shows that the opportunities for Malian women in the political field are fraught. Transitional leaders need to show political will to turn the tables.[18]

The work of civil society in advancing women's rights and advocating for special measures such as quotas to increase women's representation is crucial. In many countries, electoral reform has only taken place to level the playing field for women because of the tireless work of CSOs. Women's involvement in local community work and activism can also be an entry point into politics. Women often lack access to traditional political networks compared to their male counterparts. Some women may enter politics through civil society organisations, grassroots activism, advocacy work, or community organising, where they can build support, develop leadership skills, and form connections with like-minded individuals as illustrated above.

Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter demonstrates through examples that women politicians can and do make a difference when they hold positions of power. However, at the community level, multiple challenges arise that affect women's rights and gender equality. These challenges range from social resistance to women in decision-making roles to complex dilemmas over electoral systems. Tackling these challenges is crucial to achieving gender equality in society.

- **Addressing women's experiences, needs, and priorities:** Having women participate in political decision-making ensures that the electorate considers women's perspectives, needs, and concerns, leading to more inclusive and effective policies that benefit all members of society. Women bring unique experiences and perspectives to the table, enriching discussions and leading to more well-rounded and comprehensive decision-making processes.
- **Addressing gender equality:** Women's participation in political decision-making is essential for advocating for and implementing policies that promote gender equality, such as equal pay, reproductive rights, and protection against gender-based violence.
- **Role models:** Women in leadership positions serve as role models for other women and girls, inspiring them to pursue careers in politics and leadership roles.
- **Enhancing democracy:** Diverse representation of women in political decision-making fosters a more reflective and responsive democracy that better represents the population it serves.
- **Better policy outcomes:** Gender-balanced decision-making bodies are more likely to produce policies that address a broader range of societal needs and lead to better outcomes for communities.

[18] Case study by Bokoum Abdoul Momini

- **Education and early engagement to leadership roles:** Research has shown that the majority of women get to be engaged in politics in their adulthood with more pressure exerted during the electioneering period to fill numbers. These women experience challenges in leadership as they often lack mentorship. Leadership education at early school age is important. The majority of women excelling in current political leadership trace their leadership roles to school, secondary and tertiary level. Female leadership should start early and aim at addressing gender disparities and dismantling social barriers. Early exposure to leadership principles can help instill leadership skills, values, and attitudes. This in turn improves the outcome of elections both as aspirants or as voters and overall representation of women in Politics. Forum For African Women Educationalists (FAWE) has developed a model leadership curriculum targeting female pupils as early as five years old on transformative education to get them to take up leadership roles.

- **Building a more just and equitable society:** Women's participation in political decision-making is crucial for creating a society that values the rights and contributions of all individuals, regardless of gender.



Group Awards - Women Political Participation Cross Generation Academy Training in Maun, Botswana. *Photo: Mboy Maswabi*

INTO THE FUTURE

9



Passing the baton: Former President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (left) with Chad Minster of State Amina Priscille Longoh, New York.

Credit: Annour Notime

KEY POINTS

- Women's equal representation and participation in political decision-making is still firmly on the global development agenda. The UN CEDAW Committee is drafting a new recommendation, General Recommendation (GR) 40 to reaffirm commitment to promoting women's equal and inclusive representation in decision-making systems worldwide.
- Youth in general and young women in particular, are extremely underrepresented in political decision-making. There is a growing recognition of the important role that young people can play in the decision-making processes of governance and politics.
- Globally young people under 30 represent only 3% of MPs; 19% are under 40 and 32% under 45.
- Seasoned politicians, young politicians, and those aspiring for office face several barriers, both in getting into office and in gaining the power to influence decision-making.
- Many women politicians believe that quotas should be temporary, providing a platform for women to gain experience and confidence. These politicians believe that women should transition to contesting for competitive seats to make space for new women to come in.
- Participating in political parties is essential to gaining political understanding, growing confidence, and garnering support for success.

Introduction

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5.5 is to "ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life." As this Barometer has shown, most states will not achieve this goal. Just one country, Rwanda, has met and exceeded the 50% target of women in parliament. In other countries, women remain underrepresented at all political decision-making levels.

Advocacy for the equal representation of women has been on the United Nations agenda since the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979. The historical Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 reaffirmed this principle. While several international instruments advocate for equal WPP, many states have not observed these.

> CEDAW's GR40 aims at a new approach to governance based on parity as a core principle and a leading force for transformative change.
>
> The Committee aims to adopt GR40 at its 89th session in October 2024.

The CEDAW Committee is considering this at their 89th session, with the aim of creating a new general recommendation. The future **General Recommendation 40 (GR40)** aims to promote women's equal and inclusive representation in decision-making systems worldwide, building on existing principles and articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

GR40 seeks to address structural obstacles, discrimination, stereotypes, and gender-based violence that hinder women's access to and participation in decision-making roles. The recommendation aims to shift towards a new form of representation that goes beyond mere participation towards equal and inclusive representation. It will provide clear guidance, measures, and a structured agenda for States Parties and stakeholders to ensure the effective implementation of women's rights. Additionally, the recommendation aims to highlight the CEDAW Committee's role in promoting gender equality, combatting discrimination and inequalities, and contributing to social cohesion, stability, peace, and sustainable development, aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.[1]

The recommended GR40 defines "decision-making systems" to include decision-making processes carried out in the political, public, economic, and private sectors. GR40 emphasises that achieving gender equality requires addressing all the areas where decision-making takes place and how these areas affect one another. It also requires addressing the underlying barriers that prevent women from accessing decision-making systems on an equal basis with men.[2]

This general recommendation provides guidance to State parties on legislative, policy, programmatic, and other relevant measures to ensure the implementation of their obligations in relation to the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems. It defines **"equal and inclusive**

[1] CEDAW, Concept Note on the Future General Recommendation on Equal and Inclusive Representation of Women in Decision-Making Systems, 2024
[2] CEDAW, Draft General Recommendation on General Recommendation on Equal and Inclusive Representation of Women in Decision-Making Systems, 2024

representation" as parity between women and men in terms of both equal access to and equal power within decision-making systems, taking into account diversity among women based on race, ethnicity, religion, disability, age, class, caste, migration and sexual orientation and gender identity, among other criteria. The general recommendation defines **"decision-making systems"** to encompass decision-making taking place in the political, public, economic and private spheres. This vision recognises that parity cannot be achieved without considering multiple arenas of decision-making and how they shape and interact with one another, or without addressing underlying obstacles that prevent women from accessing decision-making systems on an equal footing with men.[3]

The GR40 identifies **four key game-changing challenges** as important opportunities to rethink "systems through new and innovative solutions, and demonstrate the need to join forces between women and men and place parity at the core of decision-making." These are peace and political stability; sustainable economy; climate change and disaster risk reduction; as well as technological developments, including the rise of artificial intelligence. We explore these, as well as the meaning of "equal and inclusive participation" in this final chapter of the Barometer.

Peace and political stability

The world is becoming increasingly unstable, with ever-increasing conflicts worldwide. According to the Geneva Academy, of the more than 110 conflicts worldwide, more than 35 are in Africa (excluding North Africa). Women are key drivers of peace, yet remain excluded from peace negotiations and peace-building efforts.[4] For instance, in 2022, women comprised only 16% of peace negotiators. Only 33% of peace agreements included provisions on women, girls, or gender. This is concerning as women are vulnerable to human rights violations during conflicts. Therefore, we need a new, parity-based approach to decision-making in conflict prevention, building resilient societies, and post-conflict reconstruction efforts at the local, national, and international levels. This approach is necessary to establish a new peace architecture that includes women in all aspects of peacebuilding.

In the aftermath of a conflict, the process of transitioning to a stable and peaceful government can be complex and challenging. However, women, particularly young women, can play a crucial role in this process. Transitional governments can benefit from new and innovative perspectives by electing or appointing young women to positions of power. These women represent the hopes and aspirations of the next generation and can bring a fresh approach to the challenges facing their countries. By embracing the contributions of young women, post-conflict governments can pave the way for a brighter and more equitable future.



The Legislative Transition Assembly (LTA) in **Burkina Faso** is youthful, with 47% of members aged 45 years or younger. Five of the 12 women in the LTA are aged between 25 and 40, and the youngest parliamentarian is a woman. One of these young leaders is **Bénédicte Bailou** (see also Chapter Eight). This 33 year old Burkinabè represents a new generation of political leaders in Burkina Faso who contribute to good governance. In November 2022, CSO's chose her to represent them in the LTA.

[3] CEDAW, Draft General Recommendation on General Recommendation on Equal and Inclusive Representation of Women in Decision-Making Systems, 2024
[4] Women's Participation and a Better Understanding of the Political | Global study on the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 (unwomen.org)

She tried to get herself elected to take over the presidency of LTA, to symbolise the crucial role that a woman, especially a young one, can play strategically in the complex African context. Losing the election has strengthened her resolve. “In any election, you have to be convincing. Unfortunately, I was not able to convince anyone this time, but I must admit that I am proud to have been a candidate. It was a challenge I wanted to take up. What is more, in terms of symbolism, it was important for me to show that a woman, especially somebody young, can aspire to occupy such a high strategic position in an African country heavily influenced by many things."

Bailou's outlook for the future is optimistic focusing on women, especially young women, having much to offer in building a prosperous Burkina Faso. According to her, it is necessary to facilitate political training, promote the sharing of experiences and establish connections. "My prospects are excellent. I intend to continue demonstrating that women, especially young women, have much to contribute to building a prosperous Burkina Faso. The city management is the responsibility of all citizens. In my opinion, young girls and women need to be properly trained."[5]

In countries where corruption, conflict, and war are prevalent, young women are at an even greater risk of harm. By raising awareness, we can help ensure that society protects young women to pursue their political objectives free of fear.



Judilicaëlle Irakoze is a young activist and politician from **Burundi**. Her journey into politics began when she worked at the Mahama camp in Rwanda. There, she witnessed the suffering and injustice that Burundian refugees, especially young women, were enduring. The stories and struggles of these individuals motivated her to champion their rights and fight for justice within Burundi and across borders.

Irakoze reflects on the escalating challenges facing women in the political sphere since 2015, highlighting the repercussions faced by outspoken individuals who challenge oppressive authorities. Describing the hostile environment that silences dissent and punishes those advocating for meaningful change, she laments the unjust labels and accusations. Despite these obstacles, Irakoze defends young women's and marginalised communities' rights, showcasing resilience in the face of adversity.

Recalling that the national intelligence services blacklisted and targeted her, Irakoze underscores the risks and dangers she encountered while attempting to return home to organise a workshop for young girls. Confronted with surveillance, intimidation, and the arrest of fellow activists, she was compelled to flee the country, emphasising the pervasive atmosphere of repression and insecurity that stifles political engagement, especially for women. Irakoze's poignant testimony reflects the broader challenges faced by young Burundians compelled to seek refuge due to political persecution and threats to their safety.[6]

Sustainable economy

The importance of Women's economic empowerment for economic growth and sustainable development is widely acknowledged.[7] However, financial crises and instability disproportionately affect women, exacerbating their existing vulnerabilities. In times of financial crisis, they are often the first to experience erosion of their already limited social and economic rights due to governments implementing austerity measures. Across all sectors, women suffer from a structural

5 Profile by Isabelle Otchoumare
6 Case Study by Marcella Irakoze for GL WPP project
7 https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment

undervaluing of their contribution to the economy and a lack of respect for their human rights. Women continue to be underrepresented and recognised as leaders across all sectors at local, national, and international levels.

The growing importance of the digital economy and the continuing gender digital gap have further widened these inequalities. Women's representation in political and decision-making roles may be further marginalised during financial crises, limiting their ability to advocate for policies and programmes that address the specific needs of women and promote gender equality.

Climate change and disaster risk reduction

As one of the biggest existential crises of our time, tackling the climate crisis requires concerted action from all sectors of society to mitigate and adapt to climate change. The impacts of climate change on human populations and development are severe and far-reaching. Climate-related disasters and climate change impact on food, water, and other natural resources vital to human survival. The climate crisis disproportionately affects women and girls as they tend to rely more heavily on natural resources, public services, and infrastructure such as water and power supplies. Climate change affects women in six main areas - food security, water scarcity, energy poverty, health, GBV, and climate-induced displacement and migration as people become forcibly displaced due to climate extremes and events. However, women remain on the periphery of climate change decision-making.

The climate gender tracker, which has tracked data on women's participation in their national party delegations at every UNFCCC meeting since 2008[8], shows that women constituted 34% of delegations at COP28. This underrepresentation can have significant implications for the outcomes of climate negotiations. Research has shown that diverse representation leads to better policy outcomes that consider the needs and perspectives of all groups affected by climate change.. Various organisations and networks seek to increase the participation of women in climate negotiations and ensure gender equality in decision-making processes related to climate change. This includes initiatives to train and support women negotiators, provide mentorship and networking opportunities, and advocate for gender-responsive climate policies.



In **Cameroon**, women's organisations, gender equality experts, and national policymakers developed a roadmap for mainstreaming gender in the formulation of the country's national strategy to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+). As part of this initiative, women from five ecological regions received training on forestry skills, resulting in the launch of several pilot projects led by women themselves, stronger women's networks on forest governance, and the protection of land rights. The initiative also led to the establishment of a Gender and Forest Task Force. Notably, women gained representation in major decision-making bodies and processes, thereby advancing gender-responsive climate action.[9]

[8] Gender Climate Tracker, https://genderclimatetracker.org/womens-participation-party-delegations accessed 23 April 2024
[9] https://climatepromise.undp.org/news-and-stories/women-are-key-future-climate-action-africa , accessed 24 April 2024

Technological developments, including the rise of artificial intelligence

Technological developments, including the rapid rise of artificial intelligence (AI), have revolutionised various aspects of our lives in recent years. AI technology can potentially enhance efficiency, productivity, and innovation across industries. AI also offers new opportunities for job creation and skills development, and women have the potential to benefit from these changes if given access to training and education in AI-related fields.

However, with this advancement comes a range of ethical, social, and economic challenges, such as concerns about surveillance, privacy, bias, and job displacement. Despite these challenges, the continued development and adoption of AI hold the promise of shaping the future of technology and society in profound ways. It is crucial for policymakers, industry stakeholders, and society as a whole, to navigate these technological advancements thoughtfully and responsibly to ensure that AI benefits everyone while minimising potential risks and inequalities.

The lack of diversity in the tech industry, particularly in AI development, can result in products and services that do not adequately consider women's needs and perspectives. This can lead to AI systems that are not inclusive, equitable, or relevant to women's experiences.

With more women using social media and digital platforms as critical tools for connecting with voters, building strong campaigns, and sharing messages with a broader audience, the use of AI may have some advantages. A growing area of discourse is on the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Big Data (BD) in shaping political communication, campaigning, and election management. It is essential that WPP advocates identify challenges and opportunities.

Equal and inclusive representation in decision-making systems

The CEDAW Committee identifies the following as the essential components:

- 50:50 gender parity as a starting point and universal norm;
- A systematic intersectional approach, recognising the need for women in all their diversity to be included as decision-makers;
- A comprehensive understanding of decision-making, covering the political, public, economic, and private spheres;
- Women's equal power in decision-making, not merely their access to decision-making;
- Structural transformation of gendered roles and responsibilities across the public and private spheres; and
- Inclusive modes of decision-making that include women human rights defenders and civil society.

50:50 gender parity in decision-making

Until recently most WPP literature cited 30% as the "critical mass" for women in decision-making. The CEDAW GR40 marks a turning point, endorsing gender parity as the goal, with a meaning that extends beyond numerical quotas. According to the committee: "The concept of parity is distinct from the logic of quotas. While parity might be understood as a temporary special measure stipulating a 50:50 gender requirement, the CEDAW Committee considers that gender parity means the full and equal sharing of power as a permanent and core feature of political, public, economic, and cultural institutions."[10]

The 2024 WPP Africa Barometer shows that electoral systems and quotas have a profound impact on WPP, in increasing representation and creating an enabling environment in which women operate. Forty-one African countries have constitutional, legislated, or voluntary party quotas at the national or local level, or both. However, these are only effective when countries adopt and implement the quotas in line with the mandate provided for in either the national constitution or other legislation. Political will is key. When political parties adopt quotas voluntarily, this is especially effective.

Political parties need clear policy frameworks and guidelines for implementation of quotas, including the nomination process, candidate selection and role definition. Lawmakers need to address unintended negative consequences of quotas, particularly reserving seats for women only, through campaigns and awareness raising.

Politicians interviewed for this study agreed that quotas should be temporary, providing a platform for women to gain experience and confidence. However, they also believed that these women should transition to contesting for competitive seats.

To achieve optimal results, it is crucial not only to garner political support but also to address deeply ingrained cultural and social beliefs about WPP. This requires a multifaceted approach that takes into account the complex interplay of political, cultural, and social factors. Only by cautiously navigating and addressing these dynamics can we ensure that our efforts yield the desired outcomes.



Zimbabwe has a reserved seats quota system, which allocates 40 extra seats just to women, on a PR basis. **Tabetha Rudo Kanengoni-Malinga**, a former MP, believes the quota is a lost opportunity to bring young women into parliament. She says, "Many young women who wanted to go in on these seats found it very difficult. They used the rules to select women for those non-constituency seats based on seniority. "So immediately it kicks out young women. Then, the few that managed to get in, obviously, you have to fight to get in there."

Kanengoni - Malinga is critical of the PR seats. She says they have failed to yield tangible results. Initially intended to facilitate women's participation temporarily the Zimbabwe parliament extended the quota for another ten years in 2023. "Before my father's passing, discussions about non-constituency seats arose, and some individuals encouraged me to pursue this option as an easy path to political involvement. However, my father advised against it, emphasising that genuine power comes from being elected by the people and gaining a mandate through their votes," Kanengoni-Malinga recalls.[11]

A quick review of various experiences by women of quota system shows multiple systemic barriers. Having women around the table does not automatically translate into effective representation and participation.

[10] CEDAW, Draft General Recommendation on General Recommendation on Equal and Inclusive Representation of Women in Decision-Making Systems, 2024
[11] Excerpt from profile by Susan Tolmay.

Understanding the limitation of overdependence on quotas to the marginalisation of women in the public domain, and particularly in the decision-making sphere, remains urgent. Substantive presence needs to match formal representation. There is a great need for alternative mechanisms to push a feminist agenda in the political space that challenges the current political system.

Education towards empowerment and leadership

Political education, grooming, and support are essential strategies for advancing WPP. These strategies can help empower women to actively participate in politics and make their voices heard. By providing women with the knowledge, skills, and support they need, we can help create a more inclusive and representative political system. Through such efforts, women can overcome the systemic barriers and biases that have traditionally hindered their political engagement and representation.



Joanna Bérenger, a young woman MP in **Mauritius**, says that unlike other politicians, the public did not know her during her first attempt at the 2019 general election. Over time, she climbed the ladder within her party, to which she is deeply committed. Bérenger says that she had been a member of the Mouvement Militant Mauricien (MMM) regional committee in Vacoas/Floréal (constituency number 16) for ten years before receiving a ticket to contest the 2019 election. "I joined the youth activist movement known as Jeunesse Militante. I was elected secretary in 2018, and I have campaigned for the party as a grassroots activist throughout these years, including during the 2017 general election, municipal election, and by-election. Very few elected representatives have spent ten years as a party member before their first candidacy," she recalls. In 2018, Bérenger, joined the Central Committee of the party, and today, she sits in the Political Bureau as she is a parliamentarian, and she also presides over the Sustainable Development Commission of the MMM.

Asked about her ultimate goal in politics, Joanna Bérenger speaks with passion about gender equality and empowerment of women. As she represents the new generation of Mauritian politicians, she aspires to see a future in which women are not in secondary roles or stereotyped. "I would like women to no longer be devalued... and for more of us to be given positions of responsibility. Regardless of my position, I will contribute as I can and continue to raise my voice in favour of progress."[12]



Fatma Zohra Zerouati, former minister of Environment and Renewable Energy in **Algeria**, had political aspirations from a young age. "I started leading several activities in high school. It was the same at university, where I had the opportunity to join the National Union of Algerian Students, scientific clubs, and volunteer work to eradicate illiteracy among women with the Union." Zerouati says that initiating girls at an early age is essential to promoting women's leadership and political empowerment. "Algerian women are capable and have great potential. We just have to boost their self-confidence. Women, in general, are the mirror of society. The more they advance and take responsibility, the more balanced and stable society will be. But first and foremost, women themselves must have the will to get involved in politics and accept positions with high responsibilities. Women also need adequate political training, an essential element for their success as elected members and parliamentarians. But before this stage, the academic education should comprise political mechanisms and tools to help them design a social project."[13]

[12] Case study by Karen Walter for GL WPP project.
[13] Case Study by Nassimah Berrayah for GL WPP project.

Intersectional equality and inclusion of all women in decision-making systems

Intersectionality is important for decision-making systems because it recognises that individuals have multiple intersecting identities, such as race, gender, class, sexuality, and ability, which shape their experiences and perspectives. By understanding and considering these intersecting identities, decision-making systems can create more inclusive and equitable outcomes for all individuals.

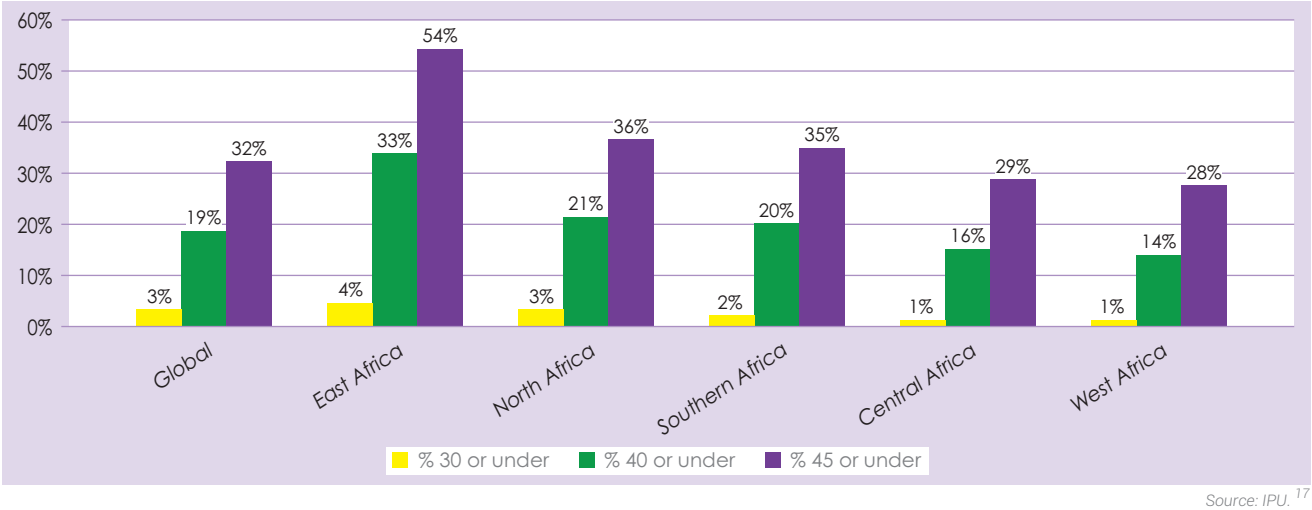
Incorporating intersectionality into decision-making systems can lead to more accurate and nuanced analyses of social issues, better identification of systemic discrimination and inequalities, and the development of policies and interventions that address the needs of all individuals. It helps ensure that decision-making processes are fair, inclusive, and responsive to the diverse experiences and perspectives of the populations they serve. Embracing intersectionality in decision-making systems promotes social justice, reduces disparities, and fosters a more holistic and inclusive approach to policy development and implementation.

Young women leaders

Youth in general and young women in particular, are underrepresented in political decision-making. Forty percent of Africa's population is young, compared to a global average of 25%. This figure is set to rise to 42% by 2030[14].

Eighteen of the top 20 countries with the youngest populations are in Africa.[15] There is a growing recognition of the role of young people in decision-making. However, globally young people under 30 constitute only 3% of MPs; 19% are under 40 and 32% under 45.[16]

Figure 9.1: Youth participation in parliament in Africa by region



Source: IPU. [17]

[14] Office of the special advisor of Africa, Youth empowerment <https://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/peace/youth.shtml#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20United%20Nations%2C%20226%20million%20youth%20aged%2015,of%20the%20world's%20youth%20population > Accessed 14 March 2021
[15] Daily Mail, Revealed: Countries with the oldest AND youngest populations (and how there's a gap of 40 YEARS between the two ends of scale), available at, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-12666501/Countries-oldest-youngest-populations.html accessed 3 February 2024
[16] https://data.ipu.org/age-brackets-aggregate/, accessed 10 April 2024
[17] IPU, https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2023-10/youth-participation-in-national-parliaments-2023, accessed 24 April 2024

Figure 9.1 shows youth participation in African parliaments. East Africa has the highest proportion of young parliamentarians (54% 45 or under; 33% 40 or under and 4% 30 or under). The Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) does not disaggregate the data by sex. A growing number of young women are forging their way into the political sphere amid a myriad of challenges. A common thread is their determination and commitment to make a difference. Young women highlight the importance of support from their families and political parties and their previous experience as activists and professionals.



Mauritanians elected two young women from the ruling party, to represent the new generation of women emerging in politics.

Jamila Al-Naha is a 34-year-old lecturer who became an activist after joining the university union. Her involvement in the students' union helped pave the way for her to join the INSAF party in 2022. In the 2023 elections, the party approached her to be on its youth list. During her election campaign, Al-Naha prioritised concerns of young people and women's rights. She still recalls the excitement her candidacy generated at party meetings, both in-person and on social media platforms. she emphasised the importance of the support she received from her party, regardless of her age or gender.[18]



Halima Sogho, a 32-year-old entrepreneur, wife, and mother of two, stood as a candidate in the legislative and municipal elections of May 2023 under the banner of the Ribat party. Although she failed in her election bid, Sogho remains committed to her political beliefs. She is considering joining another party after the dissolving of her party for political reasons. She expresses her determination to pursue her activism to achieve her objectives. Her focus is on promoting employment for young people, who represent 57% of the population, against a backdrop of an unemployment rate of 14.9% in 2019. Additionally, she wants to work towards greater representation of women in politics challenging stereotypes, discrimination, and violence. She appeals to all women to get into politics, defend their ideas, and engage at all levels, including legislative, communal, and regional.[19]

[18] Profile by Amy FOFANA
[19] Profile by Amy FOFANA



In **Zimbabwe**, **Tabetha Rudo Kanengoni-Malinga**, has the distinction of having been the youngest minister in the Zimbabwean Cabinet.

Kanengoni-Malinga pursued a politics and gender studies degree at the University of Cape Town. She holds a masters in International Relations at the University of Zimbabwe and is pursuing a PhD in Social Development at the University of Cape Town once again. Despite her parents' initial hesitation about pursuing a degree in politics, her late father became her most ardent supporter and mentor.

When she returned home from university, her father urged her to make use of her degree and connected her with individuals in the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (Zanu PF) party. "He suggested I engage with the party's organisational structures, starting with the youth league since I come from Mashonaland Central, a rural province."

"In my province, there is a need for young, educated women to participate in party structures. My father emphasised that my academic background in politics presented a valuable asset, but understanding the practical aspects of politics was essential. He connected me with young men in the youth league and highlighted a vacant position within the provincial structures, previously held by a young woman who had passed away. After being introduced to the youth league members, I began contributing to district activities."

With the needs of youth at heart, Kanengoni-Malinga became active in her native rural province of Mashonaland Central. With her father's support and mentorship, Kanengoni-Malinga prioritised political education for young women. She sponsored the Junior Parliament Programme in Mazowe District. "I became a



mentor of sorts with the young women parliamentarians (junior MPs). They would come to events where I would be and ask them give speeches."

When Kanengoni-Malinga started working in the party, she joined the youth structures and became a member of the youth league in her province. However, she soon discovered that merit played little role in the selection for positions. She did however become secretary for gender and culture. During that period, the party dissolved the National Youth League Executive, who were mostly over 40, and set the new age as 15 to 35 years. The league voted Kanengoni-Malinga as the National Deputy Secretary for Health and Child Welfare.

When Kanengoni-Malinga lost her father due to a heart attack; she says, "I had to decide if I was going to grieve or if I was just going to push on and grieve later. It was such a difficult time for me but one thing that made me push myself was that I wanted to do it for him because he had been there for me and I had gone that far because of him and his support. That gave me a lot of energy."

She won the primary and main elections, becoming MP in Mazowe Central Constituency A few months later, President Robert Mugabe appointed her Deputy Minister of Sport, Arts and Culture, an ideal fit both because of her youth, and as a former basketball player for Zimbabwe, and captain of the basketball team at the University of Cape Town.

Elections for the youth league followed national elections. She describes the process as fraught. "I had a gang of men who decided that they didn't want me to go back into this national executive position because they wanted another young man to get in. He mobilised a team of senior men in the province who were very wealthy and provided vehicles and resources to go into every corner of the district to campaign against me. I also campaigned. I thought I was not going to give up, and I fought hard. I barely had the amount of resources that they had. But at this time, I had a history of working with people in the area. My dad taught me the type of politics where you work for people, you know, and you work because you actually want real change."

Kanengoni-Malinga lost her Ministerial post following the unseating of Mugabe by his party. She also lost her seat in the 2018 elections. Kanengoni-Malinga turned her energy to founding a women's rights organisation and working in civil society. Her advice to young women wanting to get into politics is to be active in the political party structures to gain an understanding of the party and its political ideology.

"You cannot stop people from creating stories about you. You cannot stop people from trying to push you out of the way. Focus on what you want to do. Take the small wins as well, like any small thing that you can do to contribute to the greater cause. If you really want to make a difference and if you really want to make a change, and you know exactly how you want to do it, then go for it."

Profile by Susan Tolmay

People with disabilities

Inclusive development hinges on active participation in political and public spheres, which is essential for upholding human rights. For individuals with disabilities, engagement in political and public life provides a platform to voice opinions and influence decisions affecting themselves, their communities, and their countries.

This participation is key to breaking down barriers, combatting exclusion, and addressing discrimination faced by individuals with disabilities. Despite the established right to political participation in human rights law, persons with disabilities often encounter obstacles that impede their engagement due to various forms of discrimination. Stereotypes surrounding disability can lead to biases in decision-making processes, voting, candidacy, and involvement in political activities. Obstacles such as legal, physical, transportation, and informational barriers hinder the political participation of individuals with disabilities. Governments play a crucial role in ensuring the inclusion of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes, not solely limited to electoral bodies but throughout all government entities.[20]

[20] United Nations, Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD) , Department for Economic and Social Affairs, Toolkit on disability for Africa: Participation in political and public life, no date, chrome-extension://oemmndcbldboiebfnladdacbdfmadadm/https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/disability/Toolkit/Participationin-Political-Publiclife.pdf accessed 24 April 2024

Currently, there is a lack of data on the proportion of political decision-makers with a disability. Without this data, it is difficult to identify and address any obstacles or challenges that people with disabilities may be facing in the political realm. This area requires attention so that we can better understand the current situation and work toward creating a more inclusive and representative political landscape for all.



Ahmed Saadi is an agribusiness entrepreneur who decided to run for Governor of the Island of Ngazidja in **Comoros** in 2024. Saadi is the only person with a disability who has ever run for an election. Despite his reduced mobility, he previously held state functions, including in the island government. According to a household survey conducted in the Comoros, there are 21,430 people with disabilities (3,7% of the population). The most common forms of disability are intellectual, motor, and hearing impairments. However, despite non-discriminatory legislation, in reality there are very few people with disabilities in decision-making positions.[21]



Activists and supporters at Mohamed Daoudou's political meeting in Moroni, Comoros. *Credit: Oustadh Padré*

Women's equal power in decision-making - substantive equality

The draft CEDAW GR40 notes, "Indicators capturing the share of women in political, public economic, and cultural institutions measure the degree of women's access to decision-making systems. Numbers alone, however, do not reveal whether women who have obtained these positions have equal power, in the sense of having equal voice and influence in shaping political, economic, and other outcomes."[22]

Women face significant barriers in accessing senior decision-making positions, which limits their ability to shape political, economic, and other outcomes. Patriarchal norms often prevent women from ascending to positions of influence, such as presidents, prime ministers, party leaders, and CEOs. Women also tend to be pigeon holed into specific areas, such as social inclusion and development, while men hold

[21] Case study by Mmadi Mihidjay
[22] CEDAW, Draft General Recommendation on General Recommendation on Equal and Inclusive Representation of Women in Decision-Making Systems, 2024

portfolios in areas such as defence, justice, finance, and foreign affairs.

A model of 50:50 gender parity at all levels of decision-making would effectively promote women's issues and gender equality and better allocate women across traditionally male-dominated portfolios. Such a model would also facilitate a more equitable distribution of resources and help address current and future challenges.

Structural transformation for equal and inclusive decision-making systems

Patriarchy is the common denominator in all political, social, economic, cultural, and faith structures. This system imposes specific roles and attributes on women and men based on societal expectations that restrict women to stereotypical and often unpaid roles in the private sphere. Meanwhile, society sees men as the main players in the public sphere with commensurate remuneration. This divide means that decision-making systems in politics, society, economy, culture, and faith often reflect the assumption that decision-makers are men with women merely unpaid workers. To change these gender norms and stereotypes, there needs to be a fundamental shift in the way we view gender roles and responsibilities across both the public and private spheres. This would create a more balanced context where both women and men can fulfil their professional duties while also managing their family and other obligations. Feminist economists call for more flexible working arrangements and a redefinition of the concepts of productivity and monetisation.[23]

Women who are mothers and caregivers face significant challenges in the political arena. Specifically, women of childbearing age face numerous barriers unique to their roles as mothers and caregivers. These barriers can include a lack of support for childcare, inflexible schedules, and a lack of understanding and empathy from colleagues and constituents. Society needs to make these structures more inclusive by providing better support and resources for women who are balancing their work and family responsibilities. This can include flexible working hours, on-site childcare facilities, and other family-friendly policies. By doing so, we can ensure that women are not excluded from participating in politics due to their motherhood or caregiving roles.



As a devoted mother and politician, **Joanna Bérenger**, a young woman MP in **Mauritius** juggles with a variety of responsibilities. Having campaigned while pregnant, she also had first-hand experience of the hostile environment parliament can present. She had nowhere in Parliament to breastfeed her baby or pump her milk. She recalls, "The clerk of the National Assembly, who was a woman kindly lent me her office so that I could pump my milk every three hours, and the pumped milk was kept in the canteen fridge, behind the soft drinks, because after a few hours, my cooler box no longer cooled the pumped milk sufficiently. Not an ideal scenario for a politician and mother. The problem would not have risen if there had been the possibility of benefiting from the services of an on-site nursery. I suggested this idea back in 2020 when I asked Parliament to set an example and offer nursery services for all National Assembly employees and members of Parliament. A suggestion that fell on deaf ears... If I hadn't had the support of another woman, the 'clerk', I would certainly have been forced to stop breastfeeding my baby."

[23] Ibid

She argues that there is a need for a more welcoming political environment for women. “Nothing will discourage me or put me off if I have the support of the men and women activists in my party... But there is a need for more welcoming conditions for women who want to engage in active politics". Concretely, she has proposed the removal of containers, which are transformed into 'headquarters' for political parties during election campaigns, where women in general are not welcome, especially in the evenings. She also advocates holding parliamentary sessions, preferably during the day rather than at night, which would enable women politicians to do their job as parliamentarians while not neglecting their families. “As we still live in a patriarchal society, women used to be much more involved in child-rearing than men, who were much more likely to get involved in politics. So it's no coincidence that the 'rules' they put in place are more beneficial to them than to women. But these 'rules' have to change if we really want to achieve parity," she points out.[24]

Dismantling gender stereotypes

Dismantling stereotypes about women in political decision-making is essential for promoting gender equality, ensuring diverse perspectives, fostering effective governance, setting positive examples, and upholding human rights. By challenging and overcoming these stereotypes, we can create a more inclusive and equitable society where women have equal opportunities to contribute to political processes and shape the future of their communities and countries.

Societal norms, traditions, and cultural beliefs reinforce stereotypes of women in politics. These entrenched ideas can resist change and may persist despite efforts to challenge them. Many people hold unconscious biases that shape their perceptions of women's leadership abilities and suitability for political roles. These biases can influence decision-making processes and contribute to the perpetuation of stereotypes about women in politics.

Women often face structural barriers such as unequal access to resources, limited political networks, and systemic discrimination that make it difficult for them to enter and succeed in political decision-making. These barriers can reinforce stereotypes and hinder progress toward gender equality in politics. Resistance from individuals or institutions that benefit from the status quo can pose a significant challenge to efforts to dismantle stereotypes about women in political decision-making. Those who hold power and privilege may be reluctant to challenge existing gender norms and make space for women in leadership roles. The underrepresentation of women in political leadership positions can reinforce stereotypes about women's abilities and credibility as political actors. Without visible role models and representation, it can be challenging to counter these stereotypes effectively.



In **Tunisia**, women still face many challenges in the political and public spheres. This includes “ordinary violence", a term coined in 2021 by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Research, Documentation and Information Centre on Women (CREDIF). This refers to “any behaviour that discriminates against women and is 'tolerated and accepted' by society, such as all social rules preventing or limiting a woman's right to go out at night, for example, or limiting a woman's role to household and

[24] Excerpt from profile of Joanna Bérenger by Karen Walter

domestic chores." Such violence is not physical, sexual, or economic but psychological. On 20 October 2021 UNFPA and CREDIF initiated a sensitisation campaign *"This is called discrimination,"* aired on the national television station, Watanya and on social media where is gained considerable traction.[25]



According to Anta Babacar Ngom, a candidate in the 2024 **Senegal**ese presidential elections: "we must work together, men and women, to create a respectful and inclusive political environment by raising awareness and encouraging dialogue on these crucial issues." To combat intimidation, threats, smear campaigns, and any other form of violence against women in politics, she proposes measures such as "strengthening legislation to punish such behaviour, promoting a culture of respect and tolerance in the political discourse. We also need to set up monitoring mechanisms to identify and deal with attacks quickly and raise awareness on the consequences of such actions."[26]

Civil society participation in decision-making

The CEDAW Committee says it "views the participation of women in civil society, especially in women's rights organisations, as essential for integrating a gender perspective in decision-making processes and for advising states in the development of gender-responsive legislation and policies."[27] The active participation of women's rights organisations in the work of various UN bodies, Commissions, and Human Rights Mechanisms, among others, has been a crucial factor in advancing the cause of gender equality and inclusive decision-making.

Such active involvement has enabled these organisations to raise awareness about issues affecting women and girls, advocate for their rights, and hold governments accountable for their commitments towards gender equality. Promoting equal and inclusive decision-making, building upon this foundation and facilitating inclusive governance is important.

This would entail providing women and women's rights organisations with more participatory, safe, and inclusive spaces at both domestic and international levels. In particular, there should be a strengthened focus on the participation of girls and young women, who often face additional barriers to engaging in decision-making.

Women's rights organisations (WROs) play a crucial role in supporting women who are interested in entering politics or are already in politics. They do this through **research and knowledge creation**. This Barometer is an example of such a tool. It informs different countries on how well they are doing in terms of WPP, but also has the potential to empower women politicians and WPP activists to bring about change at various levels. **Advocacy** for 50:50 forms a core part of the work that CSOs do in the area. Strong campaigning by WROs working with women politicians precedes almost all electoral reform and adoption of quotas. **Training and capacity building** by and for WROs are crucial to advancing gender equality and inclusive decision-making.

The GR40 makes several recommendations to member states and other stakeholders for ensuring non-discrimination and substantive equality, including:

[25] Case study by Mouna Ben Gamra for GL WPP Project.
[26] Case study by Fatou Laye Mbaye Diop, writing for GL WPP Project.
[27] CEDAW, Draft General Recommendation on General Recommendation on Equal and Inclusive Representation of Women in Decision-Making Systems, 2024.

Legal and policy framework

- **Change dated constitutions** to ensure that men and women have equal representation in all political, public, and economic decision-making roles.
- **Adopt temporary special measures** to address the effects of intersecting forms of discrimination.
- **Adopt and strengthen parity laws**. This can be achieved by requiring political parties to alternate between women and men candidates, both in their ranks on electoral lists or across electoral constituencies offering prospects to win. Lists that do not comply with these requirements should be rejected.
- **Create national plans** that set goals for equal representation and track progress through regular statistics. **Pass laws** that require equal numbers of men and women in political party lists, governments, public services, and economic decision-making bodies.
- Provide equal opportunities for women to be involved in all aspects of decision-making related to **peace and security**, including negotiations and reconstruction.
- Make **nomination and selection processes** transparent and based on merit.
- Encourage stakeholders to develop **recruitment strategies** to integrate women from a wide variety of backgrounds in positions of political, public, and economic decision-making.
- Establish **financial incentives** for political parties to meet parity requirements and impose penalties on those who do not nominate equal numbers of women and men.

Data

- **Collect and track data** on women and men in political, public, and economic decision-making that takes into account all their intersecting identities.

Support

- Provide **support and ensure access by women's organisations** working on the situation of disadvantaged groups of women to decision-making processes.
- Provide **financial and other support** to women candidates in campaigning for national and/or local elections. Additionally, affordable radio and television advertising time should be allocated to women candidates.

GBV

- To **combat gender-based violence** against women candidates laws should be adopted to raise awareness of the criminal nature of violence, intimidation, and hate speech against women candidates. Penalties should be established for perpetrators of such acts.
- Develop **codes of conduct that promote inclusivity** and gender equality. For example, codes of conduct should prohibit sexist language in political, public, and economic decision-making environments.

Education and awareness raising

- Conduct **awareness campaigns** targeting politicians, teachers, community leaders, and members of electoral bodies, as well as the general public, using various media platforms such as television, radio, posters, and digital outlets. Campaigns should educate people on the importance of women's participation in political, economic, and private decision-making on an equal basis with men.
- **Media professionals** should be trained to avoid perpetuating discriminatory gender stereotypes of women in public and political life. They should provide equal visibility to both men and women who stand for election and serve as decision-makers.
- Increase the availability of **mentoring programmes** that focus on political campaigning, leadership, and negotiation skills for women who are interested in entering or holding positions in political, public, and economic decision-making.

Role of women's rights organisations in decision-making

- Provide **capacity-building** to expand the expertise of women's civil society organisations to participate in all decision-making areas;

- Establish **inclusive and innovative modalities** for consulting with women's rights organisations.
- Regularly consult with women's rights organisations in response to **new and/or growing political and security challenges**, economic and technological challenges, and health and environmental challenges;
- Ensure that consultations encourage the participation of **diverse women**, making special efforts to incorporate the perspectives of women facing intersecting forms of discrimination;
- **Protect** women's rights organisations, women human rights defenders and mother women activists from all forms of reprisals and ensure they have an enabling environment to carry out their work.
- WROs should participate actively in the sixty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2025, which will mark the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, where there will be review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcomes of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as well as the 23rd special session of the General Assembly.



Women's Political Participation Campaigns and Training in Lesotho. *Photo: Ntolo Lekau*

ANNEX 1 Elections in Africa 2022-2024

	Country	Lower or single house				Local government			
		Last election	% W 2024	% W 2021	Variance	Last election	% W 2024	% W 2021	Variance
1	Benin	2023	27	8	18				
2	Sierra Leone	2023	28	12	16	2023	No data	18	
3	Cabo Verde	2021	42	26	15				
4	Guinea	2022	30	17	13	2023	16	15	1
5	Burkina Faso	2022	17	6	11	2022			
6	South Africa	2024	43	46	-3	2021	37	41	-4
7	Mozambique					2023	34	34	0
8	Chad	2021	26	15	11				
9	Equatorial Guinea	2022	31	21	10	2022	27	No data	
10	Eswatini	2023	22	10	12	2023	20	15	5
11	South Sudan	2021	32	29	4	2023	No data		
12	Morocco	2021	24	21	4	2021	27	21	6
13	Angola	2022	34	30	4				
14	Congo	2022	15	11	3	2022	23	No data	
15	Lesotho	2022	27	23	3	2022	39	40	-1
16	Liberia	2023	11	8	3				
17	Mali					2023	25	No data	
18	Senegal	2022	46	43	3	2022	3	2	1
19	Mauritania	2023	23	20	3	2023	No data	21	
20	Côte d'Ivoire	2021	14	11	2	2023	15	No data	
21	Ethiopia	2021	41	39	2	2021	No data		
22	Kenya	2022	23	22	2	2022	34	34	0
23	DRC	2023	13	13	0	2019	No data		
24	Djibouti	2023	26	26	0	2022	29	No data	
25	Gambia (The)	2022	9	9	0	2023	14	No data	
26	Zimbabwe	2023	31	32	-1	2023	33	14	19
27	Mauritius					2022	23	22	1
28	Uganda	2021	34	35	-1	2021	22	No data	
29	Zambia	2021	15	17	-2	2021	8	8	0
30	Nigeria	2023	4	6	-2	2022	11	No data	
31	Guinea-Bissau	2023	10	14	-4				
32	Somalia	2021	20	24	-5				
33	Sao Tome and Principe	2022	15	24	-9	2022	24	No data	
34	Tunisia	2022	16	26	-10	2023	48	48	0
35	Algeria	2021	8	26	-18	2022	18	18	0
36	Ghana					2023	No data	4	

ANNEX 2 Women in lower house by global ranking

IPU Ranking 2021	IPU Ranking 2024	Country	Electoral system	Type of quota	Seats*	Women	% W 2023
1	1	Rwanda	PR	Reserved seats	80	49	61%
15	5	Namibia	PR	Voluntary Party (SWAPO)	104	52	50%
16	13	Senegal	Mixed	Legislated Candidate Quotas	165	76	46%
12	22	South Africa	PR	Voluntary Party (ANC)	400	171	43%
19	21	Mozambique	PR	Voluntary Party (FRELIMO, RENAMO)	250	108	43%
75	75	Cabo Verde	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	72	30	42%
31	31	Ethiopia	FPTP	None	472	195	41%
33	33	Burundi	PR	Reserved seats	123	47	38%
34	34	Tanzania	Mixed	Reserved seats	393	147	37%
37	48	Cameroon	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	180	61	34%
52	49	Uganda	FPTP	Reserved seats	556	188	34%
59	50	Angola	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	220	74	34%
109	54	South Sudan	Other	Legislated Candidate Quotas	550	178	32%
47	60	Equatorial Guinea	PR	None	100	31	31%
83	61	Niger	PR	Reserved seats	166	51	31%
134	61	Zimbabwe	Mixed	Reserved seats	279	86	31%
67	65	Guinea	Mixed	Legislated Candidate Quotas	81	24	30%
155	72	Mali	FPTP	Legislated Candidate Quotas	147	42	29%
66	77	Sierra Leone	FPTP	Reserved seats	149	42	28%
172	81	Egypt	PR	Reserved seats	592	163	28%
93	87	Benin	PR	Reserved seats	109	29	27%
79	88	Lesotho	Mixed	Legislated Candidate Quotas	121	32	26%
140	91	Djibouti	Mixed	Reserved seats	65	17	26%
114	93	Chad	Mixed	None	197	51	26%
106	95	Morocco	PR	Reserved seats	395	96	24%
115	98	Kenya	FPTP	Reserved seats	348	81	23%
96	98	Mauritania	Mixed	Legislated Candidate Quotas	176	41	23%
95	102	Seychelles	Mixed	None	35	8	23%
118	110	Malawi	FPTP	Voluntary party (UDF, MCP)	193	40	21%
123	113	Mauritius	FPTP	Voluntary Party (MMM)	70	14	20%
89	118	Togo	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	91	18	20%
127	120	Somalia	Other	Reserved seats	274	54	20%
168	126	Madagascar	Mixed/ Parallel	None	151	28	19%
176	134	Eswatini	FPTP	Legislated Candidate Quotas	74	16	22%
133	136	Burkina Faso	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	71	12	17%
137	137	Comoros	FPTP	None	24	4	17%
77	138	Libya	Other	Legislated Candidate Quotas	170	28	16%
132	140	Tunisia	PR	None	154	25	16%
159	143	Zambia	FPTP	None	167	25	15%
92	144	Sao Tome and Principe	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	55	8	15%
147	144	Congo	FPTP	Legislated Candidate Quotas	151	22	15%
158	144	Ghana	FPTP	None	275	40	15%
170	150	Côte d'Ivoire	FPTP	Legislated Candidate Quotas	255	35	14%
152	153	Central African Republic	FPTP	Legislated Candidate Quotas	140	18	13%
163	154	DRC	Mixed	None	500	64	13%
162	157	Botswana	FPTP	Voluntary party (BCP, BNF)	63	7	11%
149	159	Liberia	FPTP	Voluntary Party (CDC)	73	8	11%
171	165	Guinea-Bissau	PR	None	102	10	10%
82	166	Gambia (The)	FPTP	None	58	5	9%
	168	Algeria	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	407	32	8%
180	180	Nigeria	FPTP	None	360	14	4%
136		Gabon	FPTP	Legislated Candidate Quotas	143	22	15%
		Sudan	Mixed	Reserved seats	426	133	31%
		Eritrea	Other	Reserved seats	150	33	22%
TOTAL AFRICA					**11122**	**2885**	**26%**

ANNEX 3 Women in local government by rank

Rank	Country	Region	Electoral system	Quota/TSM	Number seats	Women	% Women
1	Senegal	West	Mixed	Legislated Candidate Quotas	29450	13910	47%
2	Namibia	Southern	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	374	168	45%
3	Rwanda	East	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	894	390	44%
4	Cabo Verde	West	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	342	143	42%
5	Lesotho	Southern	Mixed	Reserved seats	1410	546	39%
6	South Africa	Southern	Mixed	Legislated Candidate Quotas	9473	3498	37%
7	Mozambique	Southern	PR	Voluntary party quota (FRELIMO)	3397	1155	34%
8	Kenya	East	FPTP	Reserved seats	2224	746	34%
9	Burundi	East	FPTP	Reserved seats	3,495	1164	33%
10	Comoros	Southern	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	1045	348	33%
11	Zimbabwe	Southern	FPTP	Legislated Candidate Quotas	2571	846	33%
12	Tanzania	Southern/East	Mixed	Reserved seats	5326	1634	31%
13	Djibouti	Horn	Mixed	None	194	56	29%
14	Morocco	North	N/A	Reserved seats	34556	9410	27%
15	Niger	West	Mixed	Reserved seats	2743	742	27%
16	Equatorial Guinea	West	PR	None	607	163	27%
17	Mali	West	FPTP	Reserved seats	11380	2874	25%
18	Cameroon	Central	PR	Voluntary party (SDF)	11526	2829	25%
19	Sao Tome and Principe	Central	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	67	16	24%
20	Congo-Brazzaville	Central	FPTP	Legislated Candidate Quotas	566	133	23%
21	Mauritius	Southern	FPTP	Legislated Candidate Quotas	1170	274	23%
22	Uganda	East	FPTP	Reserved seats	46285	10225	22%
23	Eswatini	Southern	FPTP	None	97	19	20%
24	Botswana	Southern	FPTP	Voluntary party (BCP, BNF)	609	111	18%
25	Sierra Leone	West	FPTP	Legislated Candidate Quotas	511	93	18%
26	Algeria	North	FPTP	Reserved seats	26880	4728	18%
27	Guinea	West	Mixed	Reserved seats	6819	1082	16%
28	Côte d'Ivoire	West	FPTP	Legislated Candidate Quotas	7672	1147	15%
29	Malawi	Southern	FPTP	None	460	67	15%
30	Libya	North	Mixed	Reserved seats	952	136	14%
31	Gambia	West	FPTP	None	167	23	14%
32	Togo	West	PR	None	1527	198	13%
33	Nigeria	West	FPTP	None	9628	1065	11%

Rank	Country	Region	Electoral system	Quota/TSM	Number seats	Women	% Women
34	Chad	Central	Mixed	None	312	34	11%
35	Zambia	Southern	FPTP	None	1841	140	8%
36	Madagascar	Southern	PR	None	10063	744	7%
37	Benin	West	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	1815	70	4%
38	Ghana	West	FPTP	None	6158	234	4%
	AFRICA TOTAL				**249932**	**62795**	**25%**
	Central African Republic	Central	TRS	Legislated Candidate Quotas	Suspended indefinitely		
	South Sudan	East	N/A	N/A			
	Eritrea	Horn	N/A	Reserved seats	Suspended indefinitely		
	Somalia	Horn	N/A	N/A			
	Egypt	North	Mixed	Reserved seats	No data		
	Sudan	North	N/A	N/A			
	Angola	Southern	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	Have not held election		
	DRC	Southern	Mixed	None			
	Seychelles	Southern	Not elected	Not elected			
	Burkina Faso	West	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	Suspended indefinitely		
	Guinea-Bissau	West	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	No data		
	Gabon	Central	FPTP	Legislated Candidate Quotas	No data		
	Ethiopia	Horn	FPTP	None	No data		
	Mauritania	North	Mixed	Reserved seats	No data		
	Tunisia	North	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	No data		
	Liberia	West	FPTP	None	No data		

ANNEX 4 Countries and regions in Africa

Region/Countries	Regional Economic Community	Notes
Southern Africa	The Southern African Development Community (SADC)	These countries also belong to the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). While this is an important trade bloc, it has less of a political character than SADC, used to classify Southern African countries in the WPP Barometer.
Angola		
Botswana		
Comoros		
Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)		
Eswatini		
Lesotho		
Madagascar		
Malawi		
Mauritius		
Mozambique		
Namibia		
Seychelles		
South Africa		
Zambia		
Zimbabwe		
Tanzania	SADC/EAC	Tanzania belongs to SADC and the EAC, which are both groupings often referred to in WPP studies. Tanzania is listed under both the statistical tables but was not counted twice in the totals.
East Africa	East African Community (EAC)	
Tanzania		
Burundi		These countries also belong to the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). While this is an important trade bloc, it has less of a political character than SADC, used for the classification of Southern African countries in the WPP Barometer.
Kenya		
Rwanda		
South Sudan		
Uganda		
Horn of Africa	The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) comprises Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda.	Four of these countries are in the EAC and therefore are not included in calculations on the Horn.
Djibouti		
Eritrea		
Ethiopia		
Somalia		
Sudan		
West Africa	The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)	ECOWAS is a well-known and coherent REC that has been used as the frame of reference for West Africa in this study.
Benin		
Burkina Faso		
Cabo Verde		
Côte d'Ivoire		
Gambia (The)		
Ghana		
Guinea		
Guinea-Bissau		
Liberia		
Mali		
Niger		
Nigeria		
Senegal		
Sierra Leone		
Togo		
Central Africa	The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) comprises Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe.	ECCAS is not a well-known regional group and has much overlap. The researchers removed the four countries that fit elsewhere, leaving the ones named here, so it is a residual grouping rather than a formally recognised one.
Cameroon		
Central African Republic		
Chad		
Congo		
Equatorial Guinea		
Gabon		
Sao Tome and Principe		
North Africa	The Arab Maghreb Union (AMU/UMA) comprises Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia.	
Algeria		
Egypt		
Libya		
Mauritania		
Morocco		
Tunisia		

Source: Gender Links 2021.

ANNEX 5 Women in parliament by region

2023	Country	Region	Lower			Upper			Both		
			Seats*	Women	% W 2023	Seats*	Women	% W	Seats*	Women	
48	Cameroon	Central	180	61	34%	100	31	31%	280	92	33%
153	Central African Republic	Central	140	18	13%	-	-		140	18	13%
93	Chad	Central	197	51	26%	-	-		197	51	26%
144	Congo	Central	151	22	15%	72	23	32%	223	45	20%
60	Equatorial Guinea	Central	100	31	31%	74	16	22%	174	47	27%
	Gabon	Central	143	22	15%	-	-		143	22	15%
144	Sao Tome and Principe	Central	55	8	15%	-	-		55	8	15%
TOTAL CENTRAL			**966**	**213**	**22%**	**246**	**70**	**28%**	**1212**	**283**	**23%**
33	Burundi	East	123	47	38%	39	16	41%	162	63	39%
98	Kenya	East	348	81	23%	67	21	31%	415	102	25%
1	Rwanda	East	80	49	61%	26	9	35%	106	58	55%
54	South Sudan	East	550	178	32%	84	27	32%	634	205	32%
37	Tanzania	East	393	147	37%	-	-		393	147	37%
49	Uganda	East	556	188	34%	-	-		556	188	34%
TOTAL EAST			**2050**	**690**	**34%**	**216**	**73**	**34%**	**2266**	**763**	**34%**
91	Djibouti	Horn	65	17	26%	-	-		65	17	26%
	Eritrea	Horn	150	33	22%	67	16	24%	217	49	23%
26	Ethiopia	Horn	472	195	41%	144	44	31%	616	239	39%
120	Somalia	Horn	274	54	20%	54	14	26%	328	68	21%
TOTAL HORN			**961**	**299**	**31%**	**265**	**74**	**28%**	**1226**	**273**	**30%**
168	Algeria	North	407	32	8%	170	7	4%	577	39	7%
81	Egypt	North	592	163	28%	300	41	14%	892	204	23%
138	Libya	North	170	28	16%	-	-		170	28	16%
98	Mauritania	North	176	41	23%	-	-		176	41	23%
95	Morocco	North	395	96	24%	120	14	12%	515	110	21%
	Sudan	North	426	133	31%	54	0	0%	480	133	28%
140	Tunisia	North	154	25	16%	-	-		154	25	16%
TOTAL NORTH			**2320**	**518**	**22%**	**644**	**62**	**10%**	**2964**	**580**	**20%**
50	Angola	Southern	220	74	34%	-	-		220	74	34%
157	Botswana	Southern	63	7	11%	-	-		63	7	11%
137	Comoros	Southern	24	4	17%	-	-		24	4	17%
154	DRC	Southern	477	61	13%	109	26	24%	586	87	15%
134	Eswatini	Southern	74	16	22%	30	12	40%	104	28	27%
88	Lesotho	Southern	121	32	26%	33	8	24%	154	40	26%

2023	Country	Region	Lower			Upper			Both		
			Seats*	Women	% W 2023	Seats*	Women	% W	Seats*	Women	
126	Madagascar	Southern	151	28	19%	18	2	11%	169	30	18%
110	Malawi	Southern	193	40	21%	-	-		193	40	21%
113	Mauritius	Southern	70	14	20%	-	-		70	14	20%
21	Mozambique	Southern	250	108	43%	-	-		250	108	43%
19	Namibia	Southern	104	52	50%	42	6	14%	146	58	40%
102	Seychelles	Southern	35	8	23%	-	-		35	8	23%
16	South Africa	Southern	400	171	43%	54	24	44%	454	195	43%
37	Tanzania	Southern	393	147	37%	-	-		393	147	37%
143	Zambia	Southern	167	25	15%	-	-		167	25	15%
61	Zimbabwe	Southern	279	86	31%	80	36	45%	359	122	34%
TOTAL SOUTHERN			**3021**	**873**	**29%**	**366**	**114**	**31%**	**3387**	**987**	**29%**
87	Benin	West	109	29	27%	-	-		109	29	27%
136	Burkina Faso	West	71	12	17%	-	-		71	12	17%
24	Cabo Verde	West	72	30	42%				72	30	42%
150	Côte d'Ivoire	West	255	35	14%	64	10	16%	319	45	14%
166	Gambia (The)	West	58	5	9%	-	-		58	5	9%
144	Ghana	West	275	40	15%	-	-		275	40	15%
65	Guinea	West	81	24	30%				81	24	30%
165	Guinea-Bissau	West	102	10	10%	-	-		102	10	10%
159	Liberia	West	73	8	11%	30	2	7%	103	10	10%
72	Mali	West	147	42	29%	-	-		147	42	29%
61	Niger	West	166	51	31%	-	-		166	51	31%
180	Nigeria	West	360	14	4%	109	3	3%	469	17	4%
13	Senegal	West	165	76	46%	-	-		165	76	46%
77	Sierra Leone	West	149	44	30%	-	-		149	42	28%
118	Togo	West	91	18	20%	-	-		91	18	20%
TOTAL WEST			**2174**	**438**	**20%**	**203**	**15**	**7%**	**2377**	**451**	**19%**
TOTAL AFRICA			**11099**	**2884**	**26%**	**1940**	**408**	**21%**	**13039**	**3292**	**25%**

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union Open Data.

ANNEX 6 Women in local government by region

Country	Region	Electoral system	Quota/TSM	Number seats	Women	% Women
Cameroon	Central	PR	Voluntary party (SDF)	11526	2829	25%
Central African Republic	Central	TRS	Legislated Candidate Quotas	Suspended indefinitely		
Chad	Central	Mixed	None	312	34	11%
Congo-Brazzaville	Central	FPTP	Legislated Candidate Quotas	566	133	23%
Gabon	Central	FPTP	Legislated Candidate Quotas	No data		
Sao Tome and Principe	Central	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	67	16	24%
TOTAL CENTRAL				**12471**	**3012**	**24%**
Burundi	East	FPTP	Reserved seats	3495	1164	33%
Kenya	East	FPTP	Reserved seats	2224	746	34%
Rwanda	East	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	894	390	44%
South Sudan	East	N/A	N/A			
Tanzania	East	Mixed	Reserved seats	5326	1634	31%
Uganda	East	FPTP	Reserved seats	46285	10225	22%
TOTAL EAST				**58224**	**14159**	**24%**
Djibouti	Horn	Mixed	None	194	56	29%
Eritrea	Horn	N/A	Reserved seats	Suspended indefinitely		
Ethiopia	Horn	FPTP	None	No data		
Somalia	Horn	N/A	N/A			
TOTAL HORN				**194**	56	**29%**
Algeria	North	FPTP	Reserved seats	26880	4728	18%
Egypt	North	Mixed	Reserved seats	No data		
Libya	North	Mixed	Reserved seats	952	136	14%
Mauritania	North	Mixed	Reserved seats			
Morocco	North	N/A	Reserved seats	34556	9410	27%
Sudan	North	N/A	N/A			
Tunisia	North	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas			
TOTAL NORTH				**62388**	**14274**	**23%**
Angola	Southern	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	Have not held election		
Botswana	Southern	FPTP	Voluntary party (BCP, BNF)	609	111	18%
Comoros	Southern	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	1045	348	33%
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Southern	Mixed	None			
Eswatini	Southern	FPTP	None	97	19	20%
Lesotho	Southern	Mixed	Reserved seats	1410	546	39%
Madagascar	Southern	PR	None	10063	744	7%

Country	Region	Electoral system	Quota/TSM	Number seats	Women	% Women
Malawi	Southern	FPTP	None	460	67	15%
Mauritius	Southern	FPTP	Legislated Candidate Quotas	1170	274	23%
Mozambique	Southern	PR	Voluntary party quota (FRELIMO)	3397	1155	34%
Namibia	Southern	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	374	168	45%
Seychelles	Southern	Not elected	Not elected			
South Africa	Southern	Mixed	Legislated Candidate Quotas	9473	3498	37%
Tanzania	Southern/East	Mixed	Reserved seats	5326	1634	31%
Zambia	Southern	FPTP	None	1841	140	8%
Zimbabwe	Southern	FPTP	Legislated Candidate Quotas	2571	846	33%
TOTAL SOUTHERN				**37836**	**9550**	**25%**
Benin	West	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	1815	70	4%
Burkina Faso	West	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	Suspended indefinitely		
Cabo Verde	West	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	342	143	42%
Gambia	West	FPTP	None	167	23	14%
Ghana	West	FPTP	None	6158	234	4%
Guinea	West	Mixed	Reserved seats	6819	1082	16%
Guinea-Bissau	West	PR	Legislated Candidate Quotas	No data		
Liberia	West	FPTP	None			
Mali	West	FPTP	Reserved seats	11380	2874	25%
Niger	West	Mixed	Reserved seats	2743	742	27%
Nigeria	West	FPTP	None	9628	1065	11%
Senegal	West	Mixed	Legislated Candidate Quotas	29450	13910	47%
Sierra Leone	West	FPTP	Legislated Candidate Quotas	511	93	18%
Togo	West	PR	None	1527	198	13%
Equatorial Guinea	West	PR	None	607	163	27%
Côte d'Ivoire			Legislated Candidate Quotas	7672	1147	15%
TOTAL WEST				**78819**	**21744**	**28%**
TOTAL AFRICA				**244606**	**61161**	**25%**

ANNEX 7 Political party leadership

Country	Party	Leader	M	W	Secretary General	M	F	DSG	M	F	Total M	Total F	Overall total	% Women	Source
Djibouti															
Ruling party	People's Rally for Progress (PRP) - leader of coalition government Union for Presidential Majority	Ismaïl Omar Guelleh	1		Ilyas Moussa Dawaleh	1					2	0	2		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/People%27s_Rally_for_Progress
Main opposition	Djibouti Union for Democracy and Justice (DRJ)	Iiaya Ismail Guedi Hared	1								1	0	1		Djibouti Union for Democracy and Justice
Eritrea															
Ruling party	People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ)	Isaias Afwerki	1		Woldemichael Abraha	1		Yemane Ghebreab	1		3	0	3		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/People%27s_Front_for_Democracy_and_Justice
Main opposition	N/A	N/A			N/A			N/A							
Ethiopia															
Ruling party	Prosperity Party	Abiy Ahmed Ali	1		Adam Farah Demeke Mekonnen	2					3	0	3		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prosperity_Party
Main opposition	National Movement of Amhara	Belete Molla	1								1	0	1		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_political_parties_in_Ethiopia
Somalia															
Ruling party	Peace and Development party (PDP)	Hassan Sheikh Mohamud	1		Abdirahman Mohamed Husen	1					2	0	2		https://www.google.com/search?q=Hassan+Sheikh+Mohamud&rlz=1C5CHFA_enZA905ZA905&oq=Hassan+Sheikh+Mohamud&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUyBggAEEUYOdIBBzU5OWowajeoAgCwAgA&sourceid=chrom
Main opposition	Tayo Party	Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed	1								1	0	1		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mohamed_Abdullahi_Mohamed
TOTAL HORN			**7**	**0**		**5**	**0**		**1**	**0**	**13**	**0**	**13**	**0%**	
Burundi															
Ruling party	National Council for the Defense of Democracy – Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD)	Evariste Ndayishimiye	1		Reverien Ndikuriyo	1		Cyriaque Nshimiyimana	1		3	0	3		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Council_for_the_Defense_of_Democracy_%E2%80%93_Forces_for_the_Defense_of_Democracy Source 1
Main opposition	National Congress for Liberty(CNL)	Agathon Rwasa	1		Simon Bizimungu	1					2	0	2		
Kenya															
Ruling party	United Democratic Alliance (UDA)	William Ruto	1		Cecily Mutitu Mbarire		1	Veronica Maina		1	1	2	3		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Democratic_Alliance_(Kenya)
Main opposition	Orange Democratic Movement (ODM)	Raila Odinga	1		Edwin Sifuna	1		John Mbadi	1		3	0	3		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orange_Democratic_Movement
South Sudan															
Ruling party	Sudan People's Liberation Movement(SPLM)	Salva Kiir Mayardit	1			0			0		1	0	13		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sudan_People%27s_Liberation_Movement
Main opposition	Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition (SPLM-IO)	Riek Machar	1		Tingo Peter Regbigo	1		Simon Gatwech Dual	1		3	0			https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sudan_People%27s_Liberation_Movement-in-Opposition

Country	Party	Leader	M	F	Secretary General	M	F	DSG	M	F	Total M	Total F	Overall total	% Women	Source
Uganda															
Ruling party	National Resistance Movement (NRM)	Yoweri Museveni	1		Richard Todwong	1					2	0	2		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Resistance_Movement
Main opposition	National Unity Platform (NUP)	Robert K. Ssentamu	1		David Lewis Rubongoya	1		Joel Ssenyonyi			2	0	2		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Unity_Platform
Tanzania															
Ruling party	Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM)	Samia Suluhu Hassan		1	Daniel Chongolo	1		Paul Makonda	1		2	1	3		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chama_Cha_Mapinduzi
Main opposition	Party for Democracy and Progress (CHADEMA)	Freeman Mbowe	1		John Mnyika	1		John Mrema	1		3	0	3		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chadema
Rwanda															
Ruling party	Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF-Inkotanyi)	Paul Kagame	1		Wellars Gasamagera	1					2	0	2		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rwandan_Patriotic_Front
Main opposition	Social Democratic Party (PSD)	Vincent Biruta	1								1	0	1		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Democratic_Party_(Rwanda)
TOTAL EAST			11	1		9	1		4	1	24	3	27	11%	
Angola															
Ruling party	People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola(MPLA)	José Eduardo dos Santos	1		Paulo Pombolo	1		n/a			2	0	2		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MPLA
Main opposition	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA)	Adalberto Costa Júnior	1		Paulo Lukamba Gato	1					2	0	2		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UNITA
Botswana															
Ruling party	Botswana Democratic Party (BDP)	Mokgweetsi Masisi	1		Kavis Kario	1		Dr. Lemogang Kwape	1		3	0	3		https://www.facebook.com/tswanacitizen/photos/a.412311742440807/1811569529181681/?type=3
Main opposition	Batswana Congress Party (MCP)	Dumelang Saleshando	1		Samuel Rantuana	1		Goretetse Kekgonegile	1		3	0	3		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Botswana_Congress_Party
Comorors															
Ruling party	Convention pour le Renouveau des Comores - CRC)	Azali ASSOUMANI	1		Houmed M'saidié	1					2	0	2		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Convention_for_the_Renewal_of_the_Comoros
Main opposition	Parti Orange	Mohamed Daoudou	1								1	0	1		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orange_Party
DRC															
Ruling party	Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS)	Félix Tshisekedi	1		Augustin Kabuya	1					2	0	2		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Union_for_Democracy_and_Social_Progress_(Democratic_Republic_of_the_Congo)
Main opposition	Movement for the Liberation of Congo	Jean-Pierre Bemba	1		Eve Bazaiba		1				1	1	2		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Movement_for_the_Liberation_of_the_Congo
Eswatini															
Ruling party	Banned										0	1	1		
Main opposition	Banned										0	0	0		
Lesotho															
Ruling party	Revolutionary for Prosperity	Ntsoakane S. Matekane	1		Nthati Moorosi		1	Metsing Lemphane	1		2	1	3		Local Contact
Main opposition	Democratic Congress	Mathebeli Mokhothu	1		Tsitso Cheba	1		Mabofokeng Mpobole		1	2		3		

Country	Party	Leader	M	F	Secretary General	M	F	DSG	M	F	Total M	Total F	Overall total	% Women	Source
Madagascar															
Ruling party	Young Malagasies Determined(TGV)	Andry Nirina RAJOELINA	1					None			1	0	1		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Young_Malagasies_Determined
Main opposition	Groupe Parlementaire uni pour la République (GPR)	Olivier Marleix	1		Émilie Bonnivard Pierre-Henri Dumont Anne-Laure Blin Philippe Gosselin	2	2	None			3	2	5		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Republicans_group_(National_Assembly)
Malawi															
Ruling party	Malawi Congress Party (MCP)	Lazarus Chakwera	1		Eisenhower Mkaka	1		Gerald Kazembe	1		3	0	3		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malawi_Congress_Party
Main opposition	Democratic Progressive Party	Peter Mutharika	1		Jean Kalilani		1	Isaac Nyakamera	1		2	1	3		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Progressive_Party_(Malawi)
Mauritius															
Ruling party	Mauritian Alliance (lead by Militant Socialist Movement (MSM)	Pravind Kumar Jugnauth	1		Maneesh Gobin	1		Joe Lesjongard Leela Devi Dookhun MP	1	1	3	1	4		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Militant_Socialist_Movement
Main opposition	National Alliance (lead by the labour party)	Navin Ramgoolam	1		Kalyanee Juggoo		1	Patrick Assirvaden	1		2	1	3		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Labour_Party_(Mauritius)
Mozambique															
Ruling party	Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (FRELIMO)	Filipe Nyusi	1		Roque Silva Samuel	1		Esperança Bias		1	2	1	3		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FRELIMO
Main opposition	Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO)	Ossufo Momade	1		Manuel Zeca Bissopo	1		Jose Manteigas	1		3	0	3		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RENAMO
Namibia															
Ruling party	South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO)	Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah (Acting)		1	Sophia Shaningwa		1	Nangolo Mbumba	1		2	1	3		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SWAPO
Main opposition	Popular Democratic Movement (PDM)	Mchenry Veenani	1		Manuel Ngaringombe	1		Linus Tobias	1		3	0	3		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Popular_Democratic_Movement
South Africa															
Ruling party	African National Congress	Cyril Ramaphosa	1		Fikile Mbalula	1		Nomvula Mokonya & Maropene Ramokgopa		2	2	2	4		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Executive_Committee_of_the_African_National_Congress
Main opposition	Democratic Alliance	John Steenhuisen - Chairperson	1		Dr Ivan Meyer - Chairperson	1		Alderman Jean-Pierre - Deputy Chairperson	1		3	0	3		https://www.da.org.za/our-people
Seychelles															
Ruling party	Seychellois Democratic Alliance	Roger Mancienne	1								1	0	1		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linyon_Demokratik_Seselwa
Main opposition	United Seychelles	Patrick Herminie	1								1	0	1		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Seychelles

Country	Party	Leader	M	F	Secretary General	M	F	DSG	M	F	Total M	Total F	Overall total	% Women	Source
Tanzania															
Ruling party	Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM)	Samia Suluhu Hassan		1	Daniel Chongolo	1		Paul Makonda	1		2	1	3		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chama_Cha_Mapinduzi
Main opposition	Party for Democracy and Progress (CHADEMA)	Freeman Mbowe	1		John Mnyika	1		John Mrema	1		3	0	3		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chadema
Zambia															
Ruling party	United Party for National Development (UPND)	Hakainde Hichilema	1		Batuke Imenda	1					2	0	2		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Party_for_National_Development
Main opposition	Patriotic Front (PF)	Edgar Lungu	1		Davies Mwila	1					2	0	2		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patriotic_Front_(Zambia)
Zimbabwe															
Ruling party	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF)	Emmerson Mnangagwa- 1st Secretary	1		Constantino C.K. Mohadi - 2nd Secretary	1		Oppah Muchinguri			2	1	3		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ZANU%E2%80%93PF
Main opposition	Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC)	Nelson Chamisa	1		Sengezo Tshabangu	1					2	0	2		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Citizens_Coalition_for_Change#:~:text=The%20Citizens%20Coalition%20for%20Change,at%20Bronte%20Hotel%20in%20Harare.
TOTAL SOUTHERN			29	2		22	8		14	9	66	15	81	19%	
Benin															
Ruling party	Progressive Union	Joseph Djogbenou	1								1	0	1		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Progressive_Union_for_Renewal
Main opposition	Republican Bloc	Abdoulaye Bio Tchané	1								1	0	1		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republican_Bloc
Burkina Faso															
Ruling party	People's Movement for Progress (MPP)	Roch M C Kaboré	1								1	0	1		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/People%27s_Movement_for_Progress
Main opposition	Congress for Democracy and Progress	Eddie Komboïgo	1								1	0	1		
Cabo Verde															
Ruling Party	Movement for Democracy (MpD)	Ulisses Correia e Silva	1		Luís Carlos Silva	1					2	0	2		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Movement_for_Democracy_(Cape_Verde)
Main Opposition	African Party for the Independence of Cape Verde(PAICV	Rui Semedo	1		Julião Varela	1					2	0	2		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Party_for_the_Independence_of_Cape_Verde
Côte d'Ivoire															
Ruling party	Rally of Houphouëtists for Democracy and Peace (RHDP)	Alassane Ouattara	1		Alain Acakpo Addra	1					2	0	2		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rally_of_Houphou%C3%ABtists_for_Democracy_and_Peace
Main opposition	Democratic Party of Ivory Coast – African Democratic Rally	Philippe Cowppli-Bony	1								1	0	1		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Party_of_Ivory_Coast_%E2%80%93_African_Democratic_Rally
Gambia (The)															
Ruling party	National People's Party (NPP)	Adama Barrow	1		Dembo Bojang	1					2	0	2		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_People%27s_Party_(The_Gambia)
Main opposition	United Democratic Party (UDP)	Ousainou Darboe	1		(Chairman)						1	0	1		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Democratic_Party_(The_Gambia)

Country	Party	Leader	M	F	Secretary General	M	F	DSG	M	F	Total M	Total F	Overall total	% Women	Source
Ghana															
Ruling party	New Patriotic Party (NPP)	Nana Akufo-Addo	1		Justin Frimpong-Kodua	1		Stephen Ayensu Ntim	1		3	0	3		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Patriotic_Party
Main opposition	National Democratic Congress (NDC)	Asiedu Nketia	1		Fifi Kwetey	1					2	0	2		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Democratic_Congress_(Ghana)
Guinea															
Ruling party	Rally of the Guinean People (RGP)	Alpha Condé	1								1	0	1		Rally of the Guinean People - Wikipedia
Main opposition	Guinean Democratic Union	Mamadou Sylla	1								1	0	1		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mamadou_Sylla_(politician)
Guinea-Bissau															
Ruling party	African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC)	Domingos Simões Pereira	1								1	0	1		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Party_for_the_Independence_of_Guinea_and_Cape_Verde
Main opposition	Movement for Democratic Alternation, Group of 15	Braima Camará	1								1	0	1		Madem G15 - Wikipedia
Liberia															
Ruling party	Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC)	George Weah	1								1	0	1		Coalition for Democratic Change - Wikipedia
Main opposition	Unity Party	Luther Tarpeh	1		Joseph Boakai	1					2	0	2		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unity_Party_(Liberia)
Mali															
	Military-led government	Colonel Assimi Goïta	1								1	0	1		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assimi_Go%C3%Afta
Niger															
Ruling party	Nigerien Party for Democracy and Socialism (PNDS-Tarrayya)	Mohamed Bazoum	1		Hassoumi Massaoudou	1					2	0	2		Nigerien Party for Democracy and Socialism - Wikipedia
Main opposition	Nigerien Democratic Movement for an African Federation (MODEN/FA)	Hama AMADOU	1								1	0	1		Nigerien Democratic Movement for an African Federation - Wikipedia
Nigeria															
Ruling party	All Progressives Congress (APC)	Bola Tinubu	1		Ajibola Basiru (OS)	1		Abdullahi Umar	1		3	0	3		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All_Progressives_Congress
Main opposition	Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	Umar Illiya	1		Samuel Anyanwu	1		Ganduje (Chairperson)			2	0	2		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peoples_Democratic_Party_(Nigeria)
Senegal															
Ruling party	Alliance for the Republic (APR)	Macky Sall	1								1	0	1		Alliance for the Republic (Senegal) - Wikipedia
Main opposition	Liberate the peeople - a coalition of 5 parties	Barthélémy Dias Ousmane Sonko Khalifa Sall	3								3	0	3		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Party_for_Unity_and_Rally
Sierra Leone															
Ruling party	Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP)	Julius Maada Bio	1		Umaru Napoleon Koroma	1	0		1		3	0	3		Sierra Leone People's Party - Wikipedia
Main opposition	All People's Congress (APC)	Ernest Bai Koroma	1		Alhaji Osman Foday	1		Prince Harding			2	0	2		All People's Congress - Wikipedia

Country	Party	Leader	M	F	Secretary General	M	F	DSG	M	F	Total M	Total F	Overall total	% Women	Source
Togo															
Ruling party	Union for the Republic (Union pour la République, UNIR)	Faure Gnassingbé	1								1	0	1		Union for the Republic (Togo) - Wikipedia
Main opposition	Union of Forces for Change	Jean-Pierre Fabre	1								1	0	1		Union of Forces for Change - Wikipedia
TOTAL WEST			31	0		12	0		3	0	46	0	46	0%	
Central African Republic															
Ruling party	United Hearts Movement	Faustin-Archange Touadéra	1								1	0	1		United Hearts Movement - Wikipedia
Main opposition	National Convergence "Kwa Na Kwa"	François Bozizé	1								1	0	1		National Convergence "Kwa Na Kwa" - Wikipedia
Congo															
Ruling party	Congolese Labour Party (Parti Congolais du Travail) PCT	Denis Sassou Nguesso	1		Pierre Ngolo	1					2	0	2		
Main opposition	Pan-African Union for Social Democracy	Pascal Lissouba	1		Pascal Tsaty Mabiala	1					2	0	2		
Cameroon															
Ruling party	Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM)	Paul BIYA	1		Jean Nkuete	1					2	0	2		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cameroon_People%27s_Democratic_Movement
Main opposition	National Union for Democracy and Progress	Bello Bouba Maigari	1								1	0	1		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_political_parties_in_Cameroon
Chad															
Ruling party	Transitional Military Council (CMT)	General Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno	1								1	0	1		After President Déby's death in April 2021, a Transitional Military Council (CMT) took over headed by his son, General Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno, also known as Mahamat Kaka.
Main opposition	Rally for Democracy and Progress	Mahamat Allahou Taher	1								1	0	1		
Equatorial Guinea															
Ruling party	Democratic Party for Equatorial Guinea (PDGE)	Teodoro OBIANG Nguema Mbasogo	1		Jerónimo Osa Osa Ecoro	1					2	0	2		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rally_for_Democracy_and_Progress_(Chad)
Main opposition	Convergence Party for Social Democracy (CPDS)	Santiago Obama Ndong	1		Andres Esono Ondo	1					2	0	2		Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea - Wikipedia Convergence for Social Democracy (Equatorial Guinea) - Wikipedia
Sao Tome and Principe															
Ruling party	Independent Democratic Action (ADI)	Patrice Trovoanda	1								1	0	1		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Independent_Democratic_Action
Main opposition	Movement for the Liberation of São Tomé and Príncipe/Social Democratic Party	Jorge Bom Jesus	1								1	0	1		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Movement_for_the_Liberation_of_S%C3%A3o_Tom%C3%A9_and_Pr%C3%ADncipe_%E2%80%93_Social_Democratic_Party
Gabon															
Ruling party	Gabonese Democratic Party (PDG)	Ali Bongo Ondimba	1								1	0	1		Gabonese Democratic Party - Wikipedia
Main opposition	The Democrats(LD)	Guy Nzouba Ndama	1								1	0	1		The Democrats (Gabon) - Wikipedia
TOTAL CENTRAL			14	0		5	0		0	0	19	0	19	0%	

Country	Party	Leader	M	F	Secretary General	M	F	DSG	M	F	Total M	Total F	Overall total	% Women	Source
Algeria															
Ruling party	National Liberation Front (NLF)	Abou El Fadhel Baadji	1		Abdelkrim Benmbarek	1					2	0	2		National Liberation Front (Algeria) - Wikipedia
Main opposition	Movement of Society for Peace (MSP)	Abderrazak Makri	1		Harakat El-Binaa El-Watani	1					2	0	2		Movement of Society for Peace - Wikipedia
Egypt															
Ruling party	Nation's Future Party (Hizb Mostakbal Watan)	Abdel-Wahab Abdel-Razeq	1		Hossam El-Khouly	1		Ashraf Rashad	1		3	0	3		Nation's Future Party - Wikipedia
Main opposition	Republican People's Party	Hazem omar	1								1	0	1		Republican People's Party (Egypt) - Wikipedia
Mauritania															
Ruling party	El Insaf	Mohamed Melainine Ould Eyih	1								1	0	1		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Equity_Party_(Mauritania)
Main opposition	National Rally for Reform and Development (Tewassoul)	Hamadi Ould Sidi Mokhtar	1								1	0	1		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Rally_for_Reform_and_Development
Morocco															
Ruling party	National Rally of Independents (RNI)	Aziz Akhannouch	1		Abdelouahed Khouja	1					2	0	2		National Rally of Independents - Wikipedia
Main opposition	Authenticity and Modernity Party (Parti Authenticité et Modernité, PAM)	Fouad Ali El Himma	1		Abdellatif Ouahbi	1					2	0	2		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Authenticity_and_Modernity_Party
Tunisia															
Ruling party	Ennahda Movement	Rached Ghannouchi	1		Zied Ladhari	1					2	0	2		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ennahda
Main opposition	Heart of Tunisia	Nabil Karoui	1								1	0	1		
Libya															
Ruling party											0	0	0		
Main opposition											0				
TOTAL NORTH			10	0		6	0		1	0	17	0	17	0%	
TOTAL AFRICA											179	18	192	9%	

ANNEX 8 Electoral management bodies (EMB) in Africa

Region	Country	Women	Men	Total	% Women in Electoral Bodies	Source
Central	Cameroon	5	13	18	28%	https://www.elecam.cm/?q=fr/content/les-membres-du-conseil-%C3%A9lectoral
Central	Central African Republic	4	7	11	36%	Central African Republic | Explore Where We Work | EISA
Central	Chad	3	28	31	10%	https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/country?country=39&database_theme=308
Central	Congo Brazzaville					No data
Central	Equatorial Guinea					No data
Central	Gabon	2	5	7	29%	https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/country?country=39&database_theme=308
Central	Sao Tome and Principe	3	5	8	38%	https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/country?country=195&database_theme=308
TOTAL CENTRAL		**17**	**58**	**75**	**23%**	
East	Burundi	2	5	7	29%	https://www.ceniburundi.bi/historique-de-la-ceni/
East	Kenya	3	4	7	43%	https://www.ec.or.ug/commissioners
East	Rwanda	6	1	7	86%	https://minaloc.prod.risa.rw/news-detail/the-new-chairperson-of-national-electoral-commission-takes-over-responsibilities
East	South Sudan	2	7	9	22%	https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/country?country=211&database_theme=308
East	Tanzania	4	3	7	57%	https://www.nec.go.tz/board
East	Uganda	3	4	7	43%	https://www.ec.or.ug/commissioners
TOTAL EAST		**20**	**24**	**44**	**45%**	
Horn	Djibouti	5	13	18	28%	https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/country?country=195&database_theme=308
Horn	Eritrea					No data
Horn	Ethiopia	2	3	5	40%	https://nebe.org.et/en/board-members
Horn	Somalia	2	5	7	29%	https://niec.so/en/about/commissioners
TOTAL HORN		**9**	**21**	**30**	**30%**	
North	Algeria	2	18	20	10%	https://ina-elections.dz/%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a3%d8%b9%d8%b6%d8%a7%d8%a1/
North	Egypt	0	9	9	0%	Composition of the current Board of Directors (elections.eg)
North	Libya	0	4	4	0%	Council - High National Elections Commission (hnec.ly)
North	Mauritania	3	9	12	25%	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Independent_Election_Commission
North	Morocco					No data
North	Sudan	3	6	9	33%	https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/country?country=212&database_theme=308
North	Tunisia	1	6	7	14%	https://www.isie.tn/isie/membres-isie/
TOTAL NORTH		**9**	**52**	**61**	**15%**	
Southern	Angola	4	13	17	31%	CNE - Composition
Southern	Botswana	3	3	6	50%	https://www.iec.gov.bw/index.php/about.html

Region	Country	Women	Men	Total	% Women in Electoral Bodies	Source
Southern	Comoros	6	7	13	46%	https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/country?country=50&database_theme=308
Southern	DRC	5	10	15	33%	https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/country?country=52&database_theme=308
Southern	Eswatini	1	4	5	20%	Organogram – eswatinielections
Southern	Lesotho	1	2	3	33%	
Southern	Malawi	2	5	7	29%	https://mec.org.mw/commissioners/
Southern	Madagascar	1	8	9	11%	https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/country?country=133&database_theme=308
Southern	Mauritius	6	1	7	86%	https://electoral.govmu.org/oec/
Southern	Mozambique	4	11	15	27%	http://www.stae.org.mz/
Southern	Namibia	2	3	5	40%	https://www.ecn.na/commissioners/
Southern	South Africa	3	2	5	60%	https://www.elections.org.za/pw/About-Us/Organogram
Southern	Seychelles	3	4	7	43%	https://www.ecs.sc/index.php/about-us/commissioners-staff
Southern	Tanzania	4	3	7	57%	https://www.nec.go.tz/board
Southern	Zambia	2	7	9	22%	https://www.elections.org.zm/?page_id=2368
Southern	Zimbabwe	5	4	9	56%	https://www.zec.org.zw/category/commissioners/
TOTAL SOUTHERN		**52**	**87**	**139**	**37%**	
West	Benin	4	7	11	36%	https://www.cne.pt/content/membros-da-16a-comissao
West	Burkina Faso	3	12	15	20%	https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/country?country=212&database_theme=308
West	Cabo Verde	1	5	6	17%	https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/country?country=195&database_theme=308
West	Côte d'Ivoire	1	7	8	13%	https://www.cei.ci/le-bureau/
West	Gambia (The)	1	4	5	20%	Independent Electoral Commission – IEC Gambia » Commissioners
West	Ghana	4	3	7	57%	https://ec.gov.gh/about-us/
West	Guinea	4	13	17	24%	
West	Guinea-Bissau	1	3	4	25%	http://www.cne.gw/comissao
West	Liberia	2	3	5	40%	https://www.necliberia.org/page_info.php?&e49c7921cb156014099756961908d03f94e3584c=MjIy
West	Mali	4	11	15	27%	Author of case study
West	Niger	1	4	5	20%	https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/country?country=212&database_theme=308
West	Nigeria	2	9	11	18%	https://www.inecnigeria.org/?page_id=930
West	Senegal	4	8	12	33%	https://www.cena.sn/
West	Sierra Leone	3	3	6	50%	https://ec.gov.sl/about-2/#our-commissioners
West	Togo	2	15	17	12%	https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/country?country=212&database_theme=308
TOTAL WEST		**37**	**107**	**135**	**29%**	
TOTAL AFRICA		**140**	**346**	**486**	**29%**	

ANNEX 9 Speakers of parliament in Africa

Country	Region	Chamber	Structure of parliament	M	W	Total	% W	Name
Angola	Southern	National Assembly	Unicameral		1	1		Carolina Cerqueira
Botswana	Southern	National Assembly	Unicameral	1		1		Phandu Tombola Chaha Skelemani
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Southern	Senate	Bicameral	1		1		Modeste Bahati Lukwebo
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Southern	National Assembly	Bicameral	1		1		Christophe Mboso N'kodia Pwanga
Comoros	Southern	Assembly of the Union	Unicameral	1		1		Abdou Moustadroine
Eswatini	Southern	Senate	Bicameral		1	1		Lindiwe Dlamini
Eswatini	Southern	House of Assembly	Bicameral	1		1		Jabulani Clement Mabuza
Lesotho	Southern	National Assembly	Bicameral	1		1		Tlohang Sekhamane
Lesotho	Southern	Senate	Bicameral		1	1		Mamonaheng Mokitimi
Madagascar	Southern	National Assembly	Bicameral		1	1		Christine Razanamahasoa
Madagascar	Southern	Senate	Bicameral	1		1		Herimanana Razafimahefa
Malawi	Southern	National Assembly	Unicameral		1	1		Catherine Gotani Hara
Mauritius	Southern	National Assembly	Unicameral	1		1		Sooroojdev Phokeer
Mozambique	Southern	Assembly of the Republic	Unicameral		1	1		Esperança Laurinda Francisco Nhiuane Bias
Namibia	Southern	National Council	Bicameral	1		1		Lukas Sinimbo Muha
Namibia	Southern	National Assembly	Bicameral	1		1		Peter Katjavivi
Seychelles	Southern	National Assembly	Unicameral	1		1		Roger Mancienne
South Africa	Southern	National Assembly	Bicameral		1	1		Nosiviwe Noluthando Mapisa-Nqakula
South Africa	Southern	National Council of Provinces	Bicameral	1		1		Amos Masondo
Republic of Tanzania	Southern	National Assembly	Unicameral		1	1		Tulia Ackson
Zambia	Southern	National Assembly	Unicameral		1	1		Nelly Butete Kashumba Mutti
Zimbabwe	Southern	National Assembly	Bicameral	1		1		J.F.N. Mudenda
Zimbabwe	Southern	Senate	Bicameral		1	1		Mabel M. Chinomona
TOTAL SOUTHERN				**13**	**10**	**23**	**43%**	
Burundi	East	National Assembly	Bicameral	1		1		Emmanuel Sinzohagera
Kenya	East	National Assembly	Bicameral	1		1		Moses Masika Wetang'ula
Kenya	East	Senate	Bicameral	1		1		Amason Jeffah Kingi
South Sudan	East	Transitional National Legislative Assy	Bicameral		1	1		Jemma Nunu Kumba
South Sudan	East	Council of States	Bicameral	1		1		Deng Deng Akon
Uganda	East	Parliament	Unicameral		1	1		Anita Annet Among
Tanzania	East	National Assembly	Unicameral		1	1		Tulia Ackson
Rwanda	East	Chamber of Deputies	Bicameral		1	1		Donatille Mukabalisa
Rwanda	East	Senate	Bicameral	1		1		François-Xavier Kalinda
TOTAL EAST				**5**	**4**	**9**	**44%**	

Country	Region	Chamber	Structure of parliament	M	W	Total	% W	Name
Central African Republic	Central	National Assembly	Unicameral	1		1		Simplice Mathieu Sarandji
Congo	Central	National Assembly	Bicameral	1		1		Isidore Mvouba
Congo	Central	Senate	Bicameral	1		1		Pierre Ngolo
Cameroon	Central	National Assembly	Bicameral	1		1		Djibril Cavayé Yeguie
Cameroon	Central	Senate	Bicameral	1		1		Marcel Niat Njifenji
Chad	Central	Transitional National Council	Unicameral	1		1		Haroun Kabadi
Equatorial Guinea	Central	Chamber of Deputies	Bicameral	1		1		Gaudencio Mohaba Messu
Equatorial Guinea	Central	Senate	Bicameral		1	1		María Teresa Efua Asangono
Sao Tome and Principe	Central	National Assembly	Unicameral		1	1		Celmira Sacramento
Gabon	Central	Transitional National Assembly	Bicameral	1		1		Jean-François Ndongou
Gabon	Central	Transitional Senate	Bicameral		1	1		Paulette Missambo
TOTAL CENTRAL				**8**	**3**	**11**	**27%**	
Benin	West	National Assembly	Unicameral	1		1		Gbèhounou Louis Vlavonou
Burkina Faso	West	Transitional Legislative Assembly	Unicameral	1		1		Ousmane Bougouma
Cabo Verde	West	National Assembly	Unicameral	1		1		Austelino Tavares Correia
Côte d'Ivoire	West	National Assembly	Bicameral	1		1		Adama Bictogo
Côte d'Ivoire	West	Senate	Bicameral		1	1		Kandia Kamissoko Camara
Gambia (The)	West	National Assembly	Unicameral	1		1		Fabakary Tombong Jatta
Ghana	West	Parliament	Unicameral	1		1		Alban Sumana Kingsford Bagbin
Guinea	West	National Transitional Counicil	Unicameral	1		1		Dansa Kourouma
Guinea-Bissau	West	Peoples National Assembly	Unicameral	1		1		Domingos Simões Pereira
Liberia	West	House of Peoples Representatives	Bicameral	1		1		Bhofal Chambers
Liberia	West	The Liberian Senate	Bicameral		1	1		Jewel Howard Taylor
Liberia	West	The Liberian Senate	Bicameral	1		1		Albert Tugbe Chie
Mali	West	Transional National Council	Unicameral	1		1		Malick Diaw
Niger	West	National Assembly	Unicameral	1		1		Seyni Oumarou
Nigeria	West	House of Representatives	Bicameral	1		1		Tajudeen Abbas
Nigeria	West	Senate	Bicameral	1		1		Godswill Akpabio
Senegal	West	National Assembly	Unicameral	1		1		Amadou Mame Diop
Sierra Leone	West	Parliament	Unicameral	1		1		Abass Chernor Bundu
Togo	West	National Assembly	Unicameral		1	1		Yawa Djigbodi Tsegan
TOTAL WEST				**16**	**3**	**19**	**16%**	
Algeria	North	National Peoples Assembly	Bicameral	1		1		Brahim Boughali
Algeria	North	Council of Nation	Bicameral	1		1		Salah Goudjil

Country	Region	Chamber	Structure of parliament	M	W	Total	% W	Name
Egypt	North	House of Representatives	Bicameral	1		1		Hanafy Gibaly
Egypt	North	Senate	Bicameral	1		1		Abdel Wahab Abdel Razeq
Mauritania	North	National Assembly	Unicameral	1		1		Mohamed Bamba Ould Meguett
Morocco	North	House of Representatives	Bicameral	1		1		Rachid Talbi El Alami
Morocco	North	House of Councillors	Bicameral	1		1		Naam Miyara
Tunisia	North	Assembly of Peoples Representatives	Unicameral	1		1		Brahim Bouderbala
Libya	North	House of Representatives	Unicameral	1		1		Aguila Salah Issa
TOTAL NORTH				**9**	**0**	**9**	**0%**	
Djibouti	Horn	National Assembly	Unicameral	1		1		Dileita Mohamed Dileita
Eritrea	Horn	National Assembly	Unicameral	1		1		Isaias Afwerki
Ethiopia	Horn	House of Peoples Representatives	Bicameral	1		1		Tagesse Chaffo
Ethiopia	Horn	House of the Federation	Bicameral	1		1		Agegnehu Teshager
Somalia	Horn	House of the People	Bicameral	1		1		Sheikh Adan Mohamed Nur (Madobe)
Somalia	Horn	Upper House	Bicameral	1		1		Abdi Hashi Abdullahi
Sudan	Horn	National Assembly (Suspended)	N/A					
Sudan	Horn	Council of States (Suspended)	N/A					
TOTAL HORN				**6**	**0**	**6**	**0%**	
TOTAL AFRICA				**57**	**19**	**76**	**25%**	

Source: IPU and parliament websites. https://data.ipu.org/speakers

ANNEX 10 Mayors of capital cities in Africa

Country	Capital city	Mayor	M	W	Total	% W	Source
Central African Republic	Bangui	Mr. Émile Gros Raymond Nakombo	1		1		https://en.db-city.com/Central-African-Republic--Bangui--Bangui
Congo	Brazzaville	Dieudonné Bantsimba	1		1		https://www.uclga.org/news/dieudonne-bantsimba-on-all-fronts/
Cameroon	Yaoundé	Bala Augustin	1		1		https://www.fast-trackcities.org/mayor-office/yaound%C3%A9
Chad	N'Djamena	Ali Haroun	1		1		https://en.db-city.com/Chad--N'Djamena--N'Djamena
Equatorial Guinea	Malabo	Maria Coloma Edjang Bengono		1	1		https://www.guineaecuatorialpress.com/noticia.php?id=10724&lang=en
Sao Tome and Principe	São Tomé	José Maria Amado da Fonseca	1		1		https://www.durban2019.uclg.org/en/uclg-leadership/jose-maria-amado-da-fonseca
Gabon	Libreville	Christine Mba Ndutume		1	1		https://www.google.com/search?q=Mayor+of++Libreville+in+Gabon&sca
TOTAL CENTRAL			**5**	**2**	**7**	**29%**	
Djibouti	Jībūtī / Djibouti	Said Daoud Mohamed	1		1		https://www.meridiano42.it/en/2022/04/25/said-daoud-mohamed-is-the-new-mayor-of-djibouti/
Eritrea	Asmara		1		1		
Ethiopia	Addis Ababa	Adanech Abebe		1	1		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adanech_Abebe
Somalia	Mogadishu	Yusuf Hussein Jimaale	1		1		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yusuf_Hussein_Jimaale
Sudan	Juba	Flora Gabriel		1	1		https://www.eyeradio.org/adil-appoints-flora-gabriel-as-juba-mayor-in-major-reshuffle/
TOTAL HORN			**3**	**2**	**5**	**40%**	
Benin	Porto-Novo	Charlemagne Yankouty	1		1		https://observatoirevivreensemble.org/en/charlemagne-yankouty
Burkina Faso	Ouagadougou	Armand Béouindé	1		1		https://www.africities.org/speakers/armand-beouinde/
Cabo Verde	Praia	Francisco Carvalho	1		1		https://voyagesafriq.com/2023/05/03/want-make-praia-cabo-verdes-melting-pot-tourism-culture-mayor/
Côte d'Ivoire	Abidjan	Robert Beugré Mambé	1		1		https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Abidjan
Gambia (The)	Banjul	Rohey Malick Lowe		1	1		https://telavivcitiessummit.com/speakers/rohey-malick-lowe/
Ghana	Accra	Elizabeth Naa Kwatsoe Tawiah Sackey		1	1		https://ama.gov.gh/themayor.php
Guinea	Conakry	M'Mahawa Sylla		1	1		https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conakry#Liste_des_maires_et_autres_autorit.C3.A9s_locales.5B1.5D
Guinea-Bissau	Bissau	Luis Ntachama					https://www.africanews.com/2022/06/22/bissau-mayor-suspended-by-government-for-alleged-corruption//
Liberia	Monrovia	Jefferson T. Koijee	1		1		https://www.esi-africa.com/tag/mayor-jefferson-t-koijee/

Country	Capital city	Mayor	M	W	Total	% W	Source
Mali	Bamako	Adama Sangaré	1		1		https://www.fast-trackcities.org/mayor-office/bamako#:~:text=Bamako%20HIV%20Care%20Continuum%20(2016)%20PLHIV%3A%2014%2C300&text=The%20Mayor%20of%20the%20District,April%202018%20in%20
Niger	Niamey	Assane Seydou Sanda	1		1		https://www.citiesabc.com/city/niamey/
Nigeria	Abuja	Christopher Zakka Maikalangu	1		1		
Senegal	Dakar	Barthélémy Dias		1	1		https://www.google.com/search?sca_esv=592064831&rlz=1C1CHZN_enLS1085LS1085&q=Barth%C3%A9l%C3%A9my+Dias&stick=H4sIAAAAAAAAAO
							NgVuLVT9c3NCzOyys2KSlMesRowS3w8sc9YSn9SWtOXmPU5OIKzsgvd80
Sierra Leone	Freetown	Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr		1	1		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yvonne_Aki-Sawyerr
Togo	Lome	Yawa Kouigan		1	1		https://www.uclga.org/news/yawa-kouigan-the-one-that-sets-the-course-to-meet-the-challenge-of-decentralization/
TOTAL WEST			**8**	**6**	**14**	**40%**	
Angola	Luanda	Maria Antonia Nelumba		1	1		https://energycities.org/member-cities/luanda-angola/city-luanda-angola
Botswana	Gaborone	Austin Abraham	1		1		https://thevoicebw.com/meet-gaborones-new-mayor/
Comoros	Moroni	Paul Bailey	1				https://moronicity.org/new-mayor-councilmembers-take-office/
Eswatini	Mbabane	Vusi Tembe	1		1		http://new.observer.org.sz/details.php?id=20875
DRC	Kinshasa	Kapampa Kamwanya	1		1		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_provincial_governors_of_the_Democratic_Republic_of_the_Congo
Lesotho	Maseru	Motlalepula Sepipi	1		1		
Madagascar	Antananarivo	Naina Andriantsitohaina	1		1		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mayor_of_Antananarivo
Malawi	Lilongwe	Richard Banda	1		1		https://lcc.mw/
Mauritius	Port Louis	Mamode Issop NUJURAULLY	1		1		https://www.mccpl.mu/ctc_lm.html
Mozambique	Maputo	Eneas Comiche,	1		1		https://www.fast-trackcities.org/mayor-office/maputo
Namibia	Windhoek	Queen Kamati		1	1		https://www.fast-trackcities.org/mayor-office/windhoek
Seychelles	Victoria	Lydia Charlie		1	1		https://mayorsofficeseychelles.com/
South Africa	Tshwane	Cilliers Brink	1		1		https://www.gov.za/about-government/contact-directory/gp-municipalities/city-tshwane-metropolitan-municipality
Tanzania	Dar Es Salaam	Isaya Mwita Charles	1		1		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mayor_of_Dar_es_Salaam
Zambia	Lusaka	Chilando Chitangala	1		1		https://fast-trackcities.org/mayor-office/lusaka
Zimbabwe	Harare	Ian Mokone	1		1		https://www.herald.co.zw/ian-makone-harares-new-mayor/
TOTAL SOUTHERN			**13**	**3**	**16**	**19%**	
Burundi	Bujumbura	Jimmy HATUNGIMANA	1		1		https://iclei.org/network_city/bujumbura-city-council/
Kenya	Nairobi	Mike Sonko	1		1		http://www.citymayors.com/statistics/capital-cities-mayors-countries.html
South Sudan	Khartoum	Mortada Abdullah Warraq	1		1		http://www.citymayors.com/statistics/capital-cities-mayors-countries.html

Country	Capital city	Mayor	M	W	Total	% W	Source
Uganda	Kampala	Erias Lukwago	1		1		http://www.citymayors.com/statistics/capital-cities-mayors-countries.html
Tanzania	Dar Es Salaam	Isaya Mwita Charles	1		1		https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaya_Mwita_Charles
Rwanda	Kigali	DUSENGIYUMVA Samuel	1		1		https://www.kigalicity.gov.rw/about/executive-committee
TOTAL EAST			**6**	**0**	**6**	**0%**	
Algeria	Algiers	Abdelkhalek Sayouda	1		1		http://www.citymayors.com/statistics/capital-cities-mayors-countries.html
Egypt	Cairo	Khaled Aal Abdel Hafez	1		1		http://www.citymayors.com/statistics/capital-cities-mayors-countries.html
Mauritania	Nouakchott	Fatimetou Abdel Malick	1		1		https://www.uclga.org/news/obituary-dead-of-ahmed-ould-hamza-former-mayor-of-nouakchott/
Morocco	Rabat	Fatiha El Moudni		1	1		https://globalparliamentofmayors.org/the-gpm-welcomes-mayor-asma-aglalo-from-rabat/
Tunisia	Tunis	Souad Abderrahim		1	1		http://www.citymayors.com/statistics/capital-cities-mayors-countries.html
Libya	Tripoli	Ibrahim Al-Khalifi	1		1		https://libyaobserver.ly/inbrief/ibrahim-al-khalifi-elected-mayor-tripoli-center
TOTAL NORTH			**4**	**2**	**6**	**33%**	
TOTAL AFRICA			**37**	**15**	**52**	**29%**	

ANNEX 11 Women in executive leadership

Country	President	M	F	Vice President	M	F	Prime Minister	M	F	Deputy Prime Minister	M	F	Total M	Total W	Overall total	% Women	Source
Central African Republic	Faustin-A Toudera	1					Félix Moloua	1									https://www.google.com/search?q=President+of+Central+African
Congo	Denis Sassou-Nguesso	1					Anatole Collinet Makosso	1									List of state leaders in 2019 - Wikipedia
Cameroon	Paul Biya	1					Joseph Dion Ngute	1									https://www.spm.gov.cm/site/?q=en/content/prime-minister
Chad	General Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno	1					N/A										https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saleh_Kebzabo
Equatorial Guinea	Teodoro Obiang N Mbasogo	1					Manuela Roka Botey		1	Clement Engonga Nguema Onguene	1						https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Equatorial_Guinea_Council_of_
										Angel Meisie Mibuy	1						Ministers
										Alfonso Nsue Mokuy	1						
Sao Tome and Principe	Carlos Vila Nova	1					Patrice Trovoada	1			1						https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_prime_ministers_of_S%C3% https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/gabon-appoints-vice-president
Gabon	Ali Bongo Ondimba	1		Rose Christiane Raponda		1	Alain-Claude Billie	1									
TOTAL CENTRAL		**7**	**0**		**0**	**1**		**5**	**1**		**4**	**0**	**16**	**2**	**18**	**11%**	
Burundi	Evariste Ndayishimiye	1		Prosper Bazombanza	1		Gervais Ndirakobuca	1									List of state leaders in 2019 - Wikipedia
Kenya	William Ruto	1		Rigathi Gachagua	1												https://www.google.com/search?q=president+of+Kenya
Rwanda	Paul Kagame	1		N/A			Édouard Ngirente	1									List of state leaders in 2019 - Wikipedia
Tanzania	Samia Suluhu Hassan		1	Phillip Isdor Mpango	1		Kassim Majaliwa Majaliwa	1		Doto Biteko	1						https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabinet_of_Tanzania
South Sudan	Salva Kiir Mayardit	1		Rebecca Nyandeng De Mabior		1				Rebecca Kadaga		1					List of state leaders in 2019 - Wikipedia
										Moses Ali	1						List of state leaders in 2019 - Wikipedia
Uganda	Yoweri Museveni	1					Robinah Nabbanja		1	Lukia Isanga Nakadama		1					List of state leaders in 2019 - Wikipedia
TOTAL EAST		**5**	**1**		**3**	**1**		**3**	**1**		**2**	**2**	**13**	**5**	**18**	**28%**	
Djibouti	Ismail Omar Guelleh	1					Abdoulkader Kamil Mohamed	1									List of state leaders in 2019 - Wikipedia
Eritrea	Isaias Afwerki	1		N/A													List of state leaders in 2019 - Wikipedia
Ethiopia	Sahle-Work Zewde		1				Abiy Ahmed	1		Demeke M Hassen	1						https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council_of_Ministers_(Ethiopia)
Somalia	Hassan Sheikh Mohamud	1			1		Hamza Abdi Barre	1		Salah Jama	1						https://www.google.com/search?q=president+of+Somalia
Puntland Somalia	Said Abdullahi Dani	1		Ahmed Elmi Osman	1												https://www.ftlsomalia.com/puntland-leader-opposes-elimination-of-prime-minister-in-somalias-new-political-system/
TOTAL HORN		**4**	**1**		**2**	**0**		**3**	**0**		**2**	**0**	**11**	**1**	**12**	**8%**	
Angola	João Lourenço	1		Esperança da Costa		1											https://www.angolaembassy.org.rs/government-of-angola/
Botswana	Dr.Mokgweetsi Masisi	1		Slumber Tsogwane	1												https://botswana-brussels.com/botswana-cabinet-list-april-
Comoros	Azali Assoumani	1															https://am.afdb.org/en/quotes/azali-assoumani-president- https://presidence.cd/president/le-president
DRC	Félix Tshisekedi	1					Judith Sumonwa Tuluka	1									
Eswatini							Russell Dlamini	1		Hon. Thulisile Dladla		1					https://www.gov.sz/index.php/ministries-departments/the-deputy-prime-minister-s-office
Lesotho							Ntsokoane Samuel Matekane	1		Chief Justice Nthomeng Majara		1					

Country	President	M	F	Vice President	M	F	Prime Minister	M	F	Deputy Prime Minister	M	F	Total M	Total W	Overall total	% Women	Source
Madagascar	Andry Rajoelina	1					Christian Ntsay	1									https://www.malawi.gov.mw/index.php/parliament/cabinets
Malawi	Dr Lazarus Chakwera	1		Dr Saulos Chilima	1												
Mauritius	Pradeep Singh Roopun	1					Pravind Jugnauth	1		Louis Steven OBEEGADOO	1						https://pmo.govmu.org/Pages/My_Cabinet.aspx
										Leela Devi DOOKUN-LUCHOOMUN		1					
										Mohammad Anwar HUSNOO	1						
Mozambique	Filipe Jacinto Nyusi	1					Adriano Maleiane	1									https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabinet_of_Mozambique
Namibia	Nangolo Mbumba	1		Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah	1		Saara Kuugongelwa		1	John Mutorwa		1					
Seychelles	Wavel Ramkalawan	1		Ahamed Afif	1												https://www.statehouse.gov.sc/the-cabinet
South Africa	Cyril Ramaphosa	1	1	Pau Mashatile	1												
Tanzania	Samia Suluhu Hassan			Phillip Isdor Mpango	1		Kassim Majaliwa Majaliwa	1		Doto Biteko	1						https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabinet_of_Tanzania
Zambia	Hakainde Hichilema	1		Mutale Nalumango		1											
Zimbabwe	Emmerson Mnangagwa	1		Constantino Chiwenga	1												ZIM has 2 vice Presidents
				Kembo Mohadi	1												
TOTAL SOUTHERN		13	1		8	2		7	1		3	4	31	8	39	21%	
Benin	Patrice Talon	1															https://www.google.com/search?q=President+of+Benin
Burkina Faso	Captain Ibrahim Traoré	1															https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_heads_of_state_of_Burkina_Faso
Cabo Verde	José Maria Neves	1					Ulisses Correia e Silva	1									https://www.google.com/search?q=prime+minister+of+cabo+verde
Côte d'Ivoire	Robert Beugré Mambé	1		Tiemoko Meyliet Koné	1												https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_heads_of_government_of_Ivory_Coast
Gambia (The)	Adama Barrow	1		Muhammad B.S Jallow	1												https://op.gov.gm/cabinet
Ghana	Nana A D Akufo-Addo	1		Mahamudu Bawumia	1												List of state leaders in 2019 - Wikipedia
Guinea	Mamady Doumbouya	1															https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_presidents_of_Guinea
Guinea-Bissau	Umaro Sissoco Embaló	1															https://www.google.com/search?q=president+of+guinea-bissau
Liberia	Joseph Boakai	1		Jeremiah Kpan Koung	1												https://www.emansion.gov.lr/general/biography-president-nyuma-boakai-sr
Mali	Assimi Goïta	1					Choguel Kokalla Maïga	1									https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_heads_of_state_of_Mali
Niger	Mohamed Bazoum	1					Ali Lamine Zeine	1									https://www.google.com/search?q=prime+minister+of+niger
Nigeria	Bola Tinubu	1		Kashim Shettima	1												https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabinet_of_Bola_Tinubu
Senegal	Macky Sall	1					Amadou Ba	1									https://www.aljazeera.com/news/liveblog/2023/3/1/nigeria-election
Sierra Leone	Julius Maada Bio	1		Mohamed Juldeh Jalloh	1												https://www.sierraleoneembassy.brussels/about-sierra-leone
Togo	Faure Gnassingbe	1					Victoire Tomegah Dogbé		1								List of state leaders in 2019 - Wikipedia
TOTAL WEST		15	0		6	0		4	1		0	0	25	1	26	4%	
Algeria	Abdelmadjid Tebboune	1					Nadir Larbaoui	1									List of state leaders in 2019 - Wikipedia
Egypt	H.E. Dr. Mostafa El Madbouli	1					H.E. ElSayed El Qusayer	1									https://www.amcham.org.eg/information-resources/
Mauritania	Mohamed Ould Ghazouani	1					Mohamed Ould Bilal	1									
Morocco	King Mohammed VI	1					Aziz Akhannouch	1									
Tunisia	Kais Saied	1					Ahmed Hachani	1									https://www.google.com/search?q=prime+minister+of+Tunisia
Libya	Mohamed al-Menfi	1					Abdul Hamid Muhammad	1									https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_heads_of_state_of_Libya
TOTAL NORTH		6	0		0	0		6	0		0	0	12	0	12	0%	
TOTAL AFRICA		50	2		18	4		27	4		10	6	105	16	121	13%	

ANNEX 12 Women in cabinet in Africa

Region	Country	Women	Men	Total	% Cabinet	Source
East	Rwanda	14	19	33	42%	https://www.gov.rw/cabinet
East	Burundi	6	9	15	40%	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ndayishimiye_cabinet
Southern	Tanzania	8	18	26	31%	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabinet_of_Tanzania
East	Uganda	10	17	27	37%	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabinet_of_Uganda
East	Kenya	7	17	24	29%	https://www.president.go.ke/cabinet/
TOTAL EAST		**45**	**80**	**125**	**36%**	
Southern	Comoros	1	9	10	10%	https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2021/Women-in-politics-2021-en.pdf
Southern	eSwatini	6	12	18	33%	https://www.gov.sz/index.php/scholarship/65-prime-ministers-office/the-prime-ministers-office/1467-cabinet-ministers
Southern	South Africa	14	16	30	47%	https://www.parliament.gov.za/ministers
Southern	Seychelles	5	8	13	38%	https://www.statehouse.gov.sc/the-cabinet
Southern	Zimbabwe	6	20	26	23%	
Southern	Botswana	4	13	17	24%	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabinet_of_Botswana
Southern	Lesotho	2	16	18	11%	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabinet_of_Lesotho
Southern	Malawi	8	14	22	36%	https://www.malawi.gov.mw/index.php/parliament/cabinets
Southern	Namibia	6	14	20	30%	https://www.facebook.com/namibiansun/photos/a.454441224600217/3023359944374986/?type=3
Southern	Mauritius	3	15	18	17%	https://pmo.govmu.org/Pages/My_Cabinet.aspx
Southern	Mozambique	10	10	20	50%	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabinet_of_Mozambique
Southern	DRC	16	38	54	30%	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adolphe_Muzito_cabinet
Southern	Tanzania	8	18	26	31%	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabinet_of_Tanzania
Southern	Zambia	3	22	25	12%	https://www.parliament.gov.zm/ministers/cabinet
Southern	Angola	9	14	23	18%	https://governo.gov.ao/ministro
Southern	Madagascar	8	21	29	28%	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ntsay_government
TOTAL SOUTHERN		**96**	**255**	**351**	**30%**	
North	Mauritania	5	18	23	22%	https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2021/Women-in-politics-2021-en.pdf
North	Algeria	5	29	34	15%	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabinet_of_Algeria
North	Egypt	6	26	32	19%	https://www.amcham.org.eg/information-resources/trade-resources/doing-business-in-egypt/egypt-cabinet
North	Libya	6	28	34	18%	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabinet_of_Libya
North	Morocco	6	19	25	24%	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabinet_of_Morocco
North	South Sudan	8	27	35	23%	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabinet_of_South_Sudan
North	Sudan	4	16	20	20%	https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2021/Women-in-politics-2021-en.pdf
North	Tunisia	8	15	23	35%	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bouden_Cabinet
TOTAL NORTH		**48**	**178**	**226**	**21%**	

Region	Country	Women	Men	Total	% Cabinet	Source
West	Ghana	5	19	24	21%	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabinet_of_Ghana
West	Sierra Leone	9	21	30	30%	https://www.sierraleoneembassy.brussels/about-sierra-leone/presidential-cabinet/
West	Nigeria	9	38	47	19%	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabinet_of_Bola_Tinubu
West	Liberia	5	14	19	26%	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabinet_of_Liberia
West	Côte d'Ivoire	6	41	47	13%	https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2021/Women-in-politics-2021-en.pdf
West	Guinea-Bissau	8	8	16	50%	https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2021/Women-in-politics-2021-en.pdf
West	Benin	5	19	24	21%	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabinet_of_Benin
West	Burkina Faso	4	21	25	16%	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabinet_of_Burkina_Faso
West	Gambia (The)	3	16	19	16%	https://op.gov.gm/cabinet
West	Mali	4	21	25	16%	https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2021/Women-in-politics-2021-en.pdf
West	Niger	6	32	38	16%	https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2021/Women-in-politics-2021-en.pdf
West	Senegal	7	25	32	22%	https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2021/Women-in-politics-2021-en.pdf
West	Togo	8	23	31	26%	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council_of_Ministers_of_Togo
West	Guinea	10	26	36	28%	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabinet_of_the_First_Republic_of_Guinea
West	Cabo Verde	8	3	11	73%	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabinet_of_Cape_Verde
West	Equatorial Guinea	3	23	26	12%	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Equatorial_Guinea_Council_of_Ministers
TOTAL WEST		**79**	**298**	**377**	**21%**	
Horn	Ethiopia	8	14	22	36%	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council_of_Ministers_(Ethiopia)
Horn	Somalia	3	22	25	12%	https://opm.gov.so/en/cabinet/
Horn	Djibouti	1	14	15	7%	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ministries_of_Djibouti
TOTAL HORN		**12**	**50**	**62**	**19%**	
Central	Central African Republic	6	28	34	18%	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_African_Republic_Council_of_Ministers
Central	Cameroon	7	40	47	15%	https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2021/Women-in-politics-2021-en.pdf
Central	Gabon	6	26	32	19%	https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2021/Women-in-politics-2021-en.pdf
Central	Chad	7	28	35	20%	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Government_of_Chad
Central	Sao Tome and Principe	2	9	11	18%	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council_of_Ministers_of_S%C3%A3o_Tom%C3%A9_and_Pr%C3%ADncipe
TOTAL CENTRAL		**26**	**122**	**148**	**18%**	
TOTAL AFRICA		**298**	**965**	**1263**	**24%**	

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Back by popular demand, the 2024 Women's Political Participation (WPP) Africa Barometer sounds a dire warning but also brings refreshing new insights. With women's representation in parliament up by just one percentage point since the WPP Barometer in 2021, it would take until 2100 - at this rate - for gender parity to be achieved. But 41 African countries now have quotas of one kind or the other at local and or national level. Africa is home to the global leader of WPP (Rwanda, with 61% women in parliament) but also one of the lowest (Nigeria, at 4%). The WPP Barometer coincides with consultations on the CEDAW General Resolution (GR) 40 that breaks new ground by making 50% (not 30%) the aspirational norm for WPP. GR40 also goes "beyond numbers" in a serious way, challenging governments to consider measures they can take to promote diversity, inclusion, climate justice, AI and genuine participation in WPP. For Africa, the future is young, and it is feminine!

