



**Womankind  
Worldwide**

# **WHY FEMINISTS SHOULD LEAD**

**WOMEN'S  
PARTICIPATION  
AND LEADERSHIP  
AS KEY TO  
GENDER EQUITY**

FACTSHEET





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**Photo:** Young feminists at the SHE LEADS event in Nairobi.

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**Each time a woman stands up for herself,  
without knowing it, without claiming it,  
she stands up for all women.”**

**Maya Angelou** – Poet. Author. Civil Rights Activist.

# WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP (WPL)

## 1. Current Trends in Representation:

While women's legislative representation has increased globally, it remains low. Regional disparities persist and progress is slow-moving despite global advocacy.

## 2. Statistics<sup>1</sup>

Some statistics are highlighted below on women's political participation at global level and Womankind Worldwide's focus countries of; Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe and Nepal. In Afghanistan, updated statistics remain unavailable since the return to power of the Taliban in 2021.

- i. From a sample pool of 189 countries by the Inter-parliamentary Union<sup>2</sup> and UN Women as of 1<sup>st</sup> January 2025, these were the statistics on women in the highest positions of state.
- ii. Countries with women Heads of State 18 out of 151 equivalent to 11.9 percent and countries with women Heads of Government 16 out of 193 equivalent to 8.3 percent.
  - a. Heads of State: Barbados, Bosnia and Herzegovina\*\*, Dominica, Greece, Iceland, India, Malta, North Macedonia, Peru, Republic of Moldova, Slovenia, Trinidad, and Tobago.
  - b. Heads of State and Government: Honduras, Marshall Islands, Mexico, San Marino\*\*, Switzerland\*\*, United Republic of Tanzania.
  - c. Heads of Government: Barbados, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Samoa, Thailand, Togo.
- iii. Women Speakers of Parliament 64 out of 270 equivalent 23.7 percent.

Albania, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas (2 chambers), Belarus, Belgium, Belize (2 chambers), Bulgaria, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Czechia, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, Eswatini, France, Gabon, Germany (2 chambers), Grenada, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Jamaica, Latvia, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Panama, Poland, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Serbia, Slovenia, South Africa (2 chambers), South Sudan, Spain, Switzerland, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkmenistan, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay (2 chambers), Uzbekistan, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

**11.9%**

Countries with women Heads of State

**8.3%**

Countries with women Heads of Government

**23.7%**

Countries with women Speakers of Parliament

**189**

Number of Countries sampled by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN Women as at 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2025



<sup>1</sup> UN Women and Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). *Women in Politics: 2025 Map*. March 2025. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2025/03/women-in-politics-map-2025>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

iv. **Women Deputy Speakers of Parliament 208 out of 638 equivalent to 32.6 percent.**

- a. Of the 244 chambers in 172 countries for which information is available, 124 have at least one-woman Deputy Speaker.
- b. Only six countries had 50 percent or more women in parliament in single or lower houses: Rwanda (64 percent), Cuba (56 percent), Nicaragua (55 percent), Andorra (50 percent), Mexico (50 percent), and the United Arab Emirates (50 percent)
- c. In Africa (East Africa, West Africa, Central Africa, Southern Africa) - legislators who are women constitute 27.1 percent of the lower house/single house and 27 percent for the Upper House/Senate at a combined average of 27 percent.
- d. In Asia (East Asia, Central Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia) 22.1 percent for the single/lower house and 22 percent women legislators in the Upper/Senate House with a cumulative average of 22.1 percent for both houses.
- e. Cabinet Ministerial portfolios sampled by the UN Interparliamentary Union across the 189 countries provided a comprehensive picture of women in leadership based on several criteria for example in the dockets below;
  - i. **Religious Affairs** - 1 out of 43 existing posts. Only 1 woman was selected for the docket. The lowest in terms of representation out of the entire sample of 189 countries.
  - ii. **Energy, natural resources, fuels, and mining** - second lowest in terms of representation of women cabinet ministers. Out of 226 posts across the 189 countries sampled - only 28 women were in this post (12 percent).
  - iii. **Transport** - out of 187 posts, 24 were women giving 13 percent representation.
  - iv. **Defence** - also at 13 percent, out of 162 posts there were 21 ministers who were women.
  - v. **Home Affairs** - 219 posts of which 29 were headed by women ministers, 13 percent.
- f. Conversely the dockets with the most women in post in 2025 out of the 189 countries sampled by the UN\_IPU are;
  - i. **Women and Gender Equality** - 72/83 existing posts. (87 percent)
  - ii. **Family and Children Affairs** - 55/77 existing posts (71 percent)
  - iii. **Social Inclusion and Development** - 40 out of 72 existing posts (56 percent)
  - iv. **Social Affairs (General)** - 23/53 existing posts had women at the helm (43 percent)
  - v. **Human Rights (General)** - 39 percent with 17 women cabinet heads out of 44 existing dockets from the sampled countries
  - vi. **Culture** - 35 percent 63 out of 178 existing posts

**32.6%**

**Countries with women Deputy Speakers of Parliament**

**6**

**Number of countries with 50% or more women in parliament**

**27%**

**Combined average of women legislators in Africa in both the upper and lower houses of parliament**

**22.1%**

**Cummulative average of women legislators in Asia in both the upper and lower houses of parliament**



- vii. **Education** – 31 percent, 79 women cabinet ministers out of an existing pool of 258
- viii. **Tourism** – 40 out of 131 posts, 31 percent
- ix. **Indigenous and Minority Affairs** – 30 percent with 7 out of 23 existing posts in the sample pool.
- g. Ministerial statistics as relates to Womankind Worldwide’s focus countries as linked to our focus countries
  - i. **Ethiopia’s** cabinet has 45.5 percent of its dockets being led by women. 10 women lead out of 22 total dockets. Almost half.
  - ii. **Kenya and Uganda** ties at 30 percent of their cabinet dockets being led by women. With 6 out of 30 posts being led by women in their current governments.
  - iii. **Zimbabwe** has 28 percent representation, 7 ministers who are women leading cabinet dockets out of 25 existing posts.
  - iv. **Nepal** has 9.5 percent representation which is 2 ministers out of a total of 21 total posts, being headed by a woman leader.
  - v. **No information was available for Afghanistan.**
- h. On the legislative front
  - i. **Ethiopia** – for Lower House Representation they have 41.9 percent of women legislators (202 female legislators out of a total of 482 seats), 29.7 percent in the Upper House/Senate (43 out of 145 total seats).
  - ii. **Uganda** has one legislative house. 34.1 percent of its composition is female legislators, 189 women leaders out of a total of 555 seats.
  - iii. **Zimbabwe** – 30.1 percent women in the Lower House (84 out of 279 total seats), 44.3 percent women legislators in the upper/senate house (35 women out of 79 seats).
  - iv. **Kenya** – 23.3 percent in the Lower House (81 Parliamentarians out of 348 total seats). 21 female legislators out of a total of 67 seats in the Upper/Senate House i.e. 31.3 percent.
  - v. **Nepal** – 33.5 percent of its Lower House is held by women leaders (92 out of 275 total seats) and 37.3 percent in the Upper/Senate House – 22 out of 59 total seats.
  - vi. **Afghanistan** – exceptional circumstances related to its governance i.e. Taliban Rule did not allow data collection.
- i. Women with disabilities are severely underrepresented in decision-making: while both women and men with disabilities are underrepresented, evidence from 19 countries in 2017 shows that only 2.3 percent of women with disabilities compared to 2.8 percent of men with disabilities held a position as a legislator, senior official or manager.<sup>3</sup>

- 3. Legal and Policy Gaps in Practice:** Even where supportive laws and policies exist, poor implementation perpetuates inequality. Legal frameworks alone are insufficient without actual practice and accountability from all stakeholders.
- 4. Gender Gaps in Political and Leadership Representation:** Women’s limited presence in leadership reflects systemic inequalities and male-dominated electoral histories. These disparities affect all areas of life—from households to workplaces.
- 5. Global Democracy and Women’s Representation:** Lack of presence in political, economic, and social decision-making spaces weakens women’s bargaining power and reduces their opportunities to influence policies that affect their lives exponentially.
- 6. Structural Barriers and Patriarchy:** Patriarchal systems deeply control power, influence, and resources. Women disproportionately face poverty and material deprivation due to limited control over resources. Patriarchy justifies the subordination of women to preserve power unjustly.

<sup>3</sup> **United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.** *Realization of the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities: UN Flagship Report on Disability & Development 2018.* 2018. United Nations. Retrieved from UN DESA publications repository

7. **Persistent Discrimination and Gender Stereotypes:** Deep-rooted stereotypes perpetuate inequality and normalize the violation of women's rights. These discriminatory systems affect women across all their diversities and more so as they navigate decision making and actively participating in public and private spheres of life.
8. **Restricted Access to Influence and Decision-Making:** Women are often excluded from processes and institutions that shape their lives—even within their own households. Their under-representation results in policies and laws that are non-responsive to their needs.
9. **Importance of Women's Leadership for Sustainable Development:** Women's participation is crucial to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) —especially Goal 5 on gender equality and leadership.
10. **Substantive equality** (as defined by the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women) requires not just participation but meaningful inclusion and power-sharing. It means addressing the full spectrum of disadvantages and power dynamics that women face including in leadership and participating in decision making.
11. **Leadership** cannot be meaningful if women remain constrained by intersecting inequalities like violence, economic injustice, harmful norms, and cultural practises and even gender discrimination.



Women's participation is crucial  
to achieving the Sustainable  
Development Goals (SDGs) - especially

## GOAL 5 ON GENDER EQUALITY & LEADERSHIP

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**Photo:** Biggie,  
Executive Director, FARUG



### 3. Indivisible realities



#### Women's Economic Rights

- Women's economic rights and their participation and leadership are deeply intertwined. Economic inequality limits women's ability to participate meaningfully in decision making and subsequently lack of representation in decision making spaces weakens efforts to advance inclusive and just economic systems. Achieving one without the other is neither sustainable nor transformative.<sup>4</sup>
- A key barrier to women's meaningful participation in decision making and leadership is lack of sufficient resources including; financial and social capital. Notably, whilst economic resources are pertinent in contributing towards women participating in leadership, especially politically, it has been established that it does not stop gendered discrimination and oppression.
- Unpaid care and Domestic work - women's disproportionate burden of unpaid care work restricts their time, mobility and ability to engage in leadership and decision making. This is often an invisible economic reality that affects their public participation. Inherently, a lack of recognition, redistribution and reduction of care work undermines economic, political and civic rights.
- It is crucial to recognize that political representation and the leadership of women across facets of society is shaped at the intersection of gender and multiple social identities such as race, class, caste.
- Increased representation and participation of women in decision making can lead to better fiscal policies that better tackle women's economic needs and promote gender equality. Women in positions of leaderships advocate and champion for policies that support parity in entrepreneurship, address violence against women and girls in the workplace and address unpaid care work.<sup>5</sup>

**Womankind partner Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE) through the AWESOME consortium has leveraged on advocacy centred on gender responsive at local and national levels in Uganda to promote the leadership and participation of women in decision making in public and private spheres of life. Through intersectional approaches they have also galvanised women's movements in these spaces to co-develop influencing strategies around gender-based violence as it intersects with women's leadership and participation in decision making,**

#### Violence Against Women and Girls

- Violence hinders women from exercising their rights to participate in political and public life and has wider consequences for societies, it undermines public institutions, weakens policy outcomes and impedes progress in peace and development.
- Political violence is almost an assured reality for women in politics, who face heightened forms of violence. Whether from opposing politicians or even within their own political parties and alliances whence they are seen as rivals, intensifying the violence they endure.
- Women politicians advocating for women's rights or gender equality face heightened violence, especially when taking a feminist stance or supporting gender and reproductive health laws. Political parties, which influence policy and candidate selection, are often frequent perpetrators of violence<sup>6</sup>
- Technology Facilitated Violence - As women amplify their campaigns online, technology-facilitated violence rises, aiming to silence and prevent their political participation. While social media policies exist, they often fail to stop online violence, with Violence Against Women in Politics' (VAWP) intersectionality with age, disability, and the queer community particularly evident. VAWP occurs both offline and online, perpetrated by politicians, constituents, family, voters, religious leaders, media, State actors, anonymous trolls, and bots. Limited data, fear of retaliation, stigma, and disbelief hinder reporting, while risks of reputational damage during elections exacerbate the problem. Sexism, harassment, and violence against women in politics remain pervasive, varying by context.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Women Deliver. Investing in Women's Economic Empowerment to Drive Gender Equality and Achieve the SDGs. Deliver for Good Campaign Brief, July 2019. [https://womendeliver.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/2019-7-D4G\\_Brief\\_Economic.pdf](https://womendeliver.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/2019-7-D4G_Brief_Economic.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Womankind Worldwide. AWESOME Policy Brief on Violence Against Women in Politics. March 2025. <https://womankind.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/AWESOME-Policy-Brief-on-Violence-Against-Women-in-Politics.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

## Disability and Accessibility<sup>8</sup>

- An estimated one in five women live with a disability. Historically, their equal participation and inclusion in society has been hindered by systemic marginalization and structural barriers, which often lead to less access to education, health care (including sexual and reproductive health), information, public services, justice as well as less participation in civic and political processes and decision-making.<sup>9</sup>
- Women with disabilities' representation in society, in decision making and political life, is still limited. Whilst evidence on this marker is not standardised globally, women with disabilities have exceptionally low participation rates in political leadership.
- Strengthening the capacity of people with disabilities lead to increased political participation, especially among women and girls with disabilities.<sup>10</sup>
- Affirmative action and quotas for people with disabilities has been argued to be effective at bridging existing disparities in each state. However, there is no unanimous position on the success of affirmative action.
- Disability-inclusive election observation may provide opportunities to address barriers to political participation and to empower men and women with disabilities to serve in leadership roles.
- Other efforts have focused on increasing the visibility of people with disabilities to increase participation in public life. Womankind Worldwide partner, Women Challenged to Challenge (WCC) a (Disabled Women's Rights Organisation) DWRO, also holds space for women political leaders living with a disability leveraging on media as a tool to raise awareness and harnessing it to amplify the voices of these leaders thus building collective power.
- Influencing policies and law-making processes remains a key strategy in advancing the participation of women living with disability in decision making and leadership.

**Ethiopia Women with Disability National Association (EWDNA) has actively advocated for the inclusion of progressive clauses in Ethiopian national legislature such as the Criminal code to include key provisions linked to violence against women with disability. Additionally, they have and continue to convene high level training sessions with judicial officers and judges to enhance their understanding on the compounded realities of women living with disability and access to justice. As a result of these sessions, several noteworthy initiatives have been implemented. These include the introduction of unique identification numbers for files related to women with disability, to prioritise their handling, proactive identification of deaf clients with pre-arranged sign language interpreters, and the relocation of case delivery rooms to the ground floor to accommodate physically impaired women. The outcomes of these training sessions have fostered improved collaboration among professionals in the judicial sector, police, human rights commissions, one-stop centres, and other justice institutions.**



There are various barriers to political participation faced by people with disabilities;

**THEY INCLUDE  
SOCIETAL STIGMA, DISCRIMINATORY LEGAL  
FRAMEWORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE, AND  
POSITIVE RHETORIC UNSUPPORTED BY  
POLITICAL ACTION (TOKENISM).**



<sup>8</sup> Oyieke, Yvonne Anyango. *Why Feminists Should Lead: Why Women's Participation and Leadership Is Key for Gender Equity*. Edited by Scheaffer Okore, Wanjiru Linda Kroeger, and Kavinya Makau. Womankind Worldwide, 2025.

<sup>9</sup> UN Women. *Leadership and Political Participation of Women with Disabilities* (Issue Brief, 2019). United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. Retrieved from <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2019/Brief-Leadership-and-political-participation-of-women-with-disabilities-en.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Price, R. A. (2018). *Strengthening participation of people with disabilities in leadership roles in developing countries* (K4D Helpdesk Report). Institute of Development Studies. [https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/articles/online\\_resource/Strengthening\\_Participation\\_of\\_People\\_with\\_Disabilities\\_in\\_Leadership\\_Roles\\_in\\_Developing\\_Countries/26483815?file=48258901](https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/articles/online_resource/Strengthening_Participation_of_People_with_Disabilities_in_Leadership_Roles_in_Developing_Countries/26483815?file=48258901)



## 4. Feminist funding <sup>11</sup>



- The overall state of the funding eco system for gender equality is shrinking but not due to a lack of money but rather a reprioritisation of funding priorities that do not include gender equality as a priority area. The modalities of funding warrant review and changes to bridge the gap between intent and practice, especially with the rise of anti-gender and anti-rights movements across spheres of development and aid.<sup>12</sup>
- Feminist movements are essential engines for transformative and lasting change, especially in fostering women's leadership and full participation in decision making spaces. However, these movements receive only 1 percent of gender focused and specific funding for "women and girls", especially from bilateral donors and Overseas Development Institutes (ODI). These funds do not directly reach feminist groups and women led initiatives and are further diminished in quantity when they go through intermediate organisations based in the minority world/global north.
- Moving toward a feminist funding eco system globally, will allow for a shift in allocation of resources, how they are mobilized and distributed with an emphasis on participatory grant making that allows women in all their diversity to be at the heart of decision making on where funds go – a key tenet of women's participation and leadership.
- Feminist funding prioritizes substantive participation over symbolic representation. It supports women in all their diversity, especially from marginalized communities, to lead in ways that challenge systemic inequalities, not just occupy positions of power. It enables women to shape agendas, not just fill quotas.
- In the Global South, many women's leadership initiatives emerge from community-led struggles, not institutions. Feminist funders provide flexible, core, and long-term support to these movements, recognizing them as legitimate drivers of social and political change. Without this funding, many grassroots feminist groups would remain invisible or under-resourced.
- Feminist funding centres local knowledge, autonomy, and intersectionality. It actively shifts power from global north/minority world donors to majority world/global south actors by: Supporting feminist funds in Africa, Asia, Latin America, trusting local leadership to set priorities, promoting decolonial funding practices. It is not just about giving money—it is about redistributing and shifting power to actual movement holders.

**Feminist movements are essential engines  
for transformative and lasting change**

**HOWEVER THEY RECEIVE  
1% OF GENDER FOCUSED  
FUNDING FOR WOMEN  
AND GIRLS**



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**Photo:**

A women's group  
in Uganda.

<sup>11</sup> Oyieke, Yvonne Anyango. *Why Feminists Should Lead: Why Women's Participation and Leadership Is Key for Gender Equity*. Edited by Scheaffer Okore, Wanjiru Linda Kroeger, and Kavinya Makau. Womankind Worldwide, 2025.

<sup>12</sup> Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID). *Moving More Money to the Drivers of Change: How Bilateral and Multilateral Funders Can Resource Feminist Movements*. February 2022. [https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/MovingMoreMoney\\_FINALFINAL.pdf](https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/MovingMoreMoney_FINALFINAL.pdf).



## 5. Reflections on feminist movements



- Reclaiming a feminist movement-building approach rooted in solidarity, accountability, and collective action is essential to driving transformative change in leadership and decision-making spaces in society.
- Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and in particular feminist and women's rights organisations play a critical role in advancing women's participation and leadership by promoting gender equality at all levels of society. They serve as key allies in raising awareness, mobilizing resources, and amplifying the innovative ways women are exercising agency and leadership—even in contexts marked by disempowerment and discrimination. Siiqqee Women's Development Association (SWDA) in Ethiopia has been galvanising women into organising in the Ash factory industries in Gelan town to demand safe working standards and spaces. Their participation in this influencing has led to tangible change in workplace policy in their favour, promoting their overall wellbeing.
- Through strategic collaboration, CSOs can push for stronger accountability from the state to uphold its legal obligations on inclusive leadership and equal representation at local, regional, and national levels.
- Exercising collective power as the feminist and women's rights movement allows for joint efforts in advancing Women's Participation and Leadership (WPL) including dismantling harmful stereotypes, prejudices and cultural norms linked to women in leadership.
- The importance of solidarity for and by women to augment women's leadership is key. Partners such as Federation of Women Lawyers in Kenya (FIDA Kenya) and Women Challenged to Challenge (WCC Kenya) amongst others not mentioned here have catalysed efforts towards this recommendation through their programming on WPL. As highlighted in the main report, their political leadership academies have created a platform to encourage mentorship, learning, and solidarity. Through the Vote a Dada campaign FIDA continues to hold space for women leaders at all levels of Kenyan society amplifying discourse on the role of women and persons with disabilities in political leadership and contribute to increasing the number of women elected in the six elective positions in the Kenyan electoral process. WCC a (Disabled Women's Rights Organisation) DWRO, also holds space for women political leaders living with a disability leveraging on media as a tool to raise awareness and harnessing it to amplify the voices of these leaders thus building collective power.<sup>13</sup>

**Reclaiming a feminist movement-building approach rooted in solidarity, accountability, and collective action is essential to driving**

**TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE  
IN LEADERSHIP  
AND DECISION-  
MAKING SPACES  
IN SOCIETY.**



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**Photo from left to right :**  
Kimberly, Sophia and Sandra  
during a break at a workshop  
with Young Women's Leadership  
Institute in Nairobi, Kenya.

<sup>13</sup> [U](#) AWESOME Consortium, Annual Report Narrative Y3 2023. Unpublished Internal Report, 2024.



## 6. Call to action (from Womankind Worldwide)



### Governments and State Actors

- Leverage on special legal measures such as legislated gender quotas and gender balanced appointments that are not tokenistic but structured to enhance women's participation in leadership in the political sphere as well as other aspects of public and private life. Design and implement state-led, community-driven economic justice programs that centre women's voices, are rooted in human rights law, and dismantle systemic barriers to women's special in leadership.
- Ensure full implementation—not just creation—of existing gender equality laws and policies, including affirmative action and temporary specific measures to improve women's representation in both political and non-political spaces.
- Institutionalize political education and civic training through gender-responsive, rights-based initiatives to raise awareness about women's participation and leadership.
- Collaborate with feminist organizations and community actors to embed feminist values in public institutions and to create inclusive, equitable decision-making structures.
- Invest in local-level leadership opportunities by resourcing women's political participation between election cycles and not only during campaigns.
- End All forms of Violence against women including online violence, as it hinders women from exercising their rights and their participation in public and private life with far reaching implications for their families, communities and society at large. Governments must enforce laws and policies to prevent violence during elections and beyond, to hold perpetrators to account and strengthen access to justice for survivors of this type of violence.
- Support women and representative decision making by investing in skills building and capacity enhancing programmes for women candidates at all levels of governance to build their campaigning skills and contribute towards their leadership skills as well.
- State actors should also regulate campaign financing to encourage political parties to allocate targeted funds to women candidates and their campaigns as equitable measures aimed at advancing women's participation and leadership.

### For Women's Rights Organizations (WROs) and Civil Society

- Build and fund feminist economic organizing hubs that empower women as leaders and not just service recipients.
- Support intersectional leadership development through education, mentorship, and safe spaces for women from marginalized groups (e.g., rural women, disabled women, LGBTQIA+ individuals, refugees).
- Raise collective awareness on patriarchy, gender norms, and discrimination, and advocate for cultural transformation through grassroots organizing and community dialogue.
- Document and elevate women's everyday leadership contributions, particularly in informal and traditional spaces, to challenge dominant patriarchal narratives.

### For Media and Journalists

- Mainstream gender-sensitive reporting by integrating women's voices and leadership across all content areas—not confined to "women's sections" or gender-specific features.
- Promote diverse and competent representations of women in traditionally male-dominated fields like politics, defence, business, and sports as experts, editors, and stakeholders.
- Hold media accountable for online gender-based violence, and actively report and challenge cyberbullying, harassment, and misogynistic attacks against women leaders and candidates.
- Use media platforms for public education, fostering positive dialogue on gender equality, justice, and feminist leadership for all age groups and demographics.

## For Communities, Cultural Leaders, and Educators

- Engage men and boys in gender discourse to shift the burden of gender equity from women alone and to transform collective understanding of gender beyond binary framings.
- Leverage local cultural knowledge and traditions to challenge harmful norms and uplift inclusive gender narratives that recognize all identities.
- Amplify community-based feminist education initiatives, focusing on political literacy, leadership skills, and self-confidence, particularly for those in marginalized groups.

## Regional and International Partners

- Support and study feminist leadership models from the Global South, applying insights from successful grassroots innovations and movements.
- Invest in care work advocacy by promoting fair wages and legal protections for caregivers, recognizing their labour as critical to both society and the economy.
- Facilitate cross-regional learning and collaboration, enabling feminist advocates to refine and replicate strategies that have proven effective in similar socio-political contexts.

## For Donors and Development Partners

- Fund long-term capacity building programs, not just project-based interventions, to support women's leadership across political, economic, and social sectors.<sup>14</sup>
- Support intergenerational and intersectional organizing, ensuring that programs reach young women, elders, and those across multiple identities and lived experiences.
- Encourage data collection and analysis on women's participation beyond electoral outcomes—focusing on sustained influence, leadership outcomes, and systemic change.

## Final Call to All Stakeholders:

- We must shift from a tick-box approach to gender equality toward a transformational, feminist leadership model rooted in dignity, justice, inclusion, and sustainability.
- Leverage existing laws, community strengths, and feminist innovations to reimagine leadership and decision-making spaces where women—in all their diversities—can thrive and lead with agency, confidence, and power.



<sup>14</sup> Kroeger, L (2025). *Do the People Hold the Power?* 8 March 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.womankind.org.uk/do-the-people-hold-the-power/>

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