

Democracy and Governance

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Political leaders, the visions they promote and the systems and values they bring to governing a country play a pivotal role in fostering peace and development, promoting oppression or the resurgence of conflict. Since so much is at stake, during peace negotiations there is often great competition for power and the prospect of controlling a government. For countries that have little or no experience with democratic governance, the challenges are immense. But the post conflict environment does provide an opportunity for countries to create new structures of government and systems of “good governance.” In situations where the international community has taken on state-building, its institutions assume some responsibility for issues related to democracy and governance. It is often a period when international aid is more readily available and civil society’s participation is encouraged. It is also a time of opportunity for women. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), in the last five years post conflict countries have “featured prominently in the top 30 of the IPU’s world ranking of women in national parliaments.”¹ In particular, these countries have been effective at using quotas and reserved seats to “ensure the presence and participation of women in newly-created institutions.”²

1. WHAT IS GOVERNANCE?

The term “governance” refers to the process of decision-making and the ways in which decisions are implemented (or not). In any given system, the government is the major actor, but others can influence the process. Non-state actors, such as religious or tribal leaders, civil society, major landowners, trade unions, financial institutions, the military and community-based groups can play important roles.

The following characterise a good system of governance: ³

- participatory—encouraging wide citizen participation in decision-making;
- consensus-orientated—attempting to reach decisions based on widespread agreement;
- transparent—being open to scrutiny in decision-making processes;
- responsive—listening and responding to the needs of its citizens;
- effective and efficient—providing basic services; and

- equitable and inclusive—not excluding sectors of the population, especially those that are more vulnerable or marginalised.

There are many multi- and bilateral institutions that are concerned with promoting what they have termed “good governance” in post conflict and developing countries. Each of these institutions defines good governance slightly differently and has developed its own indicators by which it measures and evaluates progress toward good governance. The World Bank, for instance, has identified six indicators of good governance “to help countries identify areas of weakness so that capacity building and assistance strategies are more effective.” Those indicators are:

- voice and accountability;
- political stability and lack of violence;
- government effectiveness;
- regulatory quality;
- rule of law; and
- control of corruption.⁴

International actors consider “good governance” to be a key for building sustainable peace and long-term development.⁵ Progress toward good governance is increasingly used as a requisite for the provision of aid.

Despite the variations in definitions and indicators of good governance, most institutions agree that good governance typically includes efforts at democratisation and decentralisation, the introduction of free and fair elections, participatory politics, the creation of an independent civil society, guarantee of a free and independent press and respect for the rule of law. Each of these topics, among others, is discussed below.

2. WHAT ARE THE KEY COMPONENTS OF “GOOD GOVERNANCE”?

In countries involved in peace processes, questions relating to governance often consume a significant portion of the discussions; typically demands for democratisation, including elections and timeframes for transition, are addressed. Other related elements include discussions surrounding the nature of political participation, electoral systems, issues of transparency and separation of powers, as discussed below.

DEMOCRATISATION

Democracy is a system of government in which power is vested in the people (the population) and exercised through representatives chosen in free and fair elections. But a democracy does not just mean that “the majority rules.” A democracy also includes and protects the human rights of minorities and respects multiple or “plural” views and opinions. In a democracy people have rights as citizens, but they also have responsibilities to participate in the governance system.

There are many versions of democracies around the world (e.g. electoral, consultative) and ongoing debates about the extent to which “one size fits all” with regard to democracy. The process a country goes through in attempting to become more democratic is referred to as **democratisation**. In order for a country to be truly democratic, all of its citizens—men and women—must be empowered to participate fully in the governance process (as citizens, voters, advocates, civil servants, judges, elected officials, etc.).

FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS

An election is the procedure by which citizens of a country choose their representatives and leaders and assign authority. Elections must be held regularly so that elected officials remain accountable to the population; if they do not uphold their responsibilities to the electorate, they can be voted out of office in the next election. Elections must be held within a period of time that is prescribed in the constitution, or fundamental law. For an election to be truly democratic, it must be:

- universal—All citizens of a country must have the right to vote and to be elected, without discrimination based on sex, race, language, religion or political affiliation.
- equal—The value of each vote must be the same.
- secret—The balloting must be private so that citizens can participate without being afraid; only the voter must know for whom she or he votes.
- direct—The voters must be able to choose their own leaders without an intermediary.
- wide choice—The voters must have the opportunity to choose from among several available candidates.

The first self-governing country that granted women the right to vote in elections was New Zealand in 1893. Women in Kuwait still do not have the right to vote in 2004.

DECENTRALISATION

An increasingly important component of democratisation in many parts of the world is **decentralisation**. Decentralisation is the process of transferring authority and responsibility from the central government to provincial and local levels. Countries pursue decentralisation for a variety of reasons, including a desire to make the government more receptive and accountable to the needs of its population and/or to respond to pressure from donors to “downsize” central government budgets.

Decentralisation is based upon the notion that various levels of the government have different expertise and abilities to address problems. For example, national defence and monetary policy are clearly best set at the national level, but policies

concerning schools, local police protection and some public services are often better determined at the local level with community input. Critics of decentralisation, however, charge that it weakens parts of the state that, for the sake of peacebuilding and human security, need to be strengthened.

There are three types of decentralisation: political, administrative and fiscal. Political decentralisation involves the election of local-level leaders. Administrative decentralisation occurs when some of the government's decision-making is managed at the local level. And fiscal decentralisation refers to the national government sharing budgetary responsibility for collecting revenues and making expenditures with local government representatives.

Decentralisation processes often include local-level elections. They provide an important opportunity for women to become involved in decision-making in their communities. In Rwanda's 2001 sector- and district-level elections, a special "triple balloting" technique was introduced that resulted in the election of women to 27 percent of district council seats. In those elections, every voter chose one general candidate, one female candidate and one youth candidate. Not only did this system set aside seats for women and youth, it also required that the entire electorate vote for women. In this way, Rwanda's decentralisation programme began to make the election of women more socially acceptable.⁶

PARTICIPATORY POLITICS AND POLITICAL PARTIES

The concept of "participatory politics" refers to the involvement of all citizens in politics and policymaking. This requires a relationship between the government and society in which the participation of citizens and a plurality of views are encouraged. This can be supported by strengthening political parties; encouraging the participation of marginalised groups, such as women and youth; and by strengthening civil society (described below).

The right to convene and articulate political views is a key principle of good governance and democratisation. Political parties are one of the cornerstones of a democratic political system. Parties are critical because they provide a structure for political participation for people with similar beliefs

and interests. By joining together, individuals, who would otherwise not be influential, can make their voices heard in the political process through their support of a political party. Political parties also provide leaders with a space in which to learn the skills needed for governing a society.⁷ A democracy must have more than one major, viable party so that a single group does not dominate the government and voters have a choice. This principle is called **multipartism**. Membership in political parties must be voluntary.

It can be difficult for women to achieve leadership positions within political parties and to be selected as candidates because, in many countries, parties operate or govern themselves without written party rules or transparent procedures. Such lack of openness allows patronage systems and "old boys' networks" to flourish, effectively excluding women from decision-making positions and candidate lists.

In some countries, political parties have adopted internal **quotas** for women's participation to ensure that they always put forward a certain number of women's candidates. Countries as different as Argentina, Botswana and France all have political parties that mandate the participation of women.⁹ An important advocacy strategy for women is to work with political parties to make sure that the party **platform**, the formal declaration of the principles and positions that the party supports, describes its positions on issues important to women.

WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION¹⁰

Women are under-represented in elected office and formal governing structures throughout the world for a number of reasons, including discriminatory social attitudes, lack of education and preparation and structural barriers to their democratic participation. Specific challenges—and some ways in which they can be overcome—are listed below.

Voter Registration and Voting: Women's participation as voters in elections is a critical expression of their rights as citizens in a democracy. Even if the right to vote is not formally denied, there are significant barriers to women's participation as voters. For instance, in order to register to vote, identity and citizenship documentation are usually required. This

Women for Prosperity's Cross-Party Work in Cambodia⁸

Governance in Cambodia is characterised by political violence, intimidation and, because of the dominance of one political party—the Cambodian People's Party—an absence of cross-party cooperation. One party wielding such power has had negative consequences for women's alignment across parties for the purposes of promoting gender issues, particularly at the national level.

Despite this, and in the face of harassment and threats, Cambodian women working through NGOs are at the forefront of building bridges across party lines. Women for Prosperity (WfP) is one of the most effective organisations in this sector. Led by returnee Pok Nanda, WfP has pioneered a programme that not only encourages and enables women to enter politics, but also bridges cross-party divides at the commune level. Among its network are women council members from all sides, including the three main political parties. WfP focuses on the common challenges facing women in politics regardless of ideology and provides ongoing coaching, thus building their skills over time. In preparation for the 2000 commune council elections, WfP supported 5,527 candidates, offering guidance in public speaking, assisting in speechwriting, answering questions from voters and combating challenges from male party members unsympathetic to women's participation. With plans to formalise a nationwide network, WfP has forged new political ground for women's participation. It has also provided an effective model for cross-party cooperation that is limited at higher political levels.

can be difficult for women who do not have documentation in their own name or, particularly in conflict situations, for women who are internally displaced or have fled their countries and lost their documentation.¹¹ Often polling stations are far away and women have no transportation or travel is restricted by custom and tradition. Voting hours can also be difficult for working women or those with childcare responsibilities. Another concern is the problem of “family voting,” which is the practice of women being led into polling booths by their husbands, who effectively do the voting for them. This is a serious problem in some countries and is a clear violation of women's right to vote in free and fair elections.

Election administrators should include women and gender-sensitive men among their ranks and must adopt policies that do not unfairly discriminate against women.¹² If women do not have official identity papers, their identity and eligibility as voters could be verified by others in the village/community. International election observers should receive gender-sensitivity training so that they are able to observe and address the challenges that women voters face. Election day should be made a holiday, or polling stations should remain open for extended hours and be close to or in central locations (e.g.

schools, churches, mosques) accessible to the entire population, including women. Ballots should include photographs and party symbols to aid those voters who are illiterate (a disproportionate number of whom are women).

Voter Education: Voter education includes training on topics such as the mechanics of voting (e.g. that the ballot must be secret) and the accountability of elected officials to voters. Women, particularly rural women, are less likely than men to have access to voter education resources or to be prepared to exercise their franchise. One successful project in preparation for **South Africa's** first democratic elections in 1994 reached out to women voters by deliberately using women as trainers and scheduling sex-segregated trainings so that women could voice concerns and ask questions without interruption by men.¹³

Civic Education: Civic education programmes are an opportunity to train and sensitise citizens about, for example, their rights and responsibilities, democratic principles, the constitution and good leadership. Civic education is a longer and more extensive process than voter education. It should begin in schools and communities long before elections are scheduled and continue after they have been held.

Civic education is based on the concept that a democracy needs an informed and critical population to succeed. Civic education programmes also provide an opportunity to confront attitudes and biases that impede women’s participation in the governance of the country; they should emphasise women’s rights and abilities.

Funding for Campaigns: Campaigning for political office in any country is a costly and time-consuming affair. Initial costs can include starting a petition, establishing a campaign office, gaining name recognition, securing the party nomination, buying advertisements, conducting voter outreach and even paying a monetary deposit to take part in the election. There are a variety of ways in which states and political parties legislate and manage elections and campaigning processes. In some countries parties have a limited time for campaigning. In other instances, the budgets for political party campaigning, or the level of media exposure and advertising they are permitted, are limited by law. For women candidates—particularly those running for office for the first time—raising sufficient funding to contest the election can be a significant challenge, especially when competing against male incumbents. However, some of the barriers can be overcome by tapping into grassroots networks and constituencies. In **Northern Ireland**, the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition (NIWC) had no funds at the start of their six-week campaign, but its members contributed their own funds and their network developed campaign materials (using cardboard boxes and other household materials) in their homes.

Electoral Systems: There are a variety of electoral systems in the world. Two of the most common—proportional representation and majoritarian systems—have the potential to produce very different results for women candidates.

In **proportional representation (PR) systems** the seats are divided among parties based on the overall percentage of votes that each party wins (and seats are filled by candidates from political party lists). More than one official is elected in each multi-member district. PR is known as a “woman-friendly” system because the multi-member districts provide more opportunities for women to be elected—the more seats, the more potential for women to be

elected. Thirteen of the top 15 countries in terms of women’s representation in parliament, are countries with PR systems.¹⁴ One commonly cited difficulty with such systems is that political parties often fail to win enough seats to govern alone, forcing parties to establish coalition governments. This can potentially lead to large and unwieldy coalitions that have difficulty governing, but it can also be seen as a strength as it ensures that several groups are represented in the governing coalition.

In PR systems, research shows that **closed lists** (where voters choose based on party affiliation only) are often more conducive to the election of women candidates than **open lists**, provided women are placed in winnable positions on the closed lists. In open list systems, voters are able to vote for any of the candidates on the list, which is of concern because sometimes voters intentionally avoid voting for the women among the candidates. Closed lists are especially effective for women if political parties place them either high enough up on the party lists or alternated with men in a **zebra** (every other “stripe” is a woman) or **zipper** list style.¹⁵ The African National Congress in **South Africa** mandates a woman be listed as every third candidate on a party list; women hold 32 percent of the seats in parliament.

In a **majoritarian system** only one official represents each district and the person who gets the most votes wins the seat outright. It is a much more difficult system for women candidates seeking to win election. In the **United States** Congress, which uses a majoritarian system, women hold only 14 percent of seats.

Electoral Management Bodies: Many countries have electoral management bodies (EMBs) that aim to increase public confidence and participation in electoral processes. EMBs have varying mandates, but among their key activities are:

- promoting and ensuring transparency in the financial affairs of political parties;
- reviewing electoral laws and promoting best practices;
- encouraging greater public participation in elections and understanding of democratic processes and principles; and

- ensuring that there is electoral equality both regionally and sectorally—in other words, that the identities and interests of communities are being represented.

EMBs can play a key role in highlighting gender issues in elections by identifying obstacles that prevent women's participation, as well as conducting voter education programmes with outreach to women.

Quotas:¹⁶ One of the most decisive, but controversial, ways to ensure that women are represented among elected officials is the adoption of quotas that set aside or reserve seats for women. Some people feel that quotas are unfair or undemocratic, because they require voters to elect people they might not otherwise choose. Other people fear that women who achieve elected office because of quotas will not be respected because they were not elected on their own merits, but because of their sex. On the other hand, many people favour quotas because they rectify historic exclusion and overcome existing barriers. Quotas can also ensure that women reach a critical mass in legislatures so that individual women are not isolated token representatives. Fundamentally, those who support quotas do so because they feel that women's participation is valuable and necessary for democratic governance.

There are a variety of quotas: those mandated by constitutions, those legislated by parliaments and those adopted internally by political parties. In **Uganda**, one seat from each parliamentary district must be held by a woman, which is a system known as **reserved seats**. In 2004 **Iraq**, the Transitional Administrative Law did not mandate a quota but did set a 25 percent target for women's representation. Quotas are frequently enacted as temporary or special measures, with the expectation that when equitable representation of women can be achieved without them, they will no longer be necessary. However, it is rare for quotas to be removed after being established; often they are strengthened. One exception is **Denmark**, where political parties used to have quotas for women's representation but no longer need them. Without quotas, women in Denmark hold 38 percent of seats in parliament.¹⁷ On the other hand, removing quotas can be detrimental for women. A case in point is **Bangladesh**; following the expiration of the quota

law in April 2001, the number of women parliamentarians dropped from ten to two percent in the October 2001 election. An important concern about quotas is that they are often not respected. **France** is a good example; the law requires 50 percent representation of women, but at the national level, women are 12 percent of representatives.

For many women activists, getting women elected with the use of quotas is only half of the battle. Quotas can guarantee that women are elected in greater numbers but they cannot guarantee that those women will be gender sensitive or responsive to women's issues. Women in civil society should proactively reach out to women legislators and build coalitions to ensure that enough attention is paid to women's concerns. Additionally, women activists need to design mechanisms that will hold women legislators accountable to their constituencies. Women in civil society should also work to support and campaign for women candidates who have proven that they are sensitive to women's issues.

INDEPENDENT CIVIL SOCIETY AND MEDIA

"Civil society" refers to the non-governmental and, usually, non-profit sectors (although some definitions of civil society do include the business community and media outlets). Civil society includes non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as community associations, trade unions, professional leagues, religious and advocacy groups. It also describes the activity that occurs between the government and individual citizens. Civil society is critical to the development of a democracy because it can represent the views of citizens, hold elected officials accountable to the population and monitor democratic institutions (see chapter on civil society).

From a governance standpoint, the laws and legal procedures developed for the registration of NGOs is also of critical importance. In many cases, the legal framework acts as an obstacle to the establishment of independent NGOs and becomes a vehicle for the government's control of civil society. In other instances if laws are too lax, they do not protect against entities that form NGOs for the purpose of profit or political gain.

Many countries have state-controlled radio and television that the government uses as a medium for

broadcasting its own messages and views. But an independent media is an important pillar of good governance. Civil society groups and political parties should have the right to broadcast and publish information and ideas without fear of arrest or undue pressure. It is also critical to have a truly independent press that is sceptical of all parties, highlights corruption across the board and is not just the “mouthpiece” of one group or another. In states with authoritarian regimes or in the early stages of democracy, the Internet is increasingly used to share information. Similar to civil society, legislation governing media and protecting independent media is of critical importance and should be developed at an early stage.

RULE OF LAW

Respect for the rule of law is another key pillar of democracy. It means that the same constitution and set of laws govern and protect everyone and that all citizens are equal. It requires an independent judicial system that is fair and transparent and that prevents the government from wielding arbitrary power.

Constitutionalism and Legal Rights: A country’s constitution is its fundamental or supreme law, its overriding legal framework. It must guarantee the rights of all its citizens—women and men—and is critical to the development of a stable democracy. Because of their central importance, constitutional issues and legal rights are addressed more fully in a separate section of this toolkit.

Judicial Independence and Impartiality: The judiciary is the system of courts that oversees legal proceedings and makes up the judicial branch of government. The courts must be independent from the other branches of government. “If a judiciary cannot be relied upon to decide cases impartially, according to the law and not based on external pressures and influences, its role is distorted and public confidence in the government is undermined.”¹⁸

Women, especially, face challenges vis-à-vis the judicial system. In addition to laws and statutes that discriminate against women, “corrupt judicial procedures and the prevalence of ‘old boys’ networks: makes it in many cases impossible for women to win legal battles in a transparent and open way.”¹⁹ However, women can make positive contributions to the justice system by serving as witnesses and testifying about abuses.

Women judges have also contributed significantly to the development of national and international law, especially with regard to gender-based crimes in war. At the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, in every case that resulted in significant redress of sex crimes (perpetrated against women *and* men), women judges were on the bench (see chapter on transitional justice).²⁰

Anti-corruption: Corruption in government is the misuse of public goods, funds, or office for private gain. It includes behaviour such as embezzlement, fraud and the taking or requiring of bribes for the provision of public services. In addition to undermining economic development, corruption also undermines good governance. “Corruption in elections and in legislative bodies reduces accountability and representation in policymaking; corruption in the judiciary suspends the rule of law; and corruption in public administration results in the unequal provision of services.”²¹ Various studies have demonstrated that women are less likely to be corrupt than men. Research by Women Waging Peace found that, in Cambodia, where a lack of anti-corruption legislation is a major threat to good governance, women were leading anti-corruption efforts within civil society and female politicians were perceived to be less corrupt than their male colleagues.²²

Human Rights: Human rights are the basic rights and freedoms to which all human beings are entitled. The most basic human rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom of thought and expression and equality before the law. The respect for and protection of human rights, including the rights of minorities and of women, is a cornerstone of any democracy. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Charter are just two of the many international instruments that delineate basic and universal human rights (see chapter on human rights).

The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) specifically addresses women’s human rights. Internationally it is recognised that “discrimination against women, in the form of violence in particular, is among the most serious unresolved problems in human rights, pervading all aspects of human rights.”²³ Even if international treaties have been ratified and national legal systems nominally protect

women, customary laws, social attitudes and cultural practices can violate women's human rights.

Monitoring and defending human rights standards requires holding governments, militaries, political parties and other actors accountable. Often, civil society plays an important “watchdog” or monitoring role and is critical to the promotion of human rights. Women all over the world have formed NGOs to monitor human rights violations, educate women about their rights and promote adherence to international standards (see chapter on human rights).

3. WHO DESIGNS AND IMPLEMENTS GOVERNANCE PROGRAMMES?

While governance is often thought of as the responsibility of national authorities, in the aftermath of conflict, international actors often provide an umbrella under which new national structures are formed.

In **East Timor** (2000), the UN mission was responsible for establishing a new state, complete with systems of executive power, parliament and judiciary. In **Cambodia** (starting in 1993), UNTAC (the UN Transitional Authority) was effectively in charge of running the country, while the national authorities were still building their capacities and developing into operational entities, including executive and legislative branches. In **Afghanistan** (starting in 2001), the UN mission is trying to play a supportive role for the governing authorities, but in reality has greater capacity and resources than national actors. The UN Security Council determines the mandate of the UN in each country that hosts a mission.

In addition to the UN, regional organisations such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) have become involved in post conflict governance and “nation-building” efforts, notably in the Balkans.

Donor countries and their bilateral development agencies (e.g. US Agency for International Development, United Kingdom Department for International Development, Canadian International Development Agency), often through their surrogates (international

NGOs), have a role in designing programmes to support national-level democracy and governance efforts. They work in partnership with a variety of international and local groups, including NGOs, relief and development agencies. Their priorities are determined by the donor country's interests as well as by local needs (for more information on donor countries, see chapter on post conflict reconstruction).

Since the mid-1990s more effort has been put into strengthening civil society capacities to engage in political issues. In **Cambodia** UN agencies such as the UN Development Programme and UNIFEM (the UN's Fund for Women) were active in providing training for civil society and NGO development, encouraging people to participate in political processes and promoting democratic values. Many of the NGOs formed during that time continue to thrive today. Some of the individuals that participated in UN initiatives at the civil society level later ran for election and are now in formal national governance structures such as parliament and government.

In **Rwanda**, local women's civil society, represented by the umbrella NGO Pro-Femmes/Twese Hamwe, has established a consultative process with national-level government, specifically women in the executive and legislative branches. While some charge that civil society has been co-opted or controlled by the national government and that this consultative process is not free of problems, the system does provide space for civil society's input and contributions on all manner of governance issues, including proposed legislation.

4. WHAT INTERNATIONAL POLICIES EXIST TO ADVANCE WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN GOOD GOVERNANCE?

Several international instruments exist that facilitate women's involvement in good governance. Three examples are listed here.

- **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966, 1976)**

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights was adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by the UN General

Assembly in 1966 and entered into force in 1976. The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights monitors the Covenant. Article 3 states: “The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all civil and political rights set forth in the present Covenant.”²⁴

- **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979, 1981)**

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979 and entered into force in 1981. CEDAW is monitored by the CEDAW Committee under the auspices of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. It defines discrimination against women as “...any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.”²⁵ See the Toolkit Appendices for the full text of CEDAW.

- **UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000)**

UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which is described at length in other sections of this Toolkit (see chapter on international policies and legal mechanisms), calls for women’s participation in decision-making, conflict resolution and post conflict reconstruction. Specifically, the Security Council in its unanimous adoption of 1325, reaffirmed “the importance of their [women’s] equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution.”²⁶

5. HOW DO WOMEN CONTRIBUTE TO GOOD GOVERNANCE?

Evidence from around the world indicates that women are leading efforts to promote good governance. In post conflict countries:

- Women have established coalitions across party, ethnic and conflict lines. In **Rwanda**, women formed the first cross-party political caucus in their country’s parliament. Other legislators have since followed their lead and established cross-party caucuses to deal with common concerns (e.g. population issues), regardless of party affiliation. Women in **Cambodia** and **Bosnia** have created similar mechanisms to reach across traditional dividing lines.
- Women in civil society and political parties have advocated for the inclusion of women (and minorities, youth and the handicapped) in government by quotas or other means.
- Women in civil society have engaged with women in government (often at the Women’s Ministry and in parliament), creating a consultative relationship and a channel for information to flow from grassroots activists and civil society leaders to women who hold positions of authority in government.
- Women have engaged with locally and nationally elected leaders on issues that are important to women. In **Rwanda**, for example, women managed to change the law on inheritance so that women can now inherit property. In other parts of the world, women have advocated for gender-sensitive approaches to land reform, employment laws, family law and other issues.
- Women’s participation has transformed debate on topics that are not traditionally considered “women’s issues.” For example, women in post-apartheid **South Africa** succeeded in democratising the national debate over security and shaping defence policy by consulting widely with the population on causes of insecurity and priorities for the future. South Africa, in part because of the contributions of women, has adopted a “human security” framework as opposed to a solely “military security” approach.
- Women have led NGOs and civil society efforts that highlight abuses. In **Cambodia**, for instance, women civil society activists are leading anti-corruption efforts. Women’s peace groups in **Israel** routinely speak out about human rights abuses.
- Research demonstrates that women in elected office, particularly at the local level, are responsive

to the needs of their citizens, consultative in their decision-making and, perhaps because they are aware of being so closely scrutinised, less corrupt in the execution of their duties.

- Women—both in civil society and in government—monitor progress towards implementation of international instruments that protect women. Women have taken the lead in many countries, for instance, in reporting on CEDAW. The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) monitors the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325 through their website <www.peacewomen.org>.

6. TAKING STRATEGIC ACTION: WHAT CAN WOMEN PEACEBUILDERS DO?

1. Mobilise and consult with women nationally and at local levels to develop a common agenda or position statement on women’s human rights and perspectives on all issues. Use this to lobby international and local parties and to ensure that they are including gender perspectives in their plans.
 - Develop gender-sensitive briefs on key issues being addressed during election campaigns to highlight the differential impact of policies on women and men.
2. Meet with and train women as candidates for political office at local and national levels, encourage their engagement on all issues and show them that women’s votes matter. Identify a key group of women who have the capacity to enter the national political stage, help strengthen their skills and advocate for their participation.
3. Join political parties or lobby all parties demanding that:
 - they include women among the party leaders;
 - they adopt quotas for women’s participation within the party; and
 - there is a party agenda for women’s rights and equality.
4. Meet with elected officials including the electoral commission and lobby them to make sure that issues of importance to women are on the agenda. Partner with national electoral commissions to undertake a range of activities including:
 - conducting voter education programmes for women;
 - identifying obstacles to women’s political participation including in elections; and
 - providing gender-sensitive training to elected officials.
5. Encourage women elected officials to create a forum for consultation with civil society. Convene meetings for women party members and politicians to meet across political lines and encourage the development of a women’s caucus in parliament.
6. Vote and explain the importance of voting to other women and conduct voter education campaigns.
7. Review all laws and budgets in your country with a “gender perspective” to determine if they include women and address women’s needs. Solicit and collect women’s perspectives on proposed legislation and spending priorities and present these ideas to national-level authorities and donor countries.
8. Monitor progress on implementation and enforcement of existing laws on women’s rights. In constitution drafting, advocate for the inclusion of international norms and standards on women’s equality.
9. Review election procedures and advocate for guidelines and processes (e.g. voter eligibility and registration and polling procedures) that make elections more democratic and more accessible to women. Monitor elections.
10. Push mainstream newspapers, magazines or radio programmes to educate and inform people of their rights and responsibilities and to address women’s issues.

WHERE CAN YOU FIND MORE INFORMATION?

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ACRONYMS

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
EMBs	Electoral Management Bodies
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIWC	Northern Ireland Women's Coalition
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PR Systems	Proportional Representation Systems
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
WfP	Women for Prosperity
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

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