

THE MOTIVATION FOR WOMEN IN POLITICS

The Contemporary Politics of Women's Participation and Representation in Africa



THE MOTIVATION FOR WOMEN IN POLITICS

The Contemporary Politics of Women's Participation and Representation in Africa

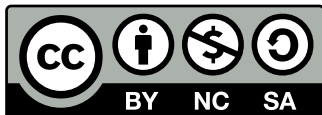
Annie Barbara Chikwanha and Theresa Moyo



International IDEA
Strömsborg
SE-103 34 Stockholm
SWEDEN
+46 8 698 37 00
info@idea.int
www.idea.int

© 2024 International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

International IDEA publications are independent of specific national or political interests. Views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the views of International IDEA, its Board or its Council members.



With the exception of any third-party images and photos, the electronic version of this publication is available under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence. You are free to copy, distribute and transmit the publication as well as to remix and adapt it, provided it is only for non-commercial purposes, that you appropriately attribute the publication, and that you distribute it under an identical licence. For more information visit the Creative Commons website: <<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>>.

International IDEA
Strömsborg
SE-103 34 Stockholm
SWEDEN
Tel: +46 8 698 37 00
Email: info@idea.int
Website: <<https://www.idea.int>>

Cover illustration: Theresa Moyo
Design and layout: International IDEA
Copyeditor: Accuracy Matters Ltd

DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2024.115>>

ISBN: 978-91-7671-871-1 (PDF)
ISBN: 978-91-7671-872-8 (Print)

Abbreviations

ACDEG	African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance
ACHPR	African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights
ANC	African National Congress
APC	All Progressives Congress
BDPA	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
CEDAW	United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CPDM	Cameroon People's Democratic Movement
CSO	civil society organization
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EAC	East African Community
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EMB	electoral management body
FPTP	first past the post
FRELIMO	Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Mozambique Liberation Front)
GBV	gender-based violence
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICT	information and communication technologies
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
KEWOPA	Kenya Women Parliamentary Association
LEAD	Labour, Economists and African Democrats, Zimbabwe
LDI	Liberal Democracy Index
LIFEMO	Mozambican Women's League
MLC	Mouvement du libération du Congo (Movement for the Liberation of the Congo)

PCI	Participatory Component Index
PDP	Peoples Democratic Party, Nigeria
PR	proportional representation
REC	regional economic community
RENAMO	Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (Mozambican National Resistance)
RPF	Rwanda Patriotic Front
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADRA	South African Development and Reconstruction Agency
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SNP	Seychelles National Party
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
V-Dem	Varieties of Democracy
WEF	World Economic Forum
WPP	women's political participation

Acknowledgements

A work of this magnitude would not have materialized without the support of other actors. We are therefore deeply indebted to all those who supported us in different ways. We wish to acknowledge the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance's Women in Political Participation programme team for the logistical support and guidance throughout. We are equally grateful to the officials in African governments, representatives of civil society organizations and women's movements, and the academics who were instrumental in linking us with women politicians in their respective countries. To the women in politics and male allies who took time to share their experiences with respect to their political journeys, we appreciate the value you will add to increasing women's participation in politics in the region. Finally, we thank Enock Ndawana for research support in data collection in some of the countries.

Foreword

I am humbled to have been asked to write this foreword by the authors. My involvement in the report was mostly at a technical advisory level, which I hope has helped to shape this report. In much of the relevant literature, a huge debate is raging on the two cardinal principles of governance—namely, participatory and representative democracy. This means that countries, scholars and policymakers must prioritize not only representational aspects of democracy but also participatory ones. A report on women's democratic participation in elections in Africa lies at the heart of this debate. In addition, the report is timely because the role of women in democracy and governance has become a topical issue globally, and an important part of the work for human rights and gender equality. Admittedly, Africa still struggles to elect women executive leaders to the highest echelons of the political spectrum, notably heads of state and government, prime ministers and senior ministers, especially in critical portfolios, such as defence, security, finance, intelligence and foreign affairs. Thus, a report on women's participation will contribute immensely to the debates, policy discussions and activists' efforts to promote women in leadership positions on the continent. It will ultimately help improve women's overall empowerment in Africa.

In Africa, the desire of women political leaders, activists and thought leaders to be appointed at the highest levels of their countries' political systems is unquestionable. Their passion to be agents of change who can make a significant contribution in society to dealing with scourges—such as rape and gender-based violence, marginalization, tokenism and several types of injustices against women—is also convincing. Given the dangers and pitfalls of patriarchy, including the entrenchment of oppressive or authoritarian governance systems in Africa and globally, women's dissatisfaction with male domination in politics is justified and understood. However, a report such as this one should urge African societies to go beyond simply understanding or condemning such situations, since the status quo cannot be left as it is. If it is, this could compromise the fulfilment of the ideals of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies (1995) and several other international instruments that promote women's equality and participation in democratic processes in Africa.

Furthermore, the report seeks to highlight and supplement women's struggles to achieve their socio-economic, political and other needs and priorities in Africa. As the relevant literature in this report attests, women's liberation struggles in many African countries were largely about liberation from numerous forms of oppression, especially racism and colonialism, wage slavery and patriarchy. Therefore, the total liberation of African people will be incomplete if it does not address these

women-specific struggles. Finally, since women usually constitute the largest number of voters on many African countries' voter rolls, by emphasizing democratic participation, this report should benefit ordinary female voters. It should also be welcomed by researchers, policymakers, activists, diplomats and government officials, as well as women in civil society, community-based and non-governmental organizations, electoral management bodies and other areas that are normally linked to political power, governance and the struggles for freedom in our countries.

Kealeboga J. Maphunye
Former WIPHOLD-Brigalia Bam Research Chair in Electoral Democracy in Africa,
University of South Africa (UNISA)
Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence, Lincoln University, Philadelphia (USA)

Contents

Abbreviations	iv
Acknowledgements	vi
Foreword	vii
Executive summary	1
Introduction	4
I.1. Why do women's participation and representation in politics matter?	8
I.2. The root cause of women's under-representation in politics: A framework for analysis	9
I.3. The gender dimension of political participation	10
I.4. Methodology	14
I.5. Structure of the report	17
I.6. Conclusion	18
Chapter 1	
International frameworks on women's participation and representation in politics	19
1.1. Introduction	19
1.2. A review of the international frameworks on women's participation and representation in politics	20
1.3. Conclusion	27
Chapter 2	
Regional frameworks on women's participation and representation in politics	28
2.1. Introduction	28
2.3. Subregional level: Frameworks by regional economic communities	33
2.4. Conclusion	36
Chapter 3	
Political systems, electoral systems and affirmative action	38
3.1. Introduction	38
3.2. Political and electoral systems and women's participation and representation	38
3.3. Affirmative action	43
3.4. Missed opportunities	44
3.5. Presidential leadership	46
3.6. Appointed positions	47
3.7. Conclusion	49

Chapter 4

Factors motivating women to participate in politics and barriers encountered	50
4.1. Introduction	50
4.2. The enablers.....	51
4.3. Barriers to women's participation and representation	55
4.4. Pushing for women's inclusion	66
4.5. Conclusion	68

Chapter 5

Advocates who promote increasing women's political participation and representation 69	
5.1. Introduction.....	69
5.2. Civil society organizations	70
5.3. The range of advocates.....	71
5.4. Conclusion	77

Chapter 6

Case studies.....	78
6.1. Introduction.....	78
6.2. Women's participation and representation in politics in East Africa	81
6.3. Women's participation and representation in politics in Central Africa	99
6.4. Women's participation and representation in politics in North Africa.....	111
6.5. Women's participation and representation in politics in Southern Africa.....	123
6.6. Women's participation and representation in politics in West Africa	140
6.7 Conclusion	153

Chapter 7

Highlights of the discussion on the motivators of women's participation and representation in politics	154
7.1. Introduction.....	154
7.2. Commonalities across the regions.....	154
7.3. Conclusion	158

Chapter 8

Conclusions and recommendations	160
8.1. Introduction.....	160
8.2. Summary of findings	161
8.3. Strategies to enhance women's political participation and representation.....	162

References	166
-------------------------	------------

Annex A. List of interviewees.....	178
---	------------

About the authors.....	180
-------------------------------	------------

About International IDEA	181
---------------------------------------	------------

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Women's participation is a key issue in contemporary African politics. This is partly due to the gender gap that still exists, as reflected in women's under-representation in political institutions and in leadership positions. Although it is encouraging that there has been an increase in women's representation in legislative bodies, from 11 per cent in 2000 to 24 per cent in 2020, this is still far from the desired 50/50 gender parity. Indeed, some countries have seen reversals in the gains that had previously been made. The *Africa Barometer 2024* on women's political participation has noted sluggish growth over the last four years, where women's representation has increased by just one percentage point.

In Africa, political leadership and representation remain largely male-dominated. This runs contrary to basic principles of democracy, given that women in Africa constitute at least 50 per cent of the population across all countries. This gender inequality in political representation and participation contradicts international law, in terms of the principles of human rights and equality between women and men as espoused in international agreements and conventions to which most African countries are signatories. The gender gap in political participation is problematic because the political space continues to foster unequal power relations, which give men an advantage over women. An inclusive political space is important because it is the arena where critical decisions are made on things like public policy, allocation of resources and setting development priorities. Women's participation on an equal basis with men in this space is important to ensure that the decisions taken are equitable and fair in terms of outcomes, as is expected in a democracy.

In Africa, political leadership and representation remain largely male-dominated.

Several factors contribute to women's under-representation in leadership and decision making. The main factors relate to social norms, including religious and cultural beliefs and practices, that perpetuate the notion of the superiority of men over women, and a skewed division of labour that confines women to the private sphere of household care and domestic work while reserving the public sphere as a male domain. Increasing women's political participation fundamentally calls for the dismantling of such social norms and practices, which exclude and marginalize women not only from politics but also from other spheres of life. Other factors that contribute to the limited participation of women in politics include the high cost of running political campaigns, and the lack of education, resources and skills to enable women to navigate the political landscape. Male domination of political parties has also reinforced the under-representation of women in leadership, which affects their prospects for appointment into legislative bodies.

Despite the challenges articulated above, there are some factors that have enabled women's participation. A more favourable environment has emerged due to the adoption of international and regional frameworks that support women's participation in politics on an equal basis with men. Most notably, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948); the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979); the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPA, 1995); the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (also referred to as the Maputo Protocol, 2003); the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007); and the 2008 Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development. Most African countries have ratified these protocols and are in the process of domesticating them. Other enabling factors have been the role of women's movements and civil society organizations, which have been active in advocating for women's participation in politics.

Gathered from interviews conducted in all five of Africa's subregions (East, Central, North, Southern and West), the evidence of the factors that motivate women to participate in politics was largely obtained from women politicians. A major factor which most respondents highlighted, was their desire and passion to be agents of change in their own societies, especially when they became aware of injustices against women. Others cited dissatisfaction with the male domination of politics. Several respondents pointed to prior experiences that had raised their consciousness about women's needs and priorities—for example, when working in the civil

society sector, or through activism in student movements. In some countries, the struggle for women's liberation was part of a wider epistemic moment—not only for women but for men as well—and the realization that the liberation of women was a necessary pillar of national liberation. Ultimately, women's participation in liberation struggles has given birth to feminist and other movements that have continued to advocate for women's rights in all spheres in the post-independence period.

The different types of electoral systems have implications for women's representation. Proportional representation (PR) electoral systems clearly create more opportunities for including minorities while majoritarian systems confer victory to one winner, leaving out minorities. The meteoric rise of women in political representation in Africa—for example, in Rwanda and Senegal—is largely attributed to more inclusive electoral systems and affirmative action policies. Despite this evidence, almost half of African countries utilize a simple majority system (23 African countries), while 18 countries use PR and 10 have a mixed system. The numbers of women representatives tend to be higher in the PR systems. Most African countries (40) have constitutional, legislated or voluntary party quotas, but there are challenges in complying with national frameworks, and political will is wanting when it comes to pushing for the alignment of administrative measures that would raise the number of women representatives. In total, 32 African countries that conducted elections between 2021 and 2024 missed out on the opportunity to use temporary special measures to increase women's participation. This points again to a general lack of political will to address gender inequalities in the region. The region struggles with the institutional capacity to align administrative measures with electoral law, constitutional provisions, and regional and international norms and standards.

This report calls upon African governments to accelerate the implementation of the international, regional, subregional and national frameworks on women's participation in politics on an equal basis with men. It emphasizes that, instead of a 30 per cent target for women's representation in legislative bodies, countries should be aiming for 50/50 representation. It calls upon governments and other actors, such as the women's movement, development partners and civil society, to build the capacity of women politicians by equipping them with knowledge and tools on how to run political campaigns. The report also recommends that political parties need to do more to mainstream gender in their policies and practices to ensure that they become effective agents for achieving the transformation of gender relations in politics.

The different types of electoral systems have implications for women's representation.

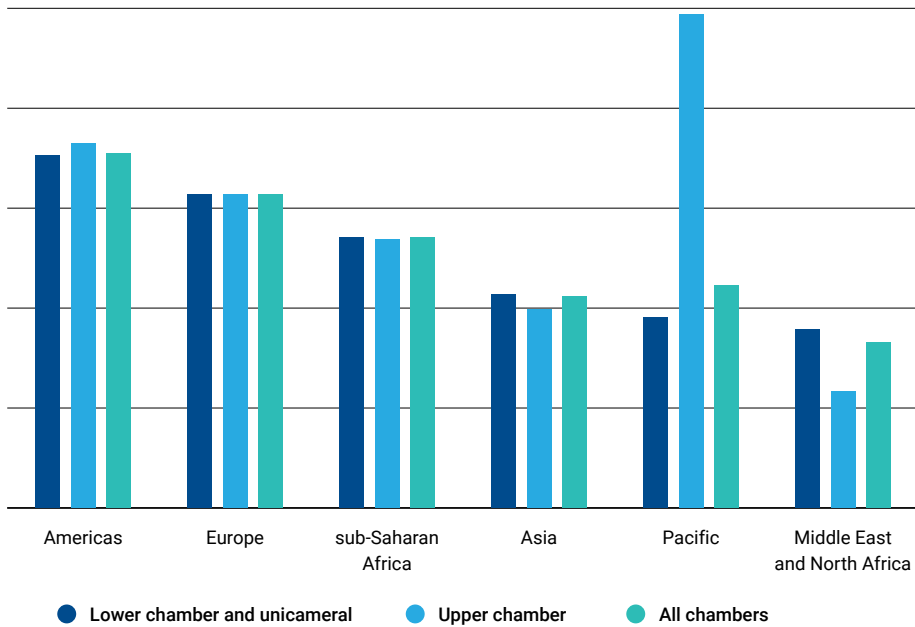
INTRODUCTION

In 2024 Africa has an average of 27 per cent women's representation in the combined chambers of parliament.

Globally, the race to increase women's representation in line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 5.5 on women's political participation (WPP) is faltering, with overall figures still below 30 per cent (see Figure 1.1). This is despite the presence of several protocols, norms and standards that heads of state have committed to. Democracy, and its principles of fairness, equality, accountability, justice and non-discrimination, serves as a model of governance for society that includes the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment (UNDP 2023). The set target of 30 per cent is deemed to be sufficient to achieve more than just symbolic representation, by creating a mass cohort of women legislators who can have a positive impact on policies and move the world closer to inclusivity in governance. The last two decades have seen a big increase globally in women's representation in legislative bodies (13 percentage points between 2000 and 2020), although there were major variations across regions. In 2024 Africa has an average of 27 per cent women in the combined chambers of parliament, surpassing Asia, the Pacific, and the Middle East and North African regions (IPU 2024).

The *Africa Barometer 2024* revealed that women's representation in African parliaments has been rather stagnant since 2021, with an increase of just one percentage point in the four years to 2024 (International IDEA 2024). As Africa has held elections in over 32 countries in the last four years, the expectation was for an upward surge in the number of women legislators, in line with international and regional standards. The same slow place is noted in the *Global Gender Gap Report 2024*, where sub-Saharan Africa's gender parity

Figure I.1. Women and political participation: Africa in a global context 2024



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), 'Global and regional averages of women in national parliaments', June 2024, <https://data.ipu.org/women-averages/?date_year=2024&date_month=10>, accessed 29 July 2024.

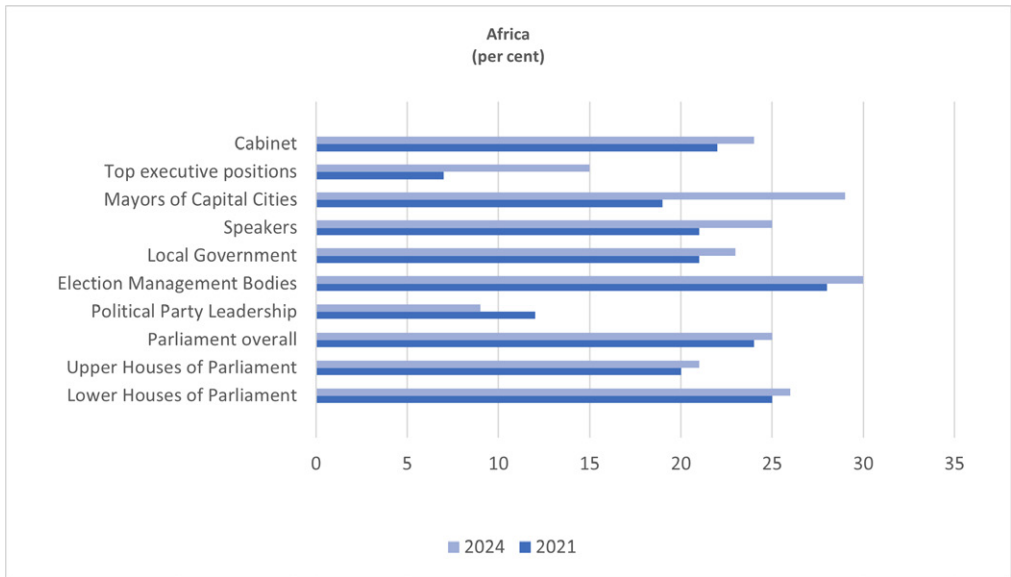
score of 68.4 per cent shows a 5.6 percentage point increase over a period of 18 years (WEF 2024).¹

Holders of the highest political positions in African countries have remained mostly men over the last five decades. The 22 women heads of state across 17 different countries in the region (32 per cent since 1970) were either elected or served in an acting capacity (Bebington 2024). This translates into an average of one woman every two and a half years and demonstrates the overall sluggish pace of growth for women's political leadership. In the lower chambers of parliament, Africa has an estimated 25 per cent women (see Figure I.2) and has struggled to reach this level. The important

¹ The Global Gender Gap Index benchmarks the current state and evolution of gender parity annually, across four key dimensions (Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment).

point is that the presence of women in leadership roles is a key motivator for other women to participate in politics at lower levels.

Figure I.2. Africa's gap in elected and high-level appointed posts 2021–2024



Source: International IDEA, *Women's Political Participation: Africa Barometer 2024* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2024), <<https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2024.46>>.

By 2024, none of the influential elected and appointed positions in Africa had reached 40 per cent for women's participation. Only electoral management bodies (EMBs) had reached 30 per cent, the target set by the African Union and its subsidiary bodies the regional economic communities (RECs). EMBs have appointed women executives and many others in technical posts. The other top executive posts in government are at 15 per cent women. Among the elected positions, mayors lead the pack at 29 per cent women and have the biggest increase (10 percentage points) over a four-year period. In 2021, Africa had 10,510 parliamentarians (UNECA 2022), and just about 25 per cent of these were women. Despite how important parliaments are in meeting women's needs, second only to local councils, which are at just 23 per cent, the increase in women parliamentarians over a three-year period is only 3 percentage points. Political party leadership remains at a dismal 13 per cent, up just

4 percentage points since 2021. The marginal increases all around indicate the need for more efforts to achieve 50 per cent parity in African parliaments. All African countries have committed to meeting the target of women holding at least 30 per cent of parliament positions by 2030. There are wide variances among African countries on this issue, with some making significant progress and others seemingly paying lip service to the commitment. African governments have missed the opportunity to address this gap that the many elections in Africa over recent years have presented.

From the 2000s, levels of women's participation in parliament hovered around 13 per cent, and by 2023 this had risen to about 26 per cent, with the pace of increase remaining at an average of 2–3 percentage points every two years (IPU 2017). The high levels of women in parliament in a few countries—Mozambique, Rwanda, Senegal and South Africa—pushed these figures up. Despite being half of the world's population, women make up just 22.5 per cent of legislative seats worldwide (IPU 2017). The cause of this disproportion is rooted in cultural, socio-economic, religious and political factors, among others. For instance, Tremblay (2012) observed that Islamic beliefs on the roles of women in society is one cultural factor that has been used to explain low levels of women's representation, while Christian Protestantism is viewed as producing more favourable results. Systems that provide more equal access to gender roles and enable women to access higher education are some of the cultural challenges that yield more positive levels of women's representation (Tremblay 2012). With better socio-economic conditions that enhance the overall quality of life for women to build their capacity in engaging in public affairs, more will likely opt to participate in politics.

Through the many international and regional protocols on gender, African countries have the required policy and institutional frameworks to close the gender political participation gap. Many African countries have ratified conventions, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR 1948), the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW 1979), the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003, the Maputo Protocol)² and the 2008 Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development, which are all geared towards achieving gender equality in decision making

2 As at June 2023, 44 out of 55 African Union member states had ratified the Maputo Protocol.

African countries have the required policy and institutional frameworks to close the gender political participation gap.

at all levels by adhering to non-discriminatory policies (Meena 2018). Although all countries have some revered women leaders and heroines, the prevailing cultural and social norms continue to keep women out of the political arena as leaders. Regardless of these obstacles, many women from diverse settings have pushed back on the exclusive male-dominated political culture and are making inroads into high-profile political spaces. What then drives these women to force inclusion and how do they strategize? What motivates them to enter these rather closed spaces?

This publication attempts to highlight the resilience of women politicians and their supporters in contexts where political gatekeeping and electoral dynamics undermine their participation, making access to the political space a privilege for which they have to fight. It critically analyses factors that motivate women's participation in politics, by identifying, assessing and documenting the current situation with respect to women's participation in politics in the African region. Understanding these motivating aspects, teasing out the key influences and defining the attitudes and mindsets that drive women's political participation is essential for designing mechanisms to expand women's inclusion. Women's political representation is defined as the proportion of seats held by women in elected and appointed positions. In this report, political participation includes a broad range of activities through which people develop and express their opinions on how they are governed and try to take part in shaping the decisions that affect their lives. Participation encompasses active engagement that is demonstrated through party membership, voting and contesting elected offices.

1.1. WHY DO WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION IN POLITICS MATTER?

Women make a significant difference in politics; they bring much needed sobriety and the equilibrium required to tackle political and societal matters sustainably (interviewee). Research has shown that women's political leadership has several societal benefits, such as inequality reduction (WEF 2017), improved cooperation across party and ethnic lines, and increased prioritization of social issues, such as health, education, parental leave and pensions (Markham 2014). Additionally, WPP has been shown to be particularly influential for women in their communities. Issues such as female voter turnout and public service responsiveness to women in general can be

attributed to the presence of women in decision-making positions across the public and private sectors, influencing policies.

Dahlerup (2003) justified the inclusion of women in politics in three ways: the pursuit of justice as equity, the fulfilment of women's lived experiences, and the fact that they represent specific interests. That women make up half the population means that they have the right to half the seats in all public office. This is a logical conclusion drawn from the fact that it is in the interest of justice to have women represent themselves. This has driven many of the legislative approaches to women's representation in Africa. Another argument emphasizes the different experiences of women, whether physically or socially constructed, and this ties in with the concept of gender responsiveness that calls for attention to the specific needs of women that merit representation. This line of thinking remains difficult to translate into action in Africa, where many policies and services do not respond to women's needs. For instance, women have reported that community meetings are very often organized around 18:00 in the evening, but that coincides with dinner preparation time and attending to children after school (interviewee, Nigeria 2024). More importantly, women's interests are not necessarily aligned with men's interests; hence, they must have space to represent their own.

African Union member states are proactively working towards achieving equal representation of women and men in politics and in decision-making positions at all levels, such as cabinet, parliament and local authorities. Despite these efforts and several declarations, statistics show that there are still few women involved in key political positions and national decision-making platforms. The patriarchal nature of most public institutions, and the toxic masculinity of political affairs, deters women from participating equally in politics in many African countries.

African Union member states are proactively working towards achieving equal representation of women and men in politics.

1.2. THE ROOT CAUSE OF WOMEN'S UNDER-REPRESENTATION IN POLITICS: A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

The under-representation of women in African politics is no mere coincidence. This report draws on feminist analyses to argue that the many barriers hindering women from politics are fundamentally rooted in the unequal power relations between women and men at

all levels in Africa. Unequal power relations have created a gender division of labour, where women have been assigned roles and responsibilities confined to the household. Their main roles are reproduction and care and domestic work. For men, they are not only leaders in the home but in the public sphere as well. Because of this division of labour, over the years, women have become marginalized and excluded from leadership and decision making both in the private and public spheres, including politics. As a result, most decision makers in African parliaments, local government, government ministries, industry and even civil society tend to be male.

Unequal power relations between women and men have been entrenched or embedded in all segments of society.

Unequal power relations between women and men have been entrenched or embedded in all segments of society through factors such as social norms, religious and other beliefs about the value and worth of women in relation to men, and discriminatory laws and policies that give preference to men over women in labour markets, wage structures, financial markets, industry and communities. Feminist scholars, such as Ahikire (2019), have articulated in very clear terms the nature of patriarchy and the gender hierarchies and inequalities that still exist in most African societies. A feminist framework is therefore best for problematizing the struggle for women's rights, as it advocates for the transformation of power structures and practices embedded in institutions. This report analyses the systemic nature of patriarchal beliefs and practices, and how they have contributed to the marginalization or even exclusion of women from leadership and decision making in the political arena. It argues that the quest to ensure that women participate in politics on an equal basis with men fundamentally depends on the ability of African governments and other actors to dismantle the root causes of bias and prejudice against women in all spheres of African societies.

1.3. THE GENDER DIMENSION OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Gender remains a contested topic. Many of the terms that form part of the discussion are often used interchangeably—for instance, gender equity is often used to refer to gender equality, but it is important that a distinction is made between these two concepts. This is to allow for reflecting on divergent understandings of gender differences and formulating appropriate strategies to address them. Bangani and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2020) point out that gender

equality denotes women having the same opportunities in life as men, including the ability to participate in the public sphere, while gender equity denotes the equivalence in life outcomes for women and men, recognizing their different needs and interests, and requiring a redistribution of power and resources. Gender equity goes beyond equality of opportunity by requiring transformative change, and this largely occurs through political participation. This brings it closer to the concept of gender responsiveness (Bloom, Owen and Covington 2003). A gender-responsive approach considers the design of institutions, systems and facilities to challenge forms of gender inequality and unequal power relations, while improving women's lack of control over resources. Such an approach is important for creating an environment that supports and enables women to realize their full potential. This conceptualization brings out the distinction between gender equity and gender equality with a gender bias, which refers to the displays of favouritism to a specific gender resulting in unfair treatment.

It is therefore imperative to scrutinize the region's normative frameworks and political institutions for both gender sensitivity and gender responsiveness. Gender responsiveness is an essential element of inclusive governance that is central to the achievement of the SDGs, yet it has not received much attention from regional policymakers. The failure of almost all African governments to implement many of the gender protocols partly explains the lack of gender responsiveness and gender sensitivity within the frameworks themselves. Individual countries have the responsibility for translating the many protocols into concrete activities that heads of state commit to, which is why it is also necessary to analyse the national-level political culture in the selected case studies.

Since the third wave of democratization started in the mid-1970s (Huntington 1991), the concept of WPP in Africa automatically evokes an analysis of the gender hierarchy, and scrutiny of social systems, social norms and cultural practices, and is laden with the historical exclusion of women from the political arena. Political participation remains a site of gender struggles in Africa and many other developing countries. Women continue to battle to be seen and included in policy arenas. Their distance from power centres makes it hard for them to access resources and demand accountability and inclusion; yet, going back to the pre-colonial era, some women did have status in the traditional governance systems. The overarching conceptual framework of this report is about how the political and governance structures and institutions, the political

Gender equity goes beyond equality of opportunity by requiring transformative change, and this largely occurs through political participation.

culture, feminist theories and key advocates who push for women's inclusion all play their part in shaping the motivations of women who participate in politics. Transformation is at the heart of most theories on women's under-representation.

Some studies have argued that women experience differential costs in terms of running for political office. This relates to the costs of competing for office that vary between women and men due to the gendered nature of household or family roles, which cripple women's political ambition, as do complex electoral processes (Lawless and Fox 2005). Although there is now a shift in perception, with the younger male generation embracing women's leadership, there remains a general view among the older generation that women are unsuitable for office (Lawless 2015), which is believed to contribute to voter discrimination at the ballot box (Erskine 1971; Ferree 1974). However, if women are fielded by political parties that will foot their campaign bills, then these perceptions and attitudes will change. In any case, many women who have held high political office have excelled, at times outperforming their male colleagues, and debunked these conjectures.

Scholars of women's representation have mainly focused on descriptive representation, referring simply to the proportion of representatives in legislative bodies who are women. In many African countries, there has been a tendency to emphasize descriptive representation—rather than any other kind of representation—which refers to women representatives as being agents who stand in for the top leadership. This has been very common in dominant party rule systems, often aligned with strong-men rule (as in Eswatini, Uganda and Zimbabwe). However, the question is to what extent women representatives project the values of the women they represent. One example is countries where, for instance, politics and service delivery or any other political developments are attributed to the principal, the 'strong man' or benevolent father figure. In these scenarios, women's representatives cease to represent the agenda of women and become overly concerned with their own political survival and selling the image of the father figure. This deviates from the principle that legislative bodies 'should be an exact portrait, in miniature, of the people at large, as it should think, feel, reason and act like them' (Pitkin 1967: 60). This has sometimes given rise to additional scrutiny of the calibre of women elected to parliament and often generated negativity towards women who pursue political office (Franceschet, Annesley and Beckwith 2017).

Political parties and electoral systems in turn influence women's descriptive representation, through the processes for the selection and election of candidates. This theorizing can be questionable in Africa, where liberation and nationalist movements advocated for equality between the sexes, but very little has changed and still only small numbers of women are elected who had to conform to the party's dictates. All of Africa went through decolonization but, since 1957, when Ghana attained its independence, none have prioritized the adoption of electoral systems that promote women's election to parliament. The majoritarian systems that dominated the African landscape immediately after independence have been proved to work against women's descriptive representation (Paxton and Kunovich 2003).

Another perspective, the substantive representation argument, portrays the role of women representatives as that of active agents who act for the principal (Pitkin 1967). The implication is that, when women are in elected positions, they are likely to pursue policies that advance women's interests and well-being. Feminists find the agency of descriptive and substantive representation of women to be intertwined, since collaboration on promoting women-friendly policies is supposedly a natural act (Bratton 2005). The question, then, is: do numbers matter in Africa, and has the increase in women's political presence in parliament led to substantial gains in women-friendly policies (Bauer 2012)? In Rwanda, women have made significant progress on many women's rights due to their high levels of representation (Burnet 2008). In Zimbabwe, a woman-led political party, the Labour, Economists and African Democrats (LEAD), successfully blocked the policy intended to lower the legal age of consent from 16 to 12 years in 2021. In many countries, such successes have been sporadic, however, so it seems that political will on the part of women politicians is paramount in pursuing women-friendly policies.

Studies on Senegal often attribute the quick rise in numbers of women in parliament to a third school of thought, symbolic representation. This refers to women representatives as agents who are attributed a certain representative meaning for the principal (Lombardo and Meier 2014). Many political institutions demonstrate how symbolic representation works. For instance, cabinets are made up of appointed positions, but they are also sites of representation, where ministers are often chosen to represent specific groups at the highest level (Franceschet, Annesley and Beckwith 2017). This symbolism gives both the appointing agent

and the appointees some desired status of inclusivity, and appeases the many audiences to whom the symbol is directed. By opening space for more women and appointing them in key positions, public attitudes realign positively. This symbolic representation of women is related to the social construction of gender roles and many post-liberation war governments in Southern Africa initially adopted this approach (Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe). Presenting women as political actors was believed to change people's attitudes, beliefs and assumptions concerning who had the right to govern. A problem arises when women either fail to perform in these positions or are not given responsibilities that give them actual power, so the whole act is regarded as tokenism. When women's positions trigger positive outcomes, discriminatory attitudes towards women as political leaders change (Beaman, Pande and Cirone 2012). This links up descriptive representation with symbolic and substantive representation, which feminist scholars defend in the sense that merely having more women in legislative bodies is valuable if it leads to changes at a broader level. Women's representation in Africa cuts across all these perceptions, while some countries may be more inclined towards one perception. In addition, the penetration of women into opposition parties challenges all these ideas, since they transcend all these categories and shape their own agendas that appeal directly to women.

1.4. METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research design was used in this study and interviews were designed to capture WPP challenges across different countries and identify initiatives that have yielded results. Eleven cases were selected across all five regions in Africa to ensure regional inclusiveness while adhering to principles of inclusivity and diversity. The countries do not claim to be representatives of the subregions but, rather, they speak to the diversity in the area and in the region at large. They cover the Lusophone, Anglophone and Francophone divides, the religious cleavages and modes of transition to democratic rule. Some countries had relatively peaceful transitions to independence and some experienced violent turbulence. Women politicians and men activists who support the advancement of women were identified in the 11 country cases—three from East Africa and two from the other four African subregions (see Table I.1)—and interviews were conducted on what motivates them to participate in politics. The East African region has three countries—

Kenya, Rwanda and Seychelles—for two reasons. One is the need to showcase Rwanda, which is the country par excellence in terms of women’s representation and participation in leadership positions, and the other is to include a quite different country, Seychelles, which is a cluster of small islands with distinct state formation dynamics. Interviews were also conducted in other countries in these regions. Success stories from these interviewees on their lived experiences in political participation were collected to complement their life histories.

Table I.1. Case studies

Region	Countries	Gender gap 2023
East Africa	Kenya	0.708
	Rwanda	0.794
	Seychelles	–
Central Africa	Democratic Republic of the Congo	0.612
	Cameroon	0.693
North Africa	Sudan	–
	Tunisia	0.642
Southern Africa	Mozambique	0.778
	South Africa	0.787
West Africa	Nigeria	0.637
	Senegal	0.680

Source: World Economic Forum (WEF), *Global Gender Gap Report 2024* (Geneva: WEF, 2024), <<https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2024/digest>>, accessed 29 May 2024.

The following data collection techniques described below were used.

Desk study

Secondary sources on drivers of WPP and representation in politics were derived from a variety of publications. These included a comprehensive review of the available literature on women’s participation and representation, and progress reports compiled by different stakeholders in the region and other actors. Some of the key resources were the *Africa Barometer 2021* and *2024* on WPP, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) database, International IDEA reports and databases and the World Bank database. Data was also

collected from civil society organization (CSO) reports, government reports, academic and grey literature, and anecdotal evidence from the media.

A review of the relevant legal and administrative measures that guide the promotion of WPP included the policies and legislative frameworks developed at the global, regional and national levels. This focused particularly on the African Union, RECs and related African Union organs and specialized agencies which set the norms and standards on gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa as informed by global normative frameworks, as well as the lived realities and needs of women and girls across the continent. Some of the key protocols for promoting women's participation in politics are the Maputo Protocol and the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. These frameworks were useful in tracking patterns on women's participation in the region to get comparative insights on what works well in different contexts.

Key informant interviews

Most primary data was collected through key informant interviews conducted with select women politicians and activists in registered CSOs that work on gender empowerment. The range of interviewees included women members of parliament, representatives from political parties, men identified as allies in advancing the inclusion of women, women who lead political parties and gender-issue experts from CSOs. The selection of participants was determined by their media visibility, participation in political parties (as electoral candidates) and through the snowballing method. Interviews were conducted online (Microsoft Teams, Zoom or Google Meet, and WhatsApp calls).

Discursive analysis was used to interpret the data, and time series analysis for the quantitative data within the country case studies was important for assessing current political and governance dynamics vis-à-vis women's needs and their reasons for participation in all aspects of political affairs. The transformation of governance practices to be inclusive of women and minorities in general has always been problematic as it is a moving target. There will always be advances and regressions in the inclusion of women in politics and this is largely affected by the macho political cultures in the region. The study therefore utilized specific retrospective questions to assess women actors' insights.

The data collection was carried out in line with mainstream research ethical guidelines. Anonymity and confidentiality, along with the data itself, were secured throughout the study. Pseudonyms are used in the report to protect some of the interviewees in countries that are intolerant of outspoken citizens who challenge the status quo.

The transformation of governance practices to be inclusive of women and minorities in general has always been problematic as it is a moving target.

1.5. STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

This introductory chapter details the theme, gives an overview of women's representation in Africa, lays out the conceptual framework and describes the methodology applied in the report. Chapter 1 defines the international protocols that guide women's inclusion. Chapter 2 focuses on the regional policy and legal frameworks that motivate and encourage women to participate in politics. The region's compliance with gender protocols is reviewed to assess political will and the drive to include women in politics. Chapter 3 presents an overview of political systems and the types of democracy and electoral systems in Africa and how these relate to affirmative action mechanisms applied to aid in the inclusion of women in politics. The aim is to ascertain the implications of different political systems and electoral quotas (where they exist) on women's participation. Chapter 4 identifies the key drivers that motivate women to participate in politics and the obstacles that limit them. The lessons learned from these approaches to women's participation feed into the last chapter on the recommendations. Chapter 5 discusses the different advocates and role models who spur other women into political participation. Chapter 6 presents the 11 country case studies that cover the region (geographically). These were selected to acknowledge the diversity in the region—across political systems, levels of democracy, religious differences, colonial legacy and liberation histories. This chapter involved the use of statistics to demonstrate the prevalence of ongoing policies and potential future problems in women's equal participation in the regions. Chapter 7 is a critical analysis of the motivators for women in politics, based on data from the case studies. The focus is on the commonalities between the key motivators across the region and the strategies utilized in different political systems. The aim was to tease out the pathways for the inclusion of women in politics across the countries and highlight their regional policy implications. The last chapter on the conclusions and recommendations reviews the policy implications of strategies utilized by women politicians and other advocates across the case studies and their relevance for replication.

The variations in women's participation across countries made it possible to propose strategic interventions to enhance women's participation in different settings.

Women's participation is essential for achieving significant levels of development that can lead to stability and prosperity.

1.6. CONCLUSION

This introductory chapter has presented the background to the report's theme and taken a quick look at the status of women's representation in Africa compared with other regions. Women's participation is essential for achieving significant levels of development that can lead to stability and prosperity. This calls for a deeper understanding of what motivates women to participate in politics and the challenges they encounter. A panoramic view of this phenomenon is essential for designing intervention strategies that have worked elsewhere in the region.

Chapter 1 reviews the international frameworks that inform regional and national approaches to enhancing women's inclusion in politics.

Chapter 1

INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORKS ON WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION IN POLITICS

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Progress in the implementation of the global agenda for gender equality and empowerment of women in the political, economic, social and cultural arenas has largely been made possible because of concerted efforts by the United Nations. Working together with state actors and other interested parties, the UN has developed comprehensive and robust frameworks that spell out norms and standards on women's participation in politics. This chapter provides an overview of the international frameworks that are central to the prioritization and institutionalization of gender equality and empowerment of women, and which guide countries to advance this agenda. These include the Charter of the United Nations, the UDHR, CEDAW, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPA) and several UN General Assembly resolutions.

The frameworks are all aligned with the global 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, which contains a specific goal on gender equality and women's empowerment, SDG 5. SDG 5 aims to achieve gender equality in all areas where women and girls are disadvantaged and experience inequality—for example, in education, health, access to wealth and resources. SDG 5 also seeks to eradicate inequality based on gender in employment, agriculture and industry, decision making and political participation. Target 5.5 seeks to 'ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life' (UN DESA n.d.a). Women's inclusion is bolstered by SDG 16, which promotes just, peaceful and inclusive societies.

Target 16.7 relates to decision making, where the goal is to 'ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels' (UN DESA n.d.b). States parties are urged to promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.

1.2. A REVIEW OF THE INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORKS ON WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION IN POLITICS

This section reviews the specific provisions in international conventions and frameworks that relate to women's participation in politics (see Table 1.1).

Charter of the United Nations (1945)

The preamble to the 1945 UN Charter presents a background which explains the rationale for advancing human rights as the guiding principle for its member states (UN 1945). The Charter was promulgated in the aftermath of the two world wars and can be viewed as a united response to the violence and other injustices that human beings had been subjected to. It was a commitment to prevent a repeat of that past and to create a more just world for future generations. The Charter establishes human rights, the dignity and worth of each human person, and equality between women and men as the foundations of justice and international law. This is reflected in the clause:

To reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.
(United Nations 1945: 2)

All African countries have signed the UN Charter and are bound by all its provisions.

Table 1.1. International frameworks with provisions on women's participation in politics

Framework	Provisions
Charter of the United Nations	Preamble
Universal Declaration of Human Rights	Human rights for all
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	Provisions on rights on political participation
Convention on the Prevention of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	Provisions on prevention of all forms of discrimination against women
Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's rights are human rights • Translating de jure equality into de facto equality or substantive equality
Agenda 2030	Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment
UN General Assembly Resolution RES/66/130	Provisions on measures to ensure women's full participation in decision making and politics
UN General Assembly Resolution RES/58/132	Monitoring of electoral processes
UN Economic and Social Council E/RES/1990/15	Introduction of quotas for women's participation in decision-making positions and politics (30 per cent target)

Source: Authors' summary.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

The UN General Assembly adopted the UDHR on 10 December 1948 (UN 1948). In line with this declaration, women's rights are human rights, so women's participation and representation are not only fundamental human rights but also an indispensable foundation for sustainable development and democracy.

The UDHR builds on the UN Charter, which makes provision for equal treatment of women and men regardless of their class, race, ethnicity, colour or religion. It articulates in detail the human rights that all human beings are entitled to. The use of the terms 'all', 'everyone' and 'no one' clearly underscores that the provisions apply to both women and men in their diversities, whether based on sex, class, ethnicity, colour, age or religion (see Table 1.2).

Table 1.2. Excerpts from the UDHR on women's participation in politics

Article	Provision(s)
Article 1	All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.
Article 3	Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.
Article 5	No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
Article 18	Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion.
Article 19	Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.
Article 20	1 Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
Article 21	1 Everyone has the right to take part in the government of their country directly or through freely chosen representatives.
	2 Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.
	3 The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage.

Source: United Nations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, <<https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>>, accessed 27 October 2024.

Article 1 of the UDHR states that the principle of equality applies to both women and men in any context or circumstances, in the political, economic, social, cultural or other arena. The political terrain in Africa tends to be fraught with violence, sexual harassment and intimidation, particularly among political parties which compete to mobilize membership. Due to unequal power relations in many parts of the continent, women are usually more vulnerable to such practices. The declaration makes provisions to protect both women and men in that regard. For example, women have the right to freedom of opinion and expression (article 19), while the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association (article 20) accords them space to participate in politics. The declaration also

emphasizes that the legitimacy of a government is derived from people (women and men), clearly suggesting that women have as much right to choose a government for their country.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)

The UN General Assembly adopted the ICCPR in 1966 (UN 1966a). The covenant was motivated by a realization that the rights provided for under the UDHR could only be enjoyed if a conducive environment was created. The ICCPR was adopted to advance that goal. Two specific provisions relate to the issue of women's participation in politics. Article 3 mandates states parties to the covenant to take measures to ensure the equal right of women and men regarding the enjoyment of all civil and political rights provided in the agreement. Article 25 indicates the specific areas for action to realize the mandate in article 3. The areas include provisions that allow every citizen to have the right and opportunity to take part in the conduct of public affairs, whether directly or indirectly through their representatives; to vote and to be elected at elections based on universal and equal suffrage by secret ballot; and to have equal access to public services in their country. In total, 53 African countries have signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979)

CEDAW was adopted in 1979 and came into force in 1981 (UN 1979). The convention builds on the UDHR by focusing specifically on a wide range of measures that member states should take to eliminate discrimination against women. The emphasis of the convention is on the need to ensure that both *de jure* (formal) and *de facto* (substantive) equality are achieved. This arises from the recognition that it is not enough to have anti-discriminatory laws; it is essential to ensure that they are implemented so that they eliminate discrimination wherever it occurs. Due to its comprehensive and practical orientation, the convention is also referred to as the International Bill of Rights for Women.

The convention defines discrimination as any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which prevents women from enjoying and exercising their human rights on an equal basis with men (article 1). Such discrimination exists in political, economic, social, cultural and other fields. In a direct and explicit manner, the convention calls on member states to condemn discrimination in any form against women and to take concrete or actual measures to eliminate the discrimination.

The political terrain in Africa tends to be fraught with violence, sexual harassment and intimidation, particularly among political parties which compete to mobilize membership.

CEDAW calls on member states to take appropriate practical measures in a bid to eliminate discrimination against women.

CEDAW also calls on member states to take appropriate practical measures in a bid to eliminate discrimination against women (article 2). Examples include integrating or embedding principles of equality between women and men in national constitutions, adopting laws and policies that prohibit discrimination against women, amending or repealing laws that are discriminatory and replacing them with laws that advance non-discrimination. Article 4 on temporary special measures enables member states to implement practical but temporary measures to correct situations where there is discrimination against women. Affirmative action is justified under this clause until equality in representation (50/50 proportion) between women and men is achieved. Social norms, beliefs and practices that perpetuate discrimination against women are some of the deeply rooted factors in the exclusion or marginalization of women from the political, economic and social arena in African societies. They are the 'engine' that propagates, perpetuates or sustains discrimination against women based on their sex. Article 5 of CEDAW makes it clear that member states have an obligation to take appropriate measures to eliminate those social norms and cultural beliefs and practices that continue to preclude women from participating in politics. The need for measures to eliminate discrimination against women in public life recognizes that women are under-represented in the political sphere, both in terms of participation and decision making. In article 7, the convention calls on member states to take concrete measures to ensure that women participate on an equal basis with men in voting, running for public office and participating in the formulation and implementation of public policies. Member states are also called upon to ensure that women participate in decision making at the international level on an equal basis with men. In total, 52 African countries have ratified CEDAW.

CEDAW Optional Protocol (1999)

This protocol was adopted for the purposes of ensuring accountability by member states in implementing the convention (UN 1999). The protocol established a Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, whose function is to receive and consider complaints from individuals or groups among signatories that pertain to alleged violations of CEDAW. The protocol goes beyond the requirement that member states submit periodic compliance reports to the Board of CEDAW, to allow victims or representatives of victims of any discriminatory practices to seek recourse at the UN level.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995)

One of the key assertions of the BDPA was that women's rights are human rights, which emphasizes that the human rights provided for in the UDHR apply to both women and men. Section G on women in power and in decision-making roles contains a robust discussion of the under-representation of women in power and in decision-making roles at all levels, the root causes of that imbalance and the measures that countries can implement to redress inequities.

The BDPA places a strong emphasis on unequal power relations as the root cause of inequality between women and men in participation in politics, in the distribution of care work in the home, with respect to access to resources (land, credit, property), and inequality based on the social construction of the gender division of labour. Recognizing the structural and political nature of women's exclusion or under-representation in leadership and decision making, the declaration advocates a redistribution of power that ensures women participate on an equal basis with men in the political arena.

In paragraph 181, there is an elaborate explanation as to why women must be equally represented in power and decision-making positions at all levels of government at the international, regional, national and local levels. The declaration states that women's equal participation in decision making is not only a demand for justice or democracy, but it can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be considered. Equal participation between women and men is a requisite for strengthening democracy and promoting its proper performance.

The BDPA contains comprehensive measures that countries can implement to redistribute power between women and men to achieve equality. These include mainstreaming gender perspectives at all levels of decision making; setting targets for women's representation at those levels; ensuring equal access to resources such as land and finance, as well as access to training and technology; monitoring implementation; and formulating policies to guide political parties on the equal sharing of power between women and men, and achieving equal representation on electoral candidate lists.

ECOSOC Resolution (1996)

Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Resolution 1996/6 was adopted in 1996 (ECOSOC 1996). ECOSOC mandated the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), a UN agency

The BDPA places a strong emphasis on unequal power relations as the root cause of inequality between women and men in participation in politics.

dedicated to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, to coordinate the monitoring and reviewing of progress on the implementation of the BDPA. The CSW is also responsible for monitoring the mainstreaming of gender within UN bodies. In article 33, member states are mandated to implement the convention by setting up a focal point tasked with the responsibility.

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security (2000)

The Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security on 31 October 2000 (UN Security Council 2000). The resolution reaffirms the important role women play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction. It stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. Political institutions involved in these efforts must involve women as key stakeholders.

UN General Assembly Resolution A/66/130 on increasing women's participation in politics (2011)

This resolution (UN General Assembly 2011) on WPP is one of the most comprehensive resolutions to address the various barriers that hinder women from actively participating in politics (see Box 1.1). The resolution urges international and regional organizations and countries, within their mandate, to implement an extensive set of measures for the purpose of increasing women's participation in decision making and politics. Box 1.1 lists the measures that the resolution proposes to address obstacles that women face in politics.

Box 1.1. United Nations General Assembly Resolution 66/130: Measures for member states to increase women's participation in politics (summarized from the resolution)

- Eliminate root causes of discrimination against women.
- Improve women's access to information and communication technologies.
- Act against perpetrators of violence, assault or harassment of women elected officials.
- Create an environment of zero tolerance for violent offences against women.
- Work on the inclusion of marginalized women.
- Conduct sensitization work with young women and girls on politics.
- Create an enabling environment for women's political participation.
- Promote the granting of appropriate maternity and paternity leave to facilitate women's political participation.
- Provide adequate access to quality education and healthcare for women and girls.

UN General Assembly Resolution 76/140 on improvement of the situation of women and girls in rural areas (2021)

Rural people in Africa have been left behind in several respects—politically, economically and socially. Due to higher levels of illiteracy, limited access to infrastructure and information, and the high cost of moving from place to place, rural women's participation in politics tends to be more limited compared with those living in urban areas. This resolution (UN General Assembly 2021) addresses these challenges by calling upon countries to implement measures to ensure that rural women are also able to participate fully in decision making and politics. This resolution was adopted by the General Assembly on 16 December 2021.

1.3. CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented summaries of key international frameworks with specific provisions for advancing the participation of women in politics and decision making. These frameworks are comprehensive, and they address a wide range of issues that are fundamental to ensuring such participation. These include the principles of equality between women and men regardless of sex, class, race, age, religion or other attributes (UN Charter) and the universality of human rights, suggesting clearly that women's rights are human rights (UDHR), and the elimination of any form of discrimination against women and girls (CEDAW). The BDPA outlines several measures that member states are called upon to implement aimed at increasing women's participation in the political arena. This chapter has also shown how UN General Assembly Resolution 66/130 provides one of the most comprehensive frameworks for identifying various areas where member states must implement measures to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women with respect to political office, electoral processes and democratization of their governance systems. These international protocols are all supposed to be domesticated at the national level. Some have been distilled by the African Union, which has come up with its own regional protocols to increase women's participation in politics, and these are discussed in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2

REGIONAL FRAMEWORKS ON WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION IN POLITICS

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the frameworks the African Union has developed to guide member states in the process of domesticating the universal UN principles and guidelines on gender equality and women's participation in politics (see Table 2.1). Africa has several regional frameworks, including the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) (1981), the Protocol on Amendments to the Constitutive Act of the African Union (2003) and the Maputo Protocol (2003). Both international and regional frameworks are used to guide countries in domesticating agreed norms and standards that pertain to women's participation in politics. These regional frameworks have become the yardstick by which regional bodies and the UN measure performance in respect of the advancement of women in the political arena.

Constitutive Act of the African Union (2000)

Using gender-neutral language, article 13 of the Constitutive Act of the African Union (2000) makes provisions that point to equal treatment of women and men with respect to the participation of African citizens in the activities of the Union, in section 13.c on the promotion of gender equality, and section 13.l on upholding respect for democratic principles, human rights, rule of law and good governance. Article 17(1) is on the establishment of a Pan-African Parliament whose function is to ensure the full participation of all Africans in the development, economic growth and regional integration of the continent. While there is no explicit reference to women, the phrase 'full participation of African peoples' suggests that this regional parliament must ensure the participation of women

Table 2.1. Regional frameworks on women's participation

Framework	Specific provisions
Constitutive Act of the African Union (2000)	Women's full participation in development
The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981)	Articles 1–19 Reaffirmation of the UDHR Article 19: equality of all before the law
The Maputo Protocol (2003)	Equality of women and men before the law Article 9: women's participation and advancement in politics
African Youth Charter (2006)	Articles 2(c) and 23 Ensuring empowerment of youth and their participation in decision making
African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007)	Domestication of CEDAW Measures to promote women in decision making
Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want (2015)	Africa's long-term vision: equality between women and men regardless of sex, class, age, ethnicity and race
African Union Gender Policy (2009) African Women's Decade, 2010–2020 (2009) African Union Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment 2018–2028 (2018)	Policy guidance and strategic directions to member states to implement measures to achieve gender equality and empowerment of women
Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2004)	Framework for monitoring progress of member states in implementing the Maputo Protocol

Source: Authors' summary.

and men without consideration of country of origin, race, ethnicity, age, income or any other characteristic. The Act was adopted by African heads of state on 11 July 2000.

The regional protocols may all be gender-sensitive, but gender responsiveness is left to each country's administrative statutes on a case-by-case basis.

The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981)

The ACHPR (African Union 1981) domesticates the UDHR at the regional level. This is evidenced in several articles, particularly articles 1 to 19. Regarding WPP, article 13 (also part of the UDHR)

demonstrates the commitment of African leadership to that principle. The article guarantees the right of every citizen to participate freely in the government of their country, either directly or through freely chosen representatives in accordance with the law. The language in the text reflects the state of gender-sensitivity knowledge at the time of drafting the protocol. The understanding was that the provisions were applicable to all Africans irrespective of gender. Articles 10, 11 and 12 provide for the rights of freedom of association, freedom of assembly and freedom of movement, and employ gender-neutral language. Article 19 makes provision for equality for all before the law, as reflected in the UDHR. In essence, even though the ACHPR uses gender-neutral and in some instances, sexist language, it does make provisions on equal rights for all, implying reference to both women and men regardless of race, ethnicity, class, sex, ethnicity or religion. To date, only 34 countries have currently ratified the Charter, which shows hesitancy in closing the gender gap.

The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol, 2003)

The Maputo Protocol (African Union 2003), adopted in 2003, incorporates provisions from the international human and women's rights frameworks into the African context (see Box 2.1). The protocol contains specific provisions on women's rights to participate in politics and decision making. These include taking measures to eliminate discrimination against women in elections and ensuring that women are represented equally in electoral processes and that they have equal opportunity to participate in political processes. It has taken two decades to have 42 countries ratify the protocol and the signatories are still at 49.

The African Union Gender Policy of 2009, the African Women's Decade 2010–2020 and the African Union Strategy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment 2018–2028 have guided African Union member states to develop national gender policies and requisite strategies for their implementation. Most countries now have such policies and strategies in place. The challenge is in the slow pace of their implementation, although there are a few countries that have made significant progress towards gender equality and empowerment of women, including in the political arena, such as Lesotho, Mauritius, Mozambique, Rwanda, Seychelles and South Africa.

Box 2.1. Article IX: Right to participation in the political and decision-making process

1. States Parties shall take specific positive action to promote participative governance and the equal participation of women in the political life of their countries through affirmative action, enabling national legislation and other measures to ensure that:
 - Women participate without any discrimination in all elections;
 - Women are represented equally at all levels with men in all electoral processes;
 - Women are equal partners with men at all levels of development and implementation of state policies and development programmes;
2. States Parties shall ensure increased and effective representation and participation of women at all levels of decision-making.

Source: African Union, Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol), 11 July 2003, <<https://au.int/en/treaties/protocol-african-charter-human-and-peoples-rights-rights-women-africa>>, accessed 25 October 2024.

The African Youth Charter (2006)

The African Youth Charter was adopted on 2 July 2006 (African Union 2006). In its preamble, the Charter domesticates international frameworks, such as the UDHR, CEDAW, ICCPR and the ICESCR. It draws on the ACHPR and the Maputo Protocol (2003).

The African Youth Charter was motivated by concerns over the situation of African youth because they still faced numerous challenges, such as discrimination and marginalization from society because of their age, poverty, unemployment, low wages, lack of education and training opportunities, disease, hunger, and restricted access to health and other services. Youth are also involved in conflicts and other forms of violence. In article 11 of the Charter, there are several provisions to resolve those challenges. Member states are urged to take measures to ensure that youth, both women and men, enjoy full human rights and have equal opportunities for a healthy life, education and employment, so that they can live a life of dignity. Article 2(c) explicitly calls on member states to ensure that young women and men have equal access to participate in decision making and public affairs.

Article 23 is particularly important in relation to WPP as it specifies measures to promote the equal participation of young women and youth in politics (see Box 2.2).

Box 2.2. Article 23 of the Youth Charter: Girls and young women

1. States Parties acknowledge the need to eliminate discrimination against girls and young women according to obligations stipulated in various international, regional and national human rights conventions and instruments designed to protect and promote women's rights. In this regard, they shall:

- a) Introduce legislative measures that eliminate all forms of discrimination against girls and young women and ensure their human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- b) Ensure that girls and young women are able to participate actively, equally and effectively with boys at all levels of social, educational, economic, political, cultural, civic life and leadership as well as scientific endeavours;
- c) Institute programmes to make girls and young women aware of their rights and of opportunities to participate as equal members of society.

Source: African Union, African Youth Charter, 2 July 2006, <<https://au.int/en/treaties/african-youth-charter>>, accessed 28 October 2024.

One of the challenges women face in politics is that most of them do not have adequate education or knowledge and awareness of politics in the public arena. Those who decide to go into politics often find that they are ill equipped for the task. Article 23 thus puts emphasis on treating boys and girls equally in terms of providing education and training. Consistent with CEDAW, the African Youth Charter calls on the African Union member states to take appropriate measures to prevent discrimination against girls and young women and to promote their active participation in all spheres of life. The emphasis is on instituting programmes to raise awareness among girls and young women of their rights and opportunities to participate as equal members of society.

African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007)

The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) was adopted on 30 January 2007 (African Union 2007). It includes domesticated tenets from both the UDHR and CEDAW, as reflected in articles 1, 3, 6, 7 and 8. The ACDEG makes a call for strengthening political pluralism and recognizing the role, rights and responsibilities of legally constituted political parties, including opposition political parties, which should be given a status under national law. In line with the BDPA, it calls upon member states to take practical measures to increase the representation of women. In that regard, article 29 calls on countries to recognize the crucial roles

played by women in development and in strengthening democracy, implement measures to support the full or active participation of women in decision-making processes at all levels, take measures to promote women's participation in electoral processes and ensure gender parity in representation at all levels, including legislatures.

The African Union Gender Policy (2009)

In 2009 the African Union introduced its Gender Policy (African Union 2009), which calls upon member states to advocate the promotion of a gender-responsive environment and practices, to facilitate gender mainstreaming in institutions, legal frameworks, policies, programmes, strategic frameworks and plans. Countries are also called upon to develop and implement guidelines and standards for ending sexual and gender-based violence (GBV), take measures to remove barriers against the movement of people and promote equitable access for both women and men to control resources (objective 6).

Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want (2015)

Agenda 2063 is a continental long-term vision of Africa in which the aspirations of African people are laid out. Spearheaded by the African Union, Agenda 2063 aims to achieve peace, prosperity and inclusive and sustainable development for all the peoples on the continent (African Union Commission 2015) (see Table 2.2). It includes clauses that point to gender equality in decision making and politics in general terms. For example, it affirms the vision of the African Union to become 'an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena' (African Union Commission 2015: 1). As indicated under Aspiration 6, the Agenda affirms the importance of women, youth and children, as the continent's development relies on them.

2.3. SUBREGIONAL LEVEL: FRAMEWORKS BY REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES

Africa is divided into eight subregional groupings of countries called RECs, which are subsidiary to the African Union. Their major role is to support countries in translating and implementing international and regional frameworks at the subregional level. Some of the RECs have started to implement the frameworks that have been developed in respect of women's participation in politics.

Table 2.2. Agenda 2063: Provisions directly related to women's political participation

Article or aspiration	Provisions	Implications for women's participation in politics
Article 49	By 2063, women are empowered and play their rightful role in all spheres of life	Women have a right to participate in politics and leadership
Article 50	The African woman will be fully empowered in all spheres, with equal social, political and economic rights, including the rights to own and inherit property, sign a contract, register and manage a business. Rural women will have access to productive assets, including land, credit, inputs and financial services	As above
Aspiration 6	An Africa, whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children.	The Agenda recognizes that women and youth have the potential to contribute to the continent's development and the political arena.
Article 52	Africa of 2063 will have full gender parity, with women occupying at least 50 per cent of elected public offices at all levels and half of managerial positions in the public and the private sectors.	This clause explicitly adopts full gender parity (50/50) in terms of the proportions of women and men in elected public offices.
Article 54	The youth of Africa shall be socially, economically and politically empowered through the full implementation of the African Youth Charter.	This clause commits member states to empower youth. It refers to the African Youth Charter.

Source: African Union Commission, *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want* (Addis Ababa: African Union Commission, 2015), <https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36204-doc-agenda2063_popular_version_en.pdf>, accessed 25 October 2024.

A few RECs, notably the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the East African Community (EAC) and the SADC, have introduced frameworks that include some provisions for advancing women's participation in decision making at all levels. Other RECs have introduced gender policies and strategies.

Economic Community of West African States

In May 2015 the ECOWAS heads of state adopted the Supplementary Act Relating to Equality of Rights Between Women and Men for Sustainable Development in the ECOWAS region (commonly referred to as the Supplementary Protocol; ECOWAS 2015). One of the eight objectives of the Act is to increase the rate of women's participation at all levels of decision making across different sectors, including the political sphere, conflict prevention and management, and the restoration of peace and security. In February 2017 the Commission adopted a Roadmap for the implementation of the Act (ECOWAS 2017a). ECOWAS also designed a Gender and Election Strategic Framework (ECOWAS 2017b) designed to be more inclusive of women in political leadership.

The East African Community

The entry point for women's rights promotion within the EAC is in the objectives of the EAC Treaty (article 5(3)(e)), which requires the EAC to ensure 'the mainstreaming of gender in all its endeavours and the enhancement of the role of women in cultural, social, political, economic and technological development' (EAC 1999: 13). Article 121 calls on member states to take measures to promote women's participation in decision making and to prevent any discrimination against them. To operationalize the treaty, the EAC has enacted several acts and policies—the EAC Gender Equality and Development Act (2016) and the EAC Gender Policy (EAC 2018).

The EAC Legislative Assembly has also formulated the Gender Equality and Development Bill, which, at the time of writing, was awaiting assent from the heads of state. One of the objectives of the bill is to realize the EAC's commitment to gender equality as set out in the EAC Treaty. One of the commitments is to prevent discrimination against women and to promote gender equality in the region.

Southern African Development Community: Protocol on Gender and Development (2008, amended 2016)

In 2008 the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development was adopted as the legal and policy framework for gender equality and women's and girls' rights. Six of its objectives focus on women's and girls' rights and gender equality, and it is cognizant of the 2003 Maputo Protocol. The SADC Protocol has some provisions on equal and effective representation of women in decision-making positions in the public and private sectors. It includes a call for member states to take special measures to advance these goals, and article 13 seeks to ensure that women have the same opportunity as men to participate

in electoral processes. Apart from its binding nature, the SADC Protocol is unique in that it translates its provisions on women's and girls' rights and gender equality into 28 concrete targets that were to be reached by 2015. Botswana is the most recent country to ratify the Protocol (in May 2017), leaving Mauritius as the only country in the SADC that has not ratified it.

Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) has a revised Gender Policy (COMESA 2016), which includes reference to women's participation in decision making. These two RECs have not yet developed legal frameworks but have designed strategies to guide their member states in the implementation of international and regional commitments on women participating on an equal basis with men in decision making and leadership. For example, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development has developed a Gender Strategy 2016–2020 (IGAD 2015). Two other important regional commitments are the Regional Action Plan for Implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 (ICGLR 1820), and the Regional Strategy for Higher Representation of Women in Decision Making Positions (GAD 2013).

2.4. CONCLUSION

This chapter has reviewed the regional frameworks that have played a leading role in domesticating international frameworks, most crucially those of the African Union. The Maputo Protocol (2003) has the most robust provisions to ensure equal treatment of women and men and it specifies measures that countries should implement to increase women's participation in politics. The ACDEG makes more direct provisions for women's participation but, so far, only 34 countries have ratified and deposited the Charter, and 46 have signed up. At the subregional level, ECOWAS, the EAC and the SADC have integrated provisions for women's advancement in politics into law, but the other RECs are at an elementary stage where, although they have some gender policies, they have not yet developed legally binding agreements.

The main message in this chapter is that there are robust frameworks in place at the regional level that guide countries in ensuring that women and men have equal opportunities to participate fully in the

governance of their countries. The frameworks identify a wide range of areas where countries can implement measures to help improve women's representation in decision making at all political levels. However, although the regional frameworks are robust and gender-sensitive, they lack gender-responsive approaches, which are left to the administrative statutes at the national level.

Based on this analysis, the problem of under-representation of women in politics in Africa can be resolved because it has been acknowledged in the regional—and, to some extent, subregional—frameworks. Governments can lead the process of change by domesticating these frameworks through integrating gender perspectives within their constitutions, laws, regulations and policies, and by developing and implementing practical measures to effect change. The next chapter discusses the different types of political systems and how electoral systems and affirmative action can influence women's participation.

**Under-representation
of women in politics in
Africa can be resolved.**

Chapter 3

POLITICAL SYSTEMS, ELECTORAL SYSTEMS AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

3.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter scrutinizes the relationships between political systems, types of democracy, electoral systems and affirmative action to increase WPP. African countries have a variety of political systems and institutions that were mostly shaped by their specific history, including their colonial past, the nation state formation processes on the attainment of independence and, for many, the turbulence experienced in the post-colonial period. For instance, Kenya and Zimbabwe adopted new constitutions after experiencing violent and heavily contested elections (2007 and 2008, respectively). Political systems and types of democracy all have an impact on the mechanisms in place to increase the number of women representatives in political institutions. Transitioning to democracy remains a challenge for most African countries, which openly struggle with introducing multipartyism. Most countries have constitutions, but compliance with their provisions seems to be problematic.

3.2. POLITICAL AND ELECTORAL SYSTEMS AND WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION

The need to manage diversity and move towards more inclusive arrangements in a particular country largely contributed to a change in political system. For Kenya, the new Constitution following the 2008 electoral violence became a chance to address gender imbalances in elected public bodies through the constitutional

provisions in articles 27(8) and 81(b), which state that not more than two-thirds of the members of elected public bodies shall be of the same gender. Zimbabwe reserved some seats for women in the senate in its 2013 Constitution and then amended the Constitution in 2021 to ensure the inclusion of women at the local level as well. Political circumstances determine the electoral system for each country, and as a result there are often various combinations of electoral systems in place. Electoral systems are heavily contested in many countries, as they are a tool for managing diversity and aiding the inclusion of marginalized communities.

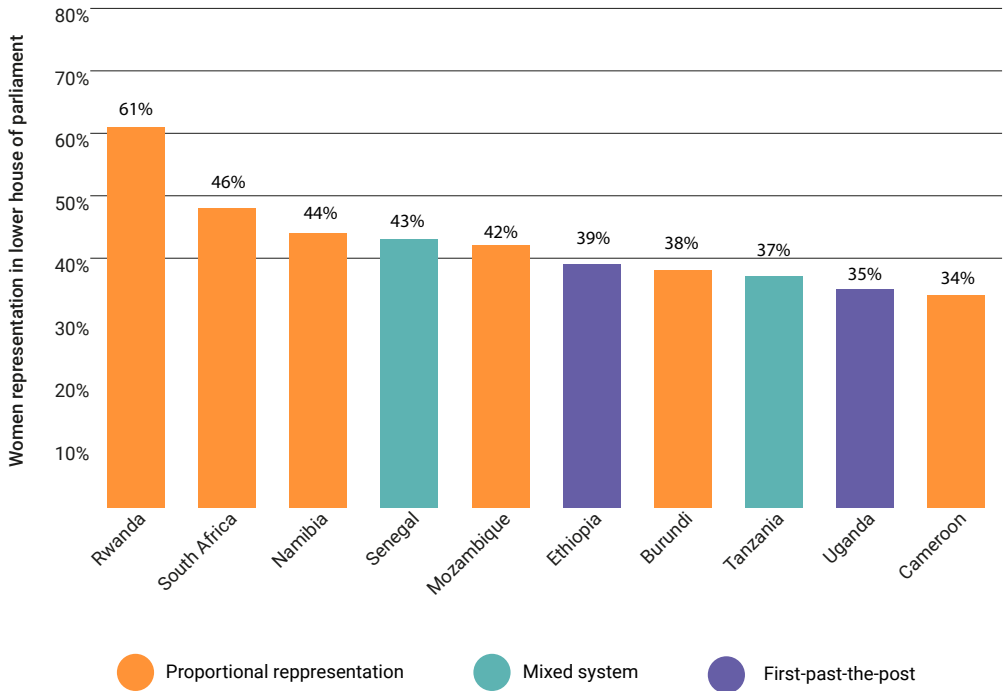
Electoral systems involve distinct varieties of political representation. Proportional representation (PR) electoral systems are designed to be more inclusive by representing both the majority and minority proportionally in parliament, resulting in a multiparty system. List PR is a category of PR electoral system that offers the best opportunity to deliberately target women candidates. In this system, numerous candidates are elected according to their position on a party's electoral list. Various techniques like the zipper or zebra³ methods can be applied to include more women, and overall, this approach is likely to move countries closer to the ideal 50/50 gender parity. The general idea of such affirmative action is that women deserve significant representation since they constitute half of the electorate, and active policies are needed to effect this due to their historical marginalization in politics. The meteoric rise of women in political representation in Senegal is attributed to such affirmative action (see Figure 3.1). Majoritarian electoral systems confer victory to one winner, leaving out minorities. Although electoral systems vary, there are often majoritarian systems that nevertheless incorporate minority representation through some affirmative action in one sphere, and proportional systems that marginalize minorities the way majoritarian systems would, such as in the recent developments in Tunisia. The first-past-the-post (FPTP) system is used in 23 African countries and PR in 18 countries, while 10 have mixed systems. A significant proportion of African countries—40 in total—have constitutional, legislated or voluntary party quotas (International IDEA 2021b).

Political party systems and the presence of smaller parties have been proven to have a positive effect on the representation of women candidates (Matland and Studlar 1996). Matland and Studlar's ideas—that smaller parties tend to favour women candidates, while larger

The meteoric rise of women in political representation in Senegal is attributed to such affirmative action.

3 A zipper or zebra system refers to creating political party candidate lists that alternate between women and men so that seats allocated will have an equal number of each gender.

Figure 3.1. Types of electoral systems in countries with the highest levels of representation 2021



Source: International IDEA, *Women's Political Participation: Africa Barometer 2021* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2021), <<https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/womens-political-participation-africa-barometer-2021.pdf>>, accessed 8 June 2024.

parties perceive them as competition—are linked to proportional systems that encompass broad multipartyism, including more than a few smaller parties. South Africa proves this hypothesis to be true as it has had several parties with many women representatives in all its parliaments up to May 2024. In majoritarian systems, the opposite is true, even in instances with partial legislative quotas as in Zimbabwe. The fractionalized main opposition party behaved like a dominant party and did not emphasize the promotion of more women candidates in 2013 and 2017. In Zimbabwe, the number of women members of parliament dropped drastically in the 2023 elections, where only 22 women (10 per cent) were elected, out of a total of 210 seats. Only 70 women had competed against 637 men for the 210 seats (ZimRights 2024).

The extent to which democracy affects women's political representation needs more research. However, there is some consistency in that countries using the FPTP system tend to see low scores on the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Liberal Democracy Index (LDI)—specifically the Participatory Component Index (PCI) element—and are among the worst rated countries. For example, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), with a score of 0.22, is ranked 154th, and Nigeria, at 0.33, is ranked 179th (V-Dem 2024) (see Table 3.1). Both countries have below 13 per cent women's representation in their parliaments. As another example, Tunisia saw its ranking drop to 139th when it removed legislative quotas in 2022. Liberal democracy measures do not necessarily correlate with levels of women's participation and representation, but clearly show that the choice of electoral system and quotas have an impact.

Some countries with low scores for civil and political freedoms, such as Rwanda, have very high numbers of women in parliament and are ranked highly on women's representation in politics, and yet some established democracies have fewer women representatives. These variations can be explained partly by the political will of the leadership (for Rwanda, this has increased under one particular president) and by whether the political culture provides a safe space for women in political leadership. This suggests that there is not always a correlation between democracy and increased participation by women in politics. Mozambique and South Africa both use voluntary party quotas, which demonstrates political will in advancing women's inclusion and this is attributed to the ruling parties that have adopted these quotas. However, transparency, fair elections and a level electoral landscape are more likely to encourage women to enter politics, since there would be fewer institutional obstacles and constraints. Women generally have a safe space in which to organize and pursue a gender equality agenda openly and to lobby freely for gender equity when there is enjoyment of civil and political liberties.

Table 3.1. Relationship between democracy, electoral system and quotas

Country	V-Dem LDI	V-Dem PCI ¹	Electoral system for lower chamber of national legislature	Electoral quota for women	LDI rank	Percentage ²
Cameroon	0.13	0.12	FPTP and PR	Voluntary party quota	49	34.00
DRC	0.12	0.40	FPTP and List PR	—	154	12.80
Kenya	0.46	0.60	FPTP	Constitutional/ Legislative	101	23.30
Mozambique	0.22	0.54	FPTP and List PR	Voluntary party quota	20	43.20
Nigeria	0.33	0.61	FPTP	—	179	3.90
Rwanda	0.10	0.42	List PR	Constitutional/ Legislative	1	61.30
Senegal	0.46	0.58	Block vote List PR Mixed member proportional	Legislative	13	46.10
Seychelles	0.66	0.29	FPTP	—	113	20.60
South Africa	0.58	0.56	List PR	Voluntary party quota	—	46.20
Sudan	0.05	0.28	Parallel List PR and majoritarian	—	—	—
Tunisia	0.30	0.55	List PR	Legislative— removed 2022	139	15.70

Sources: IPU, Parline – Global data on national parliaments, [n.d.], <<https://data.ipu.org>>, accessed 27 June 2024; V-Dem, [n.d.], <https://v-dem.net/data_analysis/CountryGraph>, accessed 28 October 2024.

Note: Parliamentary ranking is determined by the percentage of seats held by women in lower or single parliamentary chambers.

- 1 Scores in both the V-Dem Liberal Democracy Index (LDI) and its component indices range from 0.00 (least democratic) to 1.00 (most democratic). The V-Dem LDI conceptualizes and illustrates the level of democracy in a country by compiling five component indices, each of which tracks a specific facet of democracy: the Electoral Democracy Index, the Liberal Component Index, the Egalitarian Component Index, the Participatory Component Index (PCI) and the Deliberative Component Index. This table shows the specific PCI, in addition to the overall LDI.
- 2 Reported figures are for lower house or single chamber ranking and percentage of women as of 1 April 2024.

3.3. AFFIRMATIVE ACTION



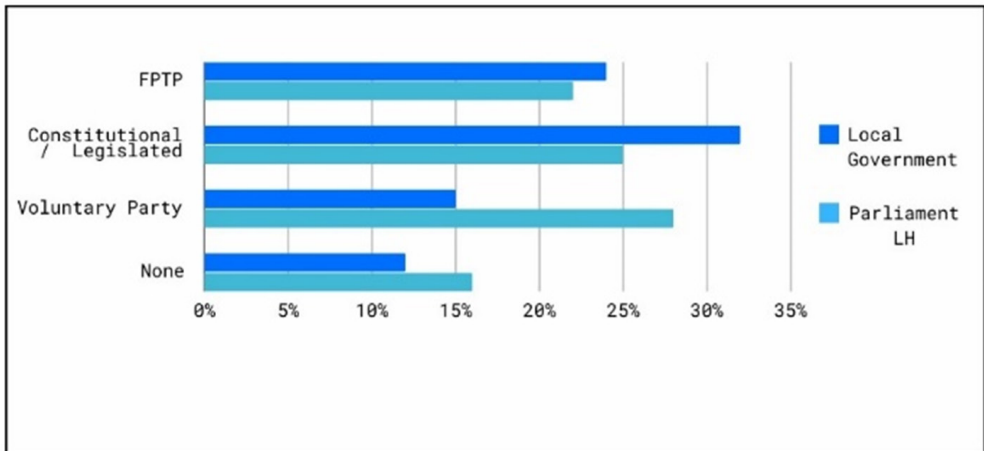
Photo by Mos.

Gender quotas are divided into three categories: reserved seats, where women candidates only participate; legislative quotas, which demand that a proportion of the nominees on the party lists be women; and voluntary party quotas, which are not mandated by electoral laws but are instituted where political parties commit themselves to having a percentage of women political candidates on their party lists. Plurality majority voting systems, such as those in Botswana, Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria and Zambia, have abstained from adopting quotas, and this shows in their low numbers of women in parliament (Bauer 2012). African countries with constitutional and legislated quotas fare best in women's representation at the local government level (33 per cent) (see Figure 3.2). In the national assembly (lower house), countries with voluntary party quotas are in the lead, at 27 per cent. Surprisingly, at the local government level, countries with voluntary party quotas perform poorly, at 15 per cent. The countries with FPTP systems are all below 23 per cent. Tripp and Kang (2008) argue that gender quotas are the intervention that best explains women's increased presence in legislatures globally. This is contested by Norris (1985), who attempted to demonstrate that culture is more influential than voting systems in determining the proportion of women in parliament. Still, the increases in African parliaments are largely attributed to quotas and this even extends to situations where socio-economic conditions are poor and women

African countries with constitutional and legislated quotas fare best in women's representation at the local government level.

have a lower status (Bauer 2012). This has been the case in Lesotho, where there is a 30 per cent gender quota requirement for the local councils and the zipper list system for the 40 PR seats in parliament.

Figure 3.2. Women's representation by electoral and quota systems in Africa 2021



Source: International IDEA, *Women's Political Participation: Africa Barometer 2021* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2021), <<https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2021.21>>.

3.4. MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

A total of 23 African countries missed out on the opportunity provided by national elections held in the period since 2021, as only eight of them reported increases greater than 10 percentage points in women representatives. West Africa held 11 national elections in that period, yet the numbers of women representatives have not surged as expected, in line with SDG 5. Only 5 of those 11 countries recorded changes over 10 percentage points (see Table 3.2). Central Africa held five national elections, and no significant changes have occurred as only two countries reported changes greater than 10 percentage points. Out of Southern Africa's six elections, only Eswatini increased its number of women representatives by over 10 percentage points. In three regions—East, Horn and North Africa—there was no progress. It is possible to therefore conclude that the entire region is moving at a sluggish pace and all the signs are very clear that achieving the goal of 30 per cent women in politics by 2030 remains elusive.

Table 3.2. Women's political participation in Africa in elections held at the national level 2021 to 2023

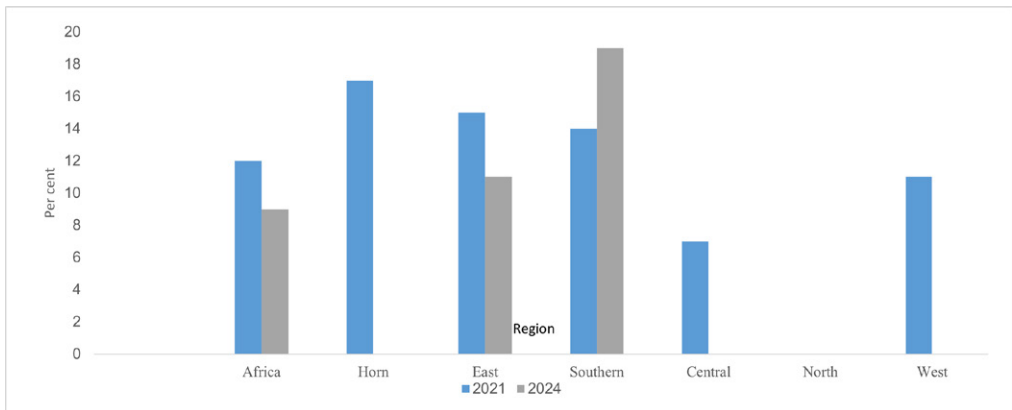
Percentage point change	Central	East	Horn	North	Southern	West
Over 10	Chad, Equatorial Guinea				Eswatini	Benin, Sierra Leone, Cabo Verde, Guinea, Burkina Faso
5–10		South Sudan				
0–5	Congo	Kenya	Ethiopia, Djibouti	Morocco, Mauritania	Angola, DRC, Lesotho	Liberia, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia
-5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

Source: International IDEA, *Women's Political Participation: Africa Barometer 2024* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2024), <<https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2024.46>>.

Political parties in Africa remain male-dominated, with only Southern Africa reporting an increase of 5 percentage points for women in political party leadership positions from 2021 to 2024 (see Figure 3.3). East Africa reported an almost similar decrease for women in party leadership. Four regions do not report on women in such leadership positions—the Horn, and Central, North and West Africa. Other than Central Africa, the other three regions have large Muslim populations and religious expectations contribute to deterring women from getting into leading roles. The Horn and North Africa regions seem to be on a downward trend, while the African average dropped slightly by 3 percentage points from 2021 to 2024. Generally,

a few countries have appointed women to senior positions, but this is mostly confined to taking care and directing women's business as defined by the party. Where women's leagues exist, they have tended to be the reserved space for women's leadership in the parties.

Figure 3.3. Women's representation in political party leadership 2021–2024



Source: International IDEA, *Women's Political Participation: Africa Barometer 2024* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2024), <<https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2024.46>>.

3.5. PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP

Some parties have elevated women into presidential positions, as happened in Malawi with Joyce Banda, Zimbabwe with Joice Mujuru and Liberia with Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. However, other than Joyce Banda, who lost the election, the other two were disgraced and disowned by their parties while they were still active party members. This was a signifier of the general intolerance towards female leadership and was supposed to act as a deterrent to other aspiring women. This did not stop some women in the Southern African region, such as Patricia de Lille and Makhosi Khoza in South Africa, and Linda Masarira and Elisabeth Valerio in Zimbabwe, who went on to form their own political parties, successfully breaking into the male-dominated domain of political parties. The latter two went on to contest the presidency. Martha Karua was also a force to be reckoned with in Kenya when she ran for the presidency in 1992. However, women's longevity in top leadership positions has always

tended to be short-lived. This is probably due to a limited base for strengthening their staying power. For instance, the security sector, where presidents mostly derive their staying power, tends to remain out of their reach.

Women's longevity in top leadership positions has always tended to be short-lived.

Figure 3.4. Social media advertisement for Linda Masarira

The advertisement features a portrait of Mambokadzi Linda WekwaMasarira on the left, wearing a white top and a dark headwrap, pointing towards the right. To her right is the LEAD party logo, which consists of a map of Zimbabwe with a rainbow outline, the word 'LEAD' in large blue letters, and the tagline 'LABOUR ECONOMISTS & AFRIKAN DEMOCRATS' and 'TOGETHER WE CAN' in smaller text. Below the logo, the text reads 'IT'S TIME TO LEAD' and 'VANHU TESE | BANTU SISONKE'. Further down, a white box contains the text: 'A new political trajectory has dawned and you are the one we need to transform our nation. Join hands today with the only party that values your leadership. #PURPLEREVOLUTION'. At the bottom left, her name and title are listed: 'Mambokadzi Linda WekwaMasarira LEAD PRESIDENT'.

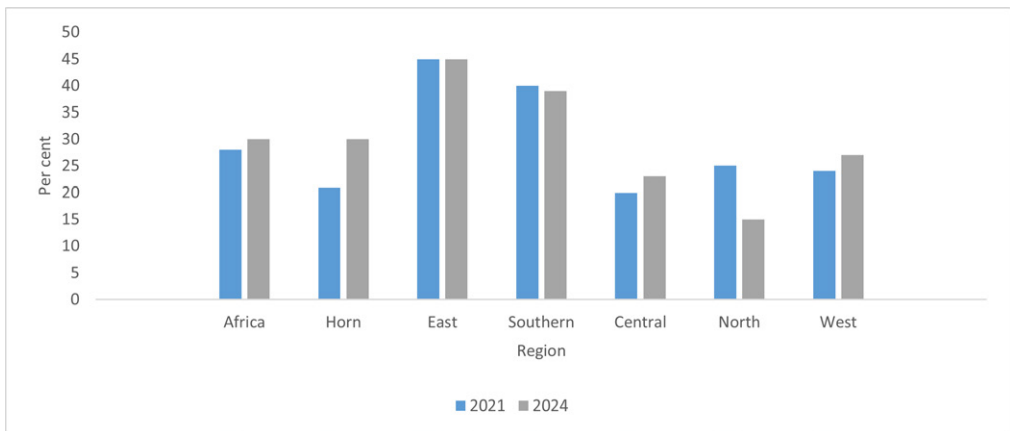
Source: Instagram

3.6. APPOINTED POSITIONS

EMBs are constitutionally mandated with the management of elections, and they come in various types, although emphasis is put on their being autonomous bodies that act impartially in handling electoral processes. The bodies have extensive responsibilities over the entire electoral cycle and must exercise their authority within the confines of the law. As bodies overseeing a democratic activity, the presence of women is essential for building confidence, as women constitute half the electorate. Many reviews across Africa have criticized the conduct of EMBs, mostly regarding partisan tendencies towards incumbent regimes that some bodies demonstrate.

The representation of women in appointed EMB positions has been mixed (see Figure 3.5). East Africa has the highest number of women in these positions, remaining at just over 40 per cent for the last four years. This is closely followed by Southern Africa. North Africa had 25 per cent women in 2021, and this has gone down by 10 percentage points in just four years. This decrease is likely to have been caused by the ongoing turmoil in Sudan and Libya, and the rather regressive 2022 constitutional referendum in Tunisia, which turned the country into a presidential republic, limited the role of the parliament and gave the president sweeping powers, resulting in a reversal of gains in women's presence in political positions.

Figure 3.5. Women's representation in electoral management bodies 2021–2024



Source: International IDEA, *Women's Political Participation: Africa Barometer 2024* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2024), <<https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2024.46>>.

3.7. CONCLUSION

This chapter has reviewed political and electoral systems and affirmative action and other opportunities for women's participation. The presence of such protocols has not had the desired effect of increasing the number of women in politics in most countries. The political culture of intolerance and the relegation of women to low leadership levels keeps them out of competition with men. Even when political parties endorse a female candidate, the onus to pay the nomination fee is on the aspiring candidate and this often means women lose out to other nominees. Political parties in Africa rarely have sufficient funds raised from membership fees to support their candidates, leaving the field free mostly for men with money who can afford the costs of running for office. As access to money is a key requirement for getting into elective office, such a brutal contesting environment is not user-friendly for women. The next chapter discusses the enabling factors that motivate women to vie for inclusion in politics, and the barriers they have to work around.

Chapter 4

FACTORS MOTIVATING WOMEN TO PARTICIPATE IN POLITICS AND BARRIERS ENCOUNTERED

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Testimony

I was involved in politics since I was in college. I was a unionist in college and was used to politics and lobbying for change. So, I already had an interest. If both of us can sit in the same classroom, and learn the same things, do the same courses, there is no reason to argue that this political work is for men only.
(interviewee, Nigeria)

The Introduction acknowledges that women are still under-represented in politics, but there has been an increasing trend in their participation since 2000. Several factors have contributed to this development. These include a changing global and regional environment in which the rights of women have been put at the centre of discourses on human rights, justice and development; the role of women's movements and activism; the integration of gender perspectives into national constitutions, laws, policies and programmes; the advent of the Fourth Industrial Revolution; and the role of the media. These range from factors working at the micro level to those impacting the macro level, and alongside them are other individual issues that are directly affected by community needs and the quest to push for development by infusing women's voices and expectations. This chapter discusses the motivating drivers for different categories of women to participate in politics, as well as the

barriers they encounter. It identifies similarities across the region, as well as the possible pathways emanating from these factors.

4.2. THE ENABLERS

Enablers refers to the motivating factors in the overall electoral and political environment that make it possible for women to navigate the electoral terrain and force inclusion.

A changing global and regional environment

A major factor that has been instrumental in support for WPP is the changing global and regional environment, which has recognized the oppression and subjugation of women and girls, and the discrimination against them taking place at all levels. The introduction of norms and standards for gender equality and empowerment of women by the UN has been central to these efforts. The UN General Assembly has adopted several resolutions designed to eliminate discrimination against women and to accelerate their participation in all fields. Chapter 1 presented a detailed discussion of the UN frameworks that promote women's empowerment in politics and all other spheres of life. These frameworks have influenced the work of regional bodies, such as the African Union and its RECs (Chapter 2), with respect to addressing the issue of gender inequality. Both international and regional frameworks have been influential in shaping African countries' legislation and policies with respect to women's rights and participation in politics. These developments have raised awareness among women of their human rights and the opportunities they have in politics. For instance, the Maputo Protocol (2003), the BDPA (1995) and the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development (2008) have all successfully exerted pressure on politicians in Tanzania to increase women's representation in parliament and local government.

The role of women's movements

One of the effects of a changing international environment, in which women's rights were recognized as human rights, was the emergence of influential feminist movements. CEDAW and the BDPA called upon all countries to implement a comprehensive range of measures to advance gender equality and women's empowerment in a wide range of fields, including participation and leadership in politics. Feminist movements drew on those commitments to champion women's struggles in the political, economic, social and cultural arenas. In

One of the effects of a changing international environment, in which women's rights were recognized as human rights, was the emergence of influential feminist movements.

politics, they lobbied for equal representation in central government, parliament, local government, political parties and electoral systems. As Parsitau and Nyakwaka (2023) observe, increased women's activism during the 1990s empowered national women's movements to actively lobby for gender issues to be mainstreamed or integrated into national constitutions, laws and policies.

Political culture

Inclusive and tolerant political cultures make it easier for women to participate in politics. Where countries have started nation building on platforms arising out of violent liberation wars, they have often emphasized the importance of including women. Women played significant roles in dismantling colonial rule and fought beside men during many liberation struggles, and this is a reference point for ensuring their inclusion in politics. Countries that experienced violent ruptures during the decolonization period are therefore expected to perform better on women's inclusion in their political structures because of the role women played in decolonization. Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe were all embroiled in violent liberation struggles for many decades while in exile, where new governance practices emerged. These governance practices inspired a liberation culture with values that put the liberating party first, and prioritized equality across the gender divide. Alignment with the liberating party was thus an important characteristic for aspiring women politicians. Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa all use the PR electoral system, and have done relatively well in addressing women's representation in the national assembly, with Mozambique and South Africa using a system of voluntary quotas.

Gender quotas

Many countries have legislated for the use of quotas as part of the domestication of international and regional norms and standards on gender equality and women's empowerment. They have made provisions in their constitutions and introduced policies on targets for women's representation in mostly elected positions, including for parliament and local government (International IDEA 2021). International IDEA (2024) continues to argue in favour of the positive impact of quotas on women's participation in politics. The assurance of women getting some seats because of quotas motivates women to contest elected posts. A positive correlation between women's participation and affirmative action has been demonstrated (Tripp and Kang 2008).

Role of technology

Social media is an enabler for women's participation in politics. Platforms such as Facebook, X and Instagram provide platforms for raising awareness and levels of political engagement with citizens. The ACE Project emphasizes the importance of social media in offering women and men a space in which to exercise their rights to freedom of expression and to participate in public life (ACE Project n.d.). It offers women politicians and candidates a platform to present themselves and their political perspective to a broader audience. The low costs of social media mean it has the potential to level the playing field, making it easy for women to reach wide audiences in a relatively secure space from a relatively safe distance. Women in politics can thus communicate their visions and outline their intentions, mobilizing support for their candidacy for leadership and decision making across many different levels. Social media platforms help voters to access information as well, which makes it easier for women to articulate details relevant to the public agenda.

Role models

Gilardi (2015) advances the idea that women who become successful in politics serve as role models for other women to go into politics. He argues that, as more women are elected to office and demonstrate their capabilities, society more easily embraces the idea of women being in politics. Consequently, more women will also develop an interest in politics and aspire to enter the political arena. Some women have taken on the job of role model willingly and sought to motivate others to be active politicians.

Historical experiences

Some women's lived experiences compelled them to join politics. This would usually be where they have experienced a traumatic incident or injustice, and this changes their perception of justice delivery and inclusion for the marginalized. A good example is Margaret Dongo, a veteran of Zimbabwe's war of independence and the first woman in the country to form her own party. She contested the national elections in 1990 after she was expelled from the ruling party, the Zimbabwe African National Union—Patriotic Front.

Development for the community

The absence of basic health services and social amenities drives many women to run for political office. Since they are the hardest hit by the lack of basic services that a government should provide and have often endured corruption through the diversion of funds by men in power, some women find it necessary to contest local government

The low costs of social media mean it has the potential to level the playing field, making it easy for women to reach wide audiences in a secure space from a relatively safe distance.

Testimony

'Being a councillor gave me a chance to speak to other women even outside my community. Most women in politics in my country were once student unionists, hence I use that angle to motivate young women to be active. I also support widows and struggling women to organize boreholes for communities. Women remarked that they never knew that women could do so much in terms of development. These successes have motivated other women to participate in politics.' —Nigerian local councillor



Photo by Falhada.

decision-making positions to spur progress on development and fulfilment of basic needs. In most rural areas in Africa, it is mostly young children and the elderly who remain in the villages when the employable youth go to urban areas to seek work. Women are therefore left to fend for themselves, which pushes them to step into leadership roles. Women in communities with large migrant populations, such as in Lesotho, have reported this experience too. Women's desire to participate is also a demand for democracy. When women put themselves up for election, this can be interpreted as expressing a need for inclusion that is in line with their democratic rights, as spelled out in the many democratic governance and women's rights protocols.

4.3. BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION

This section looks at barriers to women's participation and representation in politics. The feminist approach, which was presented in the Introduction, is fundamental for understanding the range of obstacles that African women encounter should they decide to participate in politics and take on leadership positions—whether at the parliamentary, central or local government, business or community levels. A feminist perspective is crucial for proposing the kinds of interventions likely to transform the gender relations that are the root cause of the exclusion, oppression, exploitation and subordination of women in the political, economic, social and cultural arenas. The range of critical barriers that women encounter is vast and straddles many areas, ranging from traditions, social science disciplines, institutions, ideologies, religion and culture. Serious attempts to achieve gender balance in political representation must recognize and consider the diverse perspectives on inclusion of women in the political arena.

Lack of relevant analyses

In an African context, intersectionality analyses are important because the call for women to be represented in leadership and decision making must not just benefit rich, middle-class or elite women who have the necessary education, resources and networks. Equality, justice and fairness demand that a woman from a less privileged, rural background without resources, who has a passion for leadership, should be adequately supported to realize her dreams. In Africa, there is limited knowledge and information about an intersectional approach to women's participation in leadership and decision making. This raises questions on how more women who are living in rural areas, from ethnic minorities or Indigenous backgrounds, are younger or unemployed or living with disabilities can be brought into the political arena.

Socially constructed gender roles

The many barriers hindering women from participating in politics are fundamentally rooted in the unequal power relations between women and men at all levels in Africa. Unequal power relations have created a gender division of labour where women have been assigned roles and responsibilities confined to the household. Their main roles are seen as reproduction and care and domestic work. Men, however, are not only leaders in the home but also in the public sphere. Because of such a division of labour, over the years,

The range of critical barriers that women encounter is vast and straddles many areas, ranging from traditions, social science disciplines, institutions, ideologies, religion and culture.

The many barriers hindering women from participating in politics are fundamentally rooted in the unequal power relations between women and men at all levels in Africa.

women have become marginalized and excluded from leadership and decision making, both in the private and the public spheres, including politics. As a result, most decision makers in African parliaments, local government, government ministries, industry and even civil society tend to be male. Executive managers of companies are predominantly male as well. Unequal power relations between women and men have been entrenched and are embedded in all segments of society through factors such as social norms, religious and other beliefs about the value and worth of women in relation to men, and discriminatory laws and policies that give preference to men over women in labour markets, wage structures, financial markets, industry and communities.

The range of critical barriers that women encounter is vast and straddles many areas, ranging from traditions, social science disciplines, institutions, ideologies, religion and culture.

Legal obstacles

Fagenson (1990) and Hora (2014) both observed that legal barriers are among the limitations for women's participation in decision making. Although various legal documents emphasizing the importance of women's empowerment and the participation of women in public leadership and decision-making positions exist in most African countries, the reality in terms of implementation and actual participation is different. Compliance with legal aspects of electoral processes remains a challenge for women, who do not always have access to legal counsel, and recourse to justice is just as difficult. A good example is Zimbabwe's only female presidential candidate in the 2023 elections, who was later added to the ballot after winning a court challenge when the EMB turned down her nomination, claiming that she had failed to meet the deadline to pay her nomination fees.

In some instances, governments have often implemented new laws that do not support the many protocols on advancing women in politics. Burundi drafted a new Constitution in 2018, which led to the revision of the electoral code and the municipal administration laws. Article 125(e) in the revised electoral code states that the candidacy of wives of natives or nationals of a place are allowed to contest a political office. The authorities argue that this is an affirmative action measure to accelerate the inclusion of women. However, women have frowned on this need to be tied to a man for candidature. They felt that the representation of women was threatened, as these developments deviated from the inclusive principle of the Arusha

Peace and Reconciliation Agreement (known as the Arusha Accords), and they perceived that women would eventually be excluded from the political arena completely (Kamanyi 2021).

Economic and social factors

A major challenge women confront in Africa is the lack of access to funding, which is a key influencing factor for women's ability to engage as candidates. Significant financial resources are required to contest elections, as candidates usually fund themselves at both the local and national levels. Well-resourced women candidates are usually the most successful (The Carter Center 2018). Elections are capital-intensive, and many women experience high unemployment and often lack property to use as collateral to secure loans. Without financial resources, women candidates find it hard to mobilize campaign materials and other resources and are easily dismissed, and women aspirants with limited financial means shy away from participating. The experiences of Kenyan women sum this up: 'You should have money, if you don't, do not attempt, no one will listen to you', and 'An empty hand is not licked' (The Carter Center 2018). The lack of financial resources being a barrier was corroborated by all the women interviewed for this report. Political parties do not financially support their candidates with their campaigns, and so women are kept out of the contests. In the absence of systemic support systems at the government and party level, many women will not venture into the political world.

Internal party dynamics too are reportedly toxic, and this deters women from active participation. A Nigerian aspirant revealed that contesting and winning as a woman in Nigeria is difficult: 'Sabotage, extortion, and threats to life remain a part of daily living: Party men extort money from me. If there is a burial, I am expected to bring the money for it. If their roof is leaking, I am the one to fix it. When there is a wedding, I foot the bills. The list is endless' (Abang 2019).

According to Nzomo (1995), social factors play a major role in influencing women's representation in leadership roles in the African context. These factors are closely tied to education since, without information and knowledge, meaningful participation in politics can be difficult. The social isolation that arises from a lack of education does not encourage political participation, and related personal issues, such as limited confidence or motivation to participate, marginalize women. Nzomo postulated that there is an almost complete absence of women's voices in key decision making on strategic issues in Kenya because of inequities in the structure

Without financial resources, women candidates find it hard to mobilize campaign materials and other resources and are easily dismissed.

A lack of peer support, particularly from men, is an obstacle for women occupying leadership positions.

and processes of public governance, which are spaces that require education. Cubillo and Brown (2003) added that a lack of peer support, particularly from men, is an obstacle for women occupying leadership positions.

Cultural practices

A major constraint that women face is an entrenched patriarchal system in which family control and decision-making powers are in the hands of men. Traditional beliefs and cultural attitudes regarding women's roles and status in society continue to be applied, barring women from participation, especially in rural areas (Sadie 2005). Traditional roles and the division of labour are still clearly gendered, yet women still stand up in the face of such adversity.

A study of women in the Yekene community in the Frafra traditional area of Ghana (Bukari, Apusigah and Abagre 2017) revealed that where a man makes a dowry payment to a woman's father, it often gives him a sense of entitlement to absolute control over his wife. Men in that part of the country are reluctant for women to participate in politics or other activities outside the home, so women cannot make independent decisions on participation. A response given by one of the women portrays these sentiments.

Quote

It is common for educated women to be denied their rights to further education because a man would not tolerate an empty house without a woman he has already spent so much on. Competent educated women may also be denied the right to participate in party politics. Women who refuse to take such orders are threatened with divorce by their husbands, who could also claim compensations from their wives' families.

(Bukari, Apusigah and Abagre 2017: 127)

In Kenya, where cultural attitudes towards women remain patriarchal, Kasomo (2012) points out that the subordinate position of women in society seems to legitimize their exclusion from participation in political and decision-making processes. Many stories depict women as disloyal, disagreeable, untrustworthy, stupid and even gullible. These observations about the role of culture as a barrier to women's participation in politics also resonate with women's

experiences in other countries. For example, based on her research on Nigeria, Nwabunkeonye (2014) points to patriarchy as the root cause of women's exclusion or under-representation in politics and leadership. Due to socialization, most Nigerians, including women, still believe and accept the traditional perspectives that women are inferior to men and that their role should be that of primary caregiver in the home. Consequently, they do not see themselves participating in public affairs. Women also relocate to join their husband's family after marriage, which further disadvantages them through the issue of indigenization. Constituents in the area of a woman's new home view her as non-indigenous (not belonging), and so they do not vote for her or support her for leadership or positions for political office.

Chauvinism

Patriarchy, chauvinism and cultural traditions all conflate into a single behaviour that keeps women out of public affairs in all countries. The negative fixed beliefs and attitudes of men's superiority over women deter many women from being active politicians. Patriarchy is hidden by the veil of culture and traditions, but chauvinism is hard to hide and is quite evident in the language, gestures and manipulative behaviour of men who want to continue holding on to political positions. A Zimbabwean woman politician explained that, in her country, a woman who goes into politics is considered loose morally. In Nigeria, women in politics are seen as wayward, since they cannot stay under the authority of their husbands because they go out for meetings, and in some parts of the country, women cannot even sit among men when they are talking (interviewee). This keeps most women away from politics because of the fear of the stigma of being a wayward woman. A Cameroonian woman politician agreed with these perceptions, saying: 'As an African woman, doing politics is a men's world according to our societal norms. I came up against a chauvinistic society that did not take very well to women sitting around the table and giving their opinions.'

Lack of relevant socialization

In a study of factors preventing Maasai women from participating in politics, Yiapan (2008) cites a lack of formal education, a lack of financial resources and the socialization of women that makes them believe they are inferior to men. In addition, the lack of formal education suggests that Indigenous women may find it difficult to participate in politics because the whole design and institutional set-up of the political arena in many parts of Africa tends to be inaccessible. Institutions tend to be centralized and located in urban areas and, until recently, language and documentation were in either

The complexity of institutional structures and processes is a hindrance to women's participation in politics.

English or French because of colonial-era practices. Therefore, the complexity of institutional structures and processes is a hindrance to women's participation in politics.

Religion

Religion is another barrier that discourages women from participating in public life from childhood through to adulthood. The prohibition is enforced by husbands, fathers, mothers and other relations. This arises from cultural norms which define a virtuous woman as one who is quiet and submissive. Nwabunkeonye (2014) uses the *purdah* system in northern Nigeria to illustrate how religion prevents women from participating in politics. *Purdah* is an Islamic doctrine and refers to the seclusion of women at home, which bars them from participating in politics in any way, whether as candidates for election, campaigning in electoral activities or even voting. Furthermore, some Christian believers also forbid women from participating in public affairs, including politics.

Access to the Internet and information and communication technologies

Access to information and communication technologies (ICT) is important in politics because it can enhance access to information and facilitate a politician's communication with their constituents especially during political campaigns. In Africa, there is a gender divide in access to ICT. According to the *Mobile Gender Gap Report* (GSMA 2021), globally there is a gender gap in terms of mobile ownership and mobile Internet use. In sub-Saharan Africa, the mobile ownership gap remained around 13–14 per cent between 2017 and 2020. The continent had the second widest gap after South Asia. The gender divide in access to ICT limits women's opportunities in accessing political office. For many women, social media may offer opportunities to connect with voters, but it remains an elite space for most poor urban and rural women. Internet penetration is low in Africa for several reasons, and one of them is access to electricity.

Studies have shown that social media has provided greater opportunities for women politicians to promote themselves and improve their status in the political power play (Yarchi and Samuel-Azran 2018). Women politicians' posts generated significantly more user engagement in terms of the number of likes and shares, in comparison with male politicians, while generating the same number of participants in their discussions (Yarchi and Samuel-Azran 2018). In South Africa, the strategic use of social media for self-promotion allowed women politicians to enhance their visibility, influence public perception and consolidate their positions.

South African women politicians have systematically actively engaged the public in the digital sphere, and successfully used social media to promote themselves, their parties and their work. In this way, women politicians were able to exercise and demonstrate their agency and successfully challenge the limitations imposed by traditional media structures that keep them out of sight (Matsilele and Nkoala 2023). Social media enables the promotion of women's initiatives and accomplishments and the assertion of their presence, which enhances the public perception of their credibility and influence. Unfortunately, with poor Internet connectivity in most of Africa, electoral campaigns are still conducted directly with the electorate or via the radio, where there is no anonymity and distance; hence, hate speech and attacks will continue for the foreseeable future.

Social media bullying

Women politicians are more often targets of offensive messages and gender stereotyping on social media than their male counterparts (Matsilele and Nkoala 2023). Women competing for political office have been cruelly abused online in many countries, and the attacks focus on their physical appearance and their personal lives and are usually sexualized. The attacks deliberately ignore the women's political messages or qualifications and include offences as serious as cyberstalking, issuing defamatory statements and impersonation, all to deter them from participating as contestants. When Doreen Nyanjura announced on X that she would be contesting Uganda's 2026 presidential election, she was immediately attacked online for pursuing something else rather than just the office. Her marital status came into question and the 'advice' she was given online was that she must get married before contesting the presidential seat, since a single person could not rule over married people as they would not be able to offer them advice (Offiong 2023).

Women across the region mentioned the prohibitive costs of campaigning on social media and pointed out that physical engagements are still the best way to build up a support base (interviewee 2024) because people tend to prefer to meet politicians in person and hear their messages and promises directly from them. This, coupled with bullying on social media, meant that women still opted for the old-fashioned way of engaging with supporters. Nevertheless, even traditional forms of media, such as radio and television, are accused of ignoring women politicians and dwelling on what journalists think should be women's jobs. In addition, women lament not being able to afford airtime on these traditional media platforms either (interviewee).

Social media enables the promotion of women's initiatives and accomplishments and the assertion of their presence, which enhances the public perception of their credibility and influence.

To shield themselves from offensive messages and harassment in the online space, many women resort to meta-voicing—that is, they add their voices and opinions to information generated elsewhere by others (for instance, they retweet messages) (Matsilele and Nkoala 2023). In this way, women politicians maintain their agency and manage to do their political work, projecting their views in online spaces, but avoid unnecessary, negative or hostile interactions.

Media under-reporting

Traditional media outlets have been criticized for their tendency to give less coverage to women politicians. This exacerbates their marginalization and limits their influence within the political arena. Studies have shown that, even at the highest levels of political participation, such as with the roles of president and party leaders, women's political communications continue to get skewed and remain under-reported in the mainstream media (Haraldsson 2022). Attention is usually given to women politicians only when they have done something controversial, such as being involved in a corruption case.

Electorate expectations

The electorate too tends to have certain expectations of women politicians. Participants in a study in Kenya emphasized the significance of women candidates' manifestos and campaign pledges addressing general community concerns (The Carter Center 2018). However, the respondents also added that, as women, the candidates should speak to issues that concern their gender as well. The female respondents expressed the need for more women to be involved in planning and decision making, promoting the interests of women, and designing income-generating programmes and activities for women and girls. This was considered important, as there was a realization from the public that women in political office can get sidelined in the formulation of interventions meant to benefit citizens. For women politicians to ensure that development projects meet these expectations contributes to a feeling of pressure in public life, as mobilizing resources even within the government can often be difficult.

Nomination process

There are a few theories that explain women's under-representation in parliament, and the party nomination stage is one of them. Because of the winner-takes-all nature of the FPTP system, political parties attempt to maximize their winning chances by running the safest candidates, which effectively discourages non-traditional

candidates such as women (The Carter Center 2018). For instance, in Swaziland, the nomination system for political office usually starts by nominating men because, traditionally, men's voices lead. For women in the country, connections to men in power, in this case the king, are crucial for getting nominated and women candidates are expected to demonstrate the capability to influence male politicians when necessary. All women in political positions in Swaziland are currently connected to the royal family, either by birth or by marriage. Even in situations where this is not the case, to reach the nomination stage, candidates usually have to build up a political profile and that requires a level of financial resources that most women struggle to mobilize. With relative ease of access to jobs and other money-making opportunities, many men can afford to edge out women wanting to compete.

High stakes and violence against women

In countries where the electoral stakes are high, as in Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa, violence even occurs at the local level where development tenders are issued. The local dynamics differ broadly, but using South Africa as an example, statements such as 'local government is a serious animal, you don't want to force your way in, you will die' (interviewee) are common in women's political circles. Here, the local government arena serves as territory to be contested by the former liberation war comrades and the competition is violent (interviewee). Such language contributes to deterring women's participation. The problems surrounding the controversial tender systems and the money that unscrupulous officers and businesspeople stand to gain make the whole terrain dangerous. All this happens despite South Africa's sophisticated human rights protection and defence of democratic systems (the 'Chapter Nine Institutions'). In Mozambique, a female journalist who contested the mayoral position lost all her business clients and contracts she had acquired in her advertising company. This was because FRELIMO (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique), the ruling party, went to all her clients and forced them to drop her. This bankrupted the woman's business and ruined her financially.



Photo by Mos.

Political will remains the biggest obstacle to women's inclusion and this requires addressing at the level of heads of state.

Political will

Given the fact that many states have ratified international conventions and protocols on gender equality and women's political participation, the low levels of women's representation in government in the region can partly be attributed to a lack of political will. Presidential succession in the region has often resulted in changes in the number of women appointed to the cabinet and other senior positions, as happened recently in Malawi in 2020, Mozambique in 2020 and Zimbabwe in 2018. The indifference and sluggish pace in appointing women can thus be attributed to the attitudes and commitment of leadership. In neo-patrimonial regimes, where political office creates access to state resources, men are more likely to dominate the space. There is a reluctance or hesitancy across the region to build on existing frameworks and mechanisms to include more women in leadership positions. Other than Rwanda, which has made serious efforts to advance women's inclusion, very few countries have taken the voluntary quota route. Political will remains the biggest obstacle to women's inclusion and this requires addressing at the level of heads of state.

Politics

Gatekeeping occurs through political parties, which influence who gets to contest elections. Most key positions are held by men in the parties, and there is a general tendency to keep women out in favour of men. Women are often told to step aside in favour of men who the party leaders believe are more likely to win. This gatekeeping behaviour is experienced by women across Africa in different ways. In Kenya, Nigeria and Senegal, women interviewees related these experiences. A Kenyan female politician explained how her party abused her loyalty in the 2013 elections, when she was told not to run for parliament because the party had another higher post planned for her, but she was never appointed to any post. In Nigeria, women reported being told to stand aside for men just because they were women.

Combinatorial causation

All these factors combine differently to cause obstacles that lead to variations in women's representation in political positions in the region. Some countries—such as Tanzania, which has a huge Muslim population—report better performance in political representation than in administrative posts. This was echoed by the *Global Gender Gap Report* of 2016, which ranked the country 2nd in the East African region, and 25th out of 145 countries in achieving gender equality in political positions. On the other side of the spectrum, Zimbabwe's new dispensation, which is linked with the increase in militarized masculinities, has excluded women with limited spaces for their participation and confined them to women's leagues. This has led to a drop in women's representation. However, overall the different country contexts have tended to produce more or less similar results, hence the generally slow pace of transformation.

This section has explained how the numerous barriers women face in the political arena are rooted in negative social norms, and cultural and religious beliefs and attitudes that implicitly communicate the message that politics is not for women but only for men. It has highlighted feminist arguments on how unequal power relations permeate every facet of life in Africa—the political, economic, social and cultural—and how these inequalities disadvantage women when it comes to politics and decision making.

The motivational factors and barriers discussed above have compelled women to demonstrate agency and engage as critical citizens by pushing for inclusion in different ways.

4.4. PUSHING FOR WOMEN'S INCLUSION

Many advocates exert pressure on governments in African countries to move towards more inclusion of women. Governments have used different legal instruments and affirmative action policies to anchor the transformation processes, but real change comes from the capacity for enforcement.

Pathways to women's progression

Increasing steps to address gender parity on a voluntary basis by political parties has yielded excellent results where it has been practised. For example, party constitutions can provide for gender parity among the party's highest-ranking officers, such as the leader, president, vice-presidents, treasurer and secretaries-general.

For elected positions, the various quota systems in use have generally worked. For non-elected technical positions, it is possible to institute systems that deliberately favour women. UN agencies have used such an approach successfully. For instance, to include more women in senior management, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has a policy where, for every senior managerial position that a woman applies for, the management must 'show cause on why you cannot appoint a woman' (interviewee 2023). This essentially means that there is no justification to appoint a man if there is a qualified woman, so women get a deliberate pathway to progression.

The rules of the pathways to progression that are available must be clearly communicated to all interested parties, as well as the rationale for these policies. Voluntary party quotas are an essential pathway, but in the absence of parties driven solely by ideology and principles, this depends largely on the view of the party leadership. A power alternation may have disastrous consequences for women in political positions.

Leveraging women's activism

Women's CSOs have contributed tremendously to enhancing women's inclusion across sectors. Their capacity in collecting information about women's existing status in various sectors (such as demographic, social, economic and political), as well as tracking and monitoring adherence to regional protocols, is important for gathering useful data for advocacy work. It is also important to generate information on the relevant laws, successful strategies and rules and best practices for women's participation, so countries can learn from other countries. Through CSO collaborations and

large-scale advocacy campaigns, as well as effective coalitions and political education programmes for women, information on the most effective ways to recruit women into political positions can be cascaded down through women's organizations.

Educational support

For positions requiring technical knowledge, as in local government where policy procedures and resource allocation techniques are essential, it is important to support women councillors in acquiring relevant knowledge to increase the chances of women participating. This might include providing information on the policymaking process, equipping them with the technical policy language used in government project documents, and knowledge on the overall procedures and regulations. This kind of knowledge can be part of the curriculum on women's empowerment, so that women find it easier to take up political office as they will be comfortable with the technical language. Effective recruitment of women does not always mean considering issues specifically related to women, as creating overall capacity in policy processes is also key.

Party funds for women

Political parties can voluntarily set aside special funds for supporting women candidates. This has been successful in some developed countries where parties have established special funds to help support and encourage women as candidates. For instance, in Canada the Liberal Party put in place the Judy LaMarsh Fund, named after the first Liberal woman appointed to the Cabinet (in 1963), and the New Democratic Party has the Agnes Macphail Fund, named after the first woman to be elected to the House of Commons (Virgint 2016). Both funds provide women candidates with financial and organizational assistance, training, counselling and other support.

Tie government funding for political parties to the inclusion of women candidates

Political parties are allocated government funds, and this is usually according to the number of seats won in a national election. An incentive for parties to field more women candidates could be built into these funds, which could be tied to the number of women winning seats in elected positions. This would compel parties to field more women. Connecting this to policies that require electoral commissions to reject party lists that do not meet gender parity would also go a long way towards increasing women's representation and participation. This has worked to increase the number of women representatives in Senegal.

Enhanced connectivity and diversity

It is important to reach diverse but connected groups of women's organizations that promote gender equality and the rights of women at the regional and national levels. This includes encouraging connectivity between CSOs, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, and lobby/activist groups promoting the rights and inclusion of women. Such synergies make it possible to utilize resources effectively and to sustain campaigns to increase the number of women in senior public office. Social media campaigns can amplify the voices of activists, but the data needed for lobbying must be generated and packaged in a way that clearly expresses the right demands directly to policymakers. Interventions by development partners can thus be targeted at organized bodies advocating for more inclusion of women in politics.

4.5. CONCLUSION

This chapter has covered some of the key factors that motivate women to go into politics, the obstacles that limit their participation, and the pathways that can be used to increase their participation and representation. The main argument is that a changing global and regional environment has defined women's rights as human rights and called on countries to implement measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. This has shaped the agenda for women's participation on an equal basis with men, and works in combination with the agency of women, individually and collectively. This enabling environment encourages women to consider entering the domain of politics. Women's movements across the continent continue to play a catalytic role by lobbying policymakers to introduce laws and policies to foster gender equality and the empowerment of women. Potential strategies that African countries could consider implementing to increase women's representation in politics are discussed in greater detail in the last chapter of the report. The next chapter discusses the range of advocates who support the cause for women's inclusion in politics.

Chapter 5

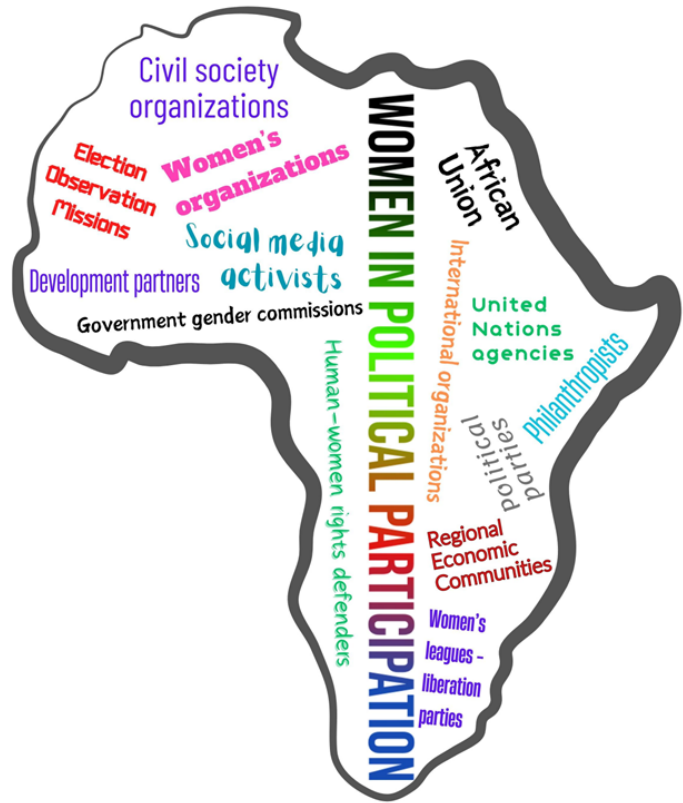
ADVOCATES WHO PROMOTE INCREASING WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The last few years have seen an increase in the number of advocates lobbying for increased women's participation and representation in politics. These advocates all intervene from different angles: some build capacity while others design the enabling policies and political institutions; some exercise oversight on the processes and others create knowledge of the phenomenon and intervention modalities. These promoters are found all over Africa and some advocates struggle more than others to execute their support programmes.

Different actors collaborate and network across a range of themes to advocate for women's political participation (see Figure 5.1). In advocating and lobbying for gender quotas, the strategies are determined by the issues relevant to the specific country for this theme. Collaboration on advocacy work does not always occur within pre-existing arrangements but is usually ad hoc, and connections only take place when there is a need for them. Advocacy groups that work together to seek to increase women's participation and representation in politics include local and international CSOs, women's parliamentary caucus groups and development partners. This chapter conducts a stakeholder analysis of advocates for women in politics, at the national and regional levels, and how they have fared. This analysis also reveals the motivators of women in politics.

Figure 5.1. The range of actors supporting women's political participation



Source: Authors' construction.

5.2. CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

For decades, CSOs across the spectrum have worked to empower women. CEDAW catapulted many of these to start building capacity for women in political positions and, more recently, there have been deliberate efforts to support women aspiring to political office. Women's CSO activism, inspired by feminist movements, continues to take action in the region, strategizing for women's inclusion across space and time. Women's interest groups connect on different themes to build capacity for increasing women's participation in politics. For instance, networking among different organizations

contributed to the Zimbabwe Government's adoption of a 30 per cent quota for women at the local level. The Zimbabwe Local Government Association and Women in Local Government Forum (a caucus group) partnered with CSOs and other stakeholders to lobby for this quota (Gender Links 2020b).

Different non-state actors in the region convened similar workshops in other countries. In Zambia in 2020, Women and Law in Southern Africa, Gender Links, the Non-governmental Gender Organisations' Coordinating Council and the Ministry of Gender and Child Development formulated a Zambia Gender and Elections Strategy ahead of the 2021 elections and this included a campaign for 50/50 gender parity. In East Africa, the political inclusion of women is the result of a great deal of work by women's organizations during the negotiations of the Arusha Accords.

5.3. THE RANGE OF ADVOCATES

Government ministries and departments of gender

On the attainment of independence, almost all African governments established ministries of gender that were tasked with everything regarding the advancement of women's interests. Decades later, not much progress has been made on political participation as these ministries have concerned themselves with issues of livelihoods, maternal healthcare and education, to some extent. However, as the entities responsible for formulating government reports on the advancement of women, they remain in a position to significantly influence policy on women's participation. Unfortunately, they have remained largely symbolic institutions of women's presence in politics and usually defer to other male-dominated ministries.

A good example of a responsive women's ministry is Namibia's Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare. The ministry partnered with International IDEA in a dialogue for political parties on women's inclusion in 2017. The dialogue was attended by nine political parties and served as a platform for consensus building, to foster compliance with the Constitution, and regional and international policies on the attainment of gender equality. Namibia has a tolerant political culture which makes it possible to engage different political parties in the same space.

Where countries have established gender commissions, these are institutions that really could transform the representation of women in politics.

Gender commissions

Where countries have established gender commissions, these are institutions that really could transform the representation of women in politics. Such commissions are mandated with ensuring gender parity and gender justice. For example, the Zimbabwe Gender Commission is tasked with monitoring issues concerning gender equality as provided for in the Constitution. The South African Commission for Gender Equality is responsible for advising government on gender and development issues, as guided by the National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality and the regional, subregional and international gender instruments. These mandates position the gender commissions as the big drivers of women's inclusion in politics. While the South African commission is well resourced, other countries' commissions do not get adequate resources to carry out their mandates—such as the Zimbabwe Gender Commission, the National Gender Commission in Botswana, and the Gender Equity and Equality Commission in Zambia. This is a major obstacle to their expected delivery on the mandates they have.

Development partners

Most interventions on women's participation are driven and supported by development partners through bilateral agreements made directly with CSO networks. There are many international organizations that focus on enhancing women's equality and these include the Association for Women's Rights in Development, Womankind Worldwide, the Global Fund for Women, and Gender at Work. These are also supported by development partners and other philanthropists.

Development partners, such as UN Women and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), have designed many interventions across all regions, and these were sometimes in partnership with government departments and sometimes directly with CSOs that support the alignment of national frameworks and policies with regional and global normative frameworks. For example, the UN Women's East and Southern Africa programme on Governance, Leadership and Political Participation focuses on providing technical support and capacity building to member states, CSOs and regional organizations. It aims to enable women to fully and equally participate in decision making and to ensure that women and girls benefit from gender-responsive laws, policies, budgets, services and accountable institutions.

The UNDP has run 28 projects in Africa, which include creating electoral environments conducive to women's inclusion. One example is in Cameroon, where UNDP worked to ensure that the entire electoral process allows women, youth and vulnerable groups to participate freely and be part of the activities, by monitoring some processes. In Sierra Leone, the project focused partly on strengthening the women's caucus to advocate for gender-related issues. UNDP Côte d'Ivoire's project included a component to support women candidates, raise awareness of women's political rights and train women candidates on effective electoral campaigns. In Somalia, the project supported new women members of parliament to strengthen their capacity to carry out their work on legislation, as well as advance gender equality and women's empowerment through legislative and advocacy work in and outside the parliament and in their respective constituencies (UNDP 2023).



Photo by Mos.

Election observation missions

In the last two decades, development partners have pushed for all recipients of donor money to not only mainstream gender into their workplans and activities, but also to factor women's participation into the interventions. This has been intensified in election and governance-related programmes where deliberate efforts are essential to ensure inclusion of women in politics. Election support CSO networks, such as the Zimbabwe Election Support Network, the Electoral Support Network of Southern Africa, the East and Horn of Africa Election Observers Network and the African Election Observers

Network, have all been building capacity for aspiring women politicians. Many election observer mission reports provide gender analysis across the electoral cycle. This is a strong signal that there is oversight on the inclusion of women.

In their regional engagement strategies with RECs, some development partners have contributed to promoting the implementation of gender-responsive election observation guidelines and other strategies, and adherence to international and regional norms that champion gender-responsive elections and equal participation in electoral processes.

Women in parliament

Just the mere presence of women in parliament—in terms of constant visibility of women—has a role model effect. A 2012 study conducted in India explained that seeing an increased proportion of women village leaders had closed the aspiration gap between girls and boys by nearly 25 percentage points and had eventually erased or reversed the gender gap in educational outcomes (Beaman, Pande and Cirone 2012). This also led to a decrease in girls being confined to domestic roles in the villages. Role models are instrumental in advancing women's representation. Fiji is another example, where the first woman speaker of parliament in the 2018 general elections acted as a role model, inspiring many women to seek political leadership positions. The island has a relatively high level of women's representation in parliament—at 20 per cent—due to her presence (Beaman, Pande and Cirone 2012).

Political parties are one actor with significant power to advance women's inclusion, but unfortunately they do not seem to prioritize this.

Political parties

Political parties are one actor with significant power to advance women's inclusion, but unfortunately they do not seem to prioritize this. The nature of African politics, where being in political office brings with it access to resources, partly explains this holding on to power and positions by men. Parties that embrace and practise the principles of equality, justice and fairness embrace the importance of supporting and encouraging women to participate as equals. They deliberately create a democratic environment, where both women and men have equal opportunities to join the party and access positions of leadership and decision making. Political parties everywhere determine who runs for office—and therefore who gets elected—and they can manipulate this process. For women, party support is a critical factor for success in elections. Parties usually have favoured contestants whom they nominate and support, and women often have very limited roles in political party leadership structures so they

cannot influence candidate selection. The party nominations process lacks transparency and accountability, yet institutional support is a critical factor in winning, especially for women. As parties have preferred candidates who they support, this complicates access to elected positions for women. Political parties tend to discourage women from participating in politics—usually in parties that are male-dominated and have limited appreciation or knowledge of gender equality and women's empowerment (Kandawasvika-Nhundu 2021).

Africa's political landscape is littered with political parties' women's leagues that work with the government's gender ministries and toe the ruling party's line. These leagues have struggled to have an independent persona separate from the parties, although they dominate the media space on women's issues. Any updates on women's empowerment made by other advocates do not get the media attention, as they are considered to be in competition with the government. Where there are dominant ruling parties that have retained power, the publicity space is seemingly reserved for the party's women's wings, and this overshadows progress made by other non-state actors. The most active league in the region is the African National Congress Women's League, which has consistently demanded fairness in women's representation (Maseko 2024).

Other countries have political parties' women's wings (Ghana, Malawi, Tanzania) that are designed to fight for gender justice, equality and inclusion, but, in many cases, these are laden with conflicting cultural norms and discriminatory practices, and a lack of financial resources affects their effectiveness (Gletsu 2012).

The Women in Political Participation project

The Women in Political Participation project contributes to enhancing women's participation through generating knowledge products that focus on the state of WPP in Africa. These range from the *Africa Barometer* reports on WPP (International IDEA 2021b; 2024) to regional and country-specific situation analysis reports and policy briefs. Women in Political Participation also offers training and capacity building, dialogues with relevant stakeholders, advocacy and platforms to celebrate those women in political leadership and those aspiring to be.



Photo by Lorena Mazive.

The power of women organizing through social media was felt in the Arab Spring, when women took on leadership roles in denouncing oppressive regimes.

Social media activists

As women must constantly seek safe spaces for public engagement, social media provides a unique way for them to reach their constituents and control their narrative (Reilly 2019). The power of women organizing through social media was felt in the Arab Spring, when women took on leadership roles in denouncing oppressive regimes. The way social media was used against the security forces in these countries demonstrated the immense power it offers women to penetrate public spaces and demand attention. Social media platforms encourage community building and offer women and activists a space in which to operate confidently in the public arena (Reilly 2019). Studies have demonstrated the usefulness of Facebook as a device for connecting with supporters and conveying one's political ideals. Twitter (now X) has become a space where one can quickly mobilize security by raising alerts and is equally useful for sharing political messages. For women candidates, the platforms allow the safe and convenient building of a community and network of supporters. The centrality of social media to most people's lives—which is particularly the case for young people—makes it an important platform for politics.

The challenge with social media lies in its ability to provide hiding spaces for negative actors. Women tend to get harassed more than men on social media and responses to political issues often get personalized. This sometimes makes it hard for women politicians to engage as freely as they would like to. In addition, in many African

countries, data costs are high, so this makes direct engagement with supporters more appealing. The 2024 national elections in South Africa were the first where extensive engagements were carried out on social media platforms, and many of the messages were presented by young women in the Democratic Alliance opposition party.

5.4. CONCLUSION

Although different advocates may have different ways of engaging and conveying their support, the successes are determined largely by the tolerance levels in the environment. International partners find it easier to engage and build capacity but the actual political work is done by locals—who must either conform to their political environment or make a radical departure to chart new courses. A big problem with externally financed support is the question of sustainability. Without local actors internalizing this capacity and cascading it down throughout their communities, it will take a long time to transform the attitudes that inhibit women's full participation as equals. Social media offers an opportunity for women to get their voices heard and demonstrate their capabilities.

The next chapter discusses the 11 case studies and focuses on the experiences and success stories of women politicians in these countries.

International partners find it easier to engage and build capacity but the actual political work is done by locals.

Chapter 6

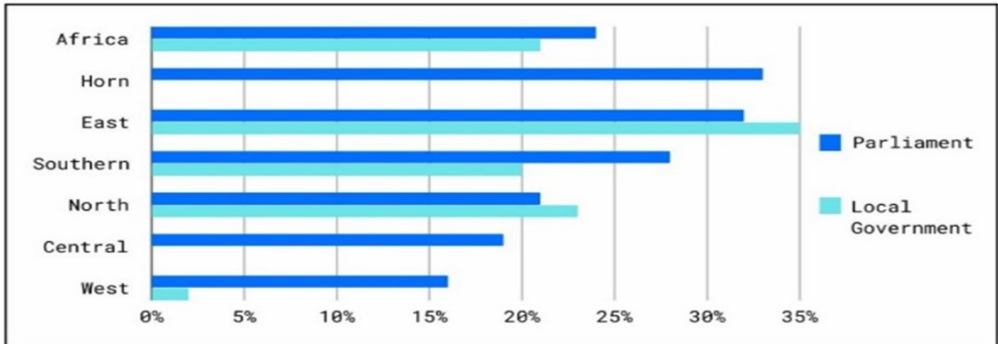
CASE STUDIES

6.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the status and experiences of women in politics across the African Union's five regions: East, Central, North, West and Southern. The variations in WPP across the countries discussed in this chapter make it essential to compare the types of political positions and the democratic landscape in each country, as well as women's agency. This is important for teasing out commonalities that can feed into designing strategies to enhance women's participation in different settings. For instance, International IDEA (2021b) data shows that East Africa is way ahead in the region in terms of women's representation at both the local government level (35 per cent) and in parliament (32 per cent) (see Figure 6.1). This is above the low regional average of 23.5 per cent women's representation in parliament and 21 per cent for local government. West Africa has only 2.5 per cent women in local government and trails the entire region in all elected offices.

Political party leadership is one area where the fewest women are found (see Figure 6.2). The average for the whole of Africa was a low 12 per cent in 2021, and by 2024, this had dropped to 9 per cent (International IDEA 2021b; 2024). The only regions with significant numbers of women representatives in political parties are East and Southern Africa. The two regions are largely former Anglophone colonies, and they experienced more difficult transitions from colonial rule to democracy. Political parties in these two regions are relatively more institutionalized, with membership fees contributing to their financial coffers, and both regions generally perform better in terms of development. Women in these two regions have risen to prominent

Figure 6.1. Women's representation at the parliamentary and local levels 2021



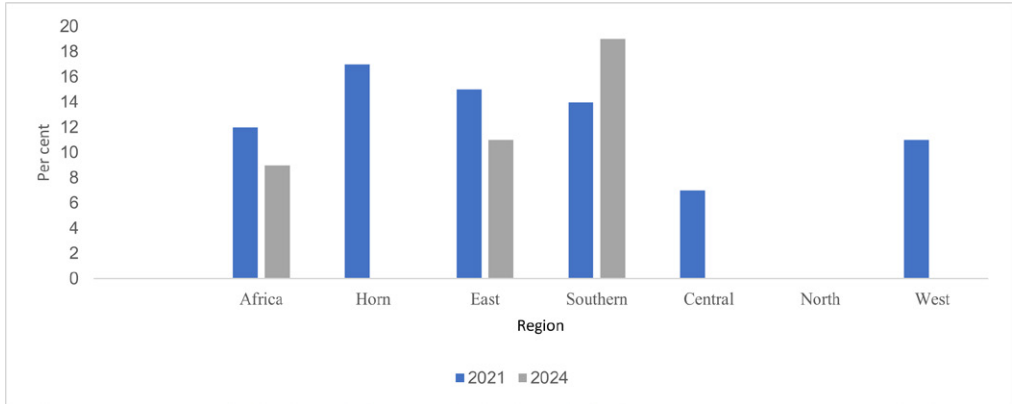
Source: International IDEA, *Women's Political Participation: Africa Barometer 2021* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2021), <<https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2024.46>>.

positions in many political parties, and some have successfully formed their own parties and contested elections. The countries in these two regions have a narrower gender gap. Overall, sub-Saharan Africa has a gender parity score of 68.4 per cent and has advanced by 5.6 percentage points overall since 2006 (WEF 2024). The political empowerment index is at 22.4 per cent, with Namibia standing out as the top performer. Over half of the countries in the region have closed over 70 per cent of their gender gap and show gradual progress (WEF 2024).⁴

Appointed positions are, relatively speaking, an easier way of increasing the number of women in top posts, and evidence shows that this is one area where governments are improving (see Figure 6.3). The average for Africa over a four-year period is around 29 per cent of appointed positions in EMBs held by women, and again both East and Southern Africa perform best, exceeding the 30 per cent mark. North Africa experienced a decline in the four-year period (of 10 percentage points) and this regression is a loss to the democratic gains that had been achieved over the previous decade. The leadership changes in Tunisia and the ongoing crisis in Sudan have contributed to this decline.

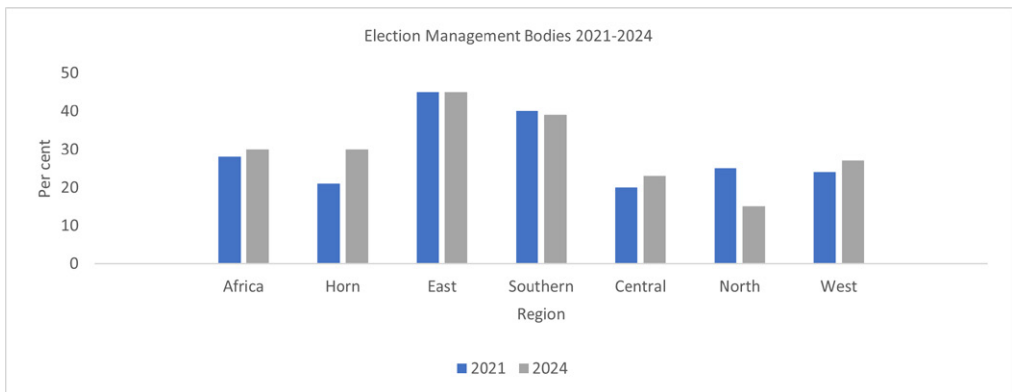
⁴ The region comprises the 35 largest economies in the region.

Figure 6.2. Political party leadership 2021–2024



Source: International IDEA, *Women's Political Participation: Africa Barometer 2024* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2024), <<https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2024.46>>.

Figure 6.3. Women in appointed positions in electoral management bodies 2021–2024



Source: International IDEA, *Women's Political Participation: Africa Barometer 2024* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2024), <<https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2024.46>>.

6.2. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION IN POLITICS IN EAST AFRICA

Introduction

This section starts with an overview of the performance of the East African region. It then gives details of the status of women's representation in politics in three countries. The region has a mix of countries that have experienced violent post-colonial conflicts (Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda) and some that are beacons of peace and stability in Africa, such as Tanzania. Regional statistics reflect a slight improvement in women's representation in politics over the four years to 2024, except in local governance structures. Cabinet representation of women increased by just 4 percentage points between 2021 and 2024, while the upper house increased by 5 percentage points. There was a decline of 4 percentage points in political party leadership from 2021 to 2024. The low levels of participation, coupled with the overall democratic regression over the period, reflects the fact that patriarchy is still entrenched at the political party level.

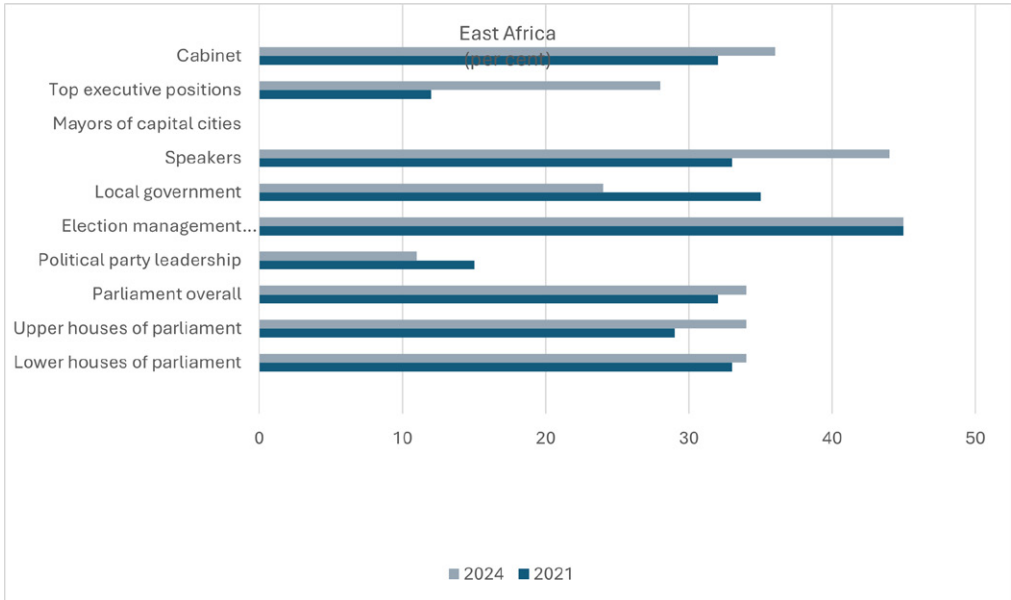
Over two decades ago, Rwanda was devastated by the genocide of the Tutsi ethnic group, but the country has bounced back and is making tremendous progress in women's participation and representation. Burundi too has had its share of ruptures and states in its constitution that women should make up at least 30 per cent representation but is struggling to comply with this provision. Rwanda, however, is ranked as the most advanced country globally with an unprecedented 61.3 per cent women's representation in the lower house (Freedom House 2024). Nevertheless, the overall improvement of women's representation in politics across the East African region makes it possible to meet the SADC Protocol on Gender target of 30 per cent but not the CEDAW General Resolution 40, which calls for 50 per cent (see Figure 6.4).

Kenya

Kenya has a presidential political system with a bicameral parliament. The country uses the FPTP electoral system in which the candidate with the highest number of votes wins.

Kenya had an LDI score of 0.46 in 2023, indicating that it is moving towards democratic consolidation. With women's representation standing at 23.3 per cent, it is ranked 101st globally, showing that, relative to other nations, it has not performed very well since it is below the parity value of 30 per cent. In the past two decades,

Figure 6.4. Women's representation in political institutions—regional overview 2021–2024



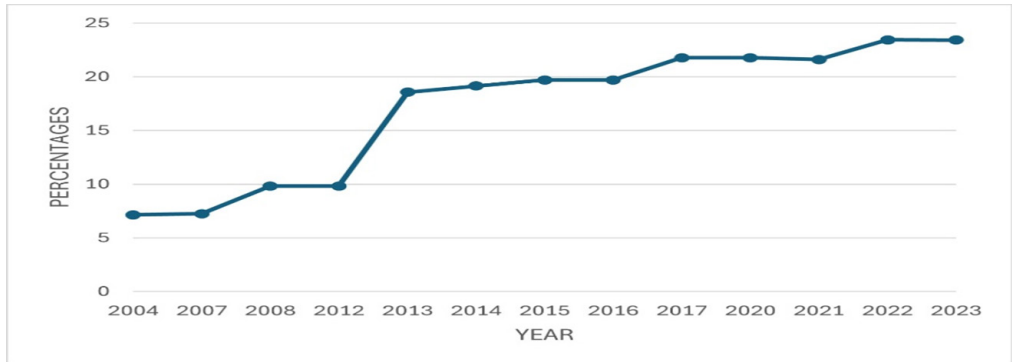
Source: International IDEA, *Women's Political Participation: Africa Barometer 2024* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2024), <<https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2024.46>>.

the country has been progressing in the representation of women in parliament. Statistics show a 17 percentage point increase in women's representation between 2004 and 2023 (see Figure 6.5). The improvement emanates from the gender quotas and the equal representation laws implemented at the national and political party levels. However, although trends indicate an increase in women's political representation, the numbers still fall short of Kenya's constitutional requirement that one-third of parliamentarians should be women.

Legal framework governing women's political participation and representation

Kenya has ratified and domesticated several international and regional legal instruments advancing women's equal participation in politics and other spheres of life, such as CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol. The rewriting of Kenya's Constitution in 2010 gave prominence to gender equality by enshrining a fixed gender quota

Figure 6.5. Trends in women's representation in parliament in Kenya since 2000



Source: World Bank, 'Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments, Kenya', World Bank Data, [n.d.], <<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS?locations=KE>>, accessed 29 July 2024.

for parliament. Article 27(8) states that no more than two-thirds of members of the elected house can be of the same gender (Berry, Bouka and Muthoni Kamuru 2021). Although women's representation is still below the target, this legislation has contributed to an increase in women in Kenyan politics. In 2017, Kenya's Supreme Court gave the country's parliament 60 days to pass a law guaranteeing that at least one-third of the country's elected representatives must be women or face dissolution. However, the parliament remained non-compliant with the Constitution after the elections and is yet to enact the law on implementation of the quota system as stated by the Constitution.

The Constitution (2010), Kenya's Elections Act (2011) and the Political Parties Act (2011) all create a harmonious regulatory framework for women's political representation and the agencies required to implement and guarantee compliance with the law. The Elections Act includes many provisions to raise the involvement of women in politics and assures their right to vote. The Act requires the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission to decide from party lists the figures necessary to fulfil the two-thirds gender rule when allotting special seats in the county assemblies. If a party is found violating the rules, it is given 14 days to revise its rules and ensure compliance. The Elections Act also promotes election

security and integrity through an Electoral Code of Conduct that controls the actions of all parties, their officials, candidates, agents and supporters. The Code of Conduct demands that political parties pledge to encourage gender equality and proscribe discrimination. In section 16, the Code of Conduct strives for protection of the political rights of women as candidates and voters. It obliges referendum committees, candidates and agents to guarantee the security and full involvement of women (NDI and Federation of Women Lawyers Kenya 2018).

Gender sensitivity lies in the provisions designed to guarantee the inclusion and involvement of women in the founding and governance of political parties.

Gender sensitivity lies in the provisions designed to guarantee the inclusion and involvement of women in the founding and governance of political parties. The Political Parties Act demands that party governing bodies act in accordance with the two-thirds gender rule and every party should subscribe to the Political Parties Code of Conduct. Political parties are compelled to uphold the rights of all persons to partake in the political process and to respect and encourage gender equity and equality and fundamental human rights and freedoms. The Political Parties Fund, which is the public money that is distributed to parties, cannot be accessed by a political party that has more than two-thirds of its office holders from the same gender. It also directs that 30 per cent of the public funds accessed by political parties must be used for the advancement of the representation of women, among other marginalized groups (NDI and Federation of Women Lawyers Kenya 2018).

Women's representation in parliament and local government

The August 2022 general election witnessed a positive shift in women's political participation and representation. Women candidates made up an estimated 11 per cent of the total number of candidates gazetted by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission. The 2022 election also recorded increases in the number of women vying for elected positions, which ultimately resulted in a greater number of women successfully elected. For instance, the number of women gubernatorial candidates increased by 5 percentage points between 2017 and 2022. Seven women were elected as county governors, representing a 32 per cent success rate (UN Women 2023b). In September 2022, President William Ruto unveiled his new Cabinet, which comprises seven women Cabinet Secretary nominees out of 22, representing 32 per cent of the total Cabinet. He also appointed three other women to the executive, including the National Security Advisor, the Women's Rights Advisor, and the Secretary to the Cabinet, bringing the representation of women in the executive to 39 per cent (UN Women 2023b). This

is an improvement on the 2017 Cabinet, which had 30 per cent representation of women. However, despite the noted progress following the 2022 elections, women's representation in the National Assembly (at 23.28 per cent) and the Cabinet still fails to meet the Constitutional two-thirds gender requirement for elected and appointed positions.

Motivators of women's political participation

Although there is no documentary evidence to suggest this, a key factor that has motivated women to participate in politics in Kenya are the legislative and policy reforms described above. These have increased public awareness of human and women's rights. Ranta (2024) contends that globally, it was the 1990s democratization process that created the pressure for women's political inclusion. Inclusion of women in parliaments became one of the indicators of democratization and so countries became more open to women's participation in politics. In her thesis, Kombo (2012) argues 'that due to colonial oppression women's political consciousness progressively deepened and motivated them to participate in the liberation wars and in the post-liberation era in women's continued struggles for political advancement in their independent states'.

Women are also motivated by the oppressive experiences which they encounter. Those experiences drive them to enter politics as part of the struggle for their own emancipation and also that of other women. Waangari Mathai is one of the best examples to illustrate this (Maloiy 2018). Participating in the Mau Mau, Kenya's liberation struggle against colonialism, also raised women's consciousness and interest in politics as the case of Wambui Otieno illustrates (Maloiy 2018). Other women are motivated by the recognition and encouragement they receive from community members and those in political leadership. The case of Grace Ogot (Maloiy 2018) illustrates this.

Barriers to women's effective participation and representation in politics

For a woman to rise in politics, you go through so much. At the end of it, you will have been bruised and battered, you do not even know who you are.
(Kenyan female politician)

Women in Kenya face many hurdles in their effort to participate in politics. Many of them are of a legal nature while others are social and cultural. The implementation of the two-thirds rule is

Women are also motivated by the oppressive experiences which they encounter. Those experiences drive them to enter politics as part of the struggle for their own emancipation and also that of other women.

yet to materialize, mainly because of the resistance from male parliamentarians, who—as they constitute a majority—can block the passing of any law that would result in the full implementation of the Constitution’s article 27 (Ngom et al. 2022). Six court orders have not moved the Kenyan Parliament and government organs to pass a law to ensure the full implementation of the two-thirds gender rule (Ngom et al. 2022).

Socio-cultural obstacles women face on their way into political office include inadequate political support from their parties, especially during primaries; GBV against women politicians; gender stereotyping; a lack of funding; and the patriarchal structures in society. For example, GBV takes the form of online abuse, verbal sexism and physical attacks meted out on women competing for elected positions. The patriarchal language used in Kenyan politics is designed to delegitimize women’s leadership. The character assassination tactics used by men against a woman opponent and their supporters range from body shaming to sexist and misogynistic comments on their marital status, particularly if they are not married (Ngom et al. 2022).

A big challenge is the complex terrain of the political landscape in Kenya. A Kenyan female politician narrates her experiences in trying to get into politics for the last 25 years in Box 6.1.

Although her motives are not different from many other women candidates, this politician was moved around and given empty promises after working hard for the political party that later just ignored her. The barriers to women’s participation are well portrayed in her narrative.

Advocates promoting women’s participation and representation in politics

International organizations, such as the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the New Tactics in Human Rights, UN Women and the Heinrich Böll Foundation, partner with CSO groups to promote women’s participation in politics in Kenya, including by training women candidates and securing their political voice (Berry, Bouka and Muthoni Kamuru 2021). As part of the CSOs’ fight against patriarchal and discriminatory language, there has been an increase in training for journalists on gender-sensitive language and avoiding stereotyping (Ngom et al. 2022).

Box 6.1. Experiences of a female politician in an opposition party in Kenya

What motivated me is that I always felt there was a lot of space for women to do a lot of good things in development and I looked at things I had learnt at university. I felt that there was a lot of opportunity in Africa—whether in socio-economic, social justice or inequality, there was a gap. Because previously, I worked with communities and had been able to execute a lot of projects for the community (infrastructure, health, community development), I asked myself, being the authority and office-bearer, if I would not yield so much more for the community if I could join politics. Having been part of the team which prepared the new Kenya Constitution in 2010, which introduced a quota requirement that no gender should occupy more than two-thirds of the seats in parliament, I saw an opportunity for women. So, I decided to go for politics. I also felt that there was a lot of empty capacity in the political arena. You look at our women's parliamentary representation, it is very low. It also became clear to me that as women, even though we work very hard, we are hardly recognized. In Kenya, I speak a lot about the girl child and fostering female leadership in Africa. I have been in politics for the last 25 years. My journey started from simply doing campaigns and analysis and once I got the knack for it, I went into full campaigning. I campaigned for former President Mwai Kibaki in the diaspora as a youth, and I was in the presidential campaign

team for former president Uhuru Kenyatta and for our current president, William Ruto, in 2017.

I then decided to take a back seat and started running for my own elected seat, but then I lost in the party primaries, but after that I moved on to the Democratic Party, and in 2022 I ran as an MP for Kiboyisi West and came out in third place out of six candidates. However, because I had done some work that was relevant when I campaigned for a former president when I was abroad, I got interested. The first time I ran for election at the local level I lost. Then in the 2017 elections, I contested in some constituency and was elected. Instead of going into parliament, I was asked to join the presidential campaign team on the understanding that when it was over, I would be supported for a parliamentary seat. However, much to my disappointment, the promise was never fulfilled, and I felt disappointed and let down that despite the intense work which I had done in the campaign team, I was not supported to get into parliament. This also happened in the subsequent administration. Even though my name was up for a senate seat, somebody replaced me while I had travelled abroad, another big disappointment in my career. Not even those presidents I had served could even support me when I approached them. I have since learnt that politics is a tough game.

The Kenya Women Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA) is a cross-party caucus that advocates for women's rights and promotes democracy. It includes the Women's Parliamentary Association, which is a regional coalition of women parliamentarians in the

Intergovernmental Authority on Development region; the East African Women's Political Caucus, a coalition of women's organizations that aims to increase women's political engagement and representation in parliament; and the Kenya National Assembly's Women's Caucus, a specialized body that focuses on gender-related issues and advocates for women's empowerment. KEWOPA, in partnership with UN Women and Global Affairs Canada, provides capacity-building services by equipping women with the tools, knowledge and confidence to step into leadership positions.

Social media campaigns, such as #Ni Mama, #Chagua Dada Jenga Nchi, #BetterThan and the activities of Tuvuke, among other groups, have provided significant input to improve media coverage and raise awareness of women in politics. Women politicians and Kenya's National Gender and Equality Commission have also been pushing for the government to enact laws and political parties to create policies to discourage and punish perpetrators of online and physical GBV (Ngom et al. 2022).

Kenya has some women role models, such as Martha Karua and Charity Ngilu, who have been active in the political arena for a long time. They continue to inspire many young women who openly say that they adore them and appreciate what they have done for women's politics in the country (interviewee).

Kenya has been progressive in improving women's participation in politics and has a very vibrant political culture. As the case study has shown, there was a significant increase in the representation of women over the period 2000 to 2023. This is largely attributed to the introduction of legislation promoting the equal representation of women at the national and local levels and the implementation of gender quotas. A notable development was the amendment of the Constitution in 2010 to guarantee that each gender constitutes at least one-third of the membership of parliament. Notwithstanding the progress achieved so far, Kenya is yet to achieve gender parity, and there is a need for the government to implement the progress laws which the parliament has passed. The women's movement, social media and other advocates should also accelerate their advocacy of this agenda.

Rwanda

Rwanda is lauded as one of the world's success stories in ensuring equal representation and participation in politics. The country has LDI and PCI scores of 0.10 and 0.42, respectively. The latest data

shows that 64 per cent of members of parliament are women (International IDEA 2024). The country's success is largely attributed to the visionary leadership of the government. Rwanda has domesticated most international and regional agreements on gender equality and empowerment of women and has passed legislation and introduced policies that have been instrumental in increasing women's participation in politics. This has been complemented by the establishment of institutions to coordinate and monitor the implementation of those laws and policies.

Rwanda's legislative branch consists of a bicameral parliament made up of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. The 26 members of the Senate are either appointed or elected and serve an eight-year term. Of these, eight are selected by the president to ensure that historically marginalized communities are represented. The other 12 are chosen by sectoral or provincial councils. Four members are elected by the National Consultative Forum of Political Organizations, and two by university staff. The Chamber of Deputies is made up of 80 deputies. Of this number, 53 are elected through a list PR system and 24 are elected by the provincial councils. One is chosen by the National Union of Disability Organizations in Rwanda and two by the National Youth Council.

Rwanda has a mixed electoral system with constitutional and legislated quotas at the national and local levels. The Rwandan Patriotic Front–Inkotanyi and the Centrist Democratic Party both have voluntary party quotas of 30 per cent women for all decision-making positions within the party structures (International IDEA 2024). The candidacy requirement is party membership or independent candidature.

Legal frameworks governing women's political participation and representation

Rwanda has signed and/or ratified key international and regional conventions and agreements on the equal treatment of women and men with respect to political participation—for example, UDHR (1948), ICESCR (1966), ICCPR (1966), CEDAW (1979) and BDPA (1995). At the regional level, Rwanda has ratified the Maputo Protocol (2003), and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2004).

After the 1994 genocide, Rwanda adopted a new Constitution (1995). Article 9(4) provided for a minimum 30 per cent of women in decision-making positions. The implementation of this provision pushed up the proportion of women parliamentarians, making

Rwanda the first country to have a women-dominated parliament (International IDEA 2021b). In 2003, a new Rwandan Constitution was created, which included electoral quotas, and has become a symbol of Rwanda's dedication to women's rights. The preamble formally recognizes equal rights for women and men, reserving 30 per cent of all elected positions in official bodies—such as the cabinet, parliament and district councils—for women, as well as 24 indirectly elected seats in parliament (or the Chamber of Deputies) for women (Abbott and Rucogoza 2011). The Gender Monitoring Office was established by article 185 of the Constitution to achieve gender equality and complementarity via impartial monitoring of public policy and administration. Women's capacity in public office is bolstered in a variety of ways, including through women's councils, which aim to promote women's interests in development, advise local governance structures on women's issues and teach women how to participate in politics; and through the Rwanda Women Parliamentary Forum, which provides support to women in elected office (Burnet 2008). In terms of politics, Rwandan President Paul Kagame directly supports the advancement of women's status in Rwanda by prioritizing women's rights.

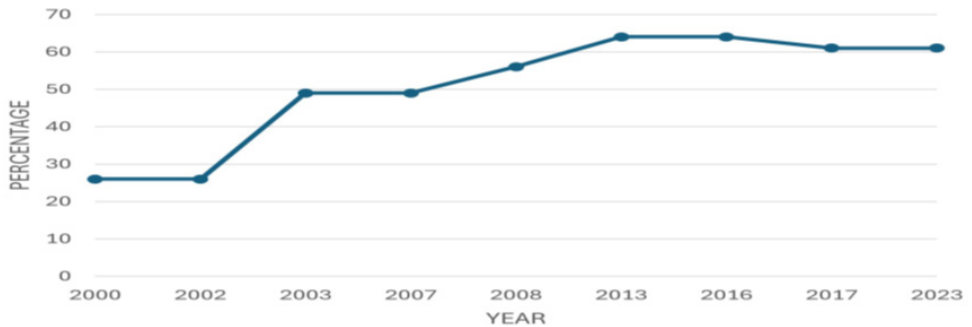
Enabling policy frameworks—including the National Gender Policy, the National Policy against Gender-Based Violence and the National Policy for Family Promotion—were put in place to ensure that the principle of gender equality is mainstreamed across all sectors. In addition, the National Strategy for Transformation strengthens and promotes gender equality and ensures equal opportunities for all Rwandans while fostering a culture of solidarity with vulnerable groups.

Women's representation in parliament and local government

The rapid increase in women's participation in parliament in Rwanda has been applauded the world over. The proportion of women representatives rose from 27 per cent in 2000, reached a peak in 2013 at 63 per cent, and even after declining it was still at 61 per cent in 2023, which is way above the parity threshold (see Figure 6.6).

In addition, in 2024 women occupy 50 per cent of cabinet positions compared with 47.3 per cent in 2016 and 2017. In the judiciary, women occupied 51 per cent of the total positions. This high representation of women in the parliament, the cabinet and the judiciary is a result of increased political space and capacities for women and girls to assume governance roles in Rwanda (Halidu,

Figure 6.6. Trends in women’s representation in parliament in Rwanda since 2000



Source: World Bank, 'Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament, Rwanda', World Bank Data, [n.d.], <<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS?locations=RW>>, accessed 29 July 2024.

Kizito and Jacob 2020). In 2023, Rwanda’s ruling party elected its first female deputy president (East African Herald 2023).

In local government, women’s representation now varies between 16.7 per cent and 66.7 per cent with high representation in the district councils (45.2 per cent), where positions are electable, and among the vice-mayors in charge of social affairs (Republic of Rwanda n.d.). However, only 27 per cent of district mayors are women, although this is an improvement on 2015 when the figure was just 10 per cent. At the level of executive secretaries (the third lowest administrative entity in Rwanda), men still dominate at 83.9 per cent compared with 16.1 per cent of women (Republic of Rwanda n.d.).

Based on interviews with two women politicians from Rwanda, the restoration of peace in the country after the genocide has brought some stability. The participants considered that President Paul Kagame’s government has been instrumental in bringing about policy reforms that have resulted in the country’s unprecedented success in terms of women’s participation and representation in political leadership. The country has created the legal, institutional and implementation mechanisms that have driven the agenda of increasing women’s participation. Women felt that—because they had the requisite education and exposure to leadership—they could easily venture into politics and be the voice for the millions of women who could not speak for themselves.

Motivators of women's political participation

Although the 1994 genocide, which killed over one million Tutsis, continues to define contemporary events in Rwanda, the country has recovered relatively quickly. Efforts have been made to neutralize the ethnic cleavages that tore the country apart. From this devastation, women have risen to prominence as the Rwandan parliament has the highest proportion of women in the world. Although the president has championed the cause of women, the journey remains difficult for women on a personal level.

In Box 6.2, a woman narrates her journey into politics.

Box 6.2. Joining politics in Rwanda

My entering the field of politics is a long story, a long journey which began almost 30 years ago. What motivated me was the experience which I had in my childhood. I come from a country that has a history of colonialism and post-colonialism. We were also affected by the ideology of hatred against the Tutsi ethnic group which, as you know, was a key factor in the genocide against the group in 1994. Because of the ethnic tensions prior to 1994, my parents fled to Uganda. I was born and grew up as a refugee in that country. Although the country took good care of us, as a family we longed to return to our country one day because as a refugee, you do not get to enjoy the full rights that citizens enjoy. During my exile, I heard that Rwandan refugees were forming a political party, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), whose purpose was to fight for the right of

return for refugees and for them to be treated with dignity like all other citizens of Rwanda. The RPF aimed to build a country that was free from discrimination and exclusion. So, in 1992, immediately after graduation, I decided to join the political organization. Prior to that, I was afraid of politics. I always thought that it was a dirty game, but having grown up as a refugee, all this changed. I began my political career as a cadre, responsible for mobilizing women from Rwanda and from the refugee community in Uganda to join the struggle. After the RPF took power in 1994, I joined the Government of National Unity. I was deployed to the Ministry of Gender where I made my contribution in terms of developing gender policies and guidelines for mainstreaming gender issues in all sectors. I grew up through the ranks from the technical to leadership roles.

Barriers to women's effective participation and representation in politics

During the violent conflict Rwanda experienced, women were subjected to sexual violence, rape and other forms of abuse. The new government took immediate measures to end this kind of violence

with impunity. However, the country is just as patriarchal as other African countries, although the situation is slowly changing because of government policies and legislative reforms. GBV remains a problem and has been viewed by some as a backlash against the progress the country has made in empowering women and girls. Even despite this progress, women politicians still experience challenges, as one woman explains in Box 6.3.

Box 6.3. Challenges in Rwanda

I have faced several challenges in politics despite holding a high-level office. A major challenge was the negative social norms and cultural beliefs about what a woman 'ought to be'. I recall that, when I was appointed to senior positions, more questions were as to whether I would be able to do the work or not. On a few occasions, some people insisted on addressing me as 'Mr' even though they were clear that I was a woman. There was a hidden mockery in those words, the idea being to insinuate that the senior position which I was occupying was fit for a man, not a woman. I noticed that the more senior I rose through the ranks, the greater the incidents of gender stereotyping and the greater the expectations were on me. In fact, I realized that the bar

was much higher for women than for men for the same level of responsibility. Another challenge was my marital status. Because I was single at the time I was appointed into senior positions, some would ask questions such as 'When are you going to get married?', 'How do you lead when you are not married?' Yet the same questions were not asked in the case of my male counterparts. Often, I also felt that some people harboured doubts about my competencies. Some felt that I was not up to the task. Somehow, I felt that women faced a higher standard than men. They were expected to be perfect. Pressures were not limited to the office. Rather, my own family, whose attitudes and values also mirrored the society.

Advocates promoting women's participation and representation in politics

The government has institutionalized gender equality and empowerment of women by establishing the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, the Gender Monitoring Office, the National Women's Council and the Rwanda Women Parliamentary Forum. These institutions are responsible for formulating and coordinating policy and implementing projects to advance gender equality in Rwanda.

Rwanda's success is largely attributed to the government's domestication and implementation of international and regional

agreements on gender equality and empowerment of women with respect to their political representation and participation. The visionary leadership of the government has also been evident in the integration of gender equality provisions in the Constitution, the promulgation of relevant legislation, and the formulation of policies to promote the equality of women and men. For a region that has been engulfed by conflict for a long time, lessons can be drawn from Rwanda's competence in establishing regimes to transform the role, quality and voices of women in politics.

Seychelles

Multi-party democracy was reintroduced in 1993 in Seychelles after a new Constitution was adopted. Seychelles became a unitary republic that allowed opposition candidates to run for the presidency from 1994. It has an LDI score of 0.66, which means that it has achieved significant democratic gains, and a low PCI score of 0.29, indicating rather low levels of participation. The country has four political parties, but the two dominant ones are the Seychelles National Party (SNP) and United Seychelles. Since 2017 the governing party has been United Seychelles with the SNP in opposition. Women have equal rights to participate in political and public life and their involvement in election processes is very high (UN Women and Government of Seychelles 2019).

Seychelles has a mixed electoral system where both PR and FPTP are used, and there is no gender quota in place. The National Assembly consists of 35 directly elected members, 8 of whom (23 per cent) are women. The candidacy requirements consist of party membership or affiliation, plus a fee (National Assembly of Seychelles n.d.).

Legal framework governing women's political participation and representation

Seychelles has signed and ratified many of the regional and international gender protocols and has enacted its own legal framework to advance equality between women and men as depicted in Box 6.4.

The Seychellois Charter of Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms (Constitution of Seychelles Part 1) has provisions to ensure that women have the same rights as men in all spheres of life, including politics. Article 24(1) has specific provisions that guarantee equal rights for women and men with respect to the right to vote, participation in public affairs and running for political office. In article 27, the Constitution guarantees gender equality and

Box 6.4. Legal framework governing women's political participation in Seychelles

International

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), ratified 1992
 Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (1999), ratified 2011
 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), ratified 1992

Regional

African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981)
 Protocol to the ACHPR on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003)
 Southern African Development Community Protocol on Gender and Development (2008)

National

The Seychelles National Gender Policy (2016) aims to promote gender equality in all areas, including politics.
 The Electoral Commission Act (2015) ensures gender balance in the Electoral Commission.
 The Political Parties Act (2015) encourages political parties to promote gender equality and women's participation.

non-discrimination. The government has also introduced a National Gender Policy and developed a strategy for its implementation.

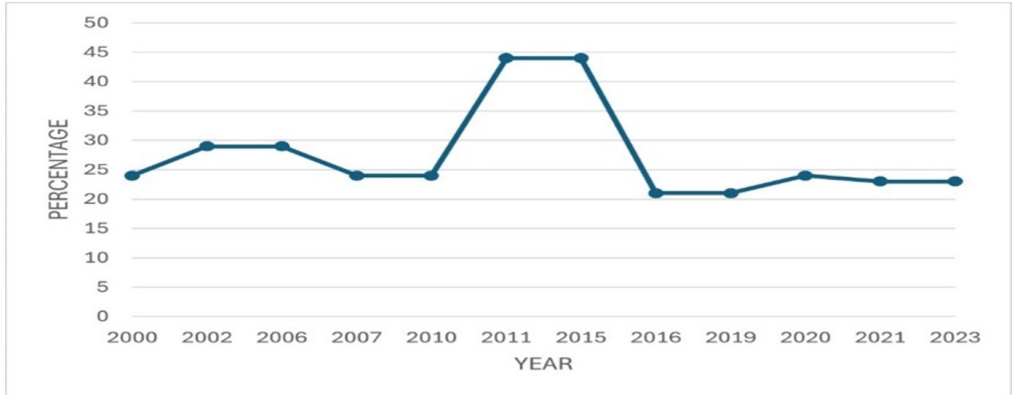
Women's representation in parliament and local government

The representation of women in parliament has regressed in the last 10 years, from 44 per cent in 2015 to 23 per cent in 2023, which is well below the regional average (see Figure 6.7). The levels of representation were erratic over the period 2000 to 2023. There was a declining trend from 2000 to 2009 after which an increase was achieved (2010–2015). However, there was then a sharp decline in 2016. Since then, there has been some gradual improvement but, by 2023, representation was just below a quarter (23 per cent), much lower than the peak of 43 per cent achieved between 2010 and 2015.

Some analysts attribute the decline to systemic informal factors, such as customs, culture, traditions, socialization and gender stereotypes, which in their most extreme form are expressed as gender violence.

Women in Seychelles hold 23 per cent of elected positions in the government, compared with 40 per cent of management positions in the private sector. In the National Assembly, they constitute 21 per

Figure 6.7. Trends in women's representation in parliament in Seychelles since 2000



Source: World Bank, 'Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament, Seychelles', World Bank Data, [n.d.], <<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS?locations=ZA-CD-KE-SC>>, accessed 29 July 2024.

cent, in cabinet 25 per cent, and in local government councils 60 per cent (International IDEA 2024).

Motivators of women's political participation

Although some challenges still exist with respect to women's advancement, the Seychellois are progressive around gender equality issues, with more than 93 per cent stating that women should have the same opportunity as men to vie for political office, rejecting the idea that men should be given priority as candidates (Okello 2023). Most of the population embrace the principle of equality between women and men in all spheres, which is conducive to promoting women's participation in politics. There is high support for women's rights, equality in employment, land ownership and political leadership, although a sizeable minority consider it likely that women might suffer criticism or harassment if they run for public office (Okello 2023).

Barriers to women's effective participation and representation in politics

Although Seychelles is classified by the UN as a high-income country, the persistence of social norms and cultural values that treat men as superior to women has contributed to the country's decline in

performance with respect to women's participation in politics. Patriarchal practices still exist in the society. In addition, the absence of special measures, such as quotas, makes it difficult to achieve gender parity in representation. Social media bullying against women candidates makes the contesting environment intimidating. A senior education official remarked to journalists how the lack of political maturity in Seychelles deters women from joining politics: 'Just look at social media lately, and the number of insults being thrown just because of politics. Even now, more than a week after elections. We seriously need education on this issue' (Seychelles News Agency 2020).

A political party, One Seychelles, has openly admitted that the country has a political culture that is not accommodating to women (see Box 6.5).

Box 6.5. A political party candidly admits barriers to women's participation exist

Despite Seychelles being deemed to have a 'matriarchal' society, with women predominantly being the main breadwinners for their families, politics remains—unfortunately—male dominated. Women face a wide array of challenges in politics; they are judged by how they look and how they are dressed, more than their ideas. And when they do express their views and opinions, they are held to a much higher standard than men. When women work to rise to the top, whether in politics, business or community advocacy,

they face resistance, discrimination, social stereotypes and double standards. This is something that has undoubtedly deterred many other women from entering the political arena, and it is something that One Seychelles' formidable women candidates are working to combat. They (women) are fiercely motivated and dedicated, undeniably intelligent, and are committed to giving voice to the marginalized and oppressed members of society.

Source: One Seychelles, 'The Women of One Seychelles', Facebook, 10 October 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/enssesel/photos/the-women-of-one-seychellesdespite-seychelles-being-deemed-to-have-a-matriarchal/1335426760131016/?_rd=>, accessed 30 October 2024.

Women's rights are enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Seychelles, including the right to political participation, and there are no legal barriers for their participation in the electoral process. Women have equal access to education, employment, ownership of property, inheritance and credit, and there is no gender gap in salaries. Yet, when it comes to higher decision-making positions,

Seychellois women are often marginalized as men monopolize these roles. At this level, Seychellois society becomes patriarchal, and women are given little space (Allard and Bauer 2018).

There is a lack of legal provisions to ensure gender parity, and no special measures like quotas for elected office positions, such as the National Assembly. The 2012 CEDAW report highlighted these shortcomings and pointed out that gender stereotyping myths about the relative superiority of men and inferiority of women were many and that there was a common misperception that government policies and services were currently very pro-women. There was also government hesitancy over introducing special measures without appropriate advocacy and sensitization programmes, since these could produce a harmful backlash.

Advocates promoting women's participation and representation in politics

According to UN Women and the Seychelles Government (2019), women and girls bear a disproportionate share of care work and unpaid work. This has a negative impact on women who choose to participate in politics. The Ministry of Community Development, Social Affairs and Sports, the Women's Parliamentary Caucus, UN agencies, funding organizations and civil society organizations are the main advocates driving the agenda for gender equality and empowerment of women in Seychelles. The Women's Parliamentary Caucus has provided a platform for women in parliament to debate the struggles faced by women, with a view to tabling them before the National Assembly.

The case of Seychelles has demonstrated that, when countries achieve success in parity in women's representation and participation in politics, it is still important to closely monitor any regressive tendencies and take corrective measures. At some point, Seychelles was among the top performers with respect to women's representation in politics, yet evidence shows that the country has experienced a regression, witnessing a decline of almost 50 per cent. The government ought to consider implementing special measures, such as the adoption of a 50/50 gender quota. Comprehensive measures are necessary to address the persistence of social norms, cultural beliefs and attitudes that perpetuate negative perceptions about women's participation in politics in the region.

6.3. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION IN POLITICS IN CENTRAL AFRICA

Introduction

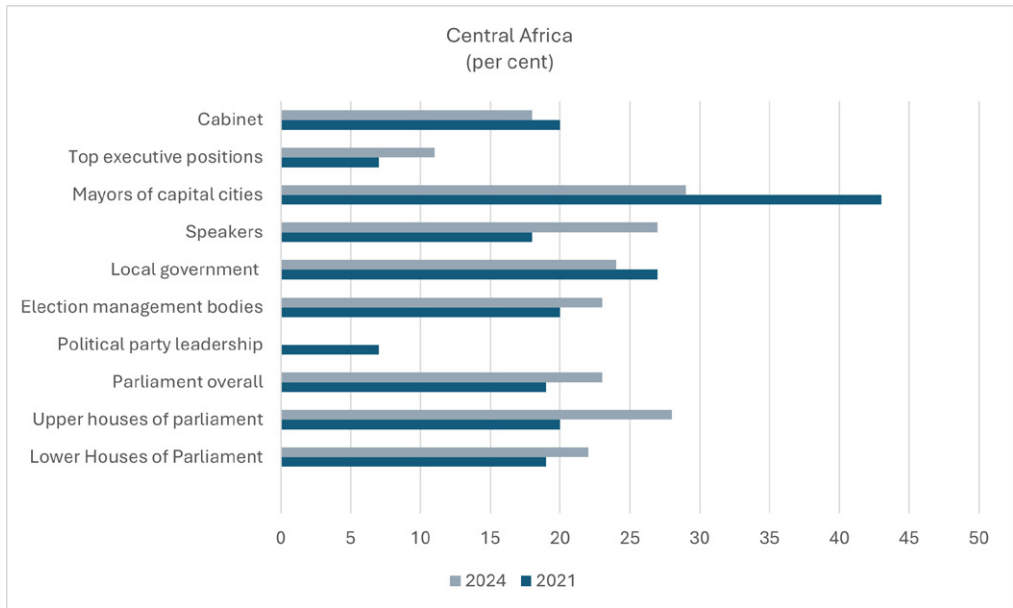
The Congolese woman has not been allowed to know politics. Only men have been groomed into politics and the Congolese woman is made to stay back and manage the home and take care of kids. It was only after the reign of Mobutu that women started participating in politics because of the advent of multiparty politics, and because women were being educated so they started participating in politics. (interviewee, DRC)

The Central African region has been embroiled in conflict for decades and democratic transitions remain difficult. The raging war in the eastern parts of the DRC and the major ruptures that destabilized the country all have an impact on WPP. Significant proportions of the populations of these countries have been displaced by the civil wars in the region. Cameroon has been embroiled in a civil war since 2016, and the Central African Republic has seen violence erupt several times in the last two decades.

Globally, the DRC is among the worst performers with respect to women's representation in parliament. With the proportion of women at 12.8 per cent as of April 2024, the country was ranked at number 154. However, Cameroon has risen to be a good performer with women making up 34 per cent of the lower chamber of parliament.

Women are poorly represented in all political institutions in the region. There is a low level of women's representation in cabinets, local government and as mayors of capital cities (see Figure 6.8). There has been a drop across all these institutions in 2024 (International IDEA 2024). Women mayors of capital cities declined by 15 percentage points between 2021 and 2024. There are no political parties that are led by women in the region in 2024. However, there is a significant improvement in women's representation in the upper houses of parliament, which saw an increase of 8 percentage points in 2024. War and political conflicts in the region might be the cause of poor representation of women, since conflicts are associated with human rights abuses, and women and children often suffer the most in those circumstances. The region is far from reaching the targeted global gender equity of 50 per cent.

Figure 6.8. Women's representation in political institutions in Central Africa 2021–2024



Source: International IDEA, *Women's Political Participation: Africa Barometer 2024* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2024), <<https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2024.46>>.

Cameroon

The country's low scores for LDI and PCI, at 0.13 and 0.12 respectively, reveal its struggles with its democratic transition. The ongoing conflict between the Cameroonian Government and the separatists took a violent turn in 2016, which disrupted progress towards gender equality. This has affected the political participation of civilians in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon, who continue to experience violence inflicted by both non-state and state actors. On 1 October 2017 the rebel separatists' group leader declared the independence of the Anglophone regions, renaming them the Republic of Ambazonia amid worsening political tensions in the country (CCID 2023). Women and girls in these conflict-ridden parts of the country have experienced increased exposure to human rights violations and GBV, the denial of resources and opportunities, and marginalization in all spheres of life.

Legal framework governing women's political participation and representation

Cameroon has an elective dictatorship political system, where the president, Paul Biya of the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM), has been in power since 1982. The adoption of the Political Parties Act led to the return to multiparty elections in 1992, and although many parties have contested elections, the CPDM controls the political arena. The country has ratified several international protocols that promote gender equality (see Box 6.6), but domestication of these has not taken place, even though the UN has pointed out critical legal reforms required to attain specific SDG 5 indicators of gender equity (IMF 2018). However, by 2021, 50 per cent of the legal frameworks that promote, enforce and monitor gender equity, with a focus on violence against women, were in place in Cameroon (Fokum, Fonjong and Adams 2020). The National Gender Policy (2011–2020), which is aligned with the country's long-term vision for 2035, includes unity in diversity, equal rights and women's participation as main principles, and specifies that at least 30 per cent of government staff and other positions should be held by women.

Box 6.6. Legal framework governing women's political participation in Cameroon

International

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979)

Regional

Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003)

National

Constitution (2012)

National Gender Policy (2015)

New Draft Code on Persons and the Family

Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family

National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2018–2020

Cameroon uses a mixed electoral system, combining FPTP and list PR. The Electoral Commission set a quota of one-third women's representation as the minimum threshold for gender mainstreaming, but there are no reserved quotas for women. Although the country

does not have legislated quotas for women in political parties, voluntary quotas have led to an increase in women representatives. Biya's CPDM party has reportedly made efforts to include more women in its structures, but did not allow them to be involved in decision making (International IDEA 2024). The main opposition party, the Social Democratic Front, adopted a 25 per cent quota, while the Cameroon Party for National Reconciliation has women's representation in the party structure at 40 per cent, surpassing the recommended 30 per cent. There are now more women involved in politics but the decision-making positions in political parties remain elusive, pushing some women to start their own parties such as the Cameroon's People's Party founded by Kah Walla.

Women's representation in parliament and local government

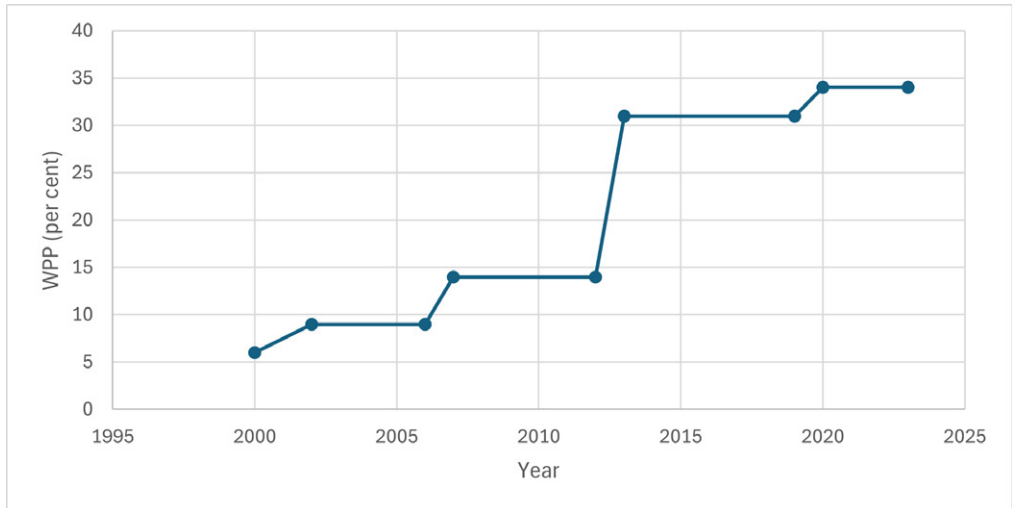
Women's continued advocacy campaigns have led to increase in participation in the political sphere. Efforts by the government date back to the 2012 Electoral Code, which required that women be included on candidate lists for municipal, legislative and senatorial elections. Due to this, women's representation in parliament reached 38 per cent by 2020 (see Figure 6.9). The Senate's 20 per cent women's representation increased to 26 per cent in 2017, town councils to 16 per cent, mayors to 8 per cent and the cabinet to 17 per cent (IMF 2018).

Women's participation in politics has improved in Cameroon, but the 30 per cent recommended quota at all levels of decision making has not been attained.

Barriers to women's effective participation and representation in politics

Women in Cameroon face many barriers to achieving their full potential in political leadership. These range from restrictive cultural practices to discriminatory traditional laws and a highly segmented familial division of labour (Taoyang 2019). A male ally explained this: 'The choice of most political leaders in a male dominated society has been androcentric, and to the best of my knowledge this is the main reason why women feel reluctant to join politics here.' Many of the obstacles emanate from this androcentric perspective, which emanates from a worldview shaped by male dominance and preferences. A man from the polygamous Bamileke ethnic group expressed his fears when he remarked on his wife's potential political career. He doubted that she would be able to perform her household duties if she became an elected official and added that his wives should not be wasting time by taking part in political activity, since

Figure 6.9. Trends in women's representation in parliament in Cameroon since 2000



Source: World Bank, 'Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament, Cameroon', World Bank Data, [n.d.], <<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS?locations=CM>>, accessed 14 August 2024.

they are supposed to be busy taking care of their children, working on the farm and at home, cooking for their family and being respectful to their husband (Voice of America 2019).

A female Senator sums up her political life experiences and reflects on her motives for joining politics and the barriers she has encountered in Box 6.7.

Advocates promoting women's participation and representation in politics

Advocates for gender equality work ceaselessly to lobby for the inclusion of women in political institutions. Some of the key actors in gender equity efforts include the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family, development partners like UN Women, and women's CSOs such as the Association for the Fight Against Violence Against Women, Grassroots Justice Network, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and Women in Alternative Action Cameroon. The troubled Northwest and Southwest Regions have some humanitarian organizations also working on encouraging social cohesion and curbing GBV.

Box 6.7. A female multiple political offices holder shares her experiences

I am a Member of the CPDM Central Committee. I grew up in a home where my father was an active politician just after the independence of Cameroon, so I got interested as a child and later as an adult decided to do active politics. I am very conscious about my community and its welfare and realized that one could influence matters if they were a political actor.

Challenges are always the same: male chauvinism, insufficient awareness of politics and lack of support among female voters, lack of support from the male folk, lack of sufficient awareness and timid financing of our activities. I, however, have a lot of community support, so I get things done. The insufficient finances affect the carrying out of proper advocacy and, lastly, some women are

not very supportive, so you navigate with tact and hard work.

Perseverance has helped me a lot, I have been doing politics in a zone not very favourable to the CPDM party. We have gradually increased support for the ruling party, and we are finally winning all elections in Bui Division: councils, parliament and Senate. We hope to improve the living conditions of the people and advocate for peace at this difficult time. All in all, the participation of women in Cameroonian politics is experiencing growth, as more women are moving into public offices. The government has also strived to increase this participation through affirmative action, by legislating a mandatory quota of women on electoral lists. While this is good, we need to advocate for more.

Male allies play a role too in advancing the case for women's inclusion. A male ally emphasized this:

The choice of political leaders should be near objectivity. Objectivity here means allowing candidates' capabilities, practicality, efficiency as well as experience, rather than choices made through gender biases of those who create opportunities for political offices. Women are more flexible leaders and more attentive to the needs of the family which is the basic unit of society. Because many organizations seek flexibility to contend with complex environments, women bring this female advantage to any organization. If this logic is carefully applied, we will have more women in political top ranks, and this will be a great encouragement to political aspirants.

Cameroon has had troubled democratic transitions that have been dominated by one party for a long time and this has impacted on

women's participation and representation. Women's rights are anchored in the Constitution and the increase in the number of women in the cabinet over time is likely to result in improvements in women's participation in politics and governance more generally. The presence of political parties led by women is a signifier of increasing competition in the political arena and this augurs well for checks on governance.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Protracted conflicts deter the political stability that is needed to achieve progress on development issues in the DRC. With an LDI score of 0.12, the country is very low on the democracy index, and the incessant and protracted conflicts have contributed to this poor performance. However, its PCI score of 0.40 shows the payoff from the many interventions by different actors in building an inclusive polity. The country has a presidential and parliamentary political system with a bicameral political structure, and it uses the FPTP and list PR electoral systems. The National Assembly has 109 members and only 21 per cent of the members are women. The country has a multiparty system, with over 400 political parties and the ruling party, the Union for Democracy and Social Progress, has been in power since 2019.

Legal framework governing women's political participation and representation

Article 13 in the DRC's Constitution paved the way for equality in the country's politics, with new voluntary incentive mechanisms to encourage WPP. Nevertheless, the electoral law is not consistent with the Constitution, which partly explains the low level of women's representation, at 10 per cent in the National Assembly. In June 2022 the Electoral Act was amended (articles 11, 13, 22 and 47), with article 13 emphasizing the importance of 50/50 political representation (UN Women 2023c). Previously, the government had passed Law No.15/013 of 2015, which mandated a gender quota of 30 per cent on electoral lists of political parties in article 47 of the Constitution. The electoral reforms exempted parties from paying registration or bond fees if they had 50 per cent women's representation on their party list. These policies resulted in a slight increase in women's representation in parliament by 4 percentage points in 2023.

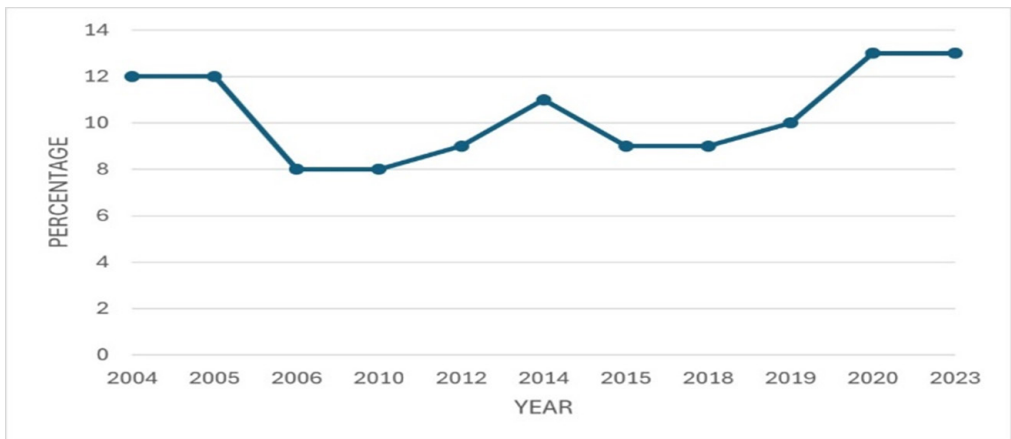
The government also introduced a National Gender Policy (2017–2021) to promote implementation of constitutional and legal provisions on gender equality in all areas, including WPP, and a

Strategic Plan for Gender Equality (2020–2024) was developed to implement the policy.

Women's representation in parliament and local government

The country's representation of women in politics has been sluggish over the last two decades, where an improvement in one period is cancelled out by a deterioration in another. Women's representation in politics is still below regional averages and far from the targeted 50 per cent gender parity. Women's representation has been below 14 per cent for over two decades (see Figure 6.10).

Figure 6.10. Trends in women's representation in parliament in the DRC since 2004



Source: World Bank, 'Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament, DRC', World Bank Data, [n.d.], <<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS?locations=CD>>, accessed 30 October 2024.

Women's political participation remains low throughout, with just over 10 per cent (13 per cent) of parliamentary seats held by women, 29.90 per cent of ministerial positions, and 14 per cent of local government representatives (International IDEA 2024). The Tshisekedi administration made a giant leap forward by appointing the country's first female Prime Minister, Judith Suminwa, in June 2024.

Motivators of women's political participation

Political reforms under President Félix Tshisekedi in the DRC have created an environment where women can exercise their rights to

political participation, especially in political leadership. Tshisekedi has consistently advocated for women's rights and staunchly believes that women's emancipation is central to the country's social development, and this attitude is attributed to the influence the women in his own family have had on him (France 24 2023). The space he has opened has encouraged more women to pursue political office. Journalists reported a surge in the number of women candidates in the 2023 elections, stating: 'Ahead of Monday's election in the DRC, women's faces can be seen everywhere, pinned up on electoral posters throughout the country' (France 24 2023). In 2023 Marie-Josée Ifoku, a woman who contested the presidency, commented on why she was in the running, and explained why many women are wary of the expected pressures of a political profession, when she launched her campaign agenda (see Box 6.8).

Box 6.8. Venturing into politics in the DRC

As a Congolese citizen, I am ready to go to the polls and vote for a woman. Not because I'm a woman too, but because I believe that women can achieve great things, as several renowned women around the world have proved. I think we can continue to have an impact on the world by supporting each other. It is an aggressive and insecure world. If you don't have a strong personality, you're not going to make it in politics. Despite everything, we have decided to defy fear,

because you must admit that there is a lot of fear behind it, and that takes courage and daring. I propose to rid Congolese society of an archaic system to move toward something new. We advocate awareness as well as national reconciliation. We want to rebuild and restore the Congolese. It must be strong, rebuilt and it must be dignified. The brooms [her campaign logo] symbolize our fight and embody power. Cleanliness is unity. It is the new.

Source: Zaidi, Z. N., 'Will female candidates transform politics in Congo?', Deutsche Welle, 15 December 2023, <<https://www.dw.com/en/will-female-candidates-transform-politics-in-congo/a-67720205>>, accessed 28 July 2024.

Barriers to women's effective participation and representation in politics

The persistent conflicts in the DRC have negatively affected both women and men. However, women are more vulnerable to abuses such as sexual harassment, rape and other forms of GBV. Traditional social and cultural norms are also still very strong. Women fear to engage in politics when there is violence. Kaniba, a female activist, conveyed the hidden dangers of participating in politics in the 2023

elections: 'We avoid [discussing political subjects] because it can be dangerous. But there are things we can do. For example, I am an observer (for an independent election watchdog). You observe, you note, and you report. You do not need to disclose you have done the job because it can be dangerous' (France 24 2023; brackets in the original).

Generose Kagheni, coordinator of the organization Women Today, a defender of women's rights in North Kivu Province, has a different perception of why women's participation rates are low. She believes that women's rights are flouted in the DRC because of the low levels of women's representation in decision-making positions. Without their voices and input, their needs are not prioritized, and policy considerations do not take them into account; hence, gender responsiveness is elusive because no resources are allocated for women's needs. Generose emphasized: 'That is why it is important to ensure that women participate at all levels of decision making so that they can present and defend their rights in our highly patriarchal society' (Zaidi 2023).

Domestic violence is rampant in the DRC and statistics show that 42.8 per cent of women in the DRC are survivors of domestic violence, 39 per cent have been threatened or injured and 27 per cent are victims of harmful traditional practices (UN Women 2023c). Due to decades of conflict that have disrupted access to education, poor governance practices and toxic masculinities, very few women have access to decent jobs (UN Women 2023c). Gender inequality permeates women's access to all opportunities—jobs, education and politics. Aspiring women politicians often encounter abuse, harassment and gender stereotyping, which not only affects women before entering politics but also continues to be inflicted on them when they represent political parties (UN Women 2023c). As a result, many women are discouraged from participating. Lack of access to finance is another challenge.



Photo by Louise Marilou Efekele.

In Box 6.9, a woman politician narrates her political life, which reveals the hidden power barriers in political parties.

Advocates promoting women's participation and representation in politics

The DRC has many actors who tend to concentrate more on humanitarian aspects and empowering women for healthcare and security services because of the conflicts and high levels of under-development. Major advocates who support women in politics are the Ministry of Gender, Family and Children, women's caucus groups like the Women's Caucus from the Pan-African Parliament, the Alliance of Women Members of Parliament and the Women Senators' Group. International promoters, such as UN Women and UNDP, and regional CSOs are also actively involved in supporting gender equality and women's empowerment in the country.

Individual advocates have started initiatives too, but they lack funding to implement them. A woman politician organized a project called

Box 6.9. A woman's struggle for inclusion

I encountered multiple challenges as a woman, but I had to find myself after 18 years of experience in politics, though it was not easy. For years after belonging to a political party, I had to force myself into the male-dominated system and take up a senior post of responsibility within my political party at the time, the Mouvement de libération du Congo (MLC) (the Movement for the Liberation of the Congo), headed by Jean-Pierre Bemba, where I was an assistant to the party's representative in Belgium. I assisted him for six years and when he was appointed the MLC's representative in the diaspora, I became the party's representative in Belgium.

The major obstacle I faced was that, irrespective of my intellectual capacity and professional experience, I could not be assigned a post of responsibility within the party at an early stage. New adherents must serve at the initial stage as assistants and protocol officers before ascending within the ranks of the party. However, I think my input at the lower level motivated the party

hierarchy to elevate me to the position of MLC representative in Belgium for over five years. I resigned from my position as MLC representative and from the party because of the challenges I faced before, during and after the position. I was appointed to a position where all those around me were men who, due to their African mentality, would not abide by what I would say because I am a woman and the demand that I had to respect men and not vice versa. Also, I could not conceive and execute projects within the party that favoured women's participation in the party's activities because the funding in the party had to be authorized by men who did not see the need for women's inclusion. Consequently, I resigned in 2018.

I took a step back to join the civil society before reintegrating into party politics. I intend to join a political party which was recently created, called Alternative Citoyenne, where I intend to work with people with a shared vision.

La Nouvelle Femme Congolaise (the New Congolese Woman), which aimed to support women interested in joining politics, but she was not able to operate the project across the capital city of Kinshasa due to financial constraints. Her reasons for the financial challenges are disturbing: 'Most funding can only be obtained from political actors. But with my personal experience with politicians, they would want to have some visibility on the project, and this will derail the project from its initial goal as it is intended to be apolitical.' The blatant capture of all political processes by wealthy men makes it difficult for women to exercise independent agency. Women are thus adopting the attitude, as this politician did, that, 'If women can be given an opportunity to gain knowledge in politics, then politicians should not be given the chance to use such avenues for political motives.' It is for this reason

that women-initiated projects are progressing slowly by relying on financial resources from membership fees and other contributions.



Photo by Lorena Mazive.

The DRC has not bridged the gender gap on women's participation in politics, as this case study has shown. A key problem seems to be the ongoing conflict that has ravaged the country for decades. Although performance has been weak, there are positive signs of progress because of the constitutional and electoral law reforms the government has adopted. However, ongoing conflicts over natural resources in specific areas of the country will remain an obstacle for many women trapped in those areas. This means that strategies are needed that will work for both peacebuilding and the inclusion of women in overall democracy building.

6.4. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION IN POLITICS IN NORTH AFRICA

Introduction

This section discusses the state of WPP in North Africa, focusing on Tunisia and Sudan. The overarching observation is that women's participation in politics remains low, which has far-reaching implications for their representation in policy- and decision-making bodies. The legal framework governing WPP in each country is

presented, before delving into women's representation in parliament and local government and the barriers hindering effective women's participation in politics. Sudanese women's participation in politics is discussed within the context of the ongoing conflict in the country and its related disproportionate effects on women.

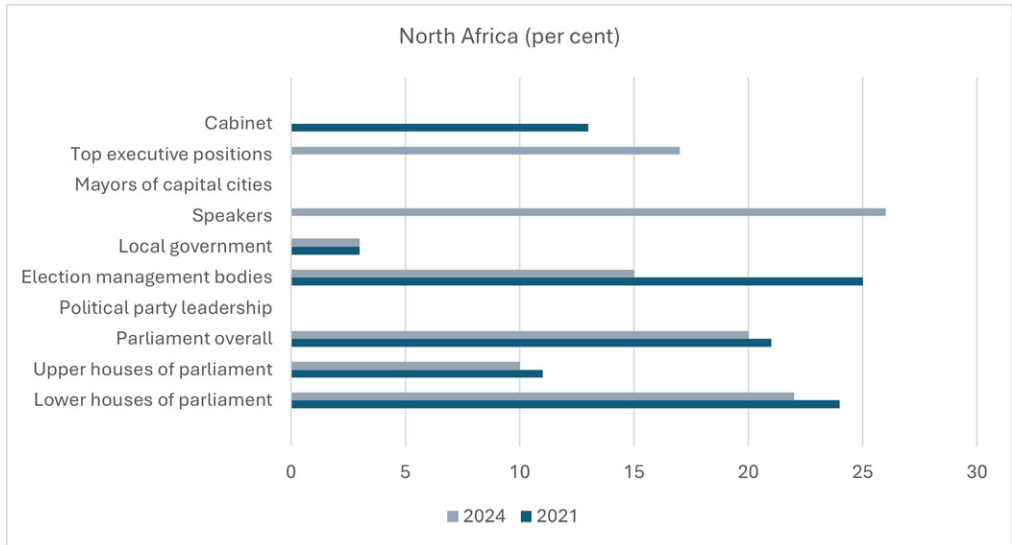
The North African region continues to experience a slow rise in WPP. In 2024 women occupy 22 per cent of parliamentary seats, compared with 21 per cent overall in 2021 (24 per cent of lower houses and 11 per cent of upper houses) (International IDEA 2021b; 2024). The region has also recently started to elect women as mayors in some major cities. The pace of moving towards gender parity is very slow and there is inconsistent implementation of the international and regional legal frameworks that promote gender equality.

The barriers hindering women's participation in politics in North Africa include few female role models, the dearth of support for women, limited youth participation among women, a lack of education and experience among women, a lack of equality in legislation, the dominance of patriarchy across society, violence against women in politics and social perceptions about biases against women in politics (Cummings 2023). Generally, the representation of women in cabinets remains low because all political parties in the region are led by men, which speaks volumes about the political culture of these countries (International IDEA 2021b). The number of women in leadership positions in the North African region remains low, mainly because women reportedly tend to vote less, and the citizens do not question or encourage their governments to become effective promoters of women (Wambua 2017).

In 2024 the highest women's representation consists of Speakers of legislatures (26 per cent), followed by EMBs (25 per cent) and Lower Houses of Parliament (22 per cent). Representation in other positions was below 23 per cent). All this indicates that the region is still far from achieving gender parity in women's representation. However, it must be noted that there were areas of improvement. For example, the proportion of speakers increased significantly from 0 per cent in 2021 to 26 per cent in 2024; women's representation in top executive positions increased from 0 to 17 per cent over the same period. These signs of progress should encourage governments to build on these successes to improve women's representation.

The region regressed in some areas—for example, there was a 40 per cent decrease in women in EMBs, a 100 per cent decrease in Cabinet representation and slight regressions in both Upper and Lower Houses.

Figure 6.11. Women's representation in political institutions in North Africa 2021–2024



Source: International IDEA, *Women's Political Participation: Africa Barometer 2024* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2024), <<https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2024.46>>.

Tunisia

Legal framework governing women's political participation and representation

Since its independence in 1956, Tunisia has stood out as one North African country that has made strides in promoting women's rights and participation in politics, in alignment with several international and regional agreements the country has signed (Box 6.10) (The Carter Center 2020). The Code of Personal Status adopted in 1957 was very forward-looking in comparison with the rest of the region, as it abolished polygamy and gave specific rights to women. This encouraged women's emancipation and the emergence of feminist movements. The post-2011 transitional process positioned Tunisian women as vanguards of women's rights across the region, as they became involved as protesters, constitution-makers and electoral contenders who were able to integrate gender parity norms into electoral processes (Cherif 2014).

A deliberate attempt to encourage women's participation in the aftermath of the 2011 revolution was the adoption of Decree Law No. 2011-35 on the election of the National Constituent Assembly, which included measures supportive of women's participation in elected offices (UN Women 2023d). The principle of vertical parity, which made it mandatory for electoral lists to alternate between women and men candidates, was introduced during this phase (Cherif 2014). Tunisia's Constitution (2014) emphasized the protection of women's rights. Article 46 states that 'The state commits to protect women's established rights and works to strengthen and develop those rights', and guarantees 'equality of opportunities between women and men to have access to all levels of responsibility and in all domains'. It obligated the state to establish gender parity in elected assemblies and this was done through Organic Law No. 2014-16 on elections and referendums, which affected the political participation and representation of women (UN Women 2023d).

Box 6.10. Legal framework governing women's political participation in Tunisia

International

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979)

Regional

Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003)

National

Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2000)

The National Women's Entrepreneurship Programme (2016–2020)

One of the most progressive gender parity laws in Tunisia, article 49 of Organic Law No. 2017-7, compelled political parties to use the zipper system (vertical parity) with half of their party lists led by women (horizontal parity) (UN Women 2023d). This principle was also applied to the municipal electoral lists (Youssef, Aissa and Abdou 2021). The passing of Organic Law No. 2017-58, which sought to eliminate all types of violence against women, including political violence, also encouraged WPP (Bajec 2022). Unfortunately, all the women's electoral quotas introduced since 2011 were removed in 2021, in Presidential Decree No. 117, which changed the electoral

system from PR to FPTP, and this was a setback to gender equality. The promulgation of Decree Law No. 2022-22 resulted in the amendment and supplementation of provisions of Organic Law No. 2012-23 governing the Independent High Authority for Elections. Its board members were appointed by a presidential decree and there is only one woman.

The country's new Constitution, which was declared on 10 December 2021 and the draft made public on 30 June 2022, states: 'The State shall endeavour to attain parity between women and men in elected assemblies.' It also includes the articles on women's rights from the 2014 Constitution.

As in many other countries, the 2022 Constitution is silent on implementation mechanisms. The new electoral reforms require candidates to run as individuals other than as party members. Candidates must also finance their campaigns and collect 400 signatures (200 from men and 200 from women) from supporters to qualify. Almost half of the 200 women who tried to compete on the ballot in 2023 failed to meet the new candidacy requirements (Farouk 2023).

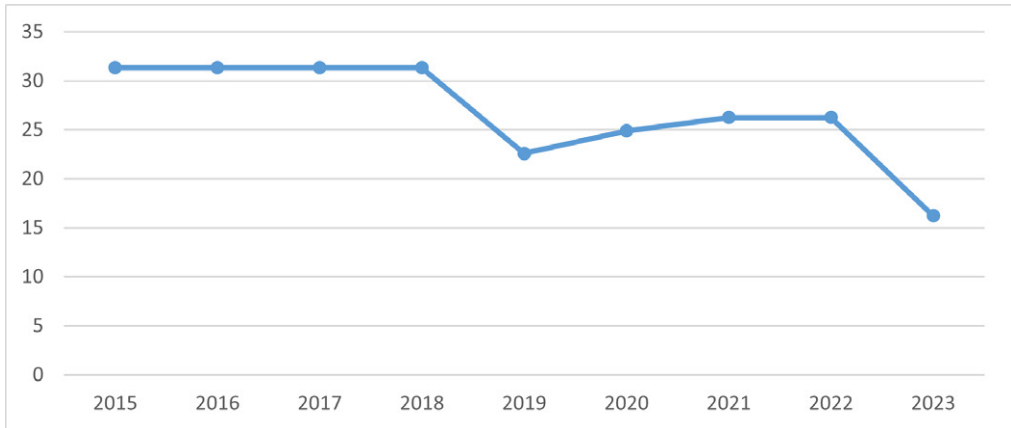
Women's representation in parliament and local government

There has been a decline in women's representation in Tunisia since 2015 when they accounted for 36 per cent in the Constituent National Assembly (International IDEA 2021b). The number of women parliamentarians stood at 31 per cent in 2018, while women constituted 47 per cent of municipal councils. These figures were buoyed by the special temporary measures enacted to support women's assumption of leadership positions (UN Women 2023d). The numbers dropped to 15.5 per cent in the current parliament elected in 2023 (see Figure 6.12). However, Tunisia got its first woman prime minister, Najla Bouden, in 2022. Ten other women were appointed to cabinet positions, including to the ministries of justice and finance.

Motivators of women's political participation

As in many other countries, women's political participation in Tunisia is undergirded by legal and institutional frameworks, civil society, and women's agency and activism in promoting women's political participation and representation. The Tunisian revolution can be considered a trigger that brought about a turning point and a new beginning for women to participate in politics, which became an ordinary occupation for them. The new joint electoral law (article 16

Figure 6.12. Trends in women's representation in parliament in Tunisia since 2015



Source: World Bank, 'Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament, Tunisia', World Bank Data, [n.d.], <https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Tunisia/Women_in_parliament/>, accessed 29 July 2024.

of the 2011 electoral law enshrined under article 46 of the 2014 Constitution) in Tunisia meant women had the right not only to elect, but to be elected in an equal way to men and this presented an opportunity to aspiring women candidates. Some women chose to participate after being approached by senior politicians who persuaded them to run as candidates in their parties in municipal elections (Abdelatiff 2023). A woman municipal candidate who was courted in this manner explained: 'We women can do something at the local level. I tell you one thing, if the law did not require the participation of women and young people, I assure you that many women would not be on the lists' (Abdelatiff 2023). Tunisian women therefore harbour the same desires as many women in Africa to see development in their communities and to be included in public affairs.

Barriers to women's effective participation and representation in politics

Despite the progress on women's rights since 2011, patriarchal gender norms persist. These norms uphold traditional gender roles and social expectations, relegating women to the private sphere and men to the public. Women face social, economic or political rebuke if trying to cross that boundary—and this partly explains their lack of experience, which prevents them from getting into executive and leadership positions in politics. This inability to engage in the social

political discourse, and participate in elections as fully informed voters, or to build wide social networks and gain the social clout and community repute necessary to run for public office, is a major obstacle to WPP. The lack of financial resources, education and support needed to effectively participate in political activities also hinders women's inclusion, especially for women from rural areas and disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds (Wambua 2017).

Another barrier is the systematic political violence targeting women. This is reinforced by the dominant traditional mindset that men are the decision makers and that violence against women is common (UN Women 2023d). Men are empowered by culture to act as gatekeepers for women's political activities and often use unnecessary influence and sometimes outright violence. For example, the General Secretary of the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women, Ahlam Boursal, attributed the lack of women's advancement in Tunisia to the violence and hate speech that are intrinsically embedded in the country's political culture, and are worsened by law enforcement agencies' reluctance to help when women complain about violence against them (Ibrahim 2022).

Advocates promoting women's participation and representation in politics

Some of the main advocates promoting women's participation in politics in Tunisia are CSOs, especially women's groups and activists. The country has long-standing women's rights organizations, such as the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women, the Coalition for Tunisian Women and the Tunisian Women's Association for Research and Development. Newer groups emerged after the revolution, and they are slowly gaining traction in pushing for women's rights.

Tunisia has a primary state-level women's rights institution, the Ministry of Women, Family, Childhood and Seniors, which is mandated with planning for the advancement of women, but it also covers other portfolios that extend to the elderly and children, so the resources allocated are always inadequate (Norbakk 2016).

Tunisian women have increasingly used social media to express their willingness to defend their rights and obtain gender parity since 2011 (International IDEA 2021b). Other activists continue to advocate for the enjoyment of these rights. Professor Hafiza Choucair, a women's rights activist, has been at the forefront of criticizing the symbolic inclusion of women in Tunisia's cabinet.

Tunisia has gone through transitions that have impacted women's participation and representation. Women's rights are anchored in the Constitution and the high number of women in cabinet is likely to result in improvements in women's inclusion in politics and governance. In the absence of political parties that can field women candidates, it is necessary to institute other support mechanisms for aspiring women politicians that can aid them to achieve their goals.

Sudan

Legal framework governing women's political participation and representation

Sudan has been experiencing a major conflict and a governance crisis for over five years. Its LDI score is currently at 0.05 and the ongoing civil war has reversed all democratic gains. The PCI is at 0.28, implying some level of public participation and this is probably all directed at peacebuilding efforts by different players. This fragile context has affected developments in women's representation and decision making. The principles of the ICCPR, which stipulate that all citizens, irrespective of sex, must be permitted to take part in the electoral process, form the foundation of the legal framework for Sudanese WPP (Ahmed 2023). The signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, and the adoption of the Interim Constitution the same year, recognized the equal participation of women and men in the civic and political life of Sudan (Tønnessen and Kjøstvedt 2010). This subsequently led to the enactment of the National Elections Act of 2008, which introduced a 25 per cent quota for women in the National Assembly (Tønnessen 2011). The Supreme Court of Sudan delivered a ruling to the effect that any political party that actively discriminated against women would have no right to work in the country (Ahmed 2023). Representing positive efforts at the local level, several states have implemented laws focused on women's empowerment, including rules that guarantee gender equality in public offices and provide safeguards for women's right to work in politics (Ahmed 2023). These laws opened up opportunities for women to participate in the electoral process and to hold public office. This case serves to demonstrate the regressions that occur when there is violent conflict that uproots mostly women and children. Many of Sudanese female professionals are in exile, from where some continue to express discontent with the politics in their country (interviewee).

The transitional government that came into power after the toppling of the country's long-time leader, Omar al-Bashir, in 2019 pledged its

commitment to secure at least 40 per cent women's representation in Sudan's National Assembly, and to revoke gender discriminatory laws and provisions (Thompson and Kostianen 2023). However, the country's descent into conflict has resulted in this commitment being left unfulfilled.



Photo by Mahdi.

Women's representation in parliament and local government

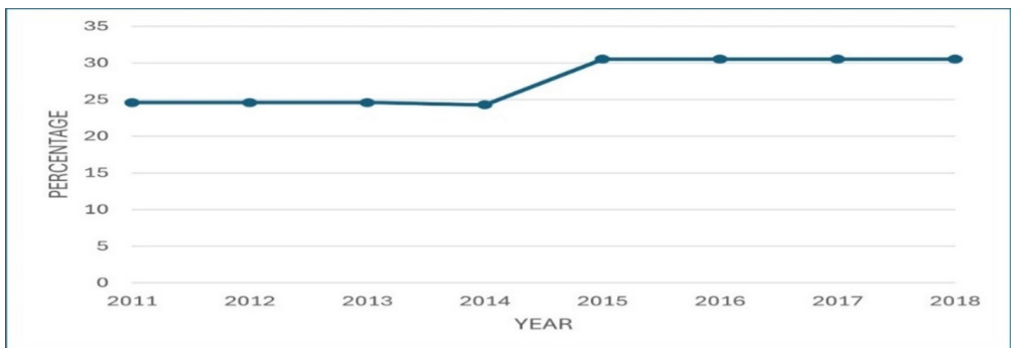
Regardless of the existence of a legal framework promoting women's participation in politics, the number of elected women representatives in Sudan remains low. This is partly because the country has been mired in extended periods of conflict, with the current one having escalated since April 2023 (Marks 2024). For instance, in the wake of the 2010 elections, which followed the introduction of the quota, women constituted 25 per cent (112 out of 450) of parliamentarians (Tønnessen 2011). Although the elections were flawed, they marked an improvement for women's representation as before them women comprised only 18 per cent of parliamentarians in the transitional legislature (Tønnessen 2011). By 2017 Sudan's 31 per cent of women parliamentarians was counted as a good performance among those countries in North Africa with gender quotas that had catapulted women's representation in parliament (Wambua 2017).

Still, a gender imbalance remained because Sudan did not have a single woman chairing a parliamentary committee or serving as a minister, regardless of the parliament having 24.30 per cent women (IRI 2016). This is consistent with the view that Sudan under al-Bashir pursued 'state feminism', which was targeted at widening

sources of regime support rather than genuinely promoting gender equality. Consequently, the 25 per cent gender quota in the legislature was predominantly occupied by women who 'were part of Bashir's patronage networks (Arabs and Muslim from certain ethnic groups) and were loyal to the Islamists' conservative gender ideology that elevated women's roles as mothers and wives before anything else' (Abdalla et al. 2023).

During the transitional period in the wake of al-Bashir's ousting, women secured only 2 out of 11 seats in the Transitional Sovereignty Council and women were selected to head 4 out of a total of 16 ministries (Thompson and Kostianen 2023). This was very far from the 40 per cent target and reflected a high degree of disdain for gender equality. This pattern was also displayed during the talks for the Juba Peace Agreement in 2020, where women had a largely symbolic role with little or no influence on the results of the agreement because they only had 10 per cent representation (Thompson and Kostianen 2023). Women also constituted just 18 per cent of the elected representatives in the 2020 elections, and they won only 2 out of the 48 competitive seats for local district headship places (Ahmed 2023). However, before this, for a period of seven years from 2011 to 2018, women's presence in parliament was between 25 per cent and 30 per cent (see Figure 6.13). The five-point increase occurred in 2015.

Figure 6.13. Trends in women's representation in parliament in Sudan since 2011



Source: World Bank, 'Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament, Sudan', World Bank Data, [n.d.], <<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS?end=2023&locations=SD&start=2007>>, accessed 29 July 2024.

Motivators of women's political participation

Like the rest of the women in the Arab Revolution countries, Sudanese women played an important role in the historic 2018–2019 revolution that overthrew former president Omar al-Bashir. Some gains were made immediately in including women in politics, but Sudan's transitional government reversed all these in 2020 and pushed women to organize mostly through parallel or underground structures in exile. However, women have forced inclusion into the peacebuilding processes via a range of coalitions and movements that are conducting advocacy campaigns to end the war (e.g. the Women Against the War campaign), which is made up of 200 prominent female advocates and human rights activists who are active on social media as well as in documenting human rights violations against women (CMI 2023). Some women have been involved in monitoring local-level conflict de-escalation activities through organized platforms such as the Ceasefire Initiative in Darfur and the Youth Citizen Observers Network. This points to peacebuilding as one of the women's priorities. Wary of the conflict, Sudanese women appear to be hesitant to mobilize politically and to join political parties but prefer to organize in separate neutral structures rather than fully integrating into established gateways to decision making (CMI 2023). This coping mechanism seems to be the best option until the conflict stops in the country.

Barriers to women's effective participation and representation in politics

The barriers to effective political participation for women in Sudan can only be understood outside the ongoing conflict that has destroyed all governance structures. These barriers include, but are not limited to, the educational system, cultural and social norms, a lack of women's empowerment, a patriarchal system, the stereotyping of women's roles in society and the previous regime's ideology, which was reinforced by the country's Islamic religion. Prominent among these factors are the cultural and social norms that are anchored in the patriarchal system and the Muslim religion, which leave women without support from their male counterparts should they wish to participate in politics. Men's dominance results in the total control of their wives and high levels of GBV that prevent women from venturing into politics (International IDEA 2021b). Traditional Islamists (both women and men) find the idea of gender equality Western and, as such, inappropriate for Muslim women in general and Sudanese society in particular (Tønnessen 2011).

Women are generally discriminated against, and their lack of political leadership experience worsens the situation, with far-reaching implications for women's participation in politics (UNDP 2020). Linked to this is the failure of political parties to allocate a significant share of their resources to support women's participation in the electoral process, and the existence of unreformed internal guidelines and protocols that safeguard equal participation for women and men (Ahmed 2023). A lack of inadequate financial resources also features among the major barriers to women's participation in politics in Sudan. Overall, the major barriers hindering WPP in Sudan involve a combination of negative cultural and social norms that are deep-seated within and maintained by party political systems, practices, processes and a leadership pyramid led by men (Elkarib 2021).

In 2020 a UNDP study ranked discrimination because of traditional cultural and social norms as the biggest barrier to women's participation, at 32 per cent. This is followed by the previous regime's ideology, which frowned on women in leadership positions (17 per cent). Stereotyping and lack of empowerment were both at 14 per cent. Just over 10 per cent of those surveyed attributed the low rates to the education system, which is not designed to bridge the gender divide (UNDP 2020).

Advocates promoting women's participation and representation in politics

Due to the ongoing conflict, advocates for women in politics have also fled Sudan. International organizations have all suspended their support programmes and women's rights defenders—ranging from CSOs to lawyers, activists and journalists—have been systematically targeted by the Sudanese authorities. Still, these advocates continue to organize and raise their voices regarding the rights of women while in exile.

Sudan continues to suffer from armed conflict, with women disproportionately suffering and no meaningful measures being put in place to ensure a brighter future for their participation in politics. Women suffer from many barriers that obstruct effective participation in politics. These include the dominance of the traditional mindset that men are the decision makers, the sanctions of the Islamic religion, the failure of political parties to allocate a significant share of their resources to support women's participation in the electoral processes and the existence of unreformed internal guidelines and protocols that can safeguard equal participation for women and men. Consequently, there is no doubt that Sudan so far

represents a good example of a country experiencing significant reversals in its efforts to promote gender equality.

6.5. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION IN POLITICS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

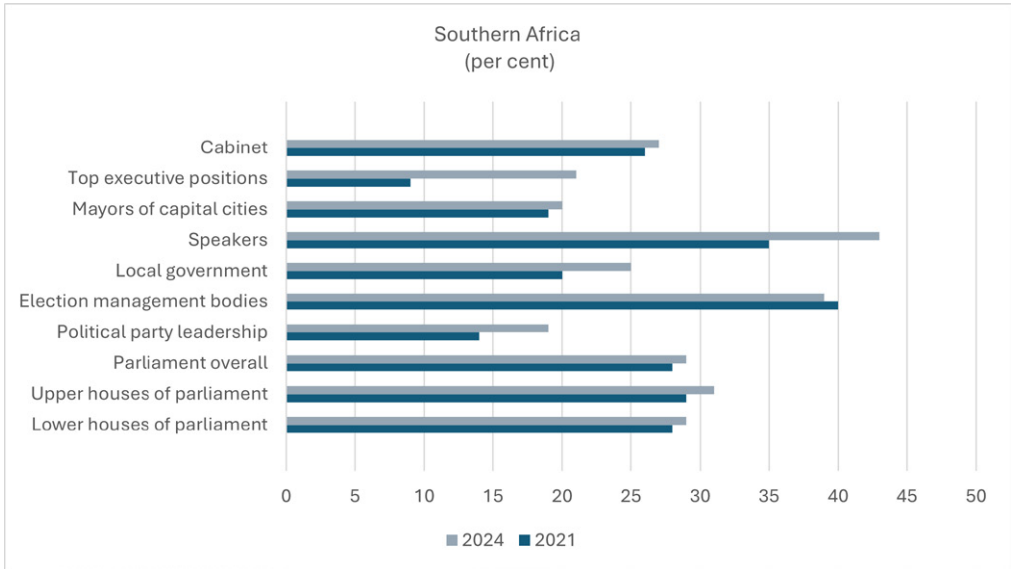
Introduction

Countries in the Southern African region have made significant progress on women's participation and representation in politics. According to International IDEA (2024), the region experienced an increase in the proportion of women in most public decision-making bodies. This is mainly attributed to the domestication of most of the international and regional frameworks that were discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. Some electoral systems in the region have integrated gender equality provisions with respect to women's voting rights and participation in politics. While most countries still use the FPTP electoral system, those that have made significant progress towards gender parity (for example, Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa) have adopted PR systems, and a few countries apply a combination of both. This section focuses on two case studies, Mozambique and South Africa.

South Africa's electoral system is list PR, and this has contributed to relatively better performance with respect to women's participation and representation in politics. The country has no mandatory quota. Instead, political parties have voluntary quotas. The same applies to Mozambique. In South Africa, the combination of a democratic system of government coupled with a PR electoral system has contributed to improved performance. As of 1 April 2024 the proportion of women in the lower house was 46.2 per cent. This is higher than for most African countries, except Rwanda. With a proportion of 43.2 per cent, Mozambique has also performed relatively well compared with most African countries.

These countries were selected because of the significant progress they have made towards gender parity in political participation and because of their shared—and common—experience of violent struggles for liberation and independence. This has influenced the transformation of gender relations in both countries.

Figure 6.14. Women's representation in political institutions in Southern Africa 2021–2024



Source: International IDEA, *Women's Political Participation: Africa Barometer 2024* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2024), <<https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2024.46>>.

Although Southern Africa is performing better than other regions on women's representation in politics between 2021 and 2024, it is still far from achieving gender parity and complying with the SADC Protocol. Very slight improvements have been recorded in the lower houses of parliament, where there is a marginal 1 percentage point increase, and in the upper houses of parliament, at 3 percentage points. Women's presence in political leadership remains low at 19 per cent, as it does in local government at 25 per cent. There was a slight decrease, of 1 percentage point, in women's representation in EMBs in 2024 (see Figure 6.14).

Namibia, which uses the PR electoral system, reported the highest number of women in local government in the region in 2021, and South Africa and Lesotho also used the system albeit with variations (International IDEA 2021b). The countries with the lowest figures for women's representation all use the FPTP system (Botswana, Eswatini, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe).

Mozambique

Mozambique was born out of a long protracted violent struggle against Portuguese rule, and the ruling party, FRELIMO, fought this war. The low LDI score of 0.22 shows the ongoing challenges of governance and the low levels of tolerance in a country after a violent liberation war. The high PCI of 0.54 demonstrates the efforts to transform the public arena into a more inclusive one, and this is mostly due to citizen capacity-building interventions by a range of actors.

Mozambique has an assembly elected through a PR system, in compliance with the Constitution (article 135). There are two major opposition parties, the Democratic Movement of Mozambique (Movimento Democrático de Moçambique) and the Mozambican National Resistance (Resistência Nacional Moçambicana, RENAMO). There are numerous other political parties as well. The country adopted the PR system to create a more inclusive democracy after a long civil war following its independence in 1975, and this has increased WPP.

Legal framework governing women's political participation and representation

Mozambique has signed some major international and regional agreements that have provisions emphasizing WPP on an equal basis with men (see Box 6.11).

Box 6.11. Legal framework governing women's political participation in Mozambique

International

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979)
- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2016)
- The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)

Regional

- African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981)
- Protocol to the ACHPR on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003)
- Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2004)

These frameworks have guided the country to integrate gender perspectives into the Constitution and relevant legislation, as well as design policies and programmes to advance gender equality and empowerment of women in politics. The Constitution prohibits discrimination and provides for equal treatment of women and men (article 10). It also integrates the principle of equality of women and men in terms of the law with respect to political, economic, social and cultural life (article 36). The Constitution also provides for women's equal rights with respect to basic freedoms, such as the freedom of expression (article 48), freedom of assembly (article 52) and the freedom to participate in political parties (article 53). Articles 66 and 67 recognize formal equality before the law in respect of the rights and duties of women and men in all spheres, as defined in article 36. Another progressive feature of the Constitution is that it makes provision for substantive equality and not just formal equality between women and men. This is reflected in article 57, which mandates the state to ensure substantive equality of women. Article 122(1) provides that women and men have equal rights to hold public and political office, and article 73 bestows all women and men over the age of 18 with equal voting rights and the right to participate in the political election process at all levels. Mozambique has a National Gender Policy, which was approved in 2018 for the purpose of guiding the nation in mainstreaming gender into all planning, programming and budgeting activities (Gender Links 2020a). The National Gender Policy (2010) aims to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in all areas, including politics.

The ruling party, FRELIMO, has a voluntary 40 per cent quota for women's representation in political decision making, and the two main opposition parties have 30 per cent quotas. This difference in quota percentages between parties largely determines the fluctuations in the percentage of women in the Mozambican parliament: when FRELIMO performs well, this goes up; when the opposition performs well, it goes down.

As intimated in the Introduction, evidence has proved that there is a direct correlation between countries with high levels of women's representation and ruling parties adopting voluntary quotas. The *Africa Barometer* on WPP cites Cameroon, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa as case evidence (International IDEA 2024).

The electoral laws of Mozambique mandate the equal treatment of all citizens to campaign freely. The laws also affirm the right of

freedom of expression in their electoral campaigns. The Electoral Law (Law No. 7/2007) ensures gender parity in the party lists and requires parties to alternate between women and men candidates. This gives women an equal opportunity under the law to exercise their right to vote and to run for political office. The voluntary quotas demonstrate political will to enhance the inclusion of women in political institutions.

Women's representation in parliament and local government

Mozambique has made some significant progress with respect to women's representation in politics and decision-making. For example, out of 250 directly elected members of the National Assembly in 2022, 107 were women (SADC, SARDIC, 2022). The proportion increased from 30 per cent in 2004 to 39.6 per cent in 2018 and 42.4 per cent in 2022 (SADC, SARDIC, 2022). The country ranked number three in SADC and fifth in Africa in terms of women's representation in national assemblies. Notwithstanding this phenomenal progress, Mozambique is yet to achieve gender parity. The increases are directly attributed to the voluntary gender quota of 30 per cent introduced in 2002. Trends show a 13.2 percentage point increase in women's representation in parliament in the period 2000 to 2023 (see Figure 6.15).

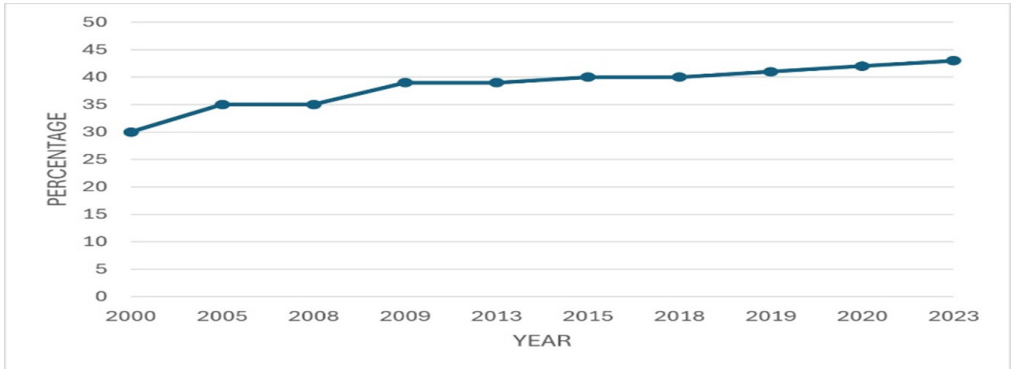
Mozambique has made some significant progress with respect to women's representation in politics and decision-making. For example, out of 250 directly elected members of the National Assembly in 2022, 107 (42,4 per cent) were women (SADC, SARDIC 2022). The proportion increased from 30 per cent in 2004 to 39.6 per cent in 2018 and 42.4 per cent in 2022 (SADC, SARDIC 2022). The country ranked number three in SADC and fifth in Africa in terms of women's representation in national assemblies.

FRELIMO had the largest proportion of seats held by women in 2021 (42.9 per cent) compared with RENAMO's 25 per cent. Despite the quotas, women were still grossly under-represented at the local level, with only 6 out of the 53 municipalities led by women in 2019. Representation of women in parliament has improved significantly.

Motivators of women's political participation

The country's liberation struggle played an important role in transforming gender relations. This factor needs to be emphasized because the liberation struggles mobilized women from across the country. Isaacman and Isaacman (1984) argue that women themselves made demands on FRELIMO to make women's liberation

Figure 6.15. Trends in women's representation in parliament in Mozambique since 2000



Source: World Bank, 'Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments, Mozambique', [n.d.], <<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS?end=2023&locations=MZ>>, accessed 29 July 2024.

an integral part of the struggle for the country's liberation from Portuguese colonialism. The authors argue that those demands led to the gradual recognition of the connection between the revolutionary process and the liberation of women. This also constituted a fundamental part of the radical transformation of FRELIMO. An interviewee pointed out that 'politics offers opportunities for career development or upward advancement, and this attracts some women to join'. The benefits of the economic and social status that is derived from being active in politics are also a motivational force for some women.



Photo by Lorena Mazive.

A woman activist who is a member of the FRELIMO party shares her insights on what motivates women to join politics in Mozambique. Her ideas and experiences are summarized in Box 6.12.

Box 6.12. An activist's experience of women's participation in Mozambique

I am working in a CSO in Mozambique. Although not a politician, I have been a member of the FRELIMO party all my life. The party supported me when I was growing up by providing me with sponsorship for my studies. My being in the party for many years has made me understand why women chose to go into or stay out of politics. For some, politics is an opportunity for them to contribute to the development of the country. Most women have grown up in the party and during the years of our liberation struggle, they saw how the country had been destroyed by the colonizers. For example, infrastructure was destroyed. The party emphasized to members the need for them to contribute towards the rebuilding of the country, for example, how to restore the

industries and infrastructure that had been destroyed. So, the idea was sown that each one could contribute. The challenge women face even when they want to join politics is that, although the party has a quota for women, most women are not sure how they can take advantage of this; the know-how about joining politics is not clear. So, they do not join, not because they do not want to but because they lack the information on how to go about it.

I have also noticed that some women pursue politics not so much as to serve the country primarily but rather to serve their own interests. They join opposition parties to receive some financial and other benefits. Thus, their joining politics is not genuine participation.

This narrative highlights that political parties have a key role in motivating women to be involved in politics. From the insights shared above, it was the vision shared by FRELIMO with its members that motivated some to venture into politics so that they could contribute to the post-conflict reconstruction of their country.

Barriers to women's effective participation and representation in politics

Mozambican women continue to suffer discrimination within their parties where men still dominate all party structures despite the voluntary party quotas. Sexual harassment is rife and is seldom effectively dealt with. Women are disadvantaged by the distribution of resources and the exercise of power. Most women do not question the social relations between women and men for fear of losing party patronage (interviewee).

Although poverty declined from 58.7 per cent in 2009 to 48.4 per cent in 2015, it remains a challenge for the country. The country also experiences significant inequality, as measured by the Gini Index (GI). According to Index Mundi (2024), the Gini coefficient rose from 47 per cent in 2002 to 54 per cent in 2014. Unfortunately, the statistics on poverty and inequality are not disaggregated by gender but, generally, due to social norms and cultural beliefs, women always have fewer opportunities than men and are less represented in paid employment, so they tend to experience higher poverty rates than their male counterparts.

A challenge arose from the multiparty political environment, which made the political environment more competitive, and with this increased competition came conflict and violence. The violence scares women, who tend to avoid conflict or uncertainty; hence, they opt out of politics and pursue entrepreneurship instead. One interviewee emphasizes this:

There is competition in politics and women do not like to be in competition and fight, so we stay out of it. A big challenge is the lack of finance especially when one is in an opposition party where a woman trying to contest must use her own resources to campaign and yet they will be competing with candidates in the ruling party who are fully funded. This is unfair competition, and it frustrates women who must mobilize their own resources.

Other barriers for women include low education levels, low self-esteem and the guilt of having to give up certain socially prescribed duties such as family responsibilities.

Advocates promoting women's participation and representation in politics

The main actors that have advanced the agenda for women's empowerment in the political arena in Mozambique include the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Action; women's caucus groups, which include the Pan-African Parliament Women's Caucus, the Women's Parliamentary Caucus, the Mozambican Women's Organization, the Mozambican Women's League (LIFEMO), UN Women Mozambique; and CSOs focusing on women's rights. Development partners collaborate with the caucus groups and have designed interventions that target women in political parties and interest groups to build capacity for women.

The FRELIMO women's league, LIFEMO, is now viewed as wielding less power and appears to have lost interest in advancing the rights of women, and young women in CSOs are increasingly stepping into this role instead (interviewee).

Mozambique is one of the few countries in Africa regarded as a success story on women's participation and representation in politics. This is largely explained by the government's domestication of progressive international and regional agreements, as well as subregional frameworks that advocate women's participation in the political sphere. The government has electoral laws that promote women's participation and has also created institutions to implement the laws and policies. The country's success is evidenced by the increase in the proportion of women in leadership positions in the last few years. The new phenomenon of a non-liberation war generation stepping in to drive the transformation regarding WPP is a signifier of the generational transformation that will take place in the post-liberation war countries. From the interviews that were carried out, it is apparent that women's participation and representation in politics is largely motivated by a liberation culture that reflects the country's historical trajectory from colonialism to national liberation and independence.

South Africa

Since the transition to democratic rule in South Africa in 1994, the country has established several institutions to promote an inclusionary political system and safeguard against the erosion of

democracy. The relatively high LDI score of 0.58 and PCI of 0.56 bear testimony to the presence of an open political space and widespread inclusion.

Legal framework governing women's political participation and representation

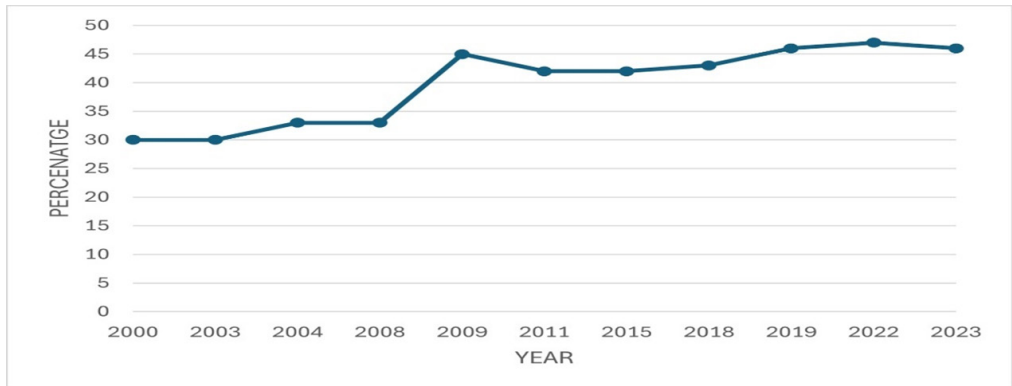
South Africa is a signatory to several international and regional legal instruments advancing women's equal participation in politics and other spheres of life, such as CEDAW (1979), the Maputo Protocol (2003) and the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development (2008). The country uses a list PR system and its gender quota system is voluntary. The African National Congress (ANC) constitution, which in 2009 stated its intention to move towards 50 per cent women's representation across all elected structures within the party, has implications for women's representation in both the national and provincial legislatures. This is because of the party's influence in the country's politics (Alexander, Charron and Justesen 2023).

Women's representation in parliament and local government

South Africa has fared relatively well regarding women's representation in politics compared with other countries in Southern Africa. South Africa's sixth parliament, elected in 2019, had 44.5 per cent women in both the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces, increasing to 47 per cent in 2022. This represented peak progress considering that women's representation had increased to 45 per cent in 2009, but declined to 42 per cent in 2015 (see Figure 6.16) and the 2024 elections resulted in 43 per cent women's representation in parliament (International IDEA 2024).

At the local level, South Africa continues to lack gender balance in municipal councils. For example, after the 2016 local government elections, women constituted 38.3 per cent of all local councillors at the municipal level and approximately 30 per cent of all mayors (Alexander, Charron and Justesen 2023). Currently, women's representation at the local level stands at 43 per cent. Women's representation in local councillor seats (elected via PR) has been on the decline, from 48 per cent in 2016 to 24.2 per cent in 2021. On the other hand, women's representation in ward seats also declined from 33 per cent in 2016 to 12.7 per cent in 2021. The legislation governing municipal elections aims to grow the role of women in politics. The Municipal Structures Act (No. 117 of 1998 and No. 33 of 2000) stipulates that every party list must strive to ensure that 50 per cent of the candidates are women and both women and men candidates are equally spread throughout the list.

Figure 6.16. Trends in women's representation in parliament in South Africa since 2000



Source: World Bank, 'Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (%)', South Africa', World Bank Data, [n.d.], <<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS?locations=ZA>>, accessed 26 July 2024.

Motivators of women's political participation

South Africa remains a patriarchal society, although much has been done to weaken the negative and harmful social norms and practices that perpetuate the oppression of women. Women were part of South Africa's long, trifurcated liberation struggle. Women actively participated in the protests against the pass laws and in the marches against the apartheid system. They were organized in movements, such as the Bantu Women's League, and the ANC Women's League is now the largest women's interest group. The Women's Charter of 1954 demonstrates that, during South Africa's liberation struggle, women championed equal treatment with men. They argued that the liberation of all people in South Africa would not be complete without the emancipation of women.

This liberation struggle background has motivated different women across the political divide to participate in politics. For many older women, it was about fulfilling the promises of the liberation struggle and achieving the equality that had been experienced in exile and in the underground movements. For others, their reasons for political participation vary, from wanting to be heard to trying to make a difference. A female respondent from an opposition party sums up her political life in Box 6.13.

Box 6.13. A ward councillor's story

I have always wanted to address challenges. Politics was always at the dinner table in my family, it is generational. My dad went into exile with the ANC. We had a safe house at the back of our house. Anyone could seek refuge there; we did not care who it was. That whole emotion you experience when you do the right thing is a beautiful thing, it is raw, it is honest. I am interested in the human factor, I am not interested in being a member of parliament, making speeches and promises. I am interested in why things are not working. There is a need for more capacitation for councillors. The induction of newly elected councillors does not work. The Wits Business School runs a course that is helpful for councillors and all councillors must attend because the entire curriculum is relevant for everyone. The Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs and the South African Local Government Authority

have the money, so all new councillors must take the course. Everyone must work as a councillor before they go into parliament because then they will know what exactly the people need.

My biggest achievement was the water project in Brixton [Johannesburg] that started in 2017 but the budget was only passed in 2021 so the much-needed water tower reservoir was finally getting built and it was completed in one year. At first, they could not find the land to build this, there were lots of excuses on the owner of the land that could have been used. The Department of Water was not responding to water issues so with one engineer I went to Johannesburg Water, and we gave them a comprehensive proposal and afterwards we shook hands and the project started in 2022. Being organized and armed with facts is important to change things in this country.

The motivation for this councillor is repeated by many older South African women politicians. The youth are, however, coming in with a different view that focuses more on the connection between politics and development (see Box 6.14).

Barriers to women's effective participation and representation in politics

Among the main barriers hindering women from effectively participating in politics in South Africa is the weak legal framework, which is based on voluntary party quotas. There is a correlation between the recent poor performance of the ANC and women's representation in politics. The ANC, which was the ruling party until the 2024 national elections, is the only party with a zipper quota system and a 50/50 quota policy, although it has never been able to meet this target (CGE 2023). The Economic Freedom Fighters adopted a zipper strategy and a 50/50 quota in practice, but this

Box 6.14. Interview with South African woman councillor

What motivated me to join politics? I was just tired of sitting back and not doing anything. At the time, I was working in the corporate world, and I was not content because my real passion was politics. That is why I eventually decided to leave and be part of the change that I desired in my society. Basically, I just did not want to sit back and let life happen to me. When I took the decision to go into politics, I faced some challenges. One of the biggest obstacles was my family and relations. People thought that I was just going through a phase; they thought I was crazy! Basically, they felt that I was throwing away my career by going into a new environment for which I was not really qualified. In the corporate world, I was a Fund Accountant and so, I did not have experience as a politician. But because I was not happy in the corporate sector, I told myself that I had to try this new alternative and if this worked for me, then I would have peace in my soul. My approach was to keep my eyes on the ball, to focus on the new field which I had entered.

Currently, my position is Caucus Leader for 44 wards in the City of Johannesburg. I am leader for 44 Councillors. My responsibilities include representing the Council on provincial and party structures, overseeing committees that are established by the Caucus, and making political statements on Caucus matters. I also liaise with and represent my party in engagements with other political parties such as the ANC, the Democratic Alliance and Patriotic Alliance, and all other parties that are represented in the Council.

Uhh! I have faced some tough situations, being undermined as a woman, and as a

black woman from the township—because when I speak English, the accent reveals that I was not a product of private school education. Being undermined by other women is what particularly pained me the most. Whereas the men actually stood with me, fellow women undermined me most of the time. The men themselves would support each other and when they saw how we women treated each other they would say, 'You black women have a problem. Why is it that when one of you is elevated, you pull them down instead of supporting them?' I was also looked down upon because of the perception that I had no political experience. Most of the councillors whom I led had over twenty years of experience and here I was leading them. So, there were people who did not like the fact that I was leading them. But because I was actually elected into my position as Caucus Leader, and not appointed, I was at peace and confident.

How did I deal with those challenges? At first, I did not know what to do and I just kept quiet. But later, I decided to approach the women who upset me. One of the strategies that I have employed was to approach those women who were negative to me. Because they were older than myself, I humbled myself and approached them like a child approaches a parent—in humility. I would tell the person, 'I come to you as a child because I see you as my mother; if I have done something wrong, I prefer that you come to me directly and correct me instead of embarrassing me publicly by calling me out in front of everyone.' This approach was effective because, with time, those women realized that if I failed, they would also have failed.

Box 6.14. Interview with South African woman councillor (cont.)

What sustained me during those challenging times were those who supported me, what I call my destiny helpers. Those were people who supported and encouraged me when I was down, I did not even know some of them previously. So, because they stood with me, I was able to pull through.

Overall, I am proud of the inroads which I have made in politics. After joining politics, a year later, I had been elected as a councillor. Six months later, I was promoted to Caucus Chairperson and in another six months I was elected to be Caucus Leader. In my opinion, the success was due to my determination, passion and a drive to do more for the residents of the City of Johannesburg. I believe that, as a Caucus Leader, I made some impact. I will give you three examples:

1. When the City of Johannesburg introduced a sudden surcharge of 200 rands (about USD 10) on electricity bills, residents were upset because they felt that they could not afford it. On behalf of my party, I led the campaign to have the surcharge scrapped. Although the ANC did not rescind its decision to introduce the levy, at least it reduced it, much to the relief of residents.
2. I also led a campaign for the creation of 6,000 jobs to be advertised, and also for employment on a full-time basis of those employees who had been on contract for five years to be included in that recruitment. We succeeded in that campaign.

3. Inner City Rejuvenation. I also played a lead role in lobbying for reclamation of abandoned buildings in Johannesburg. This led to programmes for their rejuvenation. I also championed the construction of student accommodation as this was a pressing problem for a long time.

I think women bring courage and bravery to politics. Politics is still a man's world. A woman needs to have courage and bravery when leading men; you have to demand that they give you respect as a woman and leader. I for one do speak out and tell the male colleagues that you do not flirt with me. Treat me as a woman and as leader and not as your girlfriend.

The challenge with most women is that they are afraid to speak out when men harass them. My advice is that they should learn to speak out and not put up with such abuses.

My message to the younger generation is this: Get rid of this narrative that women cannot cope with politics while carrying out their family responsibilities at the same time. They should also learn to be assertive. Furthermore, they should be encouraged by role models such as Mrs Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Sierra Leone, and Mme Lilian Ngoyi of South Africa. Finally, they need to get rid of the narrative that says that women cannot cope if they go into politics. It is about the determination and passion to succeed.

has not been achieved. The Democratic Alliance, the second largest political party, supports the notion of equal opportunity, which disregards natural attributes like gender and ethnicity (CGE 2023). The losses of the ANC in the 2024 elections demonstrate that voluntary quotas can be reversed instantly when a party with the commitment to include women on their party lists loses its dominant position. The absence of legislated quotas does not augur well for sustaining the presence of women where progress had been made.

The high levels of corruption, extensive patronage networks and GBV hinder effective WPP in South Africa. This is a major deterrent factor at the local government level, where cartels operate to access state resources. The most recent local government elections in South Africa occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic (November 2021), when mobility and gatherings were restricted, which added to the obstacles hindering women's participation. Violence and patriarchal beliefs also hinder women from effectively participating in politics in South Africa. In the latest 2021 local government elections, at least 14 candidates were killed, which confirms that this space is a political space dominated by toxic masculinity behaviours and getting into political office is literally a life-or-death scenario (interviewee). Consequently, such circumstances make it difficult for both women and men to compete fairly.

Inadequate legislation is also a big deterrent. For instance, the local government Municipal Structures Act (No. 33 of 2000, as amended) is an important piece of legislation, where section 11(3) mandates the representation of women in local government and specifies a 50 per cent target for women's representation on the party candidate lists (CGE 2023). However, this provision is confined solely to the category of local councillors, who are elected via a PR list system, and does not extend to the ward councillor category. This removes one area that contains the largest number of elected officials, and so women lose out in the competition against men.

Chauvinism, defined as the beliefs and attitudes of male superiority associated with overt or covert disparaging of women, is a big challenge in South African politics. This can be detected in the language used by men in public debates and meetings to dismiss and belittle women elected at the same level as themselves. One interviewee confirmed this: 'You cannot win in logical arguments with these men. They do not bother to read the legislation, and many do not know the administrative processes to be followed when planning for delivery services. We only win arguments through intricate knowledge of the constitution. It is the benchmark for everything we do.'

Advocates promoting women's participation and representation in politics

Although the ANC party has avoided legislating for quotas, it has been leading in the positioning and promotion of women's participation since 1994. For example, the ANC's adoption of a 50 per cent quota for women in the 2006 local elections resulted in it fielding 53 per cent women candidates, with 46 per cent winning. There is no doubt that this significantly improved the share of women ward councillors, achieving 40 per cent for the ANC (International IDEA 2021b).

South Africa's WPP landscape is littered with role models who have challenged patriarchal and traditional norms on women in politics. From the late Winnie Mandela to the opposition leaders Hellen Zille, Patricia de Lille and Makhosi Khoza, and younger role models such as Lindiwe Mazibuko and Naledi Chirwa, women continue to derive inspiration from political work and are fearless in projecting their voices. The 2024 elections saw an entire generation of young women who were very active on social media and were clearly preparing themselves for future roles in politics.

The Chapter Nine Institutions in South Africa are an important actor in the political arena, as evidenced by the Commission for Gender Equality work on tracking movement towards gender parity and compliance with legislation and regional and international instruments. It also makes informed policy recommendations on gender equality. The National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality is another key instrument that establishes guidelines for South Africa on facilitating equal access to goods and services for both women and men.

South Africa has a plethora of CSOs that work on gender advancement and there are many initiatives by community-based organizations that participate in monitoring women's inclusion and fighting GBV to keep the political space open for women. The Southern African Development and Reconstruction Agency (SADRA) is one CSO that has been supporting women leaders through capacity building. The founder of SADRA explains how his organization supports women's empowerment in Box 6.15.

South Africa has been quite successful in supporting women's participation in politics. This is explained mainly by the government's commitment to deliver on international and regional agreements that call for women to be represented in political leadership on an equal

Box 6.15. Capacity building for women leaders

My organization is involved in training women and other community leadership on peacebuilding. Our training is not necessarily [for] women who are in politics but those who are in community leadership. A while ago, in Gugulethu, a woman who was Deputy Chairperson of the Community Policing Forum in Gugulethu, a residential area in Cape Town, South Africa, was shot dead by gangsters. We have noticed that women in such positions are not always provided with the necessary support to ensure their safety, yet they still go ahead and serve their communities. This speaks to the commitment that women have to their communities and work. Women are sometimes put into positions of leadership and authority but with no support for their safety. We provide that support by training them on peacebuilding, negotiation, self-management and related issues. In South Africa, there have been other cases of women leaders who lost their lives because, even after warnings that their actions could cost them their lives, they chose to do

what is right. By developing the capacity of women to be mediators in conflict, peace in communities can be achieved and this is important for sustainable development. Even though my institution does not directly focus on women in politics for training, I believe that the principles of capacity building which I have explained are applicable. Political leadership at the formal level is not the only form of leadership where you are calling for women to participate or lead. The grassroots level or community level is an important political space where women can be agents of change and transformation. But for them to be effective, it is important to equip them with the knowledge and expertise which they require so that they can do their work more effectively and thus make substantive impacts in their communities. Let me also mention that we have trained members of some political parties who operate at the community level, for example, some members of affiliates of political parties like the ANC.

basis with men. The government has also established institutions to coordinate the implementation of constitutional provisions and legislation aimed at increasing the participation of women. Although the ANC and the Economic Freedom Fighters are the only parties with voluntary women's quotas, others follow the trend and appoint women in leadership positions.

6.6. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION IN POLITICS IN WEST AFRICA

Introduction

Transforming WPP in West Africa remains slow. Currently, women hold less than 20 per cent of parliamentary seats across the region (see Figure 6.17). In 2021 women held 16 per cent in the lower houses of parliament, 12 per cent in the upper houses and 16 per cent overall. Although the number of women mayors in the region's capital cities has improved over the last two years, women constituted just 20 per cent of mayors in 2021. Women's representation in local government has increased by 18 percentage points in 2024, but this is less than 20 per cent of the overall number of women representatives. Even appointed positions in EMBs and cabinets continue to favour men—the result of several factors. The region is characterized by inconsistent domestication and implementation of the international and regional frameworks promoting gender equality (BDPA, 1995; CEDAW, 1979; and the Maputo Protocol, 2003).

ECOWAS adopted the Supplementary Act on Equality of Rights between Women and Men for Sustainable Development in 2015. This policy commits the member states to promote gender equality and equity in all sectors. In article 11(1), it says that member states shall institute affirmative action to ensure effective gender equality in decision-making positions in public and private sectors.

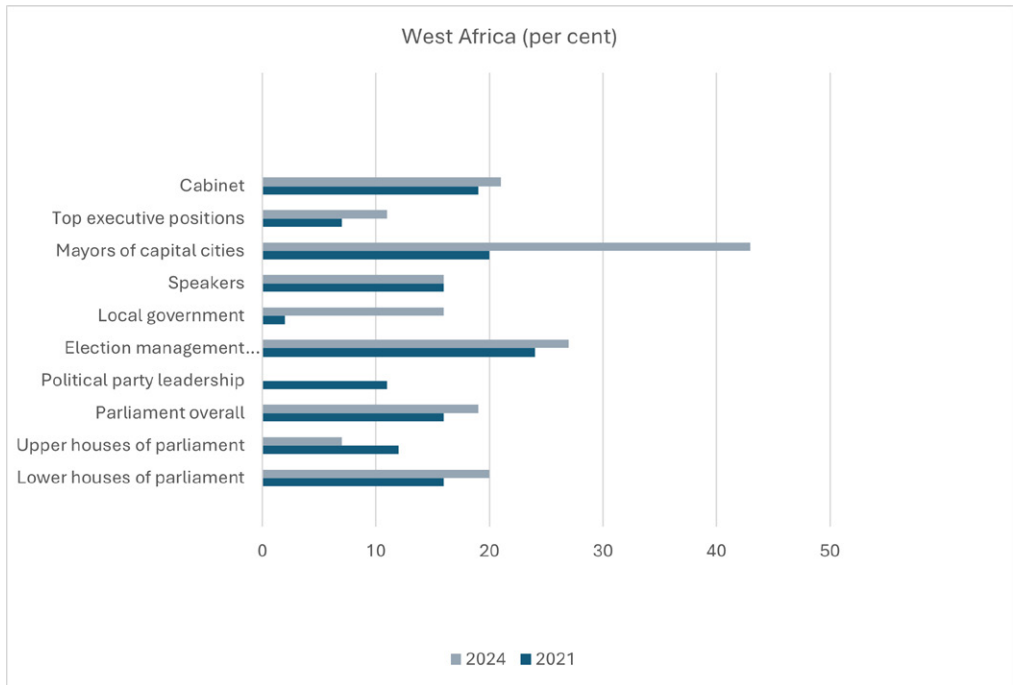
This section discusses the state of WPP in West Africa, focusing on Nigeria and Senegal. The focus is on why WPP is yet to translate into genuine representation in policy and decision making. A host of barriers hinder women's participation in politics, and these include deep-rooted patriarchy; inadequate legislative domestic frameworks to ensure minimal levels of women's representation, as stipulated by the regional protocols; religious traditions; a lack of political will; women's inexperience; GBV; and a general lack of financial resources for most women (International IDEA 2022; Nkereuwem 2023).

Nigeria

Legal framework governing women's political participation and representation

Being a federal state with a presidential system and a bicameral parliament, Nigeria's electoral politics are significantly decentralized. The country is divided into 36 states, including the Federal Capital

Figure 6.17. Women's representation in political institutions in West Africa 2021–2024



Source: International IDEA, *Women's Political Participation: Africa Barometer 2024* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2024), <<https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2024.46>>.

Territory of Abuja, which make up the six geopolitical zones (Nkereuwem 2023). The country has ratified CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol. Although formal representation of women is enshrined in the Constitution, Nigeria does not have an electoral gender quota and there are ongoing efforts to introduce one (Ette and Akpang-Obong 2023; International IDEA 2021b). The apparent reluctance to introduce gender quotas is puzzling, given the extent to which they have successfully increased women's participation in many other African countries and elsewhere. The country has an LDI score of 0.33, meaning that it still has work to do in overall democracy building. However, its PCI is quite high at 0.66, showing how Nigerians have space to participate in public affairs.

The existing National Gender Policy (2006, revised 2021–2026), which prescribes that 35 per cent of all elected and appointed positions should go to women, lacks an enabling legal framework to ensure compliance. Even when women's groups secured a court judgement to enforce the 35 per cent affirmative action policy, the government failed to implement the judgement (Ohwovoriole 2023). Policy initiators struggle to push through gender bills in Nigeria, as the legislature remains indifferent, implying the need for women to strategize collectively to lobby for change. Some bills have been left hanging for a long time, like the Gender Affirmative Bill (2012), which could have been used to increase the presence of women in political institutions. Some of the gender bills that are yet to be passed are presented in Box 6.16.

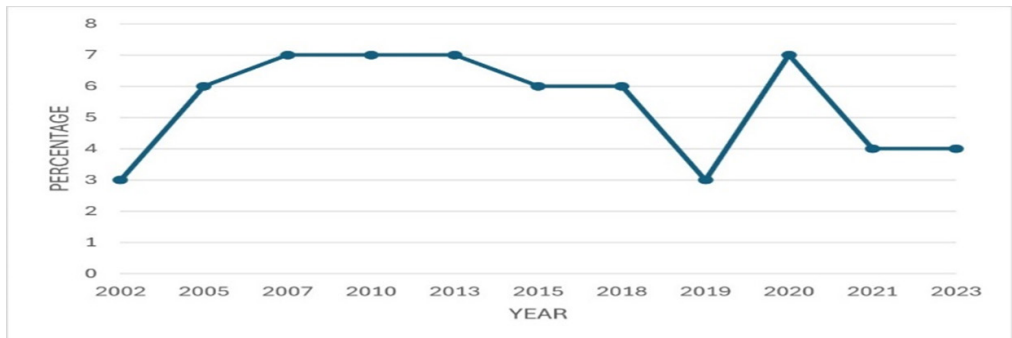
Box 6.16. Draft legal framework potentially impacting women's political participation in Nigeria

- Gender Equal Opportunities, Abuse and Administration Bill (2010)
- Women and Girls Advancement Bill (2012)
- Gender Affirmative Bill (2012)
- Property Right of Spouses Bill (2013)
- Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill (2016)
- Sexual Harassment in Tertiary Educational Institutions Bill (2016)
- HB. 1156 Family Economic Advancement Programme (Establishment, Etc.) Act (Repeal) Bill (2017). Referred to the Committee on Women Affairs and Social Development 24 October 2017. Not reported.
- HB. 1500 National Centre for Women Development Act (Repeal and Re-Enactment) Bill (2018). Introduced 3 July 2018. Awaiting second reading.
- HB. 1594 Women Participation in Elections Support Bill (2018). Debate adjourned 24 January 2019. Awaiting second reading.

Women's representation in parliament and local government

Women's participation trends do not show an upward trajectory in Nigeria. From 3 per cent in 2002, the number of women representatives peaked at a derisory 7 per cent for almost 6 years (see Figure 6.18). A downward trend began in 2015, dropping 3 per cent by 2019. Despite a brief rally to 7 per cent again in 2020, it has remained low since then at 4 per cent, a marked drop in women's representation over the decades. This picture shows the absence of rigorous and sustainable action to include women in politics.

Figure 6.18. Trends in women's representation in parliament in Nigeria since 2002



Source: World Bank, 'Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament, Nigeria', World Bank Data, [n.d.], <<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS?end=2023&locations=NG>>, accessed 29 July 2024.

For instance, in 2015, 7 women secured seats in the Senate while 20 were voted into the House of Representatives. The number of women in the lower chamber plunged to 11 per cent in 2019 (Ette and Akpang-Obong 2023). Currently, women's representation both in parliament and the cabinet is generally on the decline. Although the under-representation of women in electoral politics is unquestionably a national problem in Nigeria, it is more severe in northern Nigeria where no woman has ever been voted into the House of Assembly or the national House of Representatives from Kano, a densely populated state. In 2019, not a single woman was elected to the House of Assembly in any of the 19 northern states, while the two main political parties—the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC)—did not field women candidates (Ette and Akpang-Obong 2023). In 2021, there were more women in cabinet, at 19 per cent, than parliament, at 6 per cent (International IDEA 2021b).

The 2023 elections resulted in a further decline in women's representation in Nigerian politics. The elections saw women winning 3 per cent and 4 per cent of seats in the Senate and House of Representatives respectively (Nkereuwem 2023), while women only made up 10.9 per cent of the cabinet. In the 2023 elections women constituted just 10 per cent of the total of more than 15,000 candidates who represented 18 political parties. Women constituted 9 per cent of the candidates at the federal level, which

involved the contests for the presidency, House of Representatives and the Senate. At the state level, women made up 11 per cent of all candidates competing for governorships and state houses of assembly (Nkereuwem 2023). The experience of Nigeria is quite different from the rest of Africa and disappointing given its hegemonic position in the region.

Motivators of women's political participation

Many Nigerian women harbour the desire to be leaders in their communities and many already excel at this in other spheres, such as in religious and cultural groups. Improving the quality of life for citizens tops the list of what motivates women to be active politicians. A former female head of council in Kogi State reported:

My main motivation was that I was born in a rural area where we do not even have access to the village in the rainy season. There are no healthcare facilities; there is nothing. So in 2019, I contested for the National Assembly but failed. In 2023, I contested for the National Assembly again but there were too many challenges such as the lack of financing and stereotyping, so I went for the council instead. The big men are not interested in rural councils because there is no money to be made there.

The above interviewee's motivating reasons for joining politics echo those of many other women in her country who do not run for public office because of the overall costs of participating in politics. An academic who was appointed as a council leader also reported her desire to serve in a political position but could not pursue this position as she felt the electoral challenges were not worth it. During her tenure, a male councillor, who felt he should have held the leadership position, would openly try to humiliate her in public meetings, saying: 'Who sent you here? This is not a job for a woman. Go back to whoever sent you.' These remarks often had disturbing sexual innuendos about why she had been appointed. Despite being the head of the council, the interviewee in Kogi also struggled at times to get some male councillors to attend meetings, as they would openly defy her instructions. Fortunately, the men who were team players would always step in and ignore the defiant men by supporting her to carry on with the business of the council.

Barriers to women's effective participation and representation in politics

Socio-economic and cultural norms constitute a significant barrier to women's effective participation in politics in Nigeria. This is the case because in Nigeria 'politics is masculinized and women's subordination to male authority is considered a virtue' (Ette and Akpang-Obong 2023: 1291). Both Islam and Christianity, as well as cultural norms, reinforce the notion that women do not have a major role in public spaces in Nigeria, making it a challenge for women to participate in politics. The patriarchal political culture continues to define politics as a male domain, and women who join it are regarded as 'outliers' (Ette and Akpang-Obong 2023: 1292). This makes men reluctant to support their wives in participating in politics, as their security is not guaranteed and women are made to feel that they will neglect their wifely duties (interviewee).

Nigeria's elections are often marred by violence and women from various political parties avoid contesting. The patriarchal framing of politics by the media and the use of violent language in general in Africa undermine women's participation. At the party level, the leaders and godfathers intimidate and coerce women to withdraw their candidacy in favour of men, and this was the experience of one of the interviewees. Linked to this is the negative stereotyping, whereby male politicians criticize women who participate in politics by calling them prostitutes and not taking them seriously as politicians.

Political parties are a major barrier to women's political participation in Nigeria. As women are not usually involved in establishing political parties, the structure of most of them—especially the big ones—is patriarchal and deliberately designed to marginalize women (Ette and Akpang-Obong 2023). Women tend to just join existing parties, where they are then assigned offices and roles that do not involve key decision making.

Women's lack of financial resources in a country with high election costs also hinders their effective participation in politics. In the run-up to the 2023 general elections, the exorbitant costs charged for the purchase of nomination papers at the party primaries disqualified candidates with limited financial resources and women were the most affected group (Sambo et al. 2024). The main political parties, PDP and APC, deliberately increased the cost of nomination forms to deter less wealthy contestants, and 90 per cent of women candidates during the 2023 elections were from the smaller political parties

(Nkereuwem 2023). The degree to which financial constraints and other barriers hinder WPP were laid bare by one interviewee: 'You need your own money, then financial support from family and friends. Women cannot afford to buy the forms and to move around their constituencies collecting signatures; all that needs money. Many capable women lack the money to manoeuvre into politics.'

Another hurdle for women throughout Africa, but specifically relevant for Nigeria, comes for the few women who do get elected: the sharp contrast between constituency expectations and allocated budget complicates delivery on political promises. This practice cuts across many African countries. For instance, a woman councillor in Senegal vented her disappointment: 'The public expects instant results, and this is frustrating. It is difficult to satisfy the people in my community.'

Advocates promoting women's participation and representation in politics

Although women have been largely left to push for inclusion on their own, the action of male allies often makes a big difference. In Kogi State, a male advocate of women's advancement, Governor Yahaya Adoza Bello, reserved three seats for women in every council from 2020. He then mandated that all council leaders should be women across all the 21 councils in the state and made it clear that women had to be part of decision-making bodies (interviewee). These initiatives during his tenure earned him the title of the 'Best Governor in Kogi'. This tactical move put many women in positions of authority and helped to break down gender barriers. His term of office ended in December 2023, and the incoming governor declared that he would continue with this popular trend, announcing on behalf of his APC party that all local government vice chairs should be women and that 40 per cent of local councillors should be women (interviewee).

Civil society has been at the forefront of promoting women's participation in politics in Nigeria. Strong women's organizations work on advancing gender equality by participating in the mobilization of communities during elections. Examples are Women in Nigeria, which works to change class and gender relations, and NigeriaElectHER, which was founded in 2020 to work on transforming the electoral landscape and discourse, to encourage more women to participate (International IDEA 2021b). Another important initiative to promote women's participation in Nigerian politics is the provision of financial support. For example, in the run-up to the 2011 election, the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development launched the Nigerian Women Trust Fund to give financial support to

230 women candidates. The Women for Change Initiative was also introduced by the then First Lady, Patience Jonathan, to boost WPP. Getting money to run for office in the first place definitely helps, but it also requires resources to hold onto office. Changing the political culture to one where public officials deliver public goods is essential to move away from the politics of money.

The introduction of a gender policy by the Independent National Electoral Commission in 2014 validated the ‘commitment to sustainable and inclusive participation of all, irrespective of gender, both within the Commission and in the wider political system’ (Ette and Akpang-Obong 2023: 1295). At the local level, international CSOs have financed capacity-building programmes to support women politicians in major cities across the country. For instance, UN Women sponsored a conference of political parties in 2018, to deliberate on effective strategies to tackle the question of women’s political helplessness and under-representation in the structures of political parties and governance. One of its major outcomes was the Charter of Demands by Nigerian Women, which demanded gender mainstreaming that would incorporate at least 35 per cent women in all sectors of government, to improve women’s participation in politics and decision making.

In Nigeria, just like in other African countries and the world in general, women’s participation in decision-making bodies is obstructed by many factors. Male-dominated structures and the capture of power by men with money makes it a daunting task to organize and lobby for change in the country. A bottom-up approach, as with the developments in Kogi State, where male governors are spearheading change by implementing quotas for women, points to a potentially successful model for the broad inclusion of women in politics. Educating men on the importance of women’s participation as equals is also imperative for successful change. Although there are dismally low figures of women’s representation historically, the last two elections show a particularly worrying trend with declining women’s representation in the legislature and local government, and this merits supportive interventions.

Senegal

Legal framework governing women’s political participation and representation

Senegal is one of the most stable countries in West Africa, which has experienced peaceful power alternations since its independence. It

has an LDI score of 0.46 and is on a trajectory towards consolidating the quality of its democracy. Its PCI score is 0.58, which is relatively healthy for a transitioning country. The country has ratified and integrated several international and regional legal instruments for equality of women, such as CEDAW (1979) and the Maputo Protocol (2003). In addition to ratifying several international conventions that promote women's rights, the country developed a National Strategy for Gender Equity and Equality (2016–2026) that is intended to ensure the full participation of women and men in decision-making processes.

Constitutional Law No. 2010-11 and Electoral Law No. 1992-16 (as revised by Law No. 2012-01, article L.145) impose parity in all party candidate lists in the general elections. The country uses a zipper system of alternate representation mandated by law at both the local and national levels for a 50 per cent quota of women candidates and the rule applies to both PR and majority voting seats in the plurinominal constituencies (International IDEA 2021b).

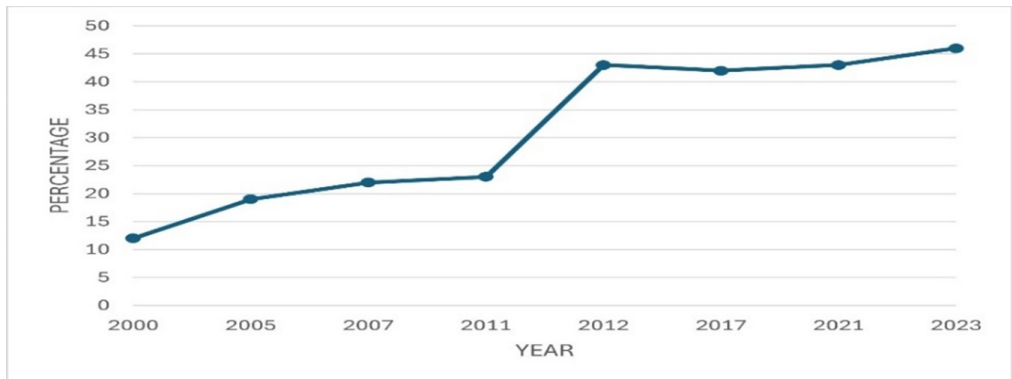
Women's representation in parliament and local government

In Senegal, radical positive discrimination was enacted in 2010 under the mandate of President Abdoulaye Wade. The new Constitution drafted under his mandate in 2010 guaranteed women's rights and access to decision making. Prior to these developments at the national level, President Wade was the first to propose a 50 per cent quota for women in the African Union at the Durban Conference in 2002. President Abdoulaye Wade proposed the [Solemn Declaration for Gender Equality in Africa](#), which was adopted by the African Union and this act of courage earned him African recognition for advancing women's empowerment.

Senegal is now one of the few countries in the world with more than 43 per cent women in its National Assembly, yet just over 10 years ago (2007–2011) women's representation stood at around 22 per cent. With the enforcement of the electoral law in parliamentary elections, women's participation rose sharply to 42 per cent in 2012 and again to 43 per cent in 2017 (Ngom et al. 2022). This meant over a period of 12 years (2000–2012) the overall increase in women's representation was 30 percentage points (see Figure 6.19). Women's presence has remained relatively stable since then. In the last parliamentary elections, held in July 2022, women won 73 seats out of a total of 165, making Senegal the country with the highest proportion of women in parliament in West Africa. However, the number of women ministers remains very low (Touré 2022). In the

current government, only 4 out of 34 ministers are women. In terms of local government, in January 2022 local elections for municipal councils and mayors increased the number of women representatives in councils, but not for mayoral posts. The percentage of women mayors was low across the country at 3.2 per cent, with only 18 women elected out of a total of 557 mayors (Ngom et al. 2022).

Figure 6.19. Trends in women's representation in parliament in Senegal since 2000



Source: World Bank, 'Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament, Senegal', [n.d.], <<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS?end=2023&locations=SN>>, accessed 29 July 2024.

Motivators of women's political participation

The legislative environment in Senegal encourages women to pursue political careers. The new Parity Law that instituted total parity between men and women was passed following an amendment of the Constitution in 2010 by the National Assembly and the Senate. The Amendment included in the Constitution a parity provision between men and women 'in all elected terms and all positions granted through elections' (Trans Saharan Elections Project n.d.). The Senegalese Law on Parity (Law 2010-11 of 28 May 2010) states in Article 1 that absolute parity between men and women is enforced and in Article 2 that all lists of candidates shall be alternately composed of persons of both sexes, and when the total number is odd, parity shall apply up to the last even number. All lists of candidates shall comply with this provision or shall be rejected.

Though the country has had a significant number of women in elected positions (40 per cent in parliament), the quest to be

accepted as equals pushes many to be involved in elections. Selly Ba, an academic and activist, stated this boldly in the run-up to the 2024 presidential election: 'We have to be there, even if we don't stand a chance. We don't stand a chance in these elections. But it's important that we have women candidates, women who are in the race' (Africa News 2024). Visibility as equal citizens is clearly part of the agenda of women activists and politicians.

Barriers to women's effective participation and representation in politics

The participation of women in political life in Senegal is affected by patriarchal norms and traditions. For example, following the 2022 parliamentary elections, President Macky Sall elected a male representative to be President of the National Assembly at the expense of a woman, Aminata Touré. The latter, who led the ruling Benno Bokk Yaakaar (United in Hope) coalition during the election, was qualified for the post and willing to assume it had the long-standing Senegalese political tradition been respected (Touré 2022). Sall's failure to abide by this tradition has given political parties the opportunity to reduce the role of women to mobilize, rather than create a space for them to run for leadership positions (Ngom et al. 2022).

Senegal seems to be reversing its positive developments in women's representation and participation in politics. The 2024 election of President Bassirou Diomaye Faye resulted in the dissolution of the Ministry of Women, Family and Children and its replacement by the Ministry of Family and Solidarity. It also resulted in the extremely low number of women in its government, which now has only 4 women out of 30 ministers and 5 delegates (Bojang Jr 2024). In addition, patriarchy and religion, a lack of financial resources, inexperience, low levels of education and violence are all obstacles to women's effective political participation (Tøraasen 2017, 2019).

There has always been resistance from some senior community leaders to positive discrimination as a way of increasing women's participation and representation in Senegal. The marabouts, powerful Muslim religious leaders, have never supported the adoption of gender quotas. Despite progress in the more liberal areas and in the cities, some conservative and religious members of society, such as those in the rural areas of Touba, the holy city run by the Muslim Mouride Brotherhood and the second most populous Senegalese city after Dakar, excluded women from the lists of candidates in the local elections, which was a violation of the provisions of the parity law.

The influence of the Mouride Brotherhood is strong enough to extend to the capital and the Interior Minister declared the party's lists valid when they were not (Ngom et al. 2022). One of the reasons for this discrimination is that gender equality and related policies are viewed by some politicians and certain sections of society as a threat to the family model in Senegal (Riley 2019).

Advocates promoting women's participation and representation in politics

The great advances of Senegalese women in politics are the result of interventions by civil society, including women's organizations, which were at the forefront of the campaign that led to the Gender Parity Law in 2010 (Touré 2022). The women's movement in Senegal also found an ally in former President Abdoulaye Wade, who campaigned for gender parity. When he was elected president in 2000, Wade presented himself as a modern reformist and attracted support by promising inclusive changes. The adoption of a new Constitution, expanding women's rights and access to decision making under his reign, made him a women-friendly leader. The leading women's organization, the Senegalese Women's Council, took advantage of this to mobilize for equality (Tøraasen 2017, 2019).

Feminist legislators linked to feminist organizations and networks—such as Ndèye Lucie Cissé, who was Deputy Chairperson of the National Assembly before the 2022 parliamentary elections and an active member and former president of the Senegalese Women's Council—have also played a decisive role in advancing women's participation and representation (Ngom et al. 2022). Academic feminists, such as Fatou Sow Sarr, also played a key role in the struggle for gender equality in Senegal (Riley 2019). Some analysts consider women's increasing representation in Senegal to correspond only to a symbolic rise in power, but the experiences of women politicians describe their agency and how they find ways to manoeuvre in the political arena. An experienced politician tells her political story in Box 6.17. This narrative of her political life summarizes the challenges faced by women and how they develop strategies to succeed.

In the last election, businesswoman Anta Babacar Ngom became the first female candidate to run for president in a long time, and she focused her campaign around poverty and unemployment. Her motivations were clear—she was responding to a call by women, as she pointed out: 'The young girls I meet ask for my support. They do so because they know that when a woman comes to power, she

Box 6.17. Experiences in Senegal

Currently, I am the president of the women's socialists in my municipality. In the city, I coordinate a political movement within our platform. We currently do not have a political party after pulling out of the Socialist Party, but we pulled out when we disagreed with the new policies adopted by the party. I am also a member of the National Bureau of the movement and National Secretariat of the movement. I am a special adviser on gender and children in the municipality of Dakar and I also coordinate a children's project I initiated. We currently do not have a party. I was inspired to join politics because I was inspired by former president Abdou Diouf (1981–2000). I was still young when I was spotted during a session on television where I was educating women on health-related issues by the president and that was the beginning of my political journey. The Law on Gender Equity has encouraged women to participate in politics and women take politics more seriously and give it a human touch. Women in politics ensure that their needs are taken into consideration when formulating policies. For more women to participate in politics, more sensitization is needed, and their success must be stories shared. Role models should not just be from other cities and overseas; these should be women in the community who contribute significantly to development.

I experienced many challenges. Women fight other women and men use other women to fight their peers to stop them from advancing. I have bad memories of this because I lost a close friend in political violence who was once used to trigger my downfall. Male politicians are financially buoyant and if you

do not have a male mentor to hold your hand to climb the political ladder, it can be very difficult. Still, my mentor let me down at some point and I had to start all over again. This was one of the most difficult moments in my life. For women who succeed, it is mostly due to their relations with male politicians. I realized at an early age that it was not smart to just do politics but to link it with politics. I therefore worked on digging boreholes, constructing schools and mosques, removing street kids from the streets, and training youth and girls to acquire other skills that enable them to generate income and not just participate in politics.

One problem was that my husband belonged to a different political party, but I had more responsibilities than him and I advised him to quit his party because there were problems in our marriage since our parties had different views. My in-laws did not support me and were against this.

As a woman without a lot of money, it was difficult to succeed as a politician. In 2009 I became the Director of Cabinet of the Mayor of Dakar, and I controlled a big budget that focused on social interventions. After I left this post it was difficult to access funds to do political work. I had also made a choice to stop studying because I wanted to pursue my political career. In 2000 we became the opposition in Senegal after many years and my political party asked me to delay my studies as I was needed for party work. I worked daily for the party and travelled around the country representing our movement which is the bedrock of socialism in the country, and I mobilized youth to join the Socialist Party.

will put an end to their suffering. I'm not going to forget them' (Africa News 2024). Many women rallied behind her just to demonstrate that they needed to be visible and included in politics.

Senegal continues to show relative stability in women's representation and participation in politics and the country is still among the top performers in the region. The main advocates for women's inclusion are women's organizations and activists, with support from male allies. The barriers hindering women from effectively participating in politics include patriarchy, religious traditions, a lack of financial resources, low levels of education and GBV. The main advocates advancing WPP in Senegal are local women's organizations that are usually supported by other actors. Maintaining the momentum in demanding gender parity is essential for guarding against a reversal of the gains secured so far.

6.7 CONCLUSION

Factors that motivate women to participate in politics range from individual experiences and ambitions to support and encouragement expressed within the political environment. The support systems available for women play a key role in their inclusion and are important in helping women make decisions about whether to enter the political realm as leaders. Across Africa, all women share the same desire to improve their quality of life, and they see politics as the gateway to propelling development and influencing processes. The importance of role models is emphasized across the cases, and this points to the need to build confidence in women and to support them to actively pursue politics. The challenge remains regarding the educational and financial resources that most women lack, and this is a demotivating factor. A comprehensive discussion of these findings from the case studies is presented in Chapter 7.

Chapter 7

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DISCUSSION ON THE MOTIVATORS OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION IN POLITICS

In most African countries, the political arena is still male-dominated—both in terms of the literal gender hierarchies that shape policies, procedures and processes, and in terms of the patriarchal belief systems that determine the entire structure.

7.1. INTRODUCTION

The under-representation of women in politics in Africa was articulated clearly in the Introduction. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the factors that motivate women to enter the political arena in situations where power relations between women and men are highly unequal, and to identify the main issues that bar women from actively participating in politics in the region. In most African countries, the political arena is still male-dominated—both in terms of the literal gender hierarchies that shape policies, procedures and processes, and in terms of the patriarchal belief systems that determine the entire structure. Given this context, revealing women's motivating factors for participation is important for two reasons. First, such a process presents the possible spaces in which governments, civil society, activists, development partners, funding institutions and other parties may anchor their interventions or support, with a view to levelling the political playing field for both women and men. Equally important is that exposing what drives women into politics may also embolden or empower other women.

7.2. COMMONALITIES ACROSS THE REGIONS

Generational or socialization?

Across all the regions of Africa, women who were exposed to politics at an early age were more likely to venture into politics as adults. Their socialization took place along a variety of dimensions—family, college and political parties. The lessons learned in these

environments proved to be a key driver for some women who pursued political leadership positions. This highlights the generational factor, which came up in interviews as an important motivator for women who grew up in politically conscious families or who had politician fathers. A woman councillor in Cameroon describes this, and it resonates with the motivating reasons given by a South African councillor (see Box 6.13):

I grew up in a home where my father was an active politician just after the independence of Cameroon, so I got interested as a child and later as an adult, I decided to be active in politics. I am very conscious of my community and its welfare, and I realized that one could influence matters if you are a political actor.

Clearly, socialization matters. Women who acquired political values early in childhood or college tend to pursue such careers later in life.

The impact of civil strife and conflicts

Traumatic experiences during conflicts spur women to join politics, with the hope of contributing to a more just society and pursuing dignity and citizenship. This background is an important factor in countries that had violent civil wars, such as Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe. A Rwandan interviewee recounted these motives too:

My country has a history that was affected by colonialism, ethnic politics, then the genocide. My parents fled into exile in 1959 and I was born as a refugee in Uganda and experienced marginalization that comes with that status. We longed to be treated with dignity as citizens. I joined a political party in 1992 that was aimed at liberating Rwanda. That pushed me into politics. The desire to live a free life, for everyone to have a home, a country to belong to. I started as an ordinary cadre in the party and was able to rise through the ranks and be part of the new nation-building project.

Loyalty

For women who experienced turbulent childhoods during liberation struggles, the saving political party became the only entity they knew that could shelter and provide for them (Mozambican interviewee). Some grew up as refugees, without parents or a traditional family structure because of wars. This deeply ingrained loyalty to the saving party gives some women a reference point for participating

Traumatic experiences during conflicts spur women to join politics, with the hope of contributing to a more just society and pursuing dignity and citizenship.

in politics and partly explains women's motivations in countries that experienced liberation wars (such as Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe).

The pursuit of justice

Some women were motivated after witnessing distressing incidents, such as the violent abuse of other women. A Burundi woman legislator chose politics as the tool to use in fighting injustice: 'I encountered an incident where someone was attacking a girl and he wanted to kill her. I intervened and she managed to escape. After that, I began to pursue the fight for justice. I joined a political party, the National Congress for Liberty.' This resonates with the orientation of many women's rights organizations that pursue justice for women.

The socio-economic benefits that emanate from being active in politics are a motivational force for some women.

Economic and social status benefits

The socio-economic benefits that emanate from being active in politics are a motivational force for some women. Poverty is widespread and democratic institutions are struggling to formalize their procedures. With high unemployment rates all over the region, the financial reward from political participation is a strong motivating factor. Some women perceive politics as a career and treat it just like any other job that earns them an income (interviewee 2024). The money factor connects with the problem of 'payback' expectations that some women politicians have experienced. Some women are reportedly harassed by constituency members who demand to be hired for jobs because they voted for them (interviewee, Cameroon), yet in many countries political office remains the only avenue to wealth. Kenya is one such country, where even highly paid civil servants resign from their jobs whenever an election is approaching to pursue election for political posts (Iraki 2022). The high salaries and the fringe benefits paid to politicians (car, house and travel allowances, office and lifetime pension) appeal equally to women and men. Elected roles also come with social status, such as the title 'chief' in Mozambique and Zimbabwe, or *mheshimiwa* [honorable] in Swahili (Iraki 2022).

Youth activism

Many young women who were active in college tend to end up in politics. Advocating for students' rights and demanding to be heard in college prepares young women for politics. The feeling of being marginalized that they experienced as youth is transformed into practical expertise in the political arena. Women who were active student unionists in college almost always end up in politics. This phenomenon was observed in Nigeria's, Senegal's and South Africa's political parties.

Male allies

The guidance and support of male allies has been instrumental in encouraging many women to pursue politics. This was revealed in the Kenya, Nigeria and Senegal case studies. Although all the women were let down at some point by these men, they had learned enough about the tricks of the trade to be able to go on in politics by themselves and mentor others in turn. The real allies to be celebrated are the men outside politics who build women's capacity and help them to strategize for political leadership. This was evident in the cases of Mozambique and South Africa, where some men manage such initiatives.

Pursuing women's rights

Women who have acquired knowledge of their rights tend to want to fight for fairness for other women. The political marginalization of women affects even educated and rich women. This motivation is underwritten in the many provisions of the frameworks on advancing women in participation. Some Tunisian women made it clear that they knew their candidate would not win in the January 2023 election, but it was important for them to remain visible, just so the men would know that they existed. In Nigeria, the same sentiments were expressed about knowing 'that we are here, and we will force inclusion, we will participate' (interviewee). In Kenya, another interviewee emphasized the importance of always being seen at all events, as this was an important reminder that women are there and will be part of the process.

Lived experiences—a search for identity

Different women have lived different lives across the region but there is some convergence in how their histories inform their reasons for joining politics. The deprivation of identities caused by displacement, by the lack of basic services like roads, hospitals and schools (DRC and Nigeria), by the trauma of war (Mozambique and Sudan), and by discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, patriarchy and chauvinism (Senegal, South Africa and Tunisia) triggers the desire to express a need for women's inclusion and women's voices.

Democracy for all is a must

Across all regions women are spurred on by the need to enjoy the benefits of living in democratic states. Women express a genuine desire to see changes in the lives of their country's citizens, through changing governance systems and shaping public policies to be responsive to their needs. Evidence is abundant in all regions and countries of the contributions made by women to development, and this lies at the core of their reasons for participating in politics.

The real allies to be celebrated are the men outside politics who build women's capacity and help them to strategize for political leadership.

7.3. CONCLUSION

As intimated in the Introduction, the case study method of data collection was designed to engage with women in politics and to hear their voices on what motivates them to participate in and be representatives in politics. Although the findings of a qualitative study based on a small sample cannot be generalized to a whole population, the interviews yielded some useful insights with respect to African women's motivations for participating in politics and running for political office. Their experiences should be useful to all those advocates who seek to promote equal treatment of women and men in the political sphere.

A major enabling factor in women's participation and representation has been the domestication of international and regional frameworks on gender equality and women's empowerment. In most of the case study countries, equality between women and men before the law is now enshrined in their national constitutions. Most have also passed legislation and introduced policies to translate those frameworks into national actions. However, implementation of those frameworks has been slow in some countries and, consequently, they have not made significant progress in achieving gender parity in political participation and representation. Those that have made progress—for example, Mozambique, Rwanda, Senegal and South Africa—have done so because of extensive measures implemented at national and local levels.

Despite the domestication of international and regional frameworks, some countries have not made much progress, and that is largely because of the persistence of negative social norms and cultural practices and beliefs.

Despite the domestication of international and regional frameworks, some countries have not made much progress, and that is largely because of the persistence of negative social norms and cultural practices and beliefs, which cause discrimination against women and result in their exclusion from the political arena. In fact, in some cases, these factors have contributed to regression in women's political representation. In almost all the interviews, women pointed out how patriarchal attitudes and social norms were a key factor in discouraging most women from participating in politics. Even those that were active in political parties complained about their marginalization from decision making.

On the question of what motivated women to participate in politics or seek representation, there were variations in experience, largely shaped by history in terms of politics, culture and socio-economic contexts. South Africa and Mozambique stood out in terms of the impact of their liberation struggle and how it transformed the

national consciousness into recognizing women's emancipation as an integral and indispensable element in their war of liberation. Post-independence, that historical experience continued to shape policy and actions to promote the equal treatment of women and men in the political sphere. Historical context also manifests itself in Rwanda, where practical expediency after the genocide made it imperative for the government to integrate women into leadership and decision-making roles.

A dominant factor emerging from the interviews was the passion that the women had, a passion to become agents of change and to be part of the solution to the challenges faced by their societies—and by women. Some pointed out that they saw an opportunity because of the enabling environment ushered in by gender equality legislation and policies.

The interviews also brought out the significance of women's prior experience or occupation (before joining politics), particularly in the context of their participation in community development activities, student activism, civil society activism or church/religious activities. These prior engagements were, for most, a kind of 'training ground', because they made the women more aware of social injustices against women and the challenges they faced generally. They also made the women realize how their voices counted and the potential they had to bring about change in women's conditions. The implications of this finding are immense. In essence, strategies to achieve gender equality in political participation and representation must identify those spaces where women and girls begin their journey participating in public affairs. Advocates for women's participation and representation in politics should consider investing in supporting women in those spaces because, potentially, they are the breeding ground for future female leaders and decision makers.

Chapter 8

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1. INTRODUCTION

The focus of this research was on women's participation and representation in politics. While acknowledging that some progress has been made across the continent to improve the gender gap in political participation, the concern was the disparity and inequalities that are evident in the under-representation or marginalization of women in politics, or their complete exclusion from the field. This exclusion is a problem because it is contrary to the principle of women's rights as human rights and is a violation of the international and regional conventions which most African states have committed to. The democratic principle also demands equal treatment of women and men to ensure that women's voices are not only heard but that their interests are prioritized in policy formulation, implementation and financing.

The purpose of the research was to find out what motivates women in Africa to participate in politics and what challenges they encounter, and to identify the strategies that countries need to employ to achieve gender parity with respect to women's participation and representation in politics. The analysis was informed by a feminist theoretical framework, primarily because it challenges the unequal power relations between women and men, which are the root causes of women's subordination to men, marginalization, oppression and exclusion from the political space. A feminist analytical framework also deconstructs those factors that perpetuate the unequal power relations, with a view to finding comprehensive and integrated strategies for dismantling them to ensure that women can participate in politics on an equal basis with men. As explained in the

Introduction, the methodological approach was a qualitative research design based on 11 case studies from 5 subregions in Africa: North, East, Central, Southern and West. Thematic analysis was applied to process the data and to draw conclusions.

8.2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The main findings from the study reveal that there are several factors that motivate women to participate in politics. Interviews with several women (and some men) in politics and with mostly female activists revealed that women were motivated by what they saw as a changing and more favourable political environment which embraced principles of equality between women and men in all spheres of life. International and regional frameworks on women's rights, the equality of women and men before the law, and their right to participate in politics on an equal basis with men have created a conducive environment for women to participate in politics at all levels. Evidence showed that some African countries have domesticated these frameworks into their national constitutions, policies and legislation. In some countries, the women's movements have played a pivotal role in raising awareness of discriminatory practices rooted in social norms and cultural practices.

From the interviews, it was evident that some women were motivated by a passion to serve their respective countries and be agents of transformation and to represent the millions of voiceless women. However, both the interviews and a literature review revealed that women still face numerous obstacles. In virtually all the case studies, a major issue was the prevalence of social norms and cultural beliefs and attitudes that still treat women as subordinate to men. These issues continue to shape and nurture a patriarchal system which creates, replicates and perpetuates unequal power relations in the political and other arenas. It is a system that continues to treat the public space as the preserve of men and not women. This discourages many women from participation. Other causal factors include a lack of access to finance and other resources, which is worsened by the disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work that women shoulder, thus leaving them with neither the time nor the money to participate in political activities.

This chapter explores a range of strategies that could be implemented by governments, political parties, businesses,

development partners and funding institutions, and CSOs to dismantle the numerous obstacles and to build on those factors that motivate women to decide to participate in politics. This means assessing the strategies of women who have successfully penetrated institutions of power and decision-making positions, for their efficacy in advocating and advancing the agenda of women's equality in Africa. A gender equality and social inclusion advocate who supports women seeking political office summed up what this should entail:

I think the assurance of safety, emotional and financial support and confidence building through trainings are key things that need to be done. It is also about pushing the states and political parties to be more gender inclusive in their policies and practices. Women need to be in leadership positions within their political party structures to be able to advocate for the nomination of women for political seats and positions.

These concerns seem to reflect the fundamental issue of the agency of women. The absence of this is pushing women to form their own political movements that connect to development issues.

A multi-stakeholder and multidimensional framework are proposed to address the challenges faced by women and to build on the progress made.

8.3. STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION

A multistakeholder and multidimensional framework are proposed to address the challenges faced by women and to build on the progress made.

Role of international and regional bodies

As explained in Chapters 1 and 2, a comprehensive international and regional framework for advancing women's participation in politics has been established. It is recommended that international bodies such as the UN, and regional bodies such as the African Union and the RECs, should accelerate their efforts to support African countries with the domestication of the relevant frameworks on implementing practical measures to increase WPP.

Role of national governments

African governments need to strengthen collaboration with the UN, other international development and funding agencies, CSOs, business and the media to support the growth of an effective

women's movement that lobbies for gender parity in women's participation and representation in politics. They should also consider accelerating efforts to domesticate existing international and regional frameworks and to consider adopting and implementing a 50/50 quota as a mandatory requirement at all levels of decision making.

Governments, in collaboration with international and regional agencies, CSOs and women's organizations, can implement the following practical measures:

- Compile a summarized version of the provisions specifying the inclusion of women from all the relevant international and regional protocols. This can then be expanded on at the national level, where the constitutional provisions, national laws (electoral laws) and administrative statutes must also be added to a user-friendly booklet that can be distributed to all political offices. The aim is to educate men on the importance of gender balance in politics, so that they are ready to support the advancement of women in politics.
- Design templates to assist with the domestication of the international and regional protocols. Build competence at the national level within the relevant institutions to enable an understanding of the WPP blueprints (the protocols). Much of the inertia has to do with a lack of experience on how to align national legislation with the Constitution and with the protocols.
- Design public and private mechanisms to support women candidates' campaigns. This could be, for example, by facilitating and paying for their access to the media. Many women cannot afford to relay their campaign messages in the media, and so lose out on having a wide reach.
- Invest more budgetary and other resources towards the implementation of the commitments made with respect to international, regional and national frameworks on women's participation in politics.
- Ensure comprehensive reporting on an annual basis on the progress regarding the implementation of these international, regional and national frameworks on WPP—as is consistent with the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa.

Role of political parties

Political parties are the crucibles in which political socialization occurs. They are therefore best positioned to profile women candidates and prepare them for office by giving them senior responsibilities at the party level. For this to take place, sensitization on women's inclusion and capacity building for political parties, in terms of translating the frameworks on women's participation into action, are imperative. As some of the case studies and interviews have shown, political parties have the potential to address the problems faced by women. Many of them are gatekeepers who maintain the status quo, but a few are increasingly embracing the equal treatment of women in politics. Thus, political parties need to integrate gender considerations into their policies and practices to ensure that women have an equal opportunity to participate in decision-making roles within the party and to advance to parliament, cabinet and other levels.

Role of CSOs and women's movements

CSOs and the women's movement can play an important role by continuing the process of sensitizing the public about women's rights in politics. They can support the cause by repackaging international and regional frameworks, national policies and laws into more user-friendly manuals, guidelines or policy briefs, which others—such as cabinets, parliaments, political parties and local governments—can then use in their advocacy campaigns to increase WPP.

Role of the private sector

The private sector has performed better than the public sector in most countries in terms of numbers of women in decision-making roles. Private sector models for enhancing women's inclusion can be used to design support systems for the advancement of women in politics in specific ways.

Role of education and training institutions

One of the challenges the study revealed was that most women lack the requisite education and knowledge required in politics. There is a need, therefore, for education and training institutions to include programmes on political education and literacy, and skills for electoral systems, processes and procedures. Capacity-building programmes to train women in politics and governance are equally essential to improve the quality of engagement by women political leaders.

One of the challenges the study revealed was that most women lack the requisite education and knowledge required in politics.

Dismantling social norms and cultural beliefs and practices hindering women from political participation

Concerted efforts are required to eradicate negative socio-cultural norms that perpetuate discriminatory behaviour against women aspiring to participate in politics. Akiyode-Afolabi (2020) proposes critical strategies to dismantle these social norms. The author suggests that ‘the building of critical consciousness in female parliamentarians through feminist campaigning and lobbying is urgently needed to challenge conservative, anti-women, hetero-normative attitudes and structures’ (Akiyode-Afolabi 2020: 8). The author also emphasizes the need to ‘challenge the hegemony of patriarchal structures in politics and life’, stating that this can be achieved by taking measures to ensure that ‘public spaces of all kinds need to be occupied by women with the agenda of pushing for gender justice and transformative change’ (Akiyode-Afolabi 2020: 11). This requires instituting measures to acknowledge the disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic work that falls on women, and how this impinges on their work. This would create time for women to actively participate in political activities.

Other measures

At the national level, countries should:

- Draft legislation to criminalize the abuse of women in the media. Projecting women positively and focusing on political work should be the purpose of media exposure, not discussing women candidates’ personal lives.
- Support CSOs to collate information by monitoring the implementation of these protocols and a country’s compliance with legislation, and publish the reports periodically in a way that demands accountability from the government. An evaluation framework to assess the level and effectiveness of women’s participation is an important instrument for exerting pressure while keeping track.
- Support women MPs with researchers so they can use evidence when participating in national parliaments to influence national policies.

References

- Abang, M., 'Female Nigerian politicians share their experiences during the 2019 elections', *BellaNaija*, 18 September 2019, <<https://www.bellanaija.com/2019/09/mercy-abang-female-nigerian-politicians-share-their-experiences-during-the-2019-elections>>, accessed 29 May 2024
- Abbott, P. and Rucogoza, M., *Legal and Policy Framework for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in Rwanda* (Rwanda Public Policy Observatory, 2011) <<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/43540646.pdf>>, accessed 20 July 2024
- Abdalla, Y. E., Bashir, H. H., Mohammed, I. A. O., Adam, Z. O. M., Al Tirifi, H. I., Babiker, S. Y. and Batio, A. A. H., 'A Regional Insight into Sudanese Women's Participation in the December Revolution', Sudan Working Paper No. 1, University of Khartoum, University of Bergen, CMI, March 2023, <<https://www.cmi.no/publications/file/8733-a-regional-insight-into-sudanese-womens-participation-in-the-december-revolution.pdf>>, accessed 23 June 2024
- Abdelatiff, S., 'Women's political citizenship in Tunisia: The May 2018 municipal elections and the gender gap', *Social Sciences*, 12/3 (2023), p. 150, <<https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12030150>>
- ACE Project, 'Social media', [n.d.], <<https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/yt/yt40/yt410/social-media>>, accessed 10 September 2024
- Africa News, 'The first woman to run for president in years inspires hope in Senegal', *Africa News*, March 2024, <<https://www.africanews.com/2024/03/20/the-first-woman-to-run-for-president-in-years-inspires-hope-in-senegal>>, accessed 24 June 2024
- African Union, African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, 1 June 1981, <<https://au.int/en/treaties/african-charter-human-and-peoples-rights>>, accessed 28 October 2024
- , Constitutive Act of the African Union, 11 July 2000, <<https://papsrepository.africa-union.org/handle/123456789/1378>>, accessed 25 October 2024
- , Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol), adopted 11 July 2003, <<https://au.int/en/treaties/protocol-african-charter-human-and-peoples-rights-rights-women-africa>>, accessed 25 October 2024
- , African Youth Charter, 2 July 2006, <<https://au.int/en/treaties/african-youth-charter>>, accessed 28 October 2024
- , African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, 30 January 2007, <<https://au.int/en/treaties/african-youth-charter>>, accessed 28 October 2024
- , 'African Union Gender Policy', 2009, <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/Gender/African_Union_Gender_Policy_2009.pdf>, accessed 25 June 2009
- African Union Commission, *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want* (Addis Ababa: African Union Commission, 2015), <https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36204-doc-agenda2063_popular_version_en.pdf>, accessed 25 October 2024

- Ahikire, J., 'African feminism in context: Reflections on the legitimization battles, victories and reversals', *Feminist African*, 19 (2019), pp. 1–23, <https://feministafrica.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/features_-_african_feminism_in_the_21st_century_-_a_reflection_on_ugandagcos_victories_battles_and_reversals.pdf>, accessed 10 September 2024
- Ahmed, S., 'Sudanese women 116 years long fight for equity', International IDEA, 10 March 2023, <<https://www.idea.int/news/sudanese-women-116-years-long-fight-equity>>, accessed 10 September 2024
- Akiyode-Afolabi, A., *Political Participation, Feminist Organising and the Creation of Democratic Spaces*, Feminist Reflections No. 3 (Maputo: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Mozambique, December 2020), <<https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/mosambik/17883.pdf>>, accessed 30 July 2024
- Alexander, A., Charron, N. and Justesen, M. K., 'Female representation and electoral clientelism: New insights from South African municipal elections', *Electoral Studies*, 82 (2023), <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2023.10t2580>>
- Allard, A. and Bauer, C., 'The possible effects of the blue economy on gender equality in the Republic of Seychelles', Linköping University, 2018, <<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/120c/cbc05c2aaf030dd67e9108a934b0c4b40521.pdf>>, accessed 16 July 2024
- Bajec, A., 'How Tunisia's new electoral law sets back women's political rights', *The New Arab*, 16 November 2022, <<https://www.newarab.com/analysis/tunisia-electoral-law-sets-back-womens-political-rights>>, accessed 10 October 2024
- Bangani, A. and Vyas-Doorgapersad, S., 'The implementation of gender equality within the South African Public Service (1994–2019)', *Africa's Public Service Delivery & Performance Review*, 8/1 (2020), pp. 1–10, <<https://doi.org/10.4102/apsdpr.v8i1.353>>
- Bauer, G., "'Let there be a balance": Women in African parliaments', *Political Studies Review*, 10/3 (2012), pp. 370–84, <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-9302.2012.00272>>
- Beaman, L., Pande, R. and Cirone, A., 'Politics as a male domain and empowerment in India', in S. Franceschet, M. L. Krook and J. M. Piscopo (eds), *The Impact of Gender Quotas* (New York: Oxford Academic, 2012), <<http://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199830091.003.0013>>
- Bebington, K., 'Women's participation in 2024's electoral politics in Africa', *Accord, Conflict & Resilience Monitor*, 28 March 2024, <<https://www.accord.org.za/analysis/womens-participation-in-2024s-electoral-politics-in-africa>>, accessed 22 June 2024
- Berry, M. E., Bouka, Y. and Muthoni Kamuru, M., 'Implementing inclusion: Gender quotas, inequality, and backlash in Kenya', *Politics & Gender*, 17/4 (2021), pp. 640–64, <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X19000886>>
- Bloom, B., Owen, B. and Covington, S., 'Gender-Responsive Strategies', National Institute of Corrections, 2003, <https://www.academia.edu/5681468/Gender_Responsive_Strategies_Bloom_Owen_Covington_2003_NIC>, accessed 10 September 2024
- Bojang Jr, S., 'Senegal: Anger and concern over low proportion of women in new government', *The Africa Report*, 8 April 2024, <<https://www.theafricareport.com/343490/senegal-anger-and-concern-over-low-proportion-of-women-in-new-government>>, accessed 10 September 2024

- Bratton, K. A., 'Critical mass theory revisited: The behavior and success of token women in state legislatures', *Politics & Gender*, 1/1 (2005), pp. 97–125, <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X0505004X>>
- Bukari, F. I. M., Apusigah, A. A. and Abagre, C. I., 'Affirmative action as a strategy for promoting women's participation in politics in the Frafra Traditional Area of Ghana', *Ghana Journal of Development Studies*, 14/2 (2017), pp. 121–41, <<https://doi.org/10.4314/gjds.v14i2.7>>
- Burnet, J., 'Gender balance and the meanings of women in governance in post-genocide Rwanda', *African Affairs*, 107/428 (2008), pp. 361–86, <<https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adn024>>
- The Carter Center, 'Youth and Women's Consultations on Political Participation in Kenya: Findings and Recommendations', 2018, <https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/news/peace_publications/democracy/kenya-youth-and-women-political-participation-report.pdf>, accessed 10 September 2024
- , *Exploring Women's Participation in Political Life in Tunisia with a Focus on the 2019 Elections* (Atlanta: The Carter Center, 2020), <https://cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/news/peace_publications/democracy/tunisia-gender-rpt-103020.pdf>, accessed 25 October 2024
- CEDAW, 'Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Combined initial, second, third and fourth and fifth periodic reports of States parties: Seychelles, 22 March 2012, CEDAW/C/SYC/1-5', <<https://www.refworld.org/reference/statepartiesrep/cedaw/2012/en/97846>>, accessed 10 October 2024
- Cherif, N., 'Tunisian women in politics: From constitution makers to electoral contenders', *Eldis*, November 2014, <<https://archive.ids.ac.uk/eldis/document/A69857.html>>, accessed 25 July 2024
- CMI, 'CMI Insight: The long journey of Sudanese women from the margins of politics to influential roles in official processes', 14 June 2023, <<https://cmi.fi/2023/06/09/cmi-insight-the-long-journey-of-sudanese-women-from-the-margins-of-politics-to-influential-roles-in-official-processes>>, accessed 10 October 2024
- Commission for Gender Equality (CGE), 'Women's political representation and participation', 2023, <<https://cge.org.za/commission-for-gender-equality-cge/>>, accessed 27 June 2024
- Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), 'COMESA Gender Policy', 2016, <<http://programmes.comesa.int/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/ENG-COMESA-Gender-Policy.pdf>>, accessed 28 October 2024
- Community Center for Integrated Development (CCID), 'The impact of the anglophone crisis on gender equality in Cameroon', *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 25/4 (2023), <https://vc.bridgew.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?params=/context/jiws/article/3101/&path_info=CyriI_et_al._The_Impact_of_the_Anglophone_Crisis_on_Gender_Equality_in_Cameroon.pdf>, accessed 18 August 2024
- Cubillo, L. and Brown, M., 'Women into education leadership and management: International differences?', *Journal of Education Administration*, 41/3 (2003), pp. 278–91, <<https://doi.org/10.1108/09578230310474421>>

- Cummings, E., 'Lack of Women in Government in the MENA Region', Ballard Brief, September 2023, <<https://ballardbrief.byu.edu/issue-briefs/lack-of-women-in-government-in-the-mena-region>>, accessed 17 July 2024
- Dahlerup, D., 'Comparative Studies of Electoral Gender Quotas', Paper presented at the International Idea workshop 'The Implementation of Quotas: Latin American Experiences', Lima, 23–24 February 2003, <<https://aceproject.org/ero-en/topics/parties-and-candidates/Dahlerup.pdf>>, accessed 25 October 2024
- East African Community (EAC), The Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community, 1999, <<https://www.eala.org/documents/view/the-treaty-for-the-establishment-of-the-east-africa-community-1999-2006>>, accessed 28 October 2024
- , 'East African Community Gender Policy', May 2018, <<https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/mul214448.pdf>>, accessed 28 October 2024
- East African Herald, 'Rwanda's ruling party elects woman to deputise Kagame', *East African Herald*, 3 April 2023, <<https://www.eastafricanherald.com/politics/2023/4/3/rwandas-ruling-party-elects-woman-to-deputise-kagame>>, accessed 13 June 2024
- Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), 'Supplementary Act Relating to Equality of Rights Between Women and Men for Sustainable Development in the ECOWAS Region', 2015, <<https://ccdg.ecowas.int/wp-content/uploads/Supplementary-Act-on-Gender-Equality.pdf>>, accessed 28 October 2024
- , 'Roadmap of Supplementary Act', 2017a, <https://ccdg.ecowas.int/wp-content/uploads/Roadmap-Supplementary-Act-on-Gender-Equality_Final.pdf>, accessed 28 October 2024
- , 'ECOWAS Gender and Elections Strategic Framework', 2017b, <<https://ecpf.ecowas.int/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/ECOWAS-GENDER-AND-ELECTION-STRATEGIC-FRAMEWORK.pdf>>, accessed 27 May 2024
- Elkarib, A. K., *Gender Assessment of Political Parties' Internal Regulations in Sudan* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2021), <<https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2021.65>>
- Erskine, H., 'The polls: Women's role', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 35/2 (1971), pp. 275–90, <<https://doi.org/10.1086/267900>>
- Ette, M. and Akpang-Obong, P., 'Negotiating access and privilege: Politics of female participation and representation in Nigeria', *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 58/7 (2023), pp. 1291–1306, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/00219096221084253>>
- Fagenson, E., 'At the heart of women management research: Theoretical and methodological approaches and their biases', *Journal of Business Ethics*, 9 (1990), pp. 267–74, <<https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00380326>>
- Farouk, M., 'Women are less and less represented in Tunisia's parliament' BusinessLIVE, 14 February 2023, <<https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/world/africa/2023-02-14-women-are-less-and-less-represented-in-tunisia-parliament>>, accessed 10 October 2024
- Ferree, M. M., 'A woman for president? Changing responses: 1958–1972', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 38/3 (1974), pp. 390–99, <<https://doi.org/10.1086/268175>>
- Fokum, V. Y., Fonjong, L. N. and Adams, M. J., 'Increasing women's representation in the Cameroon parliament: Do numbers really matter?' *Women's Studies International Forum*, 80 (May–June 2020), <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2020.102369>>

- France 24, 'Women's rights take centre stage in DR Congo election', 16 December 2023, <<https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20231216-a-feminist-president-women-s-rights-take-centre-stage-in-dr-congo-election>>, accessed 10 September 2024
- Franceschet, S., Annesley, C. and Beckwith, K., 'What do women symbolize? Symbolic representation and cabinet appointments', *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 5 (2017), pp. 1–6, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2017.1321997>>
- Freedom House, 'Freedom in the World 2024: Rwanda', 2024, <<https://freedomhouse.org/country/rwanda/freedom-world/2024>>, accessed 13 June 2024
- Gender Links, 'Gender Audit of Electoral Laws, Policies and Practices: Mozambique', March 2020a, <https://genderlinks.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Mozambique_GenderAuditElectoralLawsFINAL_102019_verified.pdf>, accessed 15 June 2024
- , 'Zim Women Councillors to Meet President for an Indaba', 10 December 2020b, <<https://genderlinks.org.za/news/zim-women-councillors-meet-president-for-an-indaba/>>, accessed 25 October 2024
- Gilardi, F., 'The temporary importance of role models for women's political representation', *American Journal of Political Science*, 59/4 (2015), pp. 957–70, <<https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12155>>
- Gletsu, G., 'Women's Representation in Parliament: The Role of Party Women's Wings in Ghana', Master's Thesis, University of Western Cape (2012), unpublished, <https://www.academia.edu/71487935/Women_s_Representation_in_Parliament_The_Role_of_Party_Women_s_Wings_in_Ghana_By>, accessed 27 May 2024
- Global System for Mobile Communications Association (GSMA), *Connected Women: The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2021* (GSMA, 2021), <<https://www.gsma.com/r/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/The-Mobile-Gender-Gap-Report-2021.pdf>>, accessed 20 August 2024
- Halidu, A., Kizito, A. and Jacob, V. J., 'Governance and leadership and the political and economic development of Rwanda under Paul Kagame: An analysis', *Nigerian Journal of Legislative Affairs*, 9/2 (2020), pp. 95–119, <<https://ir.nilds.gov.ng/bitstream/handle/123456789/1174/ABSTRACTS.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>>, accessed 20 July 2024
- Haraldsson, A., 'Media discrimination and gender differences in political ambition in a laboratory experiment', *Political Research Quarterly*, 75/4 (2022), pp. 1158–72, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/10659129211046890>>
- Hora, E., 'Factors that affect women participation in leadership and decision-making position', *Asian Journal of Humanity, Art and Literature*, 1/2 (2014), pp. 97–118, <<http://dx.doi.org/10.18034/ajhal.v1i2.287>>
- Huntington, S. P., 'Democracy's third wave', *Journal of Democracy*, 2/2 (1991), pp. 12–34, <<https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/jod.1991.0016>>
- Ibrahim, A., 'Are women's rights used as a smokescreen in Tunisia?', Aljazeera, 29 September 2022, <<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/9/29/has-female-representation-in-tunisia-govt-advanced-rights>>, accessed 11 June 2024
- Index Mundi, Mozambique-GINI index (World Bank estimate), 2024, <<https://www.indexmundi.com/facts/mozambique/indicator/SI.POV.GINI>>, accessed 23 August 2024

- Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), *Attaining the Fifty Percent Target!: Regional Strategy for Higher Representation of Women in Decision Making Positions* (Djibouti: IGAD, 2013), <<https://resilience.igad.int/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Regional-Strategy-for-Higher-Representation-of-Women-in-Decision-Making-Positions-ENGLISH.pdf>>, accessed 10 October 2024
- , 'IGAD Gender strategy and implementation plan 2016–2020', vol. 1: 'The Framework', 2015, <<https://resilience.igad.int/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Gender-IGAD-Gender-Strategy-Vol-1-Framework-2016.pdf>>, accessed 20 November 2024
- International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), *Regional Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Resolution 1325 (2000), 2018–2023*, 2018, <<https://ungreatlakes.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/rapeng.pdf>>, accessed 25 October 2024
- International IDEA, *The Role of Political Parties on Women's Participation and Representation*, International IDEA Technical Paper 1/2021 (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2021a), <<https://www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/political-parties-womens-participation-and-representation>>, accessed 25 October 2024
- , *Women's Political Participation: Africa Barometer 2021* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2021b), <<https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2021.21>>
- , 'Senegal leads in women's political participation', 18 August 2022, <<https://www.idea.int/news/senegal-leads-womens-political-participation>>, accessed 10 June 2024
- , *Women's Political Participation: Africa Barometer 2024* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2024), <<https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2024.46>>
- International Monetary Fund (IMF), *Addressing Gender Gaps in Cameroon to Enhance Inclusive Growth*, IMF Country Reports 18/256 (Washington, DC: IMF, 2018), <<https://www.elibrary.imf.org/view/journals/002/2018/256/002.2018.issue-256-en.xml>>, accessed 18 August 2024
- International Republican Institute (IRI), *Women's Political Empowerment, Representation and Influence in Africa: A Pilot Study of Women's Leadership in Political Decision-Making* (Washington, DC: IRI, 2016), <https://www.iri.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/womens_political_index_0.pdf>, accessed 10 October 2024
- Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), 'Women in Parliament in 2016: The Year in Review', 2017, <<https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2017-03/women-in-parliament-in-2016-year-in-review>>, accessed 25 October 2024
- , 'Women in Parliament in 2023: The Year in Review', 2024, <<https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2024-03/women-in-parliament-2023>>, accessed 25 October 2024
- Iraki, X. N., 'Money, influence and heroism: The allure of political power in Kenya', *The Conversation*, 13 March 2022, <<https://theconversation.com/money-influence-and-heroism-the-allure-of-political-power-in-kenya-177171>>, accessed 11 July 2024
- Isaacman, A. and Isaacman, B., 'The role of women in the liberation of Mozambique', *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies*, 13/2–3 (1984), pp. 128–85, <<https://doi.org/10.5070/F7132-3017090>>
- Kamanyi, J., *Women's World: Women and Elections in East Africa* (Kampala: Women's International Peace Centre, 2021), <https://wipc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Womens-World-52_EN.pdf>, accessed 17 June 2024

- Kandawasvika-Nhundu, R., *Political Parties in Africa through a Gender Lens* (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2021), <<https://www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/political-parties-africa-through-gender-lens>>, accessed 25 June 2024
- Kasomo, D., 'Factors affecting women's participation in electoral politics in Africa', *International Journal of Psychology and Behavioural Sciences*, 2/3 (2012), pp. 57–63, <<https://doi.org/10.5923/j.ijpbs.20120203.01>>
- Kombo, E. E., 'Women in national liberation wars in the settler colonies of Kenya and Zimbabwe: Pathways to political empowerment', Master's Thesis, University of York, 2012, <<https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/2600>>, accessed 10 October 2024
- Lawless, J. L., 'Female candidates and legislators', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 18/1 (2015), pp. 349–66, <<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-020614-094613>>
- Lawless, J. L. and Fox, R. F., *It Takes a Candidate: Why Women Don't Run for Office* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005)
- Lombardo, E. and Meier, P., *The Symbolic Representation of Gender: A Discursive Approach* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014)
- Maloiy L., 'Tracing Kenyan women's involvement in elections and political leadership from 1963–2002', in N. Nyabola and M.-E. Pommerolle (eds), *Where Women Are: Gender & The 2017 Kenyan Elections* (Nairobi: Africae, 2018), <<https://doi.org/10.4000/books.africae.1868>>
- Markham, S. A., 'Women as Agents of Change: Having Voice in Society and Influencing Policy', Women's Voice, Agency and Participation Research Series No. 5, World Bank Group, 2014, <<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/773451468150287912/Women-as-agents-of-change-having-voice-in-society-and-influencing-policy>>, accessed 26 July 2024
- Marks, S., 'The world's biggest displacement crisis is not in Gaza', Bloomberg, 9 May 2024, <<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2024-05-09/sudan-civil-war-conflict-origins-impact-and-human-toll>>, accessed 21 June 2024
- Maseko, S., 'ANCWL calls for more women in the executive', *Corporate News*, 20 June 2024, <<https://corporatenews.co.za/ancwl-calls-for-more-women-in-the-executive-sabc-news>>, accessed 20 June 2024
- Matland, R. E. and Studlar, D. T., 'The contagion of women candidates in single-member district and proportional representation electoral systems: Canada and Norway', *The Journal of Politics*, 58/3 (1996), pp. 707–33, <<https://doi.org/10.2307/2960439>>
- Matsilele, T. and Nkoala, S., 'Metavoicing, trust-building mechanisms and partisan messaging: A study of social media usage by selected South African female politicians', *Information, Communication & Society*, 26/13 (2023), pp. 2575–97 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2023.2252862>>
- Meena, R., 'Situation analysis of education of girls/women in Tanzania', *Utafiti: Journal of African Perspective*, 3/2 (2018), pp. 39–90, <<https://journals.udsm.ac.tz/index.php/uj/issue/view/251>>, accessed 18 July 2024
- National Democratic Institute (NDI) and Federation of Women Lawyers Kenya, *A Gender Analysis of the 2017 Kenya General Elections* (Washington, DC: NDI, 2018), <<https://www.ndi.org/publications/gender-analysis-2017-kenya-general-elections>>, accessed 25 October 2024

- Ngom S., Ba, S., Kioko, C. and Egelhof, N., 'Gender agenda: The big conundrum in the general elections in Kenya and Senegal', Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 18 July 2022, <<https://www.boell.de/en/2022/07/18/gender-agenda-big-conundrum-general-elections-kenya-and-senegal>>, accessed 10 October 2024
- Nkereuwem, E., 'Why Women Haven't Been Successful in Nigerian Elections', Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, May 2023, <https://iknowpolitics.org/sites/default/files/nkereuwem_women_attrition.pdf>, accessed 25 October 2024
- Norbakk, M., *The Women's Rights Champion: Tunisia's Potential for Furthering Women's Rights*, CMI Report No. 5 (Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute, 2016), <<https://www.cmi.no/publications/5973-the-womens-rights-champion>>, accessed 26 July 2024
- Norris, P., 'Women's legislative participation in western Europe', *West European Politics*, 8/4 (1985), <<https://doi.org/10.1080/01402388508424556>>
- Nwabunkeonye, U. P., 'Challenges to women active participation in politics in Nigeria', *Sociology and Anthropology*, 2/7 (2014), pp. 284–90, <<http://doi.org/10.13189/sa.2014.020704>>
- Nzomo, M., *Women in Top Management in Kenya* (Nairobi: African Association for Public Administration and Management, 1995)
- Offiong, A. V., 'People find us easy targets: Women politicians face a torrent of online abuse but say they won't stop their work', CNN, 25 May 2023, <<https://iknowpolitics.org/en/learn/knowledge-resources/uganda-people-find-us-easy-targets-women-politicians-face-torrent-online>>, accessed 25 August 2024
- Ohwovoriole, O., 'Don't appeal court decision on 35% affirmative action, coalition tells FG', This Day Live, 30 July 2023, <<https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2023/07/30/dont-appeal-court-decision-on-35-affirmative-action-coalition-tells-fg>>, accessed 27 August 2024
- Okello, A., 'In Seychelles, majority support gender equality, think greater efforts are needed', Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 703, 21 September 2023, <<https://www.afrobarometer.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/AD703-Seychellois-think-greater-gender-equality-efforts-are-needed-Afrobarometer-19sept23-.pdf>>, accessed 27 July 2024
- One Seychelles, 'The women of One Seychelles', Facebook, 10 October 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/enselsesel/photos/the-women-of-one-seychellesdespite-seychelles-being-deemed-to-have-a-matriarchal/1335426760131016/?_rdr>, accessed 30 October 2024
- Parsitau, D., Nyakwaka, D., 'The women's movement and gender politics in Kenya', in W. S. Nasong'o, M. N. Amutabi and T. Falola (eds), *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Kenya* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-15854-4_12>
- Paxton, P. and Hughes M. M., 'The increasing effectiveness of national gender quotas, 1990–2010', *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 40/30 (2015), <<https://doi.org/10.1111/lsq.12079>>
- Paxton, P. and Kunovich, S., 'Women's political representation: The importance of ideology', *Social Forces*, 82/1 (2003), pp. 87–113, <<https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.2003.0105>>
- Pitkin, F. H., *The Concept of Representation* (University of California Press, 1967)

- Ranta, E., 'Intersecting inequalities in women's political inclusion in Kenya', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 26/4 (2024), pp. 881–902, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2024.2368215>>
- Reilly, M., 'Social media is a powerful platform for both women in politics and their harassers', *Medium*, 6 November 2019, <<https://medium.com/@representwomen/social-media-is-a-powerful-platform-for-both-women-in-politics-and-their-harassers-8ccef7926cba>>, accessed 9 June 2024
- Riley, E., 'Gender parity and the politics of representation in Senegal', *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, 24 August 2019, <<https://polarjournal.org/2019/08/24/gender-parity-and-the-politics-of-representation-in-senegal>>, accessed 12 June 2024
- Rwanda, Republic of, 'Government of Rwanda', [n.d.], <<https://www.gov.rw/overview>>, accessed 25 October 2024
- Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Southern African Research and Documentation Center (SARDC), *SADC Gender and Development Monitor 2022*, 8th edition (Gaborone: SADC, 2022), <https://www.sadc.int/sites/default/files/2023-02/ENGLISH-SADC_Gender_Monitor_on_Women_in_Politics_%26_Decision-making_2022-FINAL.pdf>, accessed 30 June 2024
- Sadie, Y., 'Women in political decision-making in the SADC region', *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equality*, 65 (2005), pp. 17–31, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/4066648.pdf>>, accessed 9 July 2024
- Sambo, U., Sule, B., Adamu, U. and Septiadi, M. A., 'Democracy for sale: Examining the phenomenon of the cost of expression of interest and nomination forms for major parties in Nigeria's 2023 general election', *Sage Open*, 14/2 (2024), pp. 1–11, <<https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440241251768>>
- Seychelles Nation, 'First ever national gender policy launched', 29 November 2016, <<https://www.nation.sc/archive/251983/first-ever-national-gender-policy-launched>>, accessed 10 October 2024
- , 'Empowering women's political participation', 3 February 2020, <<https://www.nation.sc/articles/3322/empowering-womens-political-participation>>, accessed 29 June 2024
- Seychelles News Agency, 'An election giving Seychellois women small slice of power raises question on gender parity', 5 November 2020, <<http://www.seychellesnewsagency.com/articles/13815/An+election+giving+Seychellois+women+small+slice+of+power+raises+question+on+gender+parity>>, accessed 10 October 2024
- Seychelles, National Assembly of, [n.d.], <<https://www.nationalassembly.sc>>, accessed 10 October 2024
- Seychelles, Republic of, Seychelles National Gender Policy, 2012, <https://clr.africanchildforum.org/policy%20per%20country/seychelles/seychelles_gender_2012_en.pdf>, accessed 25 October 2024
- Southern African Development Community (SADC), SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, 2008, <https://www.sadc.int/sites/default/files/2021-08/Protocol_on_Gender_and_Development_2008.pdf>, accessed 28 October 2024

- Taoyang, M., 'Sociocultural barriers to women's political leadership in the north region of Cameroon', *Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Studies*, 7/2 (2019), <<https://doi.org/10.24203/ajhss.v7i2.5746>>
- Thompson, S. and Kostianinen, E., *CMI Insight: The Long Journey of Sudanese Women: From the Margins of Politics to Influential Roles* (Helsinki: CMI, June 2023), <<https://cmi.fi/2023/06/09/cmi-insight-the-long-journey-of-sudanese-women-from-the-margins-of-politics-to-influential-roles-in-official-processes/>>, accessed 25 October 2024
- Tønnessen, L., 'Beyond numbers? Women's 25 per cent parliamentary quota in post-conflict Sudan', *Journal of Peace, Conflict and Development*, 17 (2011), pp. 44–45, <<https://www.cmi.no/publications/file/4102-beyond-numbers-womens-25-parliamentary-quota-sudan.pdf>>, accessed 10 September 2024
- Tønnessen, L. and Kjølsvædt, H. G., 'The Politics of Women's Representation in Sudan: Debating Women's Rights in Islam from the Elites to the Grassroots', CMI Report R 2010:2, Chr. Michelsen Institute, 2010, <<https://www.cmi.no/publications/3643-the-politics-of-womens-representation-in-sudan>>, accessed 25 October 2024
- Tøraasen, M., 'Gender Parity in Senegal: A Continuing Struggle', CMI Insight No. 2, Chr. Michelsen Institute, 2017, <<https://www.cmi.no/publications/6230-gender-parity-in-senegal-a-continuing-struggle>>, accessed 18 June 2024
- , 'Gender parity and the symbolic representation of women in Senegal', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 57/3 (2019), pp. 459–81, <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X19000272>>
- Touré, A., 'Senegal – Women need to express their anger. Silence is the friend of injustice', Women's UN Report Network, 7 October 2022, <<https://wunrn.com/2022/10/senegal-women-need-to-express-their-anger-silence-is-the-friend-of-injustice>>, accessed 7 July 2024
- Trans Saharan Elections Project, 'Gender Quotas and Representation – Senegal', [n.d.], <<https://tsep.africa.ufl.edu/gender-quotas-and-representation/senegal>>, accessed 10 October 2024
- M. Tremblay (ed.), *Women and Legislative Representation: Electoral Systems, Political Parties, and Sex Quotas* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012)
- Tripp, A. M. and Kang, M. A., *The Global Impact of Quotas: On the Fast Track to Increased Female Legislative Representation* (University of Wisconsin, 2008)
- United Nations, Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice, 1945, <<https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/CTC/uncharter.pdf>>, accessed 10 September 2024
- , Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, <<https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>>, accessed 27 October 2024
- , International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, A/RES/2200 A (XXI), 16 December 1966, <<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/57677>>, accessed 25 June 2024
- , International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, A/RES/2200 A (XXI), 16 December 1966, <<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/57677>>, accessed 27 October 2024

- , *Women Political Participation in Tunisia: The 2022-2023 Legislative Elections* (UN Women, December 2023d), <<https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/wpp-report-tunisia.pdf>>, accessed 2 July 2024
- UN Women and Government of Seychelles, 'Seychelles: National Comprehensive Review 2019', May 2019, <<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/64/National-reviews/Seychelles.pdf>>, accessed 25 October 2024
- Virgint, E., 'Electoral Systems and Women's Representation', Publication No. 2016-30-E, Library of Parliament, 5 July 2016, <https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2016/bdp-lop/bp/YM32-2-2016-30-eng.pdf>, accessed 22 July 2024
- V-Dem, Democracy Index by Country 2024, <<https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/v-dem-democracy-index-by-country>>, accessed 25 October 2024
- Voice of America, 'Cameroonian women urge representation in politics', 19 November 2019, <<https://iknowpolitics.org/en/news/world-news/cameroonian-women-urge-representation-politics>>, accessed 24 August 2024
- Wambua, P. M., 'Weak support and limited participation hinder women's political leadership in North Africa', Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 131, 27 January 2017, <<https://www.afrobarometer.org/publication/ad131-weak-support-and-limited-participation-hinder-womens-political-leadership-in-north-africa>>, accessed 23 July 2024
- World Economic Forum (WEF), *The Inclusive Growth and Development Report 2017* (Geneva: WEF, 2017), <https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Forum_IncGrwth_2017.pdf>, accessed 10 October 2024
- , *Global Gender Gap Report 2024* (Geneva: WEF, 2024), <<https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2024/digest>>, accessed 29 May 2024
- Yarchi, M. and Samuel-Azran, T., 'Women politicians are more engaging: Male versus female politicians, ability to generate users' engagement on social media during an election campaign', *Information, Communication & Society*, 21/7 (2018), pp. 978–95, <<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2018.1439985>>
- Yiapan, J. N., 'Factors That Account for the Marginal Participation of Women in the Political Process: The Case of Maasai Women', Master's Thesis, University of Nairobi (2008), unpublished
- Youssef, M., Aissa, M. and Abdou, S., 'Women's rights have improved in North Africa, but the struggle continues', *Open Democracy*, 25 January 2021, <<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/north-africa-west-asia/womens-rights-have-improved-in-north-africa-but-the-struggle-continues>>, accessed 3 July 2024
- Zaidi, Z. N., 'Will female candidates transform politics in Congo?', *Deutsche Welle*, 15 December 2023, <<https://www.dw.com/en/will-female-candidates-transform-politics-in-congo/a-67720205>>, accessed 28 July 2024
- ZimRights, 'Women's representation in the 10th Parliament: The metrics', 8 March 2024, <<https://www.zimrights.org.zw/womens-representation-in-the-10th-parliament-the-metrics>>, accessed 25 July 2024

Annex A. List of interviewees

Pseudonyms were used to protect the respondents.

Table A.1. List of interviewees

NORTH AFRICA	
Sudan	Maram, civil society activist
EAST AFRICA	
Uganda	Mayor
Rwanda	Eal, senior politician
Kenya	Jul, politician Orange Democratic Movement
Burundi	Fal, senior politician
SOUTHERN AFRICA	
Mozambique	Miguel, International IDEA
	Pascal, FRELIMO
	Teri, civil society activist, FRELIMO member
South Africa	Gett, Democratic Alliance Councillor
	Siwela, activist, training women on mediation in electoral conflicts
	Phumzile, Rise Mzansi
Zimbabwe	Chilidzi, My Vote Counts
	Masa, Labour, Economists and African Democrats (LEAD) party politician
WEST AFRICA	
Nigeria	Ema, University of Nsukka, Nigeria
	Mos, former local councillor and doctoral candidate
Senegal	Dia, politician

Sierra Leone	Asha, academic and activist, Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone; Director of Programmes (volunteer)—The 50/50 Group Sierra Leone (a parity organization working on women in political leadership and decision-making positions)
CENTRAL AFRICA	
Cameroon	Nkor, municipality in the Northwest Region, Cameroon
	Mayo, leading politician in the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM: ruling party in Cameroon)
	Laem, Senator and Member of the Central Committee of the CPDM, National Secretary of the Women's Wing of the CPDM, CPDM Divisional Delegate for Bui Division
	Komta, Regional Councillor, Northwest Region, Cameroon
	Feke, former Mouvement de libération du Congo representative to Belgium, current politician in Alternative Citoyenne party, DRC

About the authors

Annie Barbara Chikwanha is a professor in the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Johannesburg. She is a former member of the Board of Advisors of International IDEA, and has extensive regional experience on democracy and governance, human security, security sector governance, and peace and conflict and has published on these themes.

Theresa Moyo is a retired professor. Formerly, she served at the University of Limpopo in South Africa (2005–2022), where she lectured at the Turfloop Graduate School of Leadership, teaching research methodology, development theory and practice, and regional and local economic development. Prior to that, she was a lecturer at the University of Zimbabwe, where she taught economics for 10 years. Currently, she is a senior research associate with the University of Johannesburg in South Africa. Over the years, Professor Moyo has published extensively on African development issues, focusing on trade and development, industrialization and gender and women's empowerment. She has also consulted with international organizations, particularly on sustainable development and gender issues in Africa.

About International IDEA

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization with 35 Member States founded in 1995, with a mandate to support sustainable democracy worldwide.

WHAT WE DO

We develop policy-friendly research related to elections, parliaments, constitutions, digitalization, climate change, inclusion and political representation, all under the umbrella of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We assess the performance of democracies around the world through our unique Global State of Democracy Indices and Democracy Tracker.

We provide capacity development and expert advice to democratic actors including governments, parliaments, election officials and civil society. We develop tools and publish databases, books and primers in several languages on topics ranging from voter turnout to gender quotas.

We bring states and non-state actors together for dialogues and lesson sharing. We stand up and speak out to promote and protect democracy worldwide.

WHERE WE WORK

Our headquarters is in Stockholm, and we have regional and country offices in Africa and West Asia, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean. International IDEA is a Permanent Observer to the United Nations and is accredited to European Union institutions.

OUR PUBLICATIONS AND DATABASES

We have a catalogue with more than 1,000 publications and over 25 databases on our website. Most of our publications can be downloaded free of charge.

<https://www.idea.int>

International IDEA
Strömsborg
SE-103 34 Stockholm
SWEDEN
+46 8 698 37 00
info@idea.int
www.idea.int



Women's presence in politics is vital for shaping policy outcomes in the economic, social and cultural spheres. Despite progress over the past two decades, women remain under-represented in political leadership in Africa. This publication examines the factors motivating women's participation and representation in politics on the continent, providing insights to enhance gender equality and empower women politically. Through interviews, it becomes clear that global and regional efforts for gender equality are key factors motivating women's political participation. Women's movements and civil society groups have played a significant role in advocating for increased inclusion. However, social norms and practices often still hinder women from meaningful participation in decision making.

The report suggests that African governments should expedite the implementation of international and regional frameworks to enhance women's political participation. Strengthening women's capacity to engage in politics, improving access to finance and addressing violence against women in politics are essential measures to promote their representation.

ISBN: 978-91-7671-871-1 (PDF)