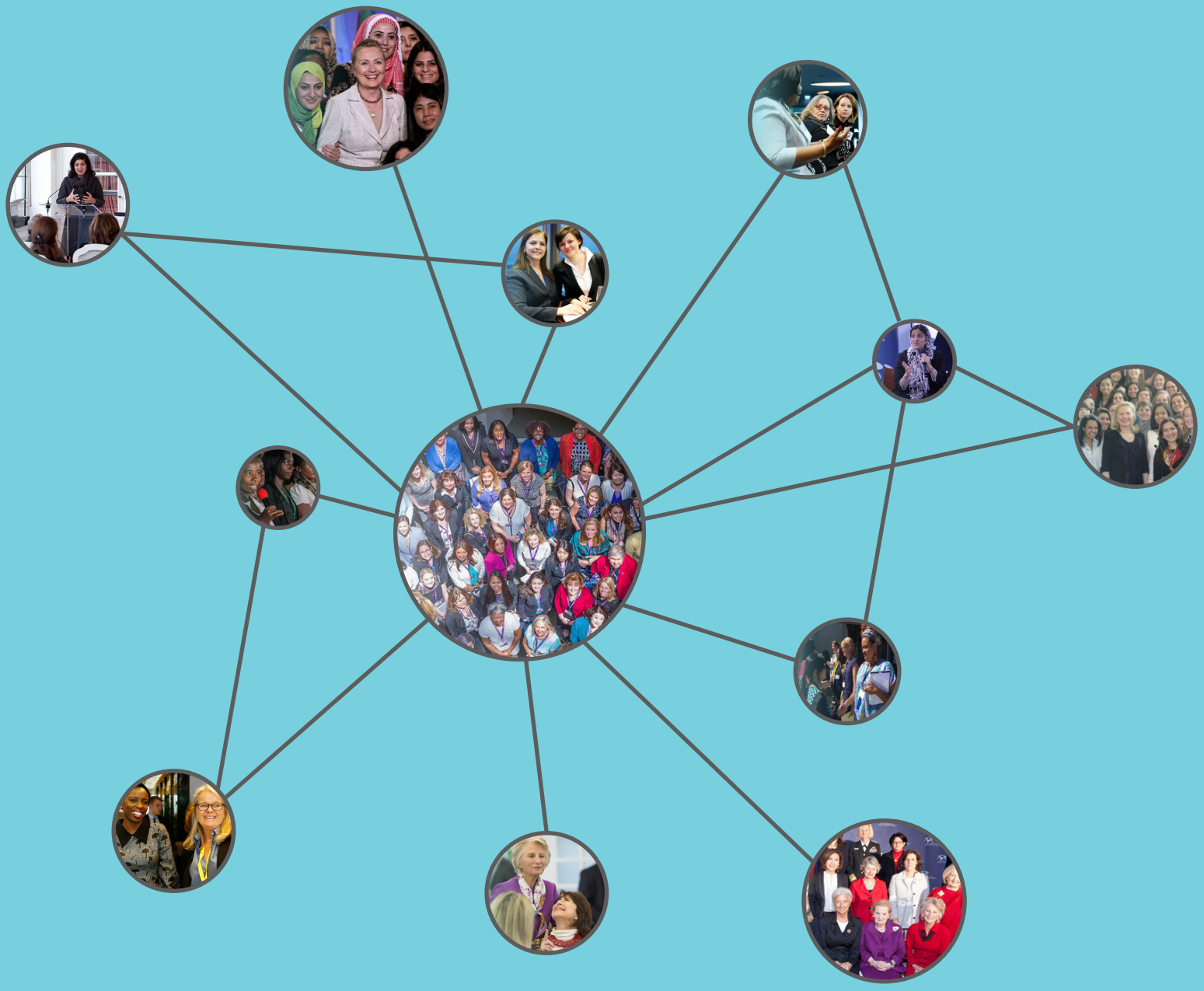
Women's Political Networks

Defining Leadership, Breaking Barriers, and Fostering Change

Lucina Di Meco



WOMEN'S POLITICAL NETWORKS

THE COMPLETE GUIDE

Wilson Center
GLOBAL WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

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About the Women in Public Service Project

The Women in Public Service Project will accelerate global progress towards women's equal participation in policy and political leadership to create more dynamic and inclusive institutions that leverage the full potential of the world's population to change the way global solutions are forged.

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Executive Summary

This paper seeks to understand the impact women's political networks have globally in supporting women overcome the universal cultural and structural barriers they face in engaging in a political career. With best practices from national, regional and international networks, this paper explores the role and modus operandi networks have adopted in supporting women running for national office in congressional or parliamentary elections, enhancing their effectiveness and shaping their leadership once in office. Through desk research of existing literature, interviews with women engaged in national politics and experts in this field, this paper also seeks to raise questions on the role of technology, the media and the correlation between women's participation in networks and their substantive representation.

About the Author

Lucina Di Meco is a Senior Gender Expert with more than 15 years of experience in the design, management and implementation of international development programs addressing gender inequality. Lucina has worked for the United Nations, as well as a wide range of international nonprofits and foundations, defending and promoting women's and girls' rights and empowerment in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

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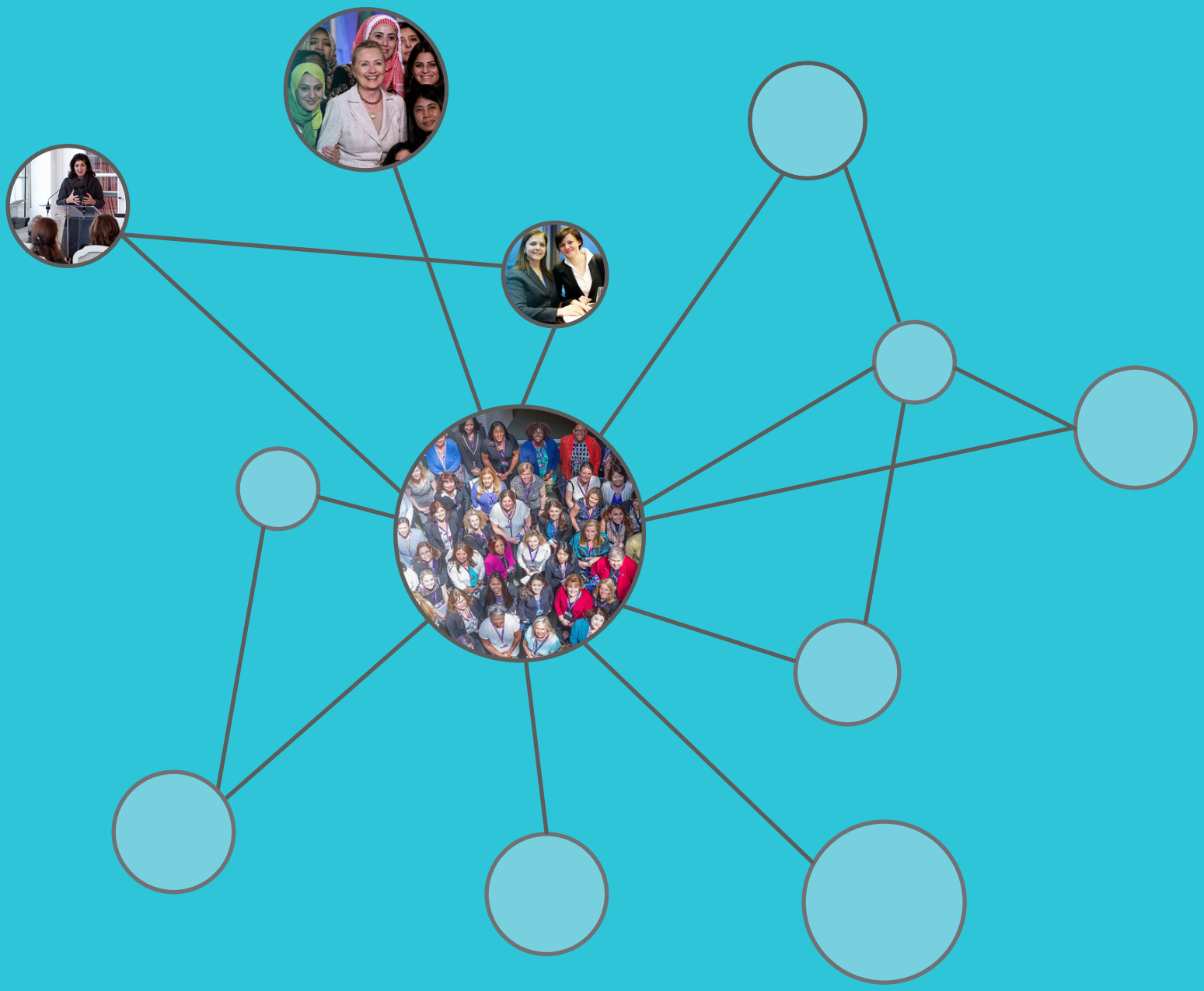

WOMEN'S POLITICAL NETWORKS

BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH

Women's Political Networks: Defining Leadership, Breaking Barriers, and Fostering Change

Background and Research Paper

Annex I: Researching Women's Political Networks: A Resource Guide

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Introduction

In 1995, when the Fourth World Conference on Women was convened by the United Nations (UN) in Beijing, China, the world average of women in parliament was 11.3 percent. The conference represented a turning point for the global women's movement, with the affirmation of "women's rights as human rights" and the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, an agenda for women's empowerment with very specific goals, measures and indicators to increase, among other things, equal participation of men and women in politics.

Since then, progress has been made, as women doubled their representation in parliaments and congresses all over the world (at the end of 2015, women held 22.7 percent of seats). Still, as the Sustainable Development Goals remind us, ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership in the political public life globally is a goal not yet fully achieved. Progress in this respect is uneven: while the Nordic countries achieved on average 41 percent women's representation and Rwanda and Bolivia have a majority of women in their national legislatures, most countries have failed to achieve Beijing's target of 30 percent women's representation at a decision-making level in legislative and governmental bodies. In 2013, in In Asia and the Pacific, where 60% of the world population lives, women hold on average 18.4% of seats in national legislatures.[1] It is also important to note that increased representation does not necessarily mean equal voice and power. Since 1960, only 54 women have become the top political executive in their countries;[2] women hold only about 17 percent of ministerial positions worldwide and even then, they tend to be reliably entrusted with social welfare portfolios, which do not grant power to decide how revenues should be allocated or to take part in national security or foreign policy decisions.[3] Finally, still in 2016, despite the presence of extremely strong female candidates, women have not yet shattered the highest glass ceilings of UN Secretary-General and United States President.

This paper seeks to understand the impact women's political networks have on supporting women running for office, getting women elected, and shaping their policies and effectiveness once in office.

To explore these issues, Part I reviews contemporary thinking on women's descriptive and substantive representation. In Part II, this study defines and describes the different types of women's political networks and explores answers to some key questions that concern their membership, their relationship to the women's movement and their use of technology. Part III analyzes the universal cultural and structural barriers women face in each stage of a political career and provides best practices of how different types of networks, separately or working in cooperation, have supported women in overcoming these barriers. Part IV highlights some of the main opportunities for further investigation from this research. Accompanying this paper are a key bibliography on women in politics and a mapping of national and international actors active in this field (Annex I), and a toolkit with basic guidelines on how to design a network fostering women's political representation.

I. Women in Politics: Considerations on Descriptive and Substantive Representation

The fact that women represent approximately half of the world's population should in and of itself be a strong argument for equal representation. In addition, women's participation in legislatures is proven to have a positive impact on the policy agenda, profound consequences on the way politics is practiced and a beneficial ripple effect on society as a whole.

Globally, women legislators tend to be more sensitive to community needs, as they often prioritize issues like childcare, education and health;[4] women lawmakers are also much more engaged in gender equality matters, including gender-based violence, equal pay and parental leave.[5] While there is no ultimate evidence regarding the differential pervasiveness of corrupt behaviors among men and women in public office, multiple surveys in India have found a correlation between women's increased representation and improved popular perceptions about public office. [6] In the United States, 34 percent of the people interviewed for a recent survey said they perceived women to be more ethical and honest, while only 3 percent said the same about men.[7]

Furthermore, a growing body of research examining leadership styles finds women to be less aggressive, more cooperative and have a more democratic approach in decision making.[8] In October 2013 in the United States, during the federal government "shut down," as the prospect of a historic default loomed close, it was women from the Senate who worked across party lines to put forward a plan that successfully reopened the government. A study from the Canadian public service points at the positive impact that equal representation has on institutional culture, programs and operations at all levels.[9]

Lindy Wafula, member of the Labour Party of Kenya who ran for office in the last two parliamentary elections, sums it up: "I keep asking myself and women and men in Africa: what would Africa be like if we had 52 female presidents? Would we still see war, hunger, poverty? This is the question I ask to women as I encourage them to run for office. Now we only have one female president. What if it was the other way round?"[10]

"Now we only have one female president. What if it was the other way round?"

Lindy Wafula, Member of the Labour Party of Kenya and two-time parliamentary candidate

Another question also remains to be fully addressed. What are the conditions under which nationally-elected female legislators drive these changes? Is the effectiveness dependent upon their sheer numbers, the strength of their internal network, their connections to their constituency, or other factors?

Why Does This Matter? Going Beyond Sheer Numbers

The Beijing Platform for Action asserts that women must achieve at least 30 percent representation in political institutions before their presence can have a transformative effect. This approach, often referred to as the *critical mass theory*, suggests that only when a certain critical mass of women is present in a political institution, will they be strong enough to confront the dominating culture, organize themselves as a group and act on behalf of women's interests.

Since Beijing, 77 countries all over the world have adopted compulsory gender quotas to increase the number of female lawmakers through legislated candidate quotas or reserved seats.[11] Political parties in fifty-four countries have also adopted voluntary quotas, with degrees of effectiveness that generally reflect their overall gender-sensitivity, the presence of women in party elites and, to a lesser extent, their ideological make-up.[12] In countries like Rwanda and Bolivia, where women achieved and surpassed that critical mass almost overnight due to ambitious quota rules, they were able to pass gender equality legislation that would have seemed unrealistic only a few years earlier.

While certainly useful in increasing the *sheer number* of women in office (women's *descriptive representation*), quotas can produce resistance or backlash in some countries.[13] Also, quotas do not necessarily increase the ability (or even willingness) of female legislators to work on gender equality and women's policy concerns (women's

substantive representation). Neither do they remove many of the cultural and structural barriers women face in entering the political life and achieving senior leadership positions.[14]

The critical mass approach has also come under harsh criticism in recent years for a variety of reasons. First, it assumes women legislators should primarily respond to women as their core constituency.[15] According to a 2008 global IPU survey of men and women in parliament, however, while women parliamentarians reported feeling a responsibility to represent the needs and interests of women, they also noted feeling an equal responsibility to represent the needs of men and children.[16] Second, this approach strengthens a gender-stereotypical notion of which matters are of women's interest, often with a strong focus on health and education.[17] Third, the critical mass approach demands for women representatives a higher and different standard of accountability, neither taking into consideration nor challenging the role played by a multiplicity of stakeholders in the legislative process, which includes civil society organizations, political parties and national legislatures. Finally, this approach does not explain the incredible achievements made by women lawmakers who were able have important gender-equality legislation passed despite holding very few seats.

These considerations reflect the need to overcome the critical mass approach in favor of a new narrative for gender parity in the political life: one that assumes equal representation as a precondition for political institutions that are inclusive, able to mirror the realities and respond to the needs of all people in their societies. Worldwide, to a greater or lesser extent, men and women are educated and socialized differently because of their gender identity, which fosters differing life experiences with respect to health, education, social norms, economic constraints and much more. By virtue of those experiences, their perspectives are different albeit often complementary and need to be represented equally in the political life. With this in mind, any government aiming at fully meeting the needs of its population must include an equal number of women legislators to ensure a truly democratic representation.

II. Women's Political Networks: Definition, Role, Membership and Key Relations

A social network can be defined as a set of actors (individuals, groups, organizations, or societies) and the relations between these actors.[18] Building upon this definition, this paper considers women's political networks as the set of critical actors working to increase women's political participation, recruitment and leadership and the relations among them. These actors include the men and women who, through women's civil society organizations, women's political party wings and women's parliamentary bodies (by themselves women's political networks), represent important stakeholders to the legislative process. The paper will analyze the role each one of these stakeholders plays to increase women's representation, both individually and in strategic partnerships sometimes referred to as *women's co-operative constellations*.[19]

Women's networks are not necessarily substitutive, but complementary with respect to policies aimed at increasing women's descriptive representation. In some cases they prepare the ground for them, such as when networks advocate for gender quotas. In other cases, they contribute to eliminating some of the barriers that make those policies necessary in the first place. For example, networks can increase the supply or demand of female candidates by increasing the pool of

"Having been part of a women's network, when you get into office you will have greater political will to advance the position of women."

Dr. Joyce Banda, Former President of Malawi

qualified female political aspirants or convincing political parties and the electorate of the importance of having more women in office. Women's networks also play an essential role in promoting women's substantive representation, by fostering dialogue among critical actors to the legislative process, including women in government, civil society and political party activists.[20] For Joyce Banda,[21] former president of Malawi and women's rights activist, "having been a part of a women's network and having gotten that support from your fellow women, when you get into office you will have greater political will to advance the position of women".

"In order to make significant progress in women's political empowerment, we need a lot more of such networks."

Melanne Verveer, Executive Director, Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security and former U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues

Finally, women's networks shape and inform women's leadership. According to Joanna Barsh, Senior Partner at McKinsey & Company, many very successful women use a "centred leadership", heavily reliant on the power of "connecting", or "identifying who can help you grow, building stronger relationships, and increasing your sense of belonging."[22] Speaking with over seventy female leaders for their book *Fast Forward*, Verveer and Azzarelli also found "connecting with others" to be absolutely essential in unlocking women's potential."[23] It's through these connections that women discover their power and purpose, as well as find the strength and validation to pursue their political vision.

Melanne Verveer, Executive Director of the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security and first ever U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues at the Department of State from 2009 to 2013, explains it this way: "I believe women's networks are invaluable in providing female political aspirants with the tools they need to get elected, despite the many hurdles in their paths. Women's networks also make an enormous difference in enabling female legislators to meet across party lines, share experiences and tools on how to successfully advance gender equality policies. In order to make significant progress on women's political empowerment, we need a lot more of such networks."[24]

Women's Political Networks in Civil Society, Political Parties and National Legislatures: A Multiplicity of Experiences and Goals

Since Beijing, a great number of women's political networks have been created, varying for geographic outreach (national, regional or international) and membership (political party wings, parliamentary committees and caucuses, civil society groups), among other categories. Each of them offers different advantages and services to their members. Asked about the role of different women's networks for her political career, Kah Walla,[25] the first woman to run for president in Cameroon, explained: "Each network provides you with something. Being part of national women's networks you can understand and reach out to women involved at the grassroots level and build your constituency. In a regional network you share experiences and understand how to advance your issues. The international network enables you to take your grassroots work to a global level, find similarities and differences with other activists in

"Being part of national women's networks, you can understand and reach out to women involved at the grassroots level."

Kah Walla, first woman to run for President in Cameroon

the world, learn and build the connections".

Women's civil society organizations and networks play a very important role in raising political awareness, acting as a loudspeaker for issues and grievances and monitoring the government and political parties' commitment to gender equality at the national, regional and international level. For example, in view of the 2014 European Parliament elections, the European Women's Lobby (EWL), the largest umbrella organization of women's associations in the European Union, performed "gender audits" of the manifestos of the main European parties, assessing their commitment to women's rights. Because of the *sheer numbers* of their members, women's organizations, especially if organized through networks, can influence the agenda of political parties interested in reaching out to women as a constituency.

Often referred to as the *gatekeepers* of democracy, political parties are very important actors in the promotion of women's inclusion in democratic institutions. Women who are members of political parties organize themselves through formal or informal groups or networks commonly referred to as "women's wings." These bodies are generally aimed at supporting women who run for office and/or seek senior leadership positions within the party,[26] as well as influence the party's agenda with respect to policies concerning women. While the majority of political parties globally have women's wings,[27] their effectiveness varies widely, from very influential to purely symbolic, often as a reflection of the overall gender-sensitivity of the party and its record of addressing gender issues in governance and electoral processes.[28]

In parliaments, congresses and parliamentary assemblies, women often organize themselves through what the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the international organization of parliaments, describes as *parliamentary committees* or *caucuses*, depending on their structure and functioning. These bodies monitor the implementation of gender mainstreaming across the country's legislative work, practices and, in some instances, budgetary allocations.[29] In some countries, women's parliamentary bodies allow men to serve as honorary members.

While each one of the above mentioned actors (women's civil society organizations, political party wings and parliamentary bodies) independently plays an important role improving women's political representation and leadership, they can achieve their goals most effectively when they strategically work together, even in a challenging political climate. In Germany, Italy and the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, a very small number of female lawmakers managed to advance important laws on gender equality thanks to the strength derived from the connection they had with women's civil society organizations and women's political party wings.[30] In the 1990s in Uruguay, women legislators, despite occupying only 15 percent of seats, succeeded in shaping the legislative agenda in favor of gender equality thanks to the strength of their cross-party parliamentary network *Bancada Femenina* and its connectivity with the Uruguayan women's movement.[31] According to Margarita Percovich, a long-time feminist, politician and one of the founders of the *Bancada Femenina*, this connectivity has been important to "multiply actions and enrich the political agenda."[32]

Speaking about her experience with women's networks, the European parliamentarian from Italy Alessia Mosca[33] says: "I strongly believe in women's networks. I have had the chance to be elected also thanks to the support of many female groups and networks that have believed in me. And I had proof of its strength also a step further the elections, while working on the law that bears my

"I have had the chance to be elected thanks to the support of many female groups and networks that have believed in me."

Alessia Mosca, European Parliamentarian from Italy

name and introduces in Italy gender quotas in the boards of listed companies. If it was not for the help of different professional groups representing professional women's interests, female colleagues in the Parliament that supported us, the media attention mostly started by female journalists, and the awareness raised among all the men counterparts, we would not have achieved that result so quickly. And it would not have had such an impact on the Italian society in general."

Are All-Women Networks Always Best?

All over the world, the majority of networks fostering women's political leadership include mostly, if not only, female members. There is a strong case to be made for female-only networks in some circumstances, for example when it comes to capacity building, mentoring and coaching. Research on girls shows how they perform better in same-sex environments[34] and when the teacher is female.[35] Also, when working in same-sex teams, women and girls boost their self-confidence and draw on each other's strengths.[36] The reason behind this seems to be that people tend to relate and learn from "similar others" and that the social ties that participants forge with one another play a key role in going beyond a simple learning experience to an actual capacity-building experience.[37] Former United States Secretary of State and presidential candidate Hillary R. Clinton echoed this notion when reflecting on her experience at the women's college Wellesley: "In so many ways this all-women college prepared me to compete in the all-boys club of presidential politics."[38]

In some countries more than others, women feel more comfortable in female-only environments, where they report feeling safe, able to share their experiences, ambitions and the challenges they face in accessing the political career without the pressure to perform according to stereotypical gender roles and be judged upon them. Several experts and coordinators of international women's political networks interviewed for this study pointed to the relationships of validation, mentoring, support and solidarity that women develop in such spaces. According to Jessica Huber, Senior Gender Specialist at the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES): "There is a strong demand and enthusiasm for the camaraderie, validation and kinship among women who are in the singular role of being a woman and an election leader."[39] Federiga Bindi, scholar and former government official in Italy who directed a training program for women leaders in international relations in 2013 confirmed: "I am still in touch with many participants: each time they never fail to repeat how that week in Brussels changed their life forever. They gained a self-awareness and self-confidence, in addition to a set of specific skills and tools that have since made the difference in both their professional and personal lives."[40]

"There is a strong demand and enthusiasm for the camraderie, vaidation and kinship among women who are in the singular role of being a woman and an election leader."
Jessica Huber, Senior Gender Specialist, International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)

While female-only political networks are important, female political aspirants, activists and legislators need to complement them with other kinds of political networks that are open to men, as they might have more of the breadth, connectivity and dynamism that are so important in the passage from a simple support network to one that truly helps people advance in their careers. [41] In addition, when it comes to achieving policy change that tackles societal norms on gender identity and roles, the inclusion of men, generally the *power brokers* in political institutions, can prove very important. For example, the involvement of male lawmakers was key for achieving positive changes

in legislation with respect to female genital mutilation in Uganda and abortion in Uruguay. [42]

Finally, there is a point to be made in favor of political networks that take into consideration the restrictive gender norms in society through the challenges women and men face for their gender identity, engaging both beyond traditional narratives of men's and women's roles and interests. Created in 2016, the Finnish parliamentary group on Feminism, open to (and attended by) both men and women, does just that. The founder explained: "Men are favored in recruitment in Finland. Mothers are favored in custody battles. A feminist group looks at both of these issues."[43]

Women's Networks and the Women's Movement:[44] Difficulties and Gains of a Complicated Relationship

For many women and girls who are skeptical towards political parties and politics in general,[45] activism in civil society organizations linked to the women's movement often represents a first step in the direction of political engagement. The relationship between the women's movement and women in government or political parties is however a complicated one. Khadija Idrissi Janati, an entrepreneur and political activist from Morocco, described her relationship with the women's movement in her country as: "Supportive, as we all have the same objective of encouraging more women to go into politics but conflictive, because we do not do it the same way."[46]

Sometimes, this relationship depends on the movement's role in getting a female candidate elected. Some women access the political life through typically "male" channels (family, political party affiliation, friends); in those cases, they do not necessarily engage with the women's movement and do not always share its ideology. In Tunisia, after the 2011 elections, most women elected in office belonged to the moderate Islamist Ennahda Party; in the discussions on the new constitution, they supported a draft describing women's roles in the family as "complementary" to that of men.[47] The Tunisian women's movement took to the streets in protests and ultimately succeeded in having the word "complementary" substituted by the word "equal," in direct opposition to what had been advocated for by many women lawmakers. Other times, women start a political career after having been part of the women's movement, where they found a training ground and a support network. Once elected, these women are more likely to continue engaging with the movement for an open dialogue on their policy agenda.

For many women politicians, however, the reality is in between: while they developed some relationship with the women's movement prior to entering politics, they do not see this relationship to be the only--or even the main--factor that helped them running for office, become a party candidate and be elected. In those instances, women in power will often try to push forward some items on the women's movement agenda but they might be negotiable in exchange for support from senior party leadership.

Often, women legislators find themselves in a dilemma: on the one hand, they fear being identified as "women's issues" politicians and pigeonholed, particularly if newly-elected.[48] On the other hand, they try to keep a connection to the women's movement and receive support for their gender-sensitive legislative work. Sometimes, in the political compromising and negotiating process, the relationship between female lawmakers and representatives of the women's movement get strained, leaving women legislators and the gender-equality agenda vulnerable.

Despite its difficulties and complications, the relationship between women legislators and the women's movement is a very important and potentially beneficial one for both stakeholders: for female lawmakers, it keeps them connected with their female constituency, informs and grants legitimacy and public support to their policy-making and supports their voices when they are being

sidelined. For women's civil society activists, it provides a channel to influence policies and promote lasting change.

"There hasn't been any moment in my political life which hasn't intersected with the policy discussions happening within women's networks"

Valeria Fedeli, Education Minister of Italy

In Central and Eastern Europe, women from progressive political parties, civil society organizations and parliament, organized through the CEE Network for Gender Issues, successfully advocated for the adoption and implementation gender quota policies in Slovenia, Kosovo, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Indonesia, Ukraine, Albania and several other countries. In Rwanda, grassroots activists from the women's movement created a common front with women from the leading political party (Rwandan Patriotic Front, RPF) and women legislators to successfully advocate for quotas, a modification in inheritance laws favorable to women and the introduction of stark legislation to prevent gender-based violence and rape.[49] In 2003, in Mozambique, more than one thousand women marched to the National Assembly to demand the passing of the New Family Law Act (which contained provisions to allow women to work without their husband's permission). After having previously stalled for four years, the bill was passed one month after the demonstration.[50] According to Mary Balikungeri, Director and Founder of the Rwanda Women's Network: "Grassroots women's organizations in their efforts to empower women and promote gender equality need to be capacitated to make linkages with women in decision making levels to join efforts in finding durable solutions to fundamental challenges faced by grassroots women."[51]

Some current and former women politicians interviewed for this study reported finding a direct correlation between their ability to push forward a gender equality agenda (in other words, their *substantive* representation) and their experience in women's networks. Valeria Fedeli, Italy's Education Minister and long-term feminist, said about her political trajectory: "There hasn't been any moment in my political life which hasn't intersected with the policy discussions happening within formal or informal women's networks. Being connected with women who share one's own experiences is fundamental in achieving common goals and gender-sensitive policies."[52]

Anita Perez Ferguson, former President of the National Women's Political Caucus and White House Liaison to the U.S. Department of Transportation reported that "women who had been in networks were much more able to accomplish, understand policy changes. They had deeper levels of conversation, were more open to different approaches, had a greater comfort level and a strengthened ability to function further in their political careers. They were better equipped."[53]

According to Sonja Lokar, member parliament in Slovenia from 1986 to 1992 and Executive Director of the CEE Network for Gender Issues since 1998: "All the women from the progressive parties that stayed long in politics, surviving the pressure of the political life and working on issues of violence, sexual rights and care in Southern and Eastern Europe were brought up through the women's network. The others came, stayed for a mandate and disappeared."[54]

"All the women from the progessive parties that stayed long in politics were brought up through the women's networks."

Sonja Lokar, Executive Director, CEE Network for Gender Issues and former Member of Parliament, Slovenia

Women's Political Networks, Social Media and Digital Technologies: Online Networks, Hashtag Activism and More

Digital technology has revolutionized the way men and women work, live and think. This revolution has not left out the political arena; social media plays an increasing important role in the way information is shared globally and contributes to defining the relationship between citizens and governments.

Women's networks in civil society are capitalizing on social media's unprecedented political and awareness-raising potential. Hashtag activism has brought women's issues to the forefront of political agendas, helping to increase the visibility of issues that were under-reported in mainstream media, like the #BringBackOurGirls campaign in 2013, which reached over 1 million tweets. Women's political party wings and women's parliamentary bodies globally have also become savvy in using technology and social media for reaching out to their constituency, mobilizing support for their agenda, celebrating activities and achievements and raising awareness on important issues. The Georgian Dream, the political party leading the governmental coalition that won the 2012 elections, has a website with information on the initiatives carried out by their female members at the national and local levels. In 2016, Hillary for America, the political action committee supporting the Democratic Presidential Candidate Hillary R. Clinton, released an application for iPhones which engaged supporters with quizzes on policy issues, information on local advocacy and fundraising events and suggestions on how to support the candidate.

Women who are actively engaged in politics have much higher familiarity and access to such technologies compared to the overall population. They rely on commercial social media platforms, like Facebook, Twitter, Skype and Whatsapp to connect with one another, share information, build a constituency, disseminate their ideas and mentor one another with limited cost.[55] In addition, specialized online platforms like iKNOW Politics,[56] WikiGender, PROLID and Apolitical connect women at various stages of the political career and support them in accessing, sharing and disseminating information and resources, and launching advocacy and awareness campaigns with very limited costs.

Women legislators and coordinators of women's political networks interviewed for this study have pointed out the importance of online tools to connect women with one another nationally and internationally. At the same time, they have stressed how these tools should be seen as complementary, not substitutive with respect to in-person gatherings, where women at all stages of political recruitment truly connect, learn to trust one another and develop bonds that enable them to continue mentoring and supporting one another. As Sonja Lokar[57] put it: "Virtual things are good if they are in support of the real thing."

III. Women's Networks as Barrier Breakers

Today, women can run for office almost anywhere,[58] theoretically having the same chances to get elected as their male counterparts. The reality is, however, quite different: in the overwhelming majority of countries, women find it extremely difficult to consider, let alone pursue, a political career, because of obstacles often perceived as insurmountable that directly relate to their gender identity.

Structural and cultural barriers[59] are the main challenges women face in the three stages of the political career: from eligible to aspirant (as women decide they want to run for office); from aspirant to candidate (as women are selected by political parties as candidates); and finally from candidate to elected official (as women are voted by the population and selected for office).[60] Structural barriers reflect the overall gender gap

in a society: educational, professional, economic and social differences in the roles and achievements of men and women. Cultural barriers refer to a societal belief of women and men's roles, acquired early in life through family, community, and education, and reinforced through media and continued socialization.[61] Some barriers, like gender-based violence in politics, have both a cultural and a structural dimension, as they build upon existing prejudices of women's roles to restrict their ability to attain professional roles in public office.

While attaining a political career is difficult for men and women, the analysis of their sex-disaggregated responses on what are perceived as the main obstacles faced in this direction are very different. For male legislators, lack of support from the electorate and from political parties, lack of finances and lack of experience in representative functions are the top four barriers. For women, they are domestic responsibilities, prevailing cultural attitudes regarding the role of women, lack of support from family and lack of confidence.[62] At a closer analysis, two things are clear: first, the main barriers women report facing relate closely to their gender identity; second, these barriers do not substitute, but mostly add to the ones reported by their male colleagues, making their climb to power even steeper.

According Valerie Dowling, Director at the Women's Democracy Network (WDN) at the International Republican Institute (IRI), which has trained thousands of women engaged in politics all over the world: "The more women we train as our network grows, the more we see how universal some of the barriers they face are. The degrees are different, but the principles are the same. This has led to WDN's concerted effort to first focus on addressing these barriers in order to set the foundation for successfully increasing women's leadership in this field."[63]

"The more women we train as our network grows, the more we see how universal some of the barriers they face are."

Valerie Dowling, Director, Women's Democracy Network, International Republican Institute (IRI)

Women's networks in civil society, political parties and legislatures have an incredibly important role to play, each by its own right or working cooperatively, in supporting women to overcome the barriers they face.

Ambition and the Confidence Gap: Women's Networks as Political Recruiters and Confidence Boosters

In 2013, Lawless and Fox surveyed more than 2,100 American college students between the ages of 18 and 25, assessing their political ambitions. Their findings were, in their own words, "troubling", as the young men interviewed were twice as interested in a political career than their female peers.[64] What is more, this *ambition gap* was similar to the one found in older age groups, where women are burdened by family obligations and painfully aware of the difficulty achieving work-life balance. What creates such a gap, so early on?

According to Lawless and Fox,[65] encouragement (or lack thereof) is key in defining young people's political ambition. The young men and women they surveyed were just as likely to respond positively if encouraged to consider a political career, but female students received such encouragement much less than male students did. Girls' ambition gap can also be explained by the scarcity of female political leaders. As Madeleine Albright, the first woman Secretary of State in the United States, famously said: "I never dreamed one day becoming secretary of state. It's not that I was modest; it's just that I had never seen a secretary of state wearing a skirt". Conversely, several studies find a very strong positive correlation between the political aspirations of adolescent e models in the political life.[66]

Women and girls' *ambition gap* is also closely related to their *confidence gap*. In *The Confidence Code*, by Katty Kay and Claire Shipman, the authors stress how very often women are burdened by levels of self-doubt exponentially superior to the ones men with similar professional and educational achievements face.[67] In the political field, like in many others, women hold themselves to a much higher standard than their male counterparts and often feel too unqualified to consider running for office. Also, women are more reluctant to promote themselves and are averse to competitive environments, particularly when the competition is against men.[68] As the Executive Director of the Massachusetts Women's Political Caucus Priti Rao stated: "Women in particular tend to be less likely to be self-promoters. In order to get a woman to agree to run for office she has to be asked seven times by seven different people."[69]

The confidence gap does not only impact the beginning of women's political career (from eligible to aspirant and candidate), but it influences their work once elected into office. In the United States and Sweden, women legislators give fewer speeches than their male colleagues because they are concerned about being perceived as too assertive and facing backlash.[70] Their concerns are very real, as women-sponsored bills often receive more hostility and scrutiny than male-sponsored bills.[71]

Risk-aversion also plays a role. One study found that female state legislators in the United States were willing to consider running for congress only if their perceived odds at winning were 20 percent or more, while men in the same roles were willing to consider running for any odds above zero.[72] From a behavioral psychology standpoint, this risk-aversion is a direct consequence of the high social price in likeability women pay for being perceived aggressive or competitive.[73] Women who are performing stereotypically male jobs seem to be in a lose-lose situation: "When performance is observable, successful women are rated as less likeable than men; when performance is ambiguous, successful women are rated as less competent than men."[74] One consequence is that women who enter politics are on average more educated and experienced than their male colleagues;[75] another one, though, is that many extremely qualified women simply never run.

Women's networks have an incredibly important role to play in providing the encouragement, validation and role models that women and girls need to consider pursuing a political career that, unlike men and boys, they might not find elsewhere.

All over the world, civil society networks implement leadership programs to ignite women's political ambitions. According to Randi Davis, Director of the Gender Team in UNDP's Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (UNDP), "these networks supports women's leadership with mentoring, research, advocacy and they therefore play a vital role in supporting women to become leaders and be effective in leadership roles. They are also incubators and mentors of leadership. They are vital to supporting women to become leaders and be successful ones." For example, the European Women's Lobby organizes a *Young Feminist Summer School*. In the United States, the non-governmental organizations *Running Start* and *IGNITE*, among others, introduce young girls to the importance of political participation and leadership through trainings in public speaking, networking, platform development and more. According to Susannah Wellford, President and Founder of Running Start: "Women and girls' networks are important because leadership for women can be lonely in a way that it is not for

"Encouraging girls to be self-confident about their aspirations is an extremely important step in ensuring their political engagement."

Susannah Wellford, President and Founder, Running Start

men. What we heard from the girls we work with is that, before the program, they felt that saying that they wanted to run for office was not OK. Encouraging girls to be self-confident about their aspirations and connecting them with others who share them is an extremely important step in ensuring their political engagement."[76]

"Many other women in the community trust me to lead, and that is a very supportive environment to be part of."

Teina Mackenzie, former parliamentary candidate, Cook Islands

The *She Should Run* initiative offers an online nomination tool, where individuals can submit the information of a woman who they think should consider running for office someday, and the program gives her positive encouragement, connections, and the necessary resources to take the next step. In Ireland, the *Women for Election Initiative* inspires and equips women to succeed in politics through trainings on confidence, communications and campaigning. Many more trainings are developed by international civil society organizations like the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the International Republican Institute (IRI), Women's Leadership Partnership (WLP) and others. Talking about the role women's networks played in her political trajectory, Kah Walla reported: "I had made up my mind to go into politics and was politically active, but being part of a network focusing on women's leadership allowed me to be on panels with world class leaders. This contributed tremendously to my confidence in running for president. Networks that I am part of have then invited me to speak about my experience to other women, which in turn gave courage to many more women to become politically engaged."[77] Teina Mackenzie, who ran as the only independent female candidate in the 2014 parliamentary elections in the Cook Islands, also stressed the importance of women's networks as confidence boosters: "The greatest element has been the self-esteem boost I receive as I recognize that many other women in the community (and beyond) count on me to take their concerns to a variety of forums on their behalf - they trust me to lead, they expect me to lead and they appreciate the manner in which I lead and that is a very supportive environment to be a part of."[78]

Political parties have also started realizing the importance of recruiting women. In the United Kingdom, the Conservative and the Labour parties have programs to encourage young women to run for office. The Canadian Liberal Party has a Women's Candidate Search Director to help recruit women to the party. The Swedish Social Democratic Party features a handbook for women party members on how to identify and remove the traps that make it difficult for them to advance within the party, unmasking socio-behavioral patterns that tend to leave them behind.[79] In Cambodia, the Sam Rainsy Party (SRP) women's wing provides trainings for female activists.

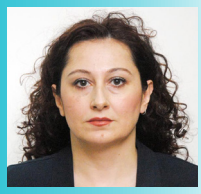
In some instances, women's parliamentary bodies have successfully advocated for the introduction of practices aimed at recruiting more women in politics and boosting the confidence of female legislators. In 1997 in Iceland, a multi-partisan parliamentary committee created and funded a 5-year campaign to increase the number of women in politics through ads, mentoring programs and trainings. In the German Bundestag, when a woman raises her hand to speak in discussions, she is automatically shifted to the top of the list of male speakers. This practice aims at overcoming women's diffidence about speaking in male-dominated groups and maximizes their opportunities to participate.[80]

Women in civil society organizations, political party wings and parliamentary bodies can catalyze change at an even greater extent when they

work co-operatively and strategically together as a network. In Lithuania, the government brings together women from different political parties into non-governmental organizations known as Women's Politicians (Milda) clubs. These clubs, funded through state budget, hold seminars and training events aimed at increasing the confidence and number of women in politics locally and nationally.[81] In the United States, the Women in Public Service Project (WPSP) of the Global Women's Leadership Initiative at the Wilson Center engages an ever-growing number of women at the highest levels of decision-making, including women working in the government, academia, civil society organizations and political parties to build a network of stakeholders that will allow women to assume positions as public leaders across the globe. As Gabriela Jakovleva, WPSP alumna from Macedonia summed up: "'Behind every successful man stands a successful woman', but behind every successful woman stands the network that we have built."[82]

"Behind every successful man stands a successful woman, but behind every successful woman stands the network that we have built."

Gabriela Jakovleva, Women in Public Service Project Institute Alumna from Macedonia



Societal Expectations, Prevailing Models of Macho Leadership and Media Misrepresentation: Women's Networks as Agents of Cultural Change

Ambition and confidence gaps are strictly related to the gendered roles that women and men are socialized to play. While programs like the ones mentioned above are incredibly important in empowering women and girls and changing society one woman at a time, they should always be framed within a wider discussion about the cultural norms and stereotypes that make it counter-intuitive for women to consider a political career and be identified as leaders in the first place.

For centuries, women's perceived primary roles as mothers, wives and caretakers limited their engagement in the public sphere. Consequently, leadership has been associated with traits considered to be stereotypically male, like aggression, competitiveness, dominance and decisiveness.[83] A 2010 Pew Global Attitudes survey of 46 countries found that, despite women's advances in the last century, women's ability to lead is still questioned in many countries where women have traditionally enjoyed very little political representation: majorities in Mali, Palestine, Kuwait, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Ethiopia and nearly half of Jordanians and Nigerians still said men make better political leaders than women.[84] The idea of a woman leader, particularly in an eminently public and male-dominated environment like politics, often defies cultural norms and expectations, demanding from women who engage in this field and, often from their families, the willingness and ability to challenge long-held perceptions of femininity and leadership. In this context, it is not surprising that many women lawmakers consider prevailing cultural attitudes regarding the role of women and lack of support from families as the primary obstacles to pursuing a political career.

Media outlets play an extremely important role in shaping perceptions around women as policy-makers, politicians and leaders, however their influence has often been a negative one, as highlighted by the 2011 documentary *Miss Representation*. In 2015, women made up only 16 percent of the people in news about politics and government worldwide;[85] female politicians are not only covered less than their male colleagues, but the nature of their coverage is often very gender-stereotypical, as much larger attention is paid to the way they are dressed, their body image and their family life.[86] A study on the media coverage of

female candidates in Canada found that women are generally described according to four roles: "sex object, mother, pet, and iron maiden." Each of these roles "poses dangers for women's equal representation in politics, as well as societal gender equality more generally. Indeed, to the extent that news coverage perpetuates well-entrenched, but tired stereotypes about men's and women's roles, abilities, and aspirations, media contribute to broader dysfunctions in how the genders see themselves and each other.[87]

These attitudes matter enormously, as they have proven to be better predictors of women's advancement in public life than, for example, a country's level of socioeconomic and democratic development, or women's participation in the labor force.[88] The way media treats female politicians does not only impact the demand of female candidates (how the electorate and political parties perceive women as candidates), but also their supply (the pool of women willing to run). In a survey conducted after Australia's first female Prime Minister Julia Gillard left office in 2012, 80 per cent of women over the age of 31 said they were less likely to run after seeing how negatively Gillard was treated by the media.[89]

Societal and cultural expectations are however not permanent. Evidence shows that where women hold public office for a sustained amount of time, the general perception about their ability to lead improves.[90] As Gwen Young, Director of the Women in Public Service Project at the Wilson Center, pointed out: "Simply having female leaders changes the norms about who can lead and what qualities are necessary in leadership. Having women in leadership roles is breaking down cultural and structural barriers -- improving leadership around the world and showing everyone what women can achieve."[91]

"Having women in leadership roles is breaking down cultural and structural barriers, improving leadership around the world."

Gwen K. Young, Director, Women in Public Service Project at the Wilson Center

Societal expectations and attitudes evolve incrementally (under normal circumstances) or abruptly (often as a result of conflict and political unrest). In both cases, women's networks have an extremely important role to play in supporting the women who are defying societal expectations to gain larger shares of representation and power.

In the past century, conflict has been a catalyst for change and women's enhanced political representation for many countries, including Rwanda, Burundi, Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Uganda. After the Arab Spring, women gained unprecedented representation in national legislatures in Algeria, Iraq and Tunisia.92 Because conflict disrupts social norms and practices, women often need to step out of the private sphere to occupy new roles as heads of households, combatants or at the fore-front of peace building activities aimed at de-escalating conflict. These activities offer women a training ground in political engagement and the opportunity of gaining the popular support and visibility necessary to become viable candidates for democratic elections. Women can also play an essential role as countries re-write constitutions and basic electoral and civil laws, to ensure that the new legislation is gender-sensitive and provides greater opportunities for representation to female political activists. In these situations, it is key that women organize through political networks, where they gain the connections, information and skills to take advantage of the opportunities presented to make their voices heard and ensure lasting change.

Even in the absence of an external, dramatic shock like conflict, women's networks are extremely important to promote incremental change in societal expectations around women, politics and leadership.

Women's civil society organizations all over the world have been particularly savvy in using the

media for challenging the gender status quo in political campaigns. In the Czech Republic, before the 2006 elections, the local non-governmental organization Forum 50 percent sponsored a poster campaign featuring a long row of trousers and ties and the question "Do you really have a choice?" In Turkey, the local civil society association Ka-Der created posters featuring well-known Turkish businesswomen and female artists wearing a tie or moustache and asking: "Is it necessary to be a man to enter parliament?"[93] During the 2010 electoral campaign in Haiti, women from civil society produced and disseminated the "Elect Haitian Women" television and radio campaign to encourage voters to elect women candidates. The campaign subverted the traditional stereotype of women as homemakers with slogans such as "If we can run our families, we can run our country."[94] Women's organizations have also been active in documenting and protesting against gender bias in the way women are depicted by media, training media outlets on gender-sensitive media coverage and encouraging opinion surveys on voter attitudes towards women in politics. Recent research from the United States and Europe has reported a positive evolution in media coverage with respect to gender and politics,[95] possibly in response to the pressures received from women's civil society organizations and networks.

Women organized in political parties can raise awareness on the importance of women's political representation and disseminate media messages highlighting the central role women play in the public life. In recent years, several to-be Prime Ministers highlighted their commitment to gender equality, winning large portions of the female vote in view of the general elections: Zapatero in 2004 in Spain; Hollande in 2012 in France and Trudeau in 2015 in Canada. In the United States, EMILY's List, a political action committee that aims to help elect pro-choice Democratic female candidates to run for office, disseminates television ads specifically addressing women voters and asking for their support to elect women in office. In Cambodia, the Sam Rainsy Party (SRP) women's wing supported a civic education radio program to advocate for increased women's participation in legislatures.[96]

Women in national legislatures can foster change in parliamentary culture, challenging prevailing cultural norms on men's and women's roles within democratic institutions, with positive ripple effects on the entire society. Because of women's advocacy within parliament, in South Africa, the term "chairman" was replaced by "chairperson."[97] Since 2012 in Italy, several women parliamentarians started demanding to be referred to with the feminine form of their professional titles, instead of the default masculine forms, still widely in use. This request encouraged a national debate involving academics, journalists and feminist groups on the use of language to reinforce or challenge stereotypes regarding women's roles in politics.

Changing cultural norms regarding what is macho and what is feminine is however a long-term process and one that requires engagement of a broad range of stakeholders from civil society organizations, national legislatures and political parties, each working individually, as well as in cooperation. According to Jennifer Siebel Newsom, who wrote, directed, and produced the 2011 award-winning documentary *Miss Representation* and currently leads The Representation Project, a nonprofit organization that uses film and media as a catalyst for cultural transformation: "Our culture's limiting gender stereotypes - that our girls value lies in their youth, beauty, and sexuality and that our boys value lies in physical dominance, sexual prowess, and financial control - perpetuate many of society's injustices. Our #AskHerMore campaign calls out sexist reporting for focusing

"Our culture's limiting gender stereotypes perpetuate many of society's injustices."

Jennifer Siebel Newsom, Writer, Director, and Producer, *Miss Representation*

on what and who women are wearing, and suggests ways to re-focus the reporting on women's achievements. #AskHerMore has a broad range of stakeholders who have actually helped transform the media's sexist reporting, including media outlets and influencers."[98]

Another success story is the HeForShe campaign launched by the United Nations to engage men and boys in ending gender inequality is a great example of such efforts at the global level. Espoused by high-level politicians, including the United States President Barack Obama, political party activists, lawmakers, as well as media outlets, universities, financial service companies and well-recognized film actors, the campaign has quickly gained media attention and contributed to starting conversations regarding gender roles and expectations all over the world.

Domestic Responsibilities and Family Penalty: Women's Networks as Support and Practice Changers

Politics is often experienced as an all-consuming activity by the men and women who engage in it. Even before entering office, a candidate (or aspirant) needs to travel extensively and take part in activism and networking events, often carried out at night and on the weekends, as stepping stones of the political career. In most countries, women carry a disproportionate share of domestic work and find it extremely difficult to find the time to invest in anything other than their families and jobs, particularly if they have small children.

As a result, women tend to become politicians later in life than men (once their children are grown up and require less attention); they are more often single (including divorced or separated), have on average fewer children than both their male colleagues and the overall female population.[99] These statistics point to the fact that, as in other prestigious and male-dominated professions, women find it extremely hard to balance career and family and the ones who enter the political career do so at a higher personal cost, facing higher trade-offs than their male counterparts. One legislator interviewed for this study reported: "It is difficult to balance politics and family. I separated from my husband because I was forced to chose either being a politician or housewife."[100]

Even once elected in office, women continue paying a "family penalty,"as they spend substantially more time caring for their families than their male colleagues.[101] A Rwandan female parliamentarian explained: "He [her husband] wants everything to be ready by the time he wakes up, he should find all lined-up for him, warm water in the bathroom, breakfast ready on the table, clothes ironed, shoes polished, socks on top of shoes, plus you to be ready by the time he is done if you have to go with him somewhere or use the same car."[102]

As a result of this situation, female politicians often shy away from leadership positions in parliamentary committees or government, hindering their chances of advancement and possibly re-election. As Anne-Marie Slaughter put it talking about her experience as the first female Director of Policy Planning for the U.S. State Department: "Having it all it all was not possible in many types of jobs, including high government office—at least not for very long."[103]

Women's networks can be extremely important in advocating for changes in cultural expectations around family and domestic responsibilities and in supporting women in their quest to balance political ambitions and family. Civil society organizations like Vital Voices Global Partnership offer trainings where women leaders share best practices on work-life balance, learn to better prioritize, delegate and be more efficient in the use of their time. Almost more importantly, they provide participants with role models: women who have gone through the same challenges and found ways to overcome them or learned to accept some trade-offs.

Women's wings in political parties play a critical role in ensuring that the practices of the party are

gender-sensitive and take into consideration men and women's needs to balance political activism and family responsibilities. Allowing party members to bring their children to congresses and meetings and providing child care (or financial support to sustain childcare costs) are important first steps. The annual political meetings organized by former Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi in Florence are open to (and attended by) men and women bringing small children.

Women's parliamentary bodies are uniquely positioned to mainstream gender into political institutions and practices, making sure that it is possible for female legislators to balance domestic and public responsibilities. Women's caucuses have successfully worked to make legislatures more family-friendly working environments by limiting sitting hours (Denmark, Sweden, South Africa and Spain), having the parliamentary calendar match the school calendar (South Africa and Switzerland), providing child care (Australia) and establishing lactation rooms or proxy votes for new mothers (Peru).[104] Given that changes in parliamentary protocols and practices have financial implications and often need to be voted upon, the ability of women lawmakers to involve their male colleagues in advocating for such changes is of fundamental importance and can be a first step towards a society-wide discussion with respect to gender equality, parenting and domestic responsibilities.

Gender-Based Violence in Politics: Women's Networks as Advocates and Women's Rights Defenders

Gender-based violence is a vicious barrier for women who defy traditional roles and engage in the political arena, as they become objects of insults and cat-calling at best, death threats and murder at worst. Women lawmakers sometimes report feeling intimidated by the "gentlemen's club" atmosphere and the sexist language which pervade many legislatures.[105]

Modern technology, including emails, blogs and social media platforms have provided new channels for misogyny and gender-based violence, with 95 percent of all aggressive behavior, abusive language and denigrating images in online spaces aimed at women.[106] In 2011, Laura Boldrini, Speaker of Italy's lower house, divulged multiple emails she has received threatening rape, torture and murder. She was not alone: for women in politics, threats, online harassment and graphic sexual taunts are often common occurrences.[107]

In some cases, online threats lead to physical violence and even murder. In 2016, Jo Cox, a female member of parliament in the United Kingdom, was killed by a male far-right activist. Ms. Cox had been victim of repeated online harassment and threats. In recent years, female candidates have been targeted by violence during the party nomination stage and the electoral campaign in Kenya, Afghanistan and many other countries. Sometimes, women are singled out for harassment when "populist strongmen turn to patriarchal narrative of putatively traditional social values—for example, as both Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan have done in recent years."[108]

These attacks, starting at the political aspirant stage and often continuing (or worsening) as women are in office, increase the perception of politics as an inherently "dirty," corrupt, cynical and violent field, where characteristics such as empathy and honesty, predominantly attributed to women, do not have a place.[109] Women who decide to enter this field often do so at their own personal risk and are blamed if they become victims of attacks, scaring away new generations of female political aspirants.

In recent years, women's civil society networks have been particularly active in denouncing gender-based violence in politics and advocating for legislative tools to prevent and punish it. They have served as shields and human rights defenders for female political activist, organizing advocacy and media campaigns to protect them from

abuse. Women's civil society organizations have also promoted the use of new technologies in this respect, through online spaces like GenderIT and Take Back The Tech!, where activists connect globally, share information, best practices and launch awareness campaigns. They have increasingly trained female political aspirants on how to protect themselves from online harassment and gender-based violence. Finally, women's organizations and networks have successfully applied text messaging technology and mapping tools to document and respond to violence and harassment.[110] In Kenya, Mali, Egypt, Syria, Senegal and Sierra Leone, these tools have been incorporated into efforts to monitor gender-based violence around elections.

"Women from very different backgrounds learned to understand one another and find a common denominator in the battle for gender equality"

Maria Eugenia Valverde, Gender Expert and former Director, Association of Women Mayors and Councilwomen (ACOBOL)

Perpetrators of gender-based violence are often within political parties and women in party wings have a critical role in uncovering and denouncing them. In 2015, the Tanzania Women Cross-Party Platform, supported by the National Democratic Institute, conducted a systematic observation of gender-based violence before the elections, reporting numerous incidents of "sextortion," where female political aspirants or candidates were demanded sexual favors by male party leaders.[111] Thanks to this reporting, Tanzania's Independent Ethics Secretariat issued stricter disciplinary measures to be taken against any official found to abuse his or her power.

In many countries, women who are in legislatures and government, locally or nationally, often side by side with civil society organizations and women political activists across parties, have successfully advocated for laws protecting female politicians from violence. In 2012, Bolivia passed a ground-breaking law to combat gender-based harassment and violence in politics. The law was the result of twelve years of advocacy by the Steering Committee for the Political Rights of Women, led by Association of Women Mayors and Councilwomen (ACOBOL), working together with women civil society organizations, government, international cooperation, as well as experts and activists from all backgrounds and origins, including from both urban and rural areas. According to Maria Eugenia Valverde, Gender Expert and Director of ACOBOL from 2002 to 2012, this coordinated work was extremely important: "On the one hand, we succeeded in having greater outreach and visibility as a very wide set of actors was advocating with us. On the other hand, as the women in the network shared information, our collective understanding of the various forms of political violence against women increased and so did our ability to propose a comprehensive law to fight it. In this process, women from very different backgrounds built a common language to share and disseminate information on the various forms of violence, learned to understand one another and find a common denominator in the battle for gender equality."[112]

In 2013, Mexico adopted amendments to its electoral law and its law on violence against women to include cases of violence against women in politics and in the electoral process. In Afghanistan, women's civil society groups, the Afghan Independent Election Commission and several international actors successfully lobbied the Ministry of Interior to obtain body guards for female parliamentary candidates, increasing their ability to campaign in safety.[113]

Substituting the Old Boys' Club: Women's Networks as Resources for Networking, Mentoring and Coaching

As newcomers to the political life, women lack access to traditionally male-dominated networks linked to political parties, such as trade unions, business and other associations where the knowledge sharing, mentoring and coaching activities necessary to launch, sustain and grow a political career take place. For this reason, women's networks represent valuable alternative channels where women at all stages of the political career to connect with one another, advocate on specific policy issues and share information and strategies. According to Caroline Hubbard, Senior Advisor, Gender, Women and Democracy at the National Democratic Institute (NDI): "Women's networks are important for women to have access to power groups they normally do not have access to."[114]

"Women's networks are important for women to have access to power groups they normally do not have access to."

Caroline Hubbard, Senior Advisor for Gender, Women and Democracy, National Democratic Institute (NDI)

Women's civil society networks connect women across society and sometimes, countries and regions to strategize around common struggles and advocacy efforts, sometimes propelled by international women's conferences, where they find a new sense of urgency for their local work.[115] Women's civil society networks are also strong propellers of training, mentoring and networking opportunities. Based in the United States, the National Democratic Institute, the International Republican Institute, the Women in Public Service Project (WPSP) and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems support women at all stages of political recruitment through trainings, technical assistance and mentorship programs. The experience provided by being part of such networks is, for the women who take part in it, incredibly enriching. As the WPSP alumna Hanane Ennadir[116] put it: "WPSP has created a platform where women from different culture but active for the same gender equality cause can exchange information and ideas. Automatically, this impacts our vision and our ability to get things done once we're back at work".

Through women's political party wings, female political activists mentor one another, share knowledge and build a common front to increase their voice and leadership. In the United Kingdom, the women's organizations of the Conservative and Labour Parties provide mentorship, training and networking opportunities to female activists who want to become members of parliament. Women's political party wings in Croatia, Indonesia and Morocco, among others, organize trainings for women political activists to support them in ascending to party leadership positions.[117] In Australia, the Labor Party's women's annual conference provides women with the opportunity to discuss policy, lobby on specific issues and network with one another. In El Salvador, the *Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front* party organizes annual conferences bringing together women leaders, stakeholders and members of the party's senior leadership to formulate gender equality strategies and policies. The *Women Can Do It* (WCDI) program, organized by the Women's Wing of the Norwegian Labour Party, trained and provided over 20,638 women from more than 25 countries with a platform to learn, strategize and build alliances.[118] The Tha'era network of women, set up in 2013 by the women's organizations of social democratic parties in Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia, has built the capacity of over 150 women political activist to become trainers for female political activists at the grassroots level.

Parliamentary women's bodies help women legislators share information and strategic advice, as

well as refine and implement their individual and common agenda. In several countries, including Laos, Burundi, Morocco and Ethiopia, the national women's parliamentary bodies train their newly elected members on the rules and procedures in place, helping them be effective legislators. The Rwanda Women Parliamentary Forum (RWPF) trains both its male and female members in gender-related policies, gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive budgeting. The Ugandan Women's Parliamentary Association raises awareness on gender equality legislation and promotes activities to support and develop women's leadership.[119] In El Salvador, the Association of Salvadorian Women Parliamentarians and Ex-Parliamentarians supports female politicians in reaching senior leadership positions. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is the world organization of parliaments, it has a membership of 170 Member Parliaments. Since 1985, at the initiative of women parliamentarians from different countries, it has established a forum of women parliamentarians to enhance solidarity among women and advance the gender equality agenda. According to Zeina Hilal, IPU Program Officer for the Gender Partnership Program: "The women see the forum as a space to share best practices, report on developments in their respective countries. A place where they can share their challenges not only in the forum's meetings but also in the corridors."[120]

An even greater value is generated by networks that include women from civil society organizations, political parties and legislatures. Together, they multiply knowledge and skills and ensure that the concerns of women at the grassroots level are taken into account and translated into policies at the national level. In Uganda, women's civil society organizations have successfully partnered with the women's caucuses by building their members' capacity to write and present bills.[121] In Uruguay, the *Bancada Femenina* worked hand in hand with civil society organizations in defining the policy items to prioritize and was able to have several gender-equality bills passed.[122] In Peru, the women's parliamentary caucus engaged women from grassroots civil society networks and succeeded in getting the issues that were of main concern to them (like gender-based violence) translated into policy reforms. According to Anna Burke, former member of the Australian Labor Party and Speaker of the House of Representatives, national networks where women political aspirants and women in office meet are crucial: "Someone who has never run for office cannot give you the lived experience of what it is like to try to enter parliament, the many obstacles and challenges."[123]

"Someone who has never run for office cannot give you the lived experience of what it is like to try to enter parliament."

Anna Burke, former member of the Australian Labor Party and Speaker of the House of Representatives

Lack of Financial Resources: Women's Networks as Assets to Sustain Political Campaign Costs

On average, women have less financial resources than men do, as a result of unequal gender divisions of labor, patriarchal laws on inheritance and land ownership, domestic responsibilities, cultural practices and much more. Women have also less access to business networks and rich individuals that sometimes financially support the electoral campaigns of male candidates. For this reason, systems where aspirants need large amounts of money to become candidates tend to disadvantage female candidates; conversely, limitations on campaign spending and on the amount of individual donations tend to have a positive effect on women's representation. With more limited assets to begin with, fewer financial sponsors and, often, less support from the party's senior leadership

(often all-male), women find sustaining the costs of a political campaign extremely hard. Financial risk-aversion also plays a role: women are in fact generally less willing to put their financial resources into a personal objective perceived as risky (the political career) and more likely to invest them in their families. Ironically, the very same traits that are highly desirable in public office, such as concern for balanced budgets and selflessness, make many women less likely to run for office.

Women's civil society organizations and networks are very important sources of monetary and in-kind support for female candidates, who sometimes rely on their members to volunteer time and sometimes financial resources in their campaigns.[124] In the case of Maria Ysabel Cedano, long-time feminist and member of the Socialist Party in Peru, women from the Peruvian women's movement were the largest donors in her 2016 electoral campaign.[125] Women's civil society networks can also connect female candidates with business networks and other sources of funding. The Nigerian Women's Trust Fund supports female political aspirants and candidates irrespective of political affiliation, providing them with the financial resources and trainings. In Kazakhstan, the Association of Businesswomen runs a political leadership school for businesswomen, encouraging them to consider starting a political career.

Women political party activists can advocate for changes in the party's campaign financing rules in favor of female representation, as well as organize campaign financing activities specifically for women. In the United States, EMILY's List supports pro-choice Democratic women candidates by raising contributions, organizing campaigns and mobilizing Democratic women voters. A similar initiative has also been developed by the pro-life *Susan B. Anthony List* to support female candidates on the other side of the ideological spectrum. The Women's Campaign Fund provides women from both political parties with the financial resources necessary to run for office. Other countries have started similar initiatives or opened local EMILY's List chapters, including Australia and the UK.

Women's parliamentary bodies, most often in synergy with female party and civil society activists, have succeeded in changing some of the norms that make campaign financing unsustainable for women and encourage political parties to include more women in electoral lists. Several countries, where public funding is a major driver of political campaigns, have adopted policies in this respect. In Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bolivia, Colombia, Georgia, Niger and Haiti, among others, political parties receive additional funding for women candidates. In France, Ethiopia, Burkina Faso and Ireland, parties which do not meet the gender quotas see their public funding reduced or forfeited.[126] In Mexico, the electoral code demands that two percent of the public funding of political parties be used specifically for building women's capacity as candidates and politicians. In the 2001 elections in East Timor, additional television advertising time was given to women candidates and parties that placed women in "winnable" positions on their candidate lists. In Brazil, a 2009 reform provided 10 per cent additional media time to political parties, to be used by female candidates.[127]

IV. Women's Political Networks: Suggestions for Further Investigation

The experiences and best practices so far described highlight how different women's political networks support women's decision to run for national office, influence their success in being elected and increase their ability to push forward a gender-equality agenda once in office. Several important questions remain however unanswered regarding the link between women's substantive representation and the role of women's networks globally.

While the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the

Quota project provide important tools to track women's descriptive representation in national legislatures, very little is being done to track women's substantive representation globally. In most countries in the world, there is no systematic analysis on the legislative record of women in national legislatures: the types of bills they propose, their rate of success or their longevity in office. Also, while several models have been proposed to analyze the reasons behind advances in gender equality in some countries,[128] they have not been systematically applied to explain variances across time and regions.

In particular, an area that demands much greater investigation is the role various types of women's networks have played in supporting women's descriptive and substantive representation globally. Are women lawmakers who started their career through women's networks in civil society or political parties more effective in their legislative work than the ones who started it through other channels? Do they propose more bills than the latters? Do they succeed in getting them passed and are the bills they propose more gender-sensitive than the ones presented by other female legislators? Are they more or less successful at being re-elected than female lawmakers who have not been supported by women's networks? Are these indicators the same or different for women lawmakers who were not part of a woman's networks before entering parliament but joined, once elected, a women's parliamentary or congressional body? How are their chances to achieve senior political roles in parties or government?

In addition to these questions, which have a mostly objective dimension (longevity in office, number and, to some extent, quality of bills proposed or passed can be measured), there are additional ones, equally interesting, which look at the impact of women's networks from the perspective of female legislators who engaged in them. Which role did these networks play in their decision to run for office? What tools did they provide them with, which proved crucial for their legislative work? Did these networks influence in any way their leadership approach? Did any other network they joined after entering parliament (for example, women's parliamentary bodies)? Surveys of female parliamentarians globally could provide some interesting responses to these questions and shed some light on the impact of women's political networks.

Responses to these questions are important in order to design political empowerment programs and structures that truly improve women's political representation.

According to Kristin Haffert, Founder and Principal of Haffert Group, co-founder of Project Mine the Gap Women's Global Leadership & Gender Equality Expert: "If we're going to move more women into elected positions around the world, we need a sustainable model to institutionalize academies/centers for women that long outlive donor programs and are cultivated with committed partners in-country. These centers would not only provide training on critical leadership skills and navigating political processes, but they would establish a network of mentors and peers that women in different stages of the political career can leverage throughout their life in politics. Over time, this could become a locus of support to encourage new women to run and create a stronger pipeline of talents."[129]

"We need a sustainable model to institutionalize academies/centers for women that are cultivated with committed partners in-country."

Kristin Haffert, Founder and Principal, Haffert Group and Co-Founder, Project Mine the Gap

According to Jessica N. Grounds, founder of Solid Grounds Strategy, co-founder of Project Mine the Gap and women's political leadership expert: "There is a great need to increase the dialogue

"There is a great need to increase the dialogue among nonpartisan actors working to increase women's participation"

Jessica N. Grounds, Founder, Solid Grounds Strategy and Co-Founder, Project Mine the Gap

among nonpartisan actors working to increase women's political participation in the Unite d States and internationally. Women in the United States would benefit from knowing best practices from women's networks that have been successful in advancing female political representation in their countries, through legislative change and other tools. On the other hand, international networks would benefit from the lessons learned of the work women's nongovernmental organizations have done in the United States, in order to increase the demand of women in office (for example, by generating and disseminating research on the positive outcomes of having more women legislators), as well as expanding the pool of qualified candidates, for example by boosting women's self-confidence, motivation and skills to run for office."[130]

Conclusion

Today, women have the right to vote and run for office almost everywhere in the world.[131] Still, most women find it extremely difficult to consider and pursue a political career because of barriers that are closely related to their gender identity and the highest glass ceilings are still not shattered in many countries and political institutions, including the United Nations and the United States Presidency. Analyzing best practices from women's political networks globally, this paper highlights the incredible results obtained by women's political networks, particularly when composed by various stakeholders in the legislative process (civil society, political parties and legislators) in supporting women overcome these challenges. In doing so, the paper uncovers the need for more qualitative and quantitative research on the long-term impact of women's networks on women's descriptive and substantive representation in national legislatures, as well as in their approach to leadership.

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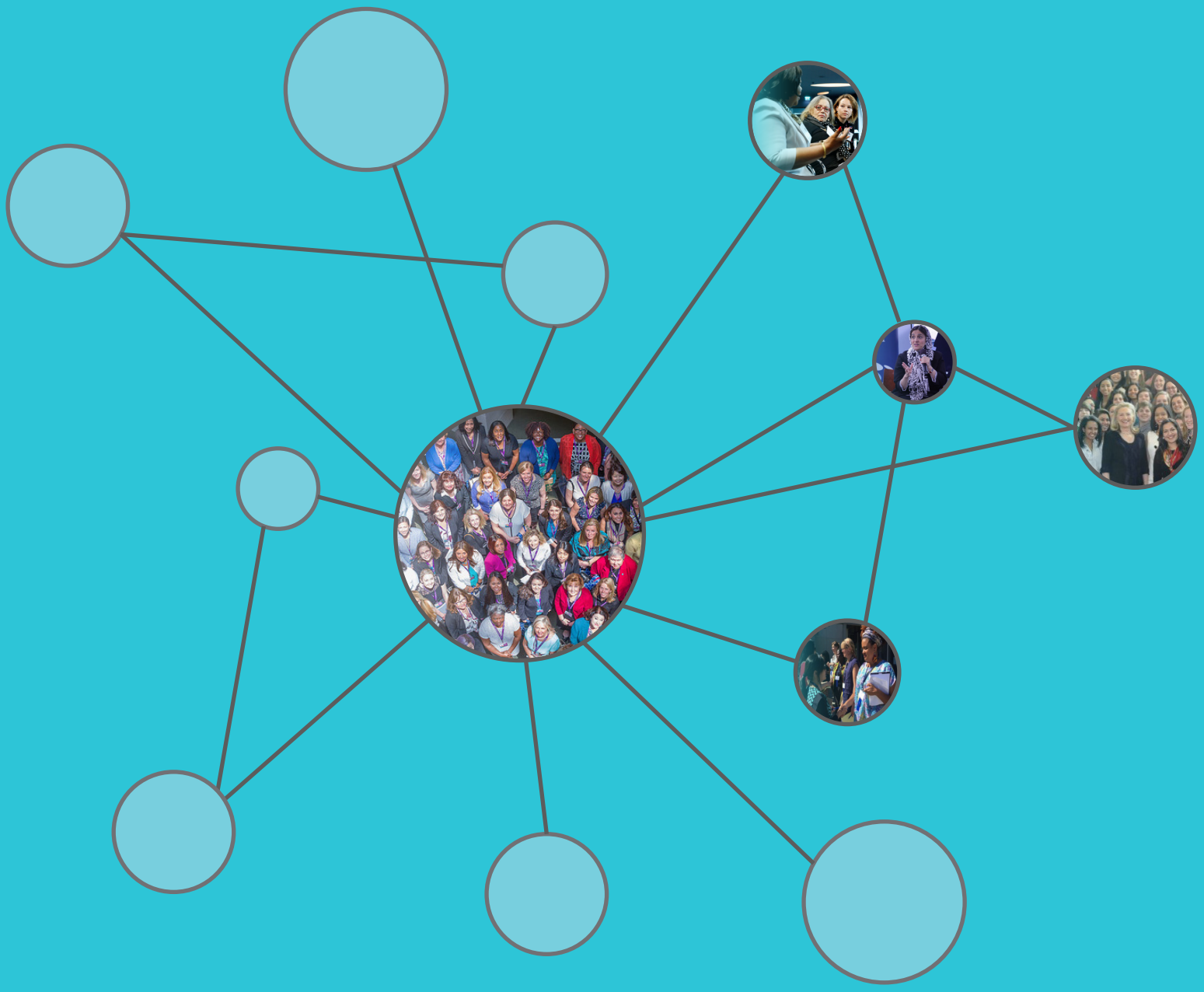
Women's Political Networks: Defining Leadership, Breaking Barriers, and Fostering Change



ANNEX I

RESOURCE GUIDE

Women's Political Networks: Defining Leadership, Breaking Barriers, and Fostering Change

Background & Research Paper

Annex I: Researching Women's Political Networks: A Resource Guide

Annex II: Designing Women's Political Networks: A Ten-Step Toolkit

Researching Women's Political Networks: A Resource Guide

Background

This resource guide has been designed to complement the paper: *Women's Political Networks: Defining Leadership, Breaking Barriers And Fostering Change*, which explores the role and *modus operandi* of women's networks in supporting female political aspirants get elected, gain higher leadership positions and in shaping their policy making once in office. The resource guide includes two main sections: **Women in Politics: Key Bibliography,** and **Women's Political Empowerment: Mapping of National and International Actors.**

Following a similar approach to the research paper, the bibliography focuses on a few key areas of investigation, namely: contemporary thinking on women's descriptive and substantive representation; analysis of the universal cultural and structural barriers women face in all stages of the political carrier (and their solutions); the main lessons learned from experiences and programs fostering women's political participation through civil society, political parties and national legislatures. Drawing on some of the resources referenced in the research, it includes a substantial amount of additional sources.

The mapping of actors provides a list of the most authoritative and reliable international, regional and national organizations working to promote women's political participation and leadership all over the world, arranged by geographic outreach. The mapping includes, among many others, some of the networks and institutions that are referred to in the paper for their best practices in enhancing women's political engagement.

Women in Politics: Key Bibliography

This bibliography provides an overview of key resources available from feminist and non-feminist[1] literature on women and political participation: articles from some of the key scholars on this topic,[2] as well as policy papers, toolkits and manuals of best practices. Following a similar approach to the paper, it is arranged by issue-specific sections:

1. Women in Politics: Considerations On Descriptive and Substantive Representation
2. Women's Confidence and Ambition Gap: On Competition and Political Participation
3. Societal Expectations and Media Coverage of Women in Politics
4. Family Penalty: The Impact of Domestic Responsibilities on Women in Politics
5. Gender-Based Violence in Politics
6. Women and Financing of Political Campaigns
7. Women and Political Leadership
8. Fostering Women's Political Participation in Civil Society, Political Parties and National Legislatures: Best Practices and Manuals

1 Methodological note: what is feminist research?

There is a large amount of literature on gender and conflict. Some of this research self identifies as "feminist research". In absence of a unanimously accepted definition, it is safe to say that feminist research tends to have a very strong social change agenda and use methods "which can best answer particular research questions, but always using them in ways which are consistent with broad feminist goals and ideology' (Jayaratne and Stewart, 1991)". Most of the existing research, however, does not identify as feminist, but follows a "gender approach", consisting, of a set of agreed principles, namely: consideration of the hierarchical power relations between men and women that tend to disadvantage women throughout the research process; integration of diversity, including the differing ways that race, ethnicity, class, caste, sexuality, age, and (dis)ability, affect gender relations, with special attention to the voices of the marginalized, into all levels of the research process; analysis of the relationships between and among all research parties (including the researcher/s); common use of qualitative methods considered 'non-traditional' in the physical and social sciences and in research for development in particular; adaptation of quantitative methods to take into consideration 'hard-to-measure' aspects such as women's empowerment, and sensitive items such as gender-based violence.

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Women's Political Empowerment: Mapping of National and International Actors

Since Beijing, a great number of networks, organizations and institutions have been created, aimed at fostering women's political participation and leadership nationally, regionally and globally. While it does not claim to be exhaustive, this mapping provides and overview of some[1] of the most authoritative and reliable institutions, organizations and networks working to promote women's political participation and leadership all over the world, arranged by geographic outreach.

1 An important caveat needs to be made: this list does not include women's caucuses and parliamentary bodies, neither women's political party wings. While these bodies are extremely important, their effectiveness varies over time and political context. For more on this issue: http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/caucus-e.pdf.

International Actors and Global Knowledge Platforms

Agora is a global knowledge platform on parliamentary development. It has been designed as a tool and a meeting space used by parliamentarians, parliamentary staff and the community of practice in order to facilitate information exchange.

Apolitical is a website and online forum which highlights and shares new ideas, effective solutions and stories of the impactful work of public servant everywhere.

BRIDGE, Institute of Development Studies (IDS), supports the needs of policy makers, practitioners, advocates and researchers in bridging the gaps between gender theory, policy and practice to make gender equality happen. BRIDGE targets both gender and non-gender specialists in an effort to ensure gender is central to all development thinking and practice, and to inspire transformation in attitudes, policies and legislation.

Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action (CREA) is a women's human rights organization that empowers women to articulate, demand and access their human rights by enhancing women's leadership and building networks at the local, regional and international levels. Based in New Delhi, India, it is one of the few international women's rights organizations based in the global South, led by Southern feminists, which works at the grassroots, national, regional, and international levels.

Global Database of Quotas for Women is a joint project of International IDEA and Stockholm University. This website provides information on the various types of quotas existing today, detailing the percentages and targets in countries where they are applicable.

The Global Fund for Women is a US-based nonprofit funding women's human rights initiatives. It focuses on improving sexual and reproductive heath and rights, freedom from violence and economic and political equality all over the world through advocacy campaigns, grantmaking and collaborations.

The International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics (iKNOW Politics) provides a web-based forum for exchanging information and debate on member fora on the status of women in politics around the globe. The project is a joint initiative of the United Nations Development Programme, UN Women, the National Democratic Institute and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Institute for Inclusive Security (ISS) is a DC-based NGO advocating for full inclusion of all stakeholders (particularly women) in peace and

security processes, consulting with governments, conducting field research, and providing leadership development for women leaders in conflict zones around the world. Inclusive Security includes the Women Waging Peace Network, a network of more than 2,000 women peacemakers from conflict areas around the world, launched in 1999 to connect these women with each other and with policy shapers.

Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is the world organization of parliaments, it has a membership of 170 Member Parliaments. Since 1985, at the initiative of women parliamentarians from different countries, it has established a Forum of women parliamentarians to enhance solidarity among women and advance the gender equality agenda.

International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) is a registered non-profit, US based organization whose mission is to support civil society activism in promoting women's rights, peace and human security in countries affected by conflict, transition and closed political space. It offers a network of activists and women leaders working in the space of women, peace and security.

International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) supports citizens' rights to participate in free and fair elections. IFES works to fortify women in political and electoral processes as candidates and elected leaders, technical experts in elections, engaged civil society leaders and informed voters. IFES implements innovative women's empowerment activities to increase women's political participation and leadership.

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization committed to promoting sustainable democracy worldwide. Among their fields of research, IDEA produces comparative knowledge on democracy as it relates to gender, diversity, and conflict and security.

International Women's Tribune Centre (IWTC) is an international non-governmental organization that provides communication, information, education, and organizing support services to women's organizations and community groups working to improve the lives of women in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Europe and Western Asia.

Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) researches and identifies successful strategies to encourage women's participation in civic and political life. IWPR has conducted research with female activists working in a range of contexts—including interfaith organizations, unions, and secular social justice movements—about their experiences in taking on public leadership roles and the sources of motivation that inspired their involvement in this work.

National Democratic Institute (NDI) believes that equitable participation of women in politics and government is essential to building and sustaining democracy. The Institute trains, educates, and motivates women candidates and elected leaders, as well as female citizens, in the political process.

Socialist International Women is the international organization of the women's organizations of the socialist, social democratic and labor parties affiliated to the Socialist International. It aims to end discrimination against women, build relations within its member organizations and create programs to foster women's political participation.

The Global Women's Leadership Initiative (GWLI) at the Wilson Center. The Women in Public Service Project (WPSP) seeks to build a new generation of global female leaders. Founded through a partnership between the US Department of State and five leading women's colleges, the WPSP aims to train women to enter the public sector by cultivating the 'strategic leadership skills, energy, and commitment required to tackle today's global challenges

The International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) aims at strengthening women's role in politics and decision-making.

The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) is a DC-based non-partisan, independent, federal institution that provides analysis of and is involved in conflicts around the world. The Institute was established by an act of Congress in 1984.

The Women in Parliaments Global Forum (WIP) is the global network of female Parliamentarians at national level, including the European Parliament, of whom there currently are around 9000.

The Women's Democracy Network (WDN) is an initiative of the International Republican Institute to increase women's political participation, leadership and representation in elected office. WDN accomplishes this goal by linking these women with their peers in other countries who share similar struggles, providing mentorship from experienced women who have are leaders in their fields, and through skills-building trainings designed to target their identified needs.

UN Women provides training for women political candidates to help build their capacities, and offer civic education and sensitization campaigns on gender equality. UN Women backs gender equality advocates in calling on political parties, governments and others to do their part in empowering women.

U.S. State Department's Office of international Women's Issues provides information and fact sheets on women's situation in several countries.

Vital Voices Global Partnership is the preeminent non-governmental organization (NGO) that identifies, trains and empowers emerging women leaders and social entrepreneurs around the globe and gives them training and visibility to support them in their leadership trajectory.

WEDO works on a range of cross-cutting issues—from climate change and natural resource management, to global governance and finance and UN reform—toward three interlinked goals: women's leadership, sustainable development and global governance.

Wikigender is a global online collaborative platform linking policymakers and experts from both developed and developing countries to find solutions to advance gender equality. It provides a centralized space for knowledge exchange on key emerging issues, with a strong focus on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and in particular on SDG 5. Both English and French speakers worldwide can discuss current issues, relevant research and emerging trends on gender equality. Wikigender places the spotlight on gender data and statistics as a complement to the Gender, Institutions and Development Database (GID-DB) and the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI), both developed by the OECD Development Centre.

Womankind Worldwide partners with local organizations in Africa, Asia and Latin America that challenge discrimination and violence. The organization aims to enable women to understand their legal rights and ultimately improve their lives.

Women for Women International provides women survivors of war, civil strife and other conflicts with the tools and resources to move from crisis and poverty to stability and self-sufficiency, thereby promoting viable civil societies.

Women Thrive Alliance, an initiative of Women Thrive Worldwide, is a leading voice for global women's rights. We work to empower grassroots women so their perspectives and solutions shape local, national, and global policies to help women and their families break free from poverty, violence, and inequality.

Women Waging Peace Network (WWPN) believes sustainable peace is possible only when those who shape policy include women and other affected groups in the prevention and transformation of violent conflict. Through networking, research and recommendations, WWPN aims to increase involvement of women in preventing, resolving and rebuilding after conflicts.

Women's Campaign International (WCI) is a

nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to increasing the participation of women in political and democratic processes worldwide. WCI's mission is to increase the number of female elected officials throughout the world, ensure their effectiveness once elected and build the capacity of local organizations working on women's issues.

Women's Centre for Democracy and Human Rights is a nongovernmental organization aimed at developing democratic society based on human rights, gender equity and social justice. The organization achieve its goals through education, advocacy and research.

Women's Learning Partnership (WLP) is made up of WLP International in the USA and 20 WLP national and regional partners. WLP is committed to the creation of tolerant, egalitarian, and democratic communities developed through partnerships based on cooperation, trust, and respect.

International Women's Democracy Center (IWDC) provides the necessary training for women to increase their participation in local, state, and national politics, policy and decision-making, working in partnership with established NGOs and recognized community leaders around the world.

Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) compiled by World Bank researchers, shows that many developing-country governments are making important gains in control of corruption, and some of them are matching the performance of affluent countries in overall governance measures.

United States Organizations, Networks and Institutions

National Organizations and Institutions

Elect Women Magazine is a U.S.-based online media site that provides campaign tips, stories, and resources to women running for political office or thinking about it. Candidates and elected officials provide
the blog posts, and women candidates can blog in to ask questions, offer advice, and share information.

EMERGE provides a seven-month program for Democratic women who want to run for elected office. Emerge gives Democratic women who want to run for public office a unique opportunity. We are the only in-depth, seven-month, 70-hour, training programs providing aspiring female leaders with cutting-edge tools and training to run for elected office and elevate themselves in our political system.

Emily's List supports pro-choice Democratic women candidates by raising campaign contributions, organizing campaigns and mobilizing Democratic women voters. Recognizing that early campaign money is crucial for establishing the viability of a political campaign, EMILY is an acronym, which stands for 'Early Money Is Like Yeast' – because it makes the 'dough' rise.

IGNITE trains young women from high schools, colleges, and universities across the United States. IGNITE teaches young women how to think critically about policy and understand where the levers of power to make change actually reside. Via our high school curriculum, college chapters, annual conferences, and elected women network, IGNITE teaches young women to become civically engaged and ultimately step into public service.

National Foundation for Women Legislators seeks to provide strategic resources to women leaders for leadership development and effective gover-

nance through conferences, effective seminars, educational programs, professional relationships, and networking at both the state and federal levels in nonpartisan ways.

National Organization for Women Political Action Committees supports feminist candidates, male and female, for federal office. The NOW Equality PAC (NEP) supports feminist candidates for state and local office in the US.

National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC) is a non-partisan national grassroots membership organization dedicated to increasing the number of pro-choice women in elected and appointed office in the US.

Public Leadership Education Network (PLEN) introduces college women to role models, career paths, and skills trainings before they enter the workforce. PLEN's mission is to increase the number of women in top leadership positions influencing all aspects of the public policy process.

Running Start introduces young women to role models, talks to young women about the importance of politics in their lives, and gives them the encouragement and skills to pursue a career in political leadership. Running Start's Young Women's Political Leadership Program introduces secondary school (high school) girls to the importance of women in political leadership and trains them in public speaking, networking, on-camera media training, and platform development.

She Should Run is an online nomination tool and resource center that asks women to consider a run for office. An individual can submit a form with the information of a woman who he or she believes should run for office someday, and the program will guarantee that she gets positive encouragement, connections, and the necessary resources to take the next step

The Susan B. Anthony List (SBA List) is a non-profit organization that seeks to reduce and ultimately end abortion in the U.S. by supporting pro-life politicians, primarily women, through its SBA List Candidate Fund political action committee.

Women Under Forty Political Action Committee (WUFPAC) is a nonpartisan political action committee that supports women forty years of age and under running for state and federal public office. It aims to represent voices of young women in shaping public policy and to build seniority of women in Congress by getting them elected at a younger age.

Women's Campaign Fund (WCF) is a nonpartisan organization, is dedicated to dramatically increasing the number of women in elected office who support reproductive health choices for all. WCF provides financial support to its endorsed candidates and produces original research related to women in politics.

Women Living Under Muslim Law is an international solidarity network that provides information, support and a collective space for women whose lives are shaped, conditioned or governed by laws and customs said to derive from Islam.

Women Waging Peace (WWP) connects women addressing conflict around the world in the belief that they have a role to play "in preventing violent conflict, stopping war, reconstructing ravaged societies, and sustaining peace in fragile areas around the world." Women Waging Peace advocates for the full participation of women in formal and informal peace processes. The initiative is run by the Women and Public Policy Program at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and Hunt Alternatives.

University Sponsored Organizations

Athena Center for Leadership Studies – Barnard. The Athena Center aims to be a globally

renowned center for advancing women in leadership. The Center encourages women leaders to be visionary, bold, and globally aware.

Center for American Women and Politics – Rutgers University. CAWP uses research and data, education and outreach programs to promote greater knowledge and understanding about women's participation in politics and government and to enhance women's influence and leadership in public life. The Rutgers Center for American Women and Politics, for example, runs a number of programs for women who are interested in running for office. The Ready to Run program is divided into two parts, one tailored to women who plan to run in the near future, and one for those who are thinking about running sometime in the future. Additional sessions are targeted towards African- American, Hispanic and Asian-American women, to address potential group-specific challenges in the campaign process.

Center for Integrative Leadership – University of Minnesota. The Center for Integrative Leadership (CIL) is a forum for the study of leaders and leadership across sectorial and geographic boundaries. CIL engages in collaborative teaching, community outreach, and research initiatives with other University centers, and external community partners.

Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy – University of Massachusetts, Boston. Part of the John W. McCormack Graduate Institute of Public Affairs, the Center seeks to expand involvement of women in politics and policies affecting them through quality graduate education, collaborative research and events, and focusing on intersection of race and gender.

Center for Women's Global Leadership – Rutgers University fosters women's leadership in the area of women's human rights and social justice through women's global leadership institutes, strategic planning activities, international mobilization campaigns, UN monitoring, global education endeavors, publications, and a resource center.

Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (GIWPS) examines and highlights the roles and experiences of women in peace and security worldwide through cutting edge research, timely global convenings, and strategic partnerships.

NYU Women's Leadership Forum – New York University fosters leadership development, facilitate professional growth, and sponsor opportunities for outreach among women in leadership roles. Through networking, access to electronic resources, and participation in an array of events such as conferences, guest presentations, and opportunities for professional development, women can exchange information and interact with others who have common interests and goals.

Wellesley Centers for Women – Wellesley College is the largest social science organization in the US dedicated to gender research. The Center conducts research and creates programs with women's perspectives and experiences at the core and ensures this work reaches a wide audience and influences public policies and programs.

Women and Politics Institute – American University. Based at American University's School of Public Affairs, the Women and Politics Institute offers courses, training, research and other opportunities to learn about women in the political arena.

Women and Public Policy Program – Kennedy School, Harvard University. WAPPP's primary activities focus on developing the relationship between women and public policy through facilitating scholarship, encouraging and enhancing teaching, publishing materials, and influencing the policy process by strengthening women's leadership and the advocacy power of grassroots women.

Women's Campaign School – Yale University aims to provide training for women who want to

run for office or who want to move up the ladder to higher elective office. For five days, participants are put through an intense political immersion program designed to teach campaign skills, strategic assessment, and improvisation.

Women's Initiative in Leadership – Harvard University (WIL) was created to address the interest and importance of female students at Harvard in developing leadership skills. The program strives to explore and understand leadership through seminars, discussions, and interactive workshops over the course of a semester.

Women's Leadership Academy – University at Albany, State University of New York. The purpose of the Women's Leadership Academy (WLA) is to strengthen participants' self-efficacy, leadership capacity and capabilities to increase female presence in public policy and politics. WLA hosts a week-long summer program for undergraduates and a six-month fellowship for graduate students to foster leadership skills.

Women's Leadership Conference – George Washington University. Each spring, the Women's Leadership Conference and the Elizabeth Somers Leadership Center bring together an intergenerational audience of professional women, many of whom are alumnae and students, to discuss the personal and professional challenges facing women in the 21st century.

Women's Leadership Initiative – Yale University aims to create a campus culture that encourages and empowers aspiring female leaders at Yale. Since its inception, WLI has grown to support both small and large forums of discussion, from WLI Salon Nights to mentorship families, and Job Shadowing Days to an annual Women in Leadership Conference.

Women's Leadership Institute – Auburn University. The Women's Leadership Institute (WLI) was established to help women associated with Auburn University take a proactive step in closing the gender gap of women in politics, corporate boardrooms, and the administrations of business and educational institutions. WLI also hosts public programs to train and inspire a new generation of women leaders.

Women's Leadership Program – George Washington University. The Women's Leadership Program is a year-long, selective, living and learning program for freshmen women of any school at GWU. WLP students have the benefit of small classes, close contact with faculty and women in leadership roles, and strong community ties within the Program.

Regional and National Organizations and Networks

Regional And National Organizations And Networks, Europe

The European Parliamentary Forum on Population & Development (EPF) is a network of members of parliaments from across Europe who are committed to protecting the sexual and reproductive health of the world's most vulnerable people, both at home and overseas.

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is one of the world's principal regional human rights bodies. Based in Warsaw, Poland, ODIHR is active throughout Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia and North America. The Office promotes democratic elections, respect for human rights, tolerance and non-discrimination, and the rule of law. ODIHR implements programs on increasing the participation of women in the political and public arena, capacity building of women's networks,

combating violence against women and the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 emphasizing the involvement of women in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation.

The Centre for Advancement of Women in Politics aims to foster an appreciation for women's contributions to politics, government, and public decision-making in the UK and Ireland. The website includes research on women's political participation and representation, public attitudes to women in politics, and women in parliament.

Women for Election is an Irish not-for-profit, non-partisan organization whose vision is of an Ireland with balanced participation of women and men in political life. Our mission is to inspire and equip women to succeed in politics.

Engender is Scotland's feminist organization. Engender has a vision for a Scotland in which women and men have equal opportunities in life, equal access to resources and power, and are equally safe and secure from harm.

National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCI) is the national representative organization for women and women's groups in Ireland. Its purpose is to achieve women's equality in a society where women and men can participate effectively as citizens in all aspects of social, cultural, economic and political life.

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is an autonomous body of the European Union, established to contribute to and strengthen the promotion of gender equality, including gender mainstreaming in all EU policies and the resulting national policies, and the fight against discrimination based on sex, as well as to raise EU citizens' awareness of gender equality. Among other things, EIGE issues reports and studies on women's leadership within the European Union.

The European Women's Lobby (EWL) is the largest umbrella organization of women's associations in the European Union (EU), working to promote women's rights and equality between women and men. It has a network of 2500 women's groups across Europe and provides a number of lobbying tools on its website, available in a range of languages, to help ordinary citizens to put pressure on elites in their own countries to take gender balance seriously in their nominations

The International Gender Policy Network (IGPN) is a non-profit, non-governmental network organization aimed at promoting gender equitable and gender sensitive public policy at all levels of global society. IGPN advocates for the inclusion of women's human rights into the national, regional and global policy agenda and for full implementation of social, economic and culture rights of women. IPGN is situated all over Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia.

The CEE Network for Gender Issues includes women from progressive political parties, civil society movements and parliament from twenty-one countries in Easter Europe and the former Soviet Union. This network has been extremely successful in establishing strong feminist streams within left wing parties, lobbying for gender quota rules and ensuring high representation of women within parties and parliaments.

The Association of European Parliamentarians for Africa (AWEPA) forges cooperation with African Parliaments to strengthen parliamentary democracy in Africa, and to attain the Millennium Development goals by supporting human rights, development, and democracy in Africa.

Regional And National Organizations, Africa and MENA Region

African Women's Development Fund is a grant-making foundation that supports local, national and regional women's organizations working towards the empowerment of African women and realization of their rights.

Akina Mama wa Afrika is an international, pan-African, non-governmental development organization for African women. It creates a space for African women to organize, and build links with African women active in the areas of their own development.

Arab Women's Leadership Institute (AWLI) supports the efforts of Arab women to increase their participation in public life and the political process throughout the Middle East and North Africa region. AWLI offers training, networking and mentorship opportunities to advance women in leadership positions.

Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc (ADFM) is an independent association established in 1985 to defend and promote the human rights of women, and to foster equitable policies and social practices. As one of the largest non-governmental organizations in Morocco focused on the rights of women, ADFM has been successful in forming networks with civil society and governmental institutions regionally and internationally. The organization guarantees and reinforces the rights of women through advocacy, awareness raising, literacy campaigns, direct assistance, and education, among other activities.

Association des Femmes Chefs de Famille (AFCF) is a non- governmental organization in Mauritania whose primary mission is to promote human rights and to defend the rights of women and children. AFCF strives
to bring support to women in precarious situations (particularly female heads of households), create a network of associations working to improve living conditions for women and children, and contribute to fostering gender equality and building active solidarity among women of different social classes.

BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights (BAOBAB) is a non-pro t organization working for women's human rights and legal rights under religious laws, statutory laws, and customary laws, with a particular focus on Muslim women. BAOBAB works with legal professionals and paralegals, policymakers, women's and human rights groups, other non-governmental organizations, and members of the general public. Its programs promote human rights education, particularly women's human rights. BAOBAB sponsors women's rights training and education projects, and programs that enhance understanding of women's rights to influence social and government policies.

Be-Free Center/Bahrain Women's Association (BFC/BWA) is a woman's rights and child empowerment organization in Bahrain. The organization strives to increase awareness of women's legal rights, as well as other issues that affect women, such as globalization, information technology, the environment, health care, culture, and the family. The Be-Free Center focuses on eliminating child abuse and neglect and empowering children to be powerful and productive citizens. Through activities including training workshops and seminars, radio and television programs, advocacy campaigns, and networking, BWA promotes active citizen participation among women. Officially established in 2001, the vision of BWA is "to empower leaders for the human development era."

Campaign for Good Governance (CGG) is a registered national non- governmental organization (NGO) advocating for good governance, freedom, democracy, and gender equity in Sierra Leone.

Club de Madrid works directly with women leaders and women's groups in the Greater Horn of Africa and the Andean Region to promote

interaction and dialogue with national, regional and international decision-making structures and mechanisms to engage in conflict prevention, management and resolution.

Collectif 95 Maghreb Egalite is a network anchored in the women's movement of the countries of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. The founders of this network, coordinators of women's organizations, intellectuals and researchers, believe that the struggle for equality between women and men is a determining factor in the achievement of full citizenship.

The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) was founded by women delegates at the 1989 plenary conference so women at future conferences could discuss ways to increase female representation in Parliament and work towards the mainstreaming of gender considerations in all CPA activities and programs. In 2004, the group was formally recognized in the CPA Constitution and its elected Chairperson added to the CPA Executive Committee.

Femmes Africa Solidarite (FAS) is an international non-governmental organization that works to promote and strengthen the role of African women in preventing, managing and resolving conflicts.

The African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) is a membership-based pan-African Network set up in 1988 to advance African women's development, equality and other human rights. Over the years FEMNET has played a central role in sharing information, experiences, ideas and strategies among African women's NGOs in order to strengthen women's capacity to participate effectively in the development processes on the continent.

Forum for Women in Development (FWID) is a network of Egyptian non-governmental organizations working for the emancipation of women and elimination of all aspects of discrimination against women. Launched in 1997 by 15 civil society organizations, FWID advocates for the reform of policies and legislation that discriminate against women. It is made up of groups of activists, both male and female, from different social and professional backgrounds, who work together to build a democratic, just, and egalitarian society.

Foundation for the Support of Women's Work (FSWW) is a non-governmental organization in Turkey seeking to ensure women's equal participation in social, economic, and political decision-making by drawing on the expertise and potential of local women. Established in 1986, it supports low- income women's groups to improve the quality of their lives, their communities, and their leadership. KEDV/FSWW works in Istanbul, the Marmara earthquake region, and southeastern Turkey. The organization also provides consultancy, training, and monitoring support to those local governments, non-governmental organizations, and other organizations that want to integrate FSWW programs into their activities.

Kayan Feminist Organization, a feminist organization established by Palestinian-Israeli women, is a capacity-building non-governmental organization devoted to women's development.

KIND stands for the Kudirat Initiative for Democracy, a not-for-profit organization based in Lagos, Nigeria. We work primarily in Nigeria in the areas of leadership development for young women and on collaborative projects aimed at removing barriers to women's public participation and ending violence against women.

Mano River Women's Peace Network is an organization with a mission to advocate for and promote at all decision-making levels the involvement of women and youth in the prevention, management and resolution of conflict in the Mano River sub-region, throughout Africa, and the world.

Moremi Initiative for Women's Leadership in Africa strives to engage, inspire and equip young

women and girls to become the next generation of leading politicians, activists, social entrepreneurs and change agents. Moremi Initiative is a non-profit organization based in Nigeria and the United States and operating throughout Africa.

Mowatinat means 'Female Citizens.' This Arabic-language site of Sisterhood Is Global Institute/Jordan provides news, information and resources on women's political and public participation in the MENA and beyond.

Nigeria Women Trust Fund (WF) was created in 2011 to increase the representation of women in Nigerian governance at all levels and address the growing concerns about the gender imbalance in elective and appointive positions. It supports female political aspirants and candidates irrespective of political affiliation, providing them with the financial resources and trainings.

Program on Governance in the Arab Region (POGAR) is dedicated to the promotion and development of good governance practices and related reforms in the Arab states in tandem with the Arab Human Development Reports. POGAR was developed at the request of Arab governments, and therefore specifically addresses national needs and concerns.

Rwanda Women's Network (RWN) is a national non-governmental organization dedicated to promotion and improvement of the socio-economic welfare of women in Rwanda since coming to being in 1997. Over time, the organization has dedicated its efforts to strategies that empower women and has extensive experience in fostering women's participation and grassroots responses to community challenges. To date, RWN works with various local and international partners, and plays a capacity building and facilitating role to a network of over 52 grassroots associations across the country.

Sisterhood Is Global Institute/Jordan (SIGI/J) is a non-governmental organization established in 1998. Its founders include lawyers, jurists, and human rights activists working to support and promote women's rights through education, skills training, and modern technology. Its programs include human rights education, initiatives for combating violence against women and girls, and a knowledge partnership program that provides ICT training. SIGI/J also sponsors cultural and educational events that highlight the experiences of women leaders.

Tha'era network of women, set up in 2013 by the women's organizations of social democratic parties in Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia, has built the capacity of over 150 women political activist to become trainers for female political activists at the grassroots level.

The Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR) provides the Arab region with a center for research and studies related to gender and women's status, and advocacy for improvement of women's status. CAWTAR is committed to the empowerment of women based on human rights and gender principles.

Voice of Libyan Women is a Libyan women's advancement and empowerment NGO based in Tripoli, with branch offices in Zawia & Misrata, focusing on the political participation and economic investment of Libyan women, as well as the elimination of all forms of gender based violence.

Women's Learning Partnership (WLP) is dedicated to women's leadership and empowerment. At its essence, WLP is a builder of networks, working with 20 autonomous and independent partner organizations in the Global South, particularly in Muslim-majority societies, to empower women to transform their families, communities, and societies.

Women's Affairs Technical Committee (WATC) is a coalition of seven women's organizations, three women's center and individual women activists. WATC seeks to eliminate discrimination against women, develop the role of women in society and

to empower women to assume decision-making positions in Palestine.

Women's Self-Promotion Movement (WSPM) is a grassroots organization created in 2001 in Zimbabwe. WSPM implements women's economic empowerment programs and women's capacity-building programs that seek to improve the lives of disadvantaged women through education, economic development and leadership. The organization primarily works with refugee women and girls in the southern Africa region.

Regional and National Organizations, Asia

All Women's Action Society (AWAM) is an independent feminist organization committed to improving the lives of women in Malaysia. Its vision is to create a just, democratic, and equitable society where women are treated with respect, and are free from all forms of violence and discrimination. To reach this goal, AWAM informs, connects, and mobilizes those interested in securing women's rights, bringing about equality between men and women, and supporting women in crisis. AWAM's activities include advocacy, training and education, and direct services to victims of violence, including counseling and legal aid.

Asian University for Women seeks to graduate women who will be skilled and innovative professionals, service oriented leaders, and promoters of intercultural understanding and sustainable human and economic development in Asia and across the globe.

Aurat Foundation is committed to working for women's rights and empowering citizens to participate in good governance for the purpose of creating a just, democratic, and humane society in Pakistan. The organization works in partnership with over 1,200 non-governmental and community-based organizations on activities related to advocacy, activism, and knowledge- and information-building for women's rights and gender equality in Pakistan.

DidiBahini is a non-profit non-governmental organization established with the goal of facilitating gender mainstreaming into the development process in Nepal.

Human Rights Center/Citizens against Corruption (CAC) in Kyrgyzstan focuses on the rights of women and refugees, provides legal consultation, conducts and disseminates research, convenes civic forums, participates in public hearings, and trains human rights defenders. CAC advocates against corruption in the government through monitoring elections and supporting election reform, supporting women in Parliament, and advocating against the use of torture and the death penalty.

International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAW Asia Pacific) is a non-profit international women's organization based in the South. It promotes the domestic implementation of international human rights standards by building the capacity of women and human rights advocates to claim and realize women's human rights.

Korean Institute for Women and Politics is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that aims for a greater inclusion of women in politics by taking into account the obstacles facing women's political participation.

N-Peace is a multi-country network of peace advocates in Asia seeking to advance Women, Peace & Security (WPS) issues. It supports women's leadership for conflict prevention, resolution and peace building, and promotes the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, and related resolutions, at regional, national and community levels.

Online Women in Politics was born out of the

vision of Asian women leaders to explore creative ways in organizing a network of Asia Pacific women involved in politics, governance, decision-making, and transformative leadership.

Shymkent Women's Resource Center (SWRC) is a non-pro t organization in Kazakhstan whose programs combat trafficking and violence against women and promote the rights of women and women's leadership. SWRC organizes campaigns to combat trafficking, creates self-help support groups for women, provides psychological and legal counseling, and manages a

Sisters in Islam (SIS) is an organization of Muslim women in Malaysia which seeks to articulate women's rights in Islam by emphasizing the need to interpret the Qur'an and the hadith in their proper historical and cultural contexts. SIS works in the areas of research, advocacy, legal reform and services, public education and publications.

The Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) is a regional non-governmental organization based in Bangkok, Thailand. It engages with parliamentarians from Asia and the Pacific to champion policies on population and development. AFPPD educates, motivates, involves, and mobilizes parliamentarians on the linkages between increasing population and development issues such as reproductive health, family planning, food security, water resources, sustainable development, environment, ageing, urbanization, migration, HIV/AIDS, and gender equality.

The Center for Asia Pacific Women in Politics (CAPWIP) is a non-partisan, non-pro t and non-governmental regional organization (NGO) dedicated to promoting equal participation of women in politics and decision-making.

The Center for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics (CAPWIP) is a regional organization dedicated to promoting equal participation of women in politics and decision-making. CAPWIP supports its network through technical assistance in organizational and program planning, training, research and information sharing.

Wedu is a leadership development organization that aims to unlock the leadership potential of women in Asia, enabling them to become leaders of their own communities, through leadership trainings. Wedu is based in Bangkok, Thailand.

Regional and National Organizations, Oceania

Women Into Politics (WIP) ensures that Australian governments honor their commitment to CEDAW to eliminate discrimination against women in the public and political sphere and to give women equal opportunity for political participation.

Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL) is dedicated to creating a society where women's participation and potential are unrestricted, acknowledged and respected and where women and men share equally in society's responsibilities and rewards.

Regional and National Organizations, Latin America

Association of El Salvadoran Women Parliamentarians and Ex-Parliamentarians (ASPARLEXSAL) offers training, networking opportunities and resources to female political aspirants in El Salvador.

The Inter-American Parliamentary Group (IAPG) is a regional alliance of parliamentarians working across party lines to advance and promote laws and policies within the framework of a broad human development agenda, which includes health, and sexual and reproductive health and rights,

and women's empowerment. The IAPG is an independent parliamentary network and the only dedicated to advance the commitments made at ICPD, Beijing and the MDGs. The IAPG has supported parliamentarians in moving forward policies and promoting laws to advance and protect sexual and reproductive health, violence against women, HIV and AIDS and sex education for young people.

Latin American Parliament (Parlatino) is a regional, permanent organization composed by the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. It has a permanent commission on gender and youth.

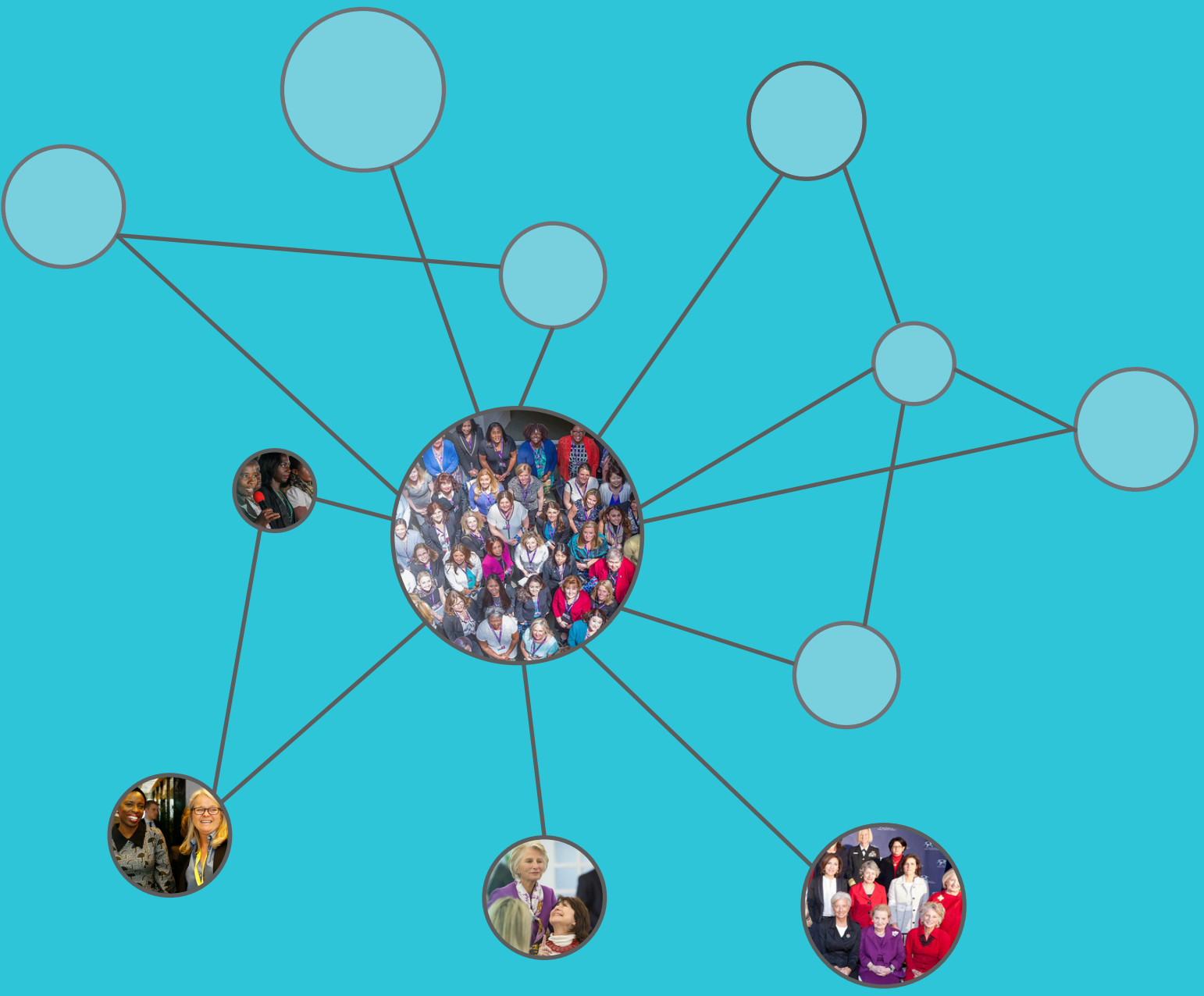
ParlAmericas is an independent network composed of national legislatures of 35 states from North, Central, and South America, and the Caribbean. The Group of Women Parliamentarians is the only permanent working group of ParlAmericas. It includes representatives from each of the sub-regions of the Americas: North, Central, South, and the Caribbean.

Red PROLID is a platform from the Inter-American Development Bank that connects women who hold or aspire to have leadership positions in the public sector in Latin America. It aims at strengthening the work of women and men parliamentarians by providing a space to share and exchange experiences and knowledge from a gender equality perspective.

The Bolivian Association of Councilwomen (ACOBOL) is part of the local government system for institutional and political representation, especially for indigenous communities as there is a corresponding mandate in the Autonomous Municipal and Indigenous Government (GAM) in order to build municipal equity. ACOBOL works with indigenous women mayors and councilors in the 337 Autonomous Municipal and Indigenous Governments in Bolivia to support them as women in their political role and defend their political rights.

The Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) is a specialized organization of the Organization of American States and is a forum for generating hemispheric policy to advance women's rights and gender equality. It is an intergovernmental agency that works to ensure recognition of the civil and political rights of women.

Women's Political Networks: Defining Leadership, Breaking Barriers, and Fostering Change



ANNEX II

ROADMAP AND TOOLKIT

Women's Political Networks: Defining Leadership, Breaking Barriers, and Fostering Change

Background & Research Paper

Annex I: Researching Women's Political Networks: A Resource Guide

Annex II: Designing Women's Political Networks: A Ten-Step Toolkit

Designing Women's Political Networks: A Ten-Step Toolkit

Background

According to Melanne Verveer, Executive Director of the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security and first ever US Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues at the U.S. Department of State from 2009 to 2013: "Women's networks are invaluable in providing female political aspirants with the tools they need to get elected, despite the many hurdles in their paths. Women's networks also make an enormous difference in enabling female legislators to meet across party lines, share experiences and tools on how to successfully advance gender equality policies. In order to make significant progress on women's political empowerment, we need a lot more of such networks.[1]"

If women's political networks are defined as a set of critical actors working to increase women's political participation, recruitment and leadership and the relations among them, what are the conditions that make such networks successful?

While guidelines have been developed by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the National Democratic Institute (NDI) regarding the functioning of women's caucuses and, to some extent, women's political party wings, much remains to be investigated on the conditions that make other types of networks successful in promoting women's political participation. Women's civil society networks and networks including stakeholders across sectors have proven to be vitally important in fostering, informing and sustaining women's political representation and leadership, but much needs to be researched on the dynamics that make them successful.

Drawing from the desk research and interviews with experts, coordinators of women's networks, as well as current and former women politicians interviewed for the paper: *Women's Political Networks: Defining Leadership, Breaking Barriers and Fostering Change*, this toolkit aims to provide women political activists, gender experts and practitioners in the field of women's political empowerment with a roadmap to design successful networks.

Roadmap: Designing your Women's Political Network

1. The Evidence	• Why do we need more women in office? • Why are women's networks helpful to increase female political participation? • In which way will your network meet the most pressing needs of the community?
2. Your Focus	• Which barriers will your network focus on? • Why are you focusing on them specifically? • How do they overlap with the barriers women face in other professions?
3. Your Theory of Change	• What is the change you are seeking to achieve? • How will the network contribute to achieving this change? • What are your short, medium and long-term objectives? Which activities will help you reach your goals?
4. Membership Criteria	• Who will your members be? Will the network be open or closed? • Will members be required to contribute information, training, advice, mentoring, financial resources, in-kind donations, etc? • How are your membership criteria linked to your theory of change and strategic planning? Do they allow for breath, connectivity and dynamism?
5. Key Relations	• What is the change you are seeking to achieve? • How will the network contribute to achieving this change? • What are your short, medium and long-term objectives? Which activities will help you reach your goals?

Roadmap: Designing your Women's Political Network

6. Activities	• What activities will most effectively enable you to achieve your goals? • Which ones will you invest more time and resources on? Why? • How do these activities link to your mission and vision?
7. Leadership & Decision-Making	• How will the leadership be chosen? For how long will leadership serve? • Who will be responsible for which tasks? • When and how will decisions be made? Will there be a necessary quorum? Will virtual presence be counted? Will you vote openly or confidentially?
8. Your Budget	• Who will work for your network part-time/full time on a paid or voluntary basis? • Do you receive donations? From whom? How much? • What are your expenditures? How are they linked to your outcomes and outputs?
9. Communications & Fundraising Strategy	• Who are your audiences? How will you communicate with them? What is your individualized "Why should I care?" message for each one of them? • Which technological tools (social media, website, etc.) will you use and how? • How will you defend your members from online harassment and threats?
10. Your M&E Strategy	• How do you define and measure success in the short, medium and long term? • How often will you re-evaluate and adapt your strategy according to the results you have achieved? • Do you have quantitative and/or qualitative indicators to measure your success?

1 Why a Women's Political Network?
Know the Evidence.

Historically, women's political networks have served a few key functions: expand women's political representation by increasing the supply and/or demand of women in politics; facilitate a dialogue between women elected in office and civil society organizations; inform women's political leadership; challenge existing societal norms on women's political participation and support women in overcoming the barriers that make it difficult for them to pursue a political career. Before starting a women's political network, you should get familiar with the best practices from existing networks in achieving each one of these goals, so that you can make an evidence-based argument regarding the importance of women's networks. It is also important to know why gender parity in politics matters: whether you chose the critical mass approach, a rights-based approach or a combination of both, you should familiarize yourself with evidence-based arguments and data on why women's increased political participation brings about important change in legislation and society. Finally, your motivations and, if possible, information should be grounded in your social and political reality and the specific needs you want to address.

You need to have clear, concise and convincing responses to these questions:

- Why do we need more women in office?
- Why are women's networks helpful to increase female political participation?
- In which way will your network improve, directly and indirectly, the most pressing needs of the community?

2 What do you Want to Fix?
Define your Focus.

In pursuing a political career globally, women face two kinds of gender-related barriers: structural barriers, reflecting the overall gender gap in a society (educational, professional, economic and social differences in the roles and achievements of men and women) and cultural barriers, referring to a societal belief of women and men's roles (acquired early in life through family, community, education and reinforced through media and continued socialization). When creating a women's political network, you will want to decide very carefully which barriers you will be focusing on. One of the reasons behind EMILY's List success is its ability to focus on one specific challenge (lack of funding for women's political campaigns). Other networks take a more comprehensive approach, trying to tackle multiple challenges at the same time. Regardless, you will want to know if the barrier(s) you will be addressing coincide with the ones women face in other professional fields. This analysis is important as it will help you identify potential allies and will be key in building your narrative.

Before moving forward, you will want to have responses to the following questions:

- Which barriers will your network focus on?
- Why are you focusing on them specifically?
- How do they overlap with the barriers women face in accessing leadership in other professions or sectors of society?

3 What are your Mission, Vision, and Goals?
Define your Theory of Change.

A theory of change is a comprehensive illustration of how and why your desired change (e.g. increased women's representation in parliament) is expected to happen as a result of a set of actions. Your theory of change will help you define your mission, identify potential allies, as well as measure success for your short, medium and long term accomplishments. Your theory of change will also inform your strategic planning, namely the set of goals, objectives, activities, outcomes and outputs expected within a very defined timeframe.

Once you have defined your strategic planning and theory of change, you should be able to respond to the following questions:

- What is the change you are seeking to achieve?
- How will the network contribute to achieving this change? Through what activities and in what timeframe?
- What are your short, medium and long-term objectives? What activities will help you reach your goals?

4 Who will Be Part of your Network?
Identify Membership Criteria.

Whether a network is formal or informal, big or small, membership criteria must be weighed carefully according to the desired outcome. According to Susan Markham, USAID Senior Gender Coordinator, being specific and conscious about the network's mission and scope and making sure that they fit with its composition are very important decisions.

Some networks, like the one developed by Vital Voices Global Partnership, invest in a few, high-potential women leaders because they already have the vision and connections to change their communities. Other networks, like the Central and Eastern Europe Network for Gender Issues, empower large cohorts of women, many of whom will not necessarily start a political career, as their aim is to foster long-term societal change around women, politics and power. Some networks involve women from similar regional, societal, professional, ideological and political backgrounds, as they will understand each other and strategize more easily for specific campaigns or issues. Other networks convene women from different backgrounds, languages and world regions, producing experiences that are extremely invigorating and sometimes life-changing for the women who take part in them, opening their minds to totally new ideas and possibilities.

Your theory of change should guide you in deciding which kind of membership criteria will best help you accomplishing your mission. You will also need to decide if you want an all-women network or a mixed one. While female-only political networks are important and might be preferable for training, they might lack the breadth (inclusion of diverse perspectives), connectivity (the capacity to link people and groups that wouldn't otherwise connect) and dynamism (ability to evolve as your goals evolve) that are so important in the passage from a simple support network to one that truly helps people advance in their careers. In addition, when it comes to achieving policy change that tackles societal norms on gender identity and roles, the inclusion of men, is key, as in the message of the #HeForShe Campaign.

Your membership criteria should provide clear responses to the following questions:

- Who will your members be (demographic, geographic composition)? Will the network be open (unlimited membership) or closed (restricted number)? Will it include men?
- Will members be required to contribute (information, training, advice, mentorship, financial resources, in-kind donations, other)?
- How are your membership criteria linked to your theory of change and strategic planning? Do your membership criteria reflect the breath, connectivity and dynamism you want to have?

5 Who are your Allies and Opponents? *Build Strong Relationships.*

Once you have decided your membership and defined your strategy, it's important you identify and map your potential allies in government, political parties and civil society (including business networks); list the relationships you would need to build to define a broad coalition with the most important stakeholders you identified. Also, try to identify what kind of resistance/opposition you will be facing and from whom, in order to devise timely response strategies.

Finally, remember that the relationship between women in politics and women's civil society organizations and associations is a very important one: for female politicians, it keeps them connected with their female constituency, informs and grants legitimacy and public support to their policy-making, and supports their voices when they are being sidelined. For women from civil society, it provides a channel to influence policies and promote lasting change. Women's networks can play a vital role in facilitating a dialogue between women's organizations and women policymakers.

Your mapping should enable you to respond to the following questions:

- Who are your allies? What would you like the network's relationship with them to be (support, coalition, other)?
- Are there events where these different stakeholders meet? Can you leverage them to foster interest and membership to your network?
- From whom will you be facing opposition?

6 What will you Do?
Define the Network's Activities.

Women's political networks increase women's political participation and leadership through various activities, including: training and mentoring of female political aspirants; facilitating the discussion across sectors and among various stakeholders on important policy issues related to gender equality; and advocacy to raise visibility for certain issues.

Your network's activities can include some or all of the above mentioned, or totally different ones. Activities can also vary over time, in response to the changes in the political situation and as you modify your strategic plan. In all cases, however, your activities must be clearly linked to your theory of change.

In designing your activities, you should ask yourself:

- Which activities will most effectively enable you to achieve your short, medium and long term goals? Which ones will you invest more time and resources on?
- Why are you prioritizing this set of activities?
- How do these activities link to your mission and vision?

7 Who Decides?
Leadership and Decision-Making as Tools and Processes.

In order to ensure a network's sustainability over time, it's extremely important that there be clear leadership structures, inclusive decision-making and transparent criteria for accessing positions of power. Also, because political participation is not only an outcome, but also a process, leadership changes provide foundational training opportunities for women who aim at engaging in a political career.

Whether you rely on volunteers or salaried members, make sure you take into account and periodically evaluate their availability and their capacity to perform the required tasks.

When defining the leadership structure of the network, you will need to make sure that you have clear responses to the following questions:

- How will the leadership be chosen? What terms of service or time limits apply to the leadership?
- Who will be responsible for which tasks (including fundraising, communication, political outreach, research and office administration)?
- When and where will decisions be made? Will there be a necessary quorum? Will virtual presence be counted? How? How will decisions be made? Will you vote openly or confidentially on issues and leadership positions?

8 How will you Sustain your Activities?
Draft your Budget.

Adequate human and financial resources need to be allocated, even for relatively small or virtual networks. List all the agencies, services and programs that might be available to support your work and reach out to them. If you receive international funding, you should encourage international donors to consider developing a holistic approach to supporting women's networks through the political cycles, overcoming old practices of dividing funds into categories that do not reflect the continuous nature of political empowerment work (for example, separating legislation and election related funding).

When preparing your budget, make sure to highlight the in-kind contributions you are receiving from members: you might realize (and be able to communicate) that your network is much stronger and richer than you think! Also, consider a results-based budgeting framework for your activities—it offers a much more compelling argument for donors!

Your budget should provide transparent answers to the following questions:

- Who will work for your network part-time/full time on a paid or voluntary basis? How much would the services provided voluntarily by your members cost you, if you had to pay for them?
- Do you receive donations? From whom? How much?
- What are your expenditures? How are your expenditures linked to your outcomes and outputs?

9 What do you Want to Say?
Develop your Communication and Fundraising Strategy.

Define a simple, proactive and clear message explaining the reason to be part of your network. You should try to find answers to the question: "Why should I care?" from the perspective of the different audiences you will be addressing.

Extremely important are the norms and policies ruling the network's external and internal communications. Internally, it's important that networks invest time and effort in in-person meetings where relationships of trust, mentoring and mutual validation are developed. Externally, it's key that they show unity: part of why the *Bancada Femenina* in Uruguay was so successful was because its leaders would only hold press conferences together, giving an image of strength and cooperation.

Successful networks are also savvy in using digital technologies to share information, publicize their work, launch advocacy campaigns, and build the skills of their members on defense strategies against online harassment and threats. Once you have a strong message, it will be easier for you to use it to raise funds among potential allies, programs and agencies you identified above.

In order to build a successful communication and fundraising strategy, you will need to respond to the following questions:

- Who are your audiences? How will you communicate with them (online, in-person, etc.)? What is your individualized "Why should I care?" message for each one of them? How will you

publicize your successes?

- Which technological tools (social media, website, etc.) will you be using for which purpose?
- How will you defend your members from online harassment and threats?

10 How do you Define Success?
Outline a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

Using the goals set in your strategic plan, you will need to measure effectiveness on the basis of the progress made towards your goals, taking into account timeframe and resources spent. Several manuals can help you in defining a monitoring and evaluation framework that works for you, on the basis of your level of familiarity with evaluations, your sophistication in data collection, etc.

You want a monitoring and evaluation framework that can help you respond as easily as possible to the following set of questions:

- How do you define and measure success in the short, medium and long term?
- How often will you re-evaluate and adapt your strategy according to the results you have achieved?
- Do you have quantitative and/or qualitative indicators to measure your success?

Further Resources: Manuals and Toolkits for Designing Women's Networks

"How to Revive a Tired Network"
Herminina Ibarra, Harvard Business Review
Ibarra, H. (2015) *How to Revive a Tired Network*. Harvard Business Review. Available at: https://hbr.org/2015/02/how-to-revive-a-tired-network.

"How Leaders Create and Use Networks"
Herminina Ibarra and Mark Lee Hunter, Harvard Business Review
Ibarra, H. and Hunter, M. (2007) How Leaders Create and Use Networks. Harvard Business Review. Available at: https://hbr.org/2007/01/how-leaders-create-and-use-networks.

Guidelines for Women's Caucuses
Inter-Parliamentary Union
Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) (2016) Guidelines for women's caucuses. Geneva. Available at: http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/caucus-e.pdf

Toolkit: How to Build an Effective Social Network
National Women's Business Council
National Women's Business Council (2015). Toolkit: How to Build an Effective Social Network. Available at: https://www.nwbc.gov/sites/default/files/NWBC_ToolKit_508.pdf.

Gender Equality in Elected Office: A Six-Step Action Plan
Pippa Norris and Mona Lena Krook, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)
Norris, P. and Krook, M. (2010) Gender Equality in Elected Office: A Six-Step Action Plan, Harvard University and Washington University in St. Louis. Report commissioned for the Programme on Increased Participation of Women in Democratic Governance by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Available at: http://www.osce.org/odihr/78432

Creating Mentor Networks in the OSCE Region: A Practical Roadmap
Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)
Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (2015) Creating Mentor Networks in the OSCE Region: A Practical Roadmap. Available at: http://www.osce.org/secretariat/163006

Leadership 101
The National Democratic Institute (NDI)
The National Democratic Institute (2010). Leadership 101. Available at: https://www.ndi.org/dcc-leadership101.

Tracking Impact: A Handbook for High Quality Data Collection
Vital Voices Global Partnership
Vital Voices Global Partnership (2016). Tracking Impact: A Handbook for High Quality Data Collection. Available at: http://www.vitalvoices.org/sites/default/files/uploads/HANDBOOK-FINAL-SINGLE%2520PAGE-2-11.pdf

Advocacy & Running for Office: A Training Manual for Women
Vital Voices Global Partnership
Vital Voices Global Partnership (2009). Advocacy & running for office: a training manual for women. Washington, DC. Available at: https://www.vitalvoices.org/sites/default/files/uploads/Advocacy%20Training%20Manual.pdf

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