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*"Gender Issues in Economic Crisis, Recovery and Beyond: Women
as Agents of Transformation"*

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REPORT ON THE COMMONWEALTH POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

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SYNOPSIS

Man and woman are a peerless pair, being supplementary to one another, each helps the other so that without one the existence of the other cannot be conceived, and therefore it follows that anything that impairs the status of either of them will involve the equal ruin of them both.

Mahatma Gandhi (Cornillion 1997, 3)

This century's experience shows that until women as women achieve numbers in legislatures for nearer parity, all advances in politics, public life and in passing laws of especial importance to the majority gender must be viewed as extremely fragile and easily reversible. Without women at the helm, women's interests and needs will continue to lose out (Cornillion 1997, 9).

Gender and Women's political participation: meaning and impact on social, economic and political relations.

The argument for increased women's participation in politics flows from many different perspectives. One of the most compelling reasons is that it is a subversion of democracy and an inequitable situation that women are under-represented in political processes worldwide, thus, gender differences and disparities in power capabilities in formal decision-making institutions should be studied with a view to democratizing access as well as incorporating the voice, agenda, perspectives, and priorities of women into national, regional and local policies, plans, and agenda.ⁱ The International Parliamentary Union considers this a serious enough problem to contend that any society that is interested in making progress and advancing in the contemporary world must include both women and men in furtherance of democracy and equity.

Further, if genuine and thoroughgoing advancement is to be accomplished, whatever impediments exist to women's participation should be eliminated. In addition to political and socio-economic obstacles to women's participation in the legislative branch, there are also ideological and psychological hindrances that deter women from participating actively, particularly in the top levels of public decision-making.ⁱⁱ "Male equivalence" is a principal means through which women access political life. It is also often assumed that women cannot enter into politics without their husband's assistance.ⁱⁱⁱ

Another successful strategy for increasing women's participation is the use of quotas. Many women legislators favour this strategy, but there is a vocal minority that opposes it on the grounds that if women are given extra assistance, there will be no respect for them within systems that remain male dominant. Thus, some women legislators support the meritocratic argument.^{iv} Although increased women's representation in legislature may be supported as conducive to social justice and the legitimacy of the political system, it does not necessarily guarantee that women's interests would be well-represented or supported.^v One of the most important

reasons for this is that most of the world's political systems retain a male dominant ethos that does not change in response to women's desires or incorporate their agenda. To be successful in these systems, most women have to learn the very same strategies that make men successful within them. Such strategies include ignoring women's issues. The case has been made that while women representatives have benefited from women's movements, there has been limited interaction between the two, a significant Achilles' heel for women legislators and the women's movement, since it is more difficult to move the women's agenda forward.^{vi}

According to Joni Lovenduski

- Women have distinct views on women's issues that are otherwise lacking in the political system,
- Their inclusion brings a women's perspective into decision making (for the better)
- Women bring a different style & expectation to politics (Bauer & Britton, 4).

For Lovenduski and Pippa Norris,

- Women parliamentarians in the UK are believed to introduce a new set of values "to issues affecting women's equality in the workplace, home, and public sphere" (4).

Diane Sainsbury considers that

- Since 45% of MPs in Sweden are women, there has been a redefinition of women's issues "as a demand for gender equality," leading to the transformation of women's issues from small, special minority issues to "major party issues." Therefore, there are now changed conditions for substantive women's representation.
- Gendered demand for increased democracy produces the strategic conversion of political women from a small minority within each party to majority of citizens. This is a potential boon for better representation (4).

Shettima tells us that

- It is quite possible for women to be politically enfranchised and for them to still suffer de facto disfranchisement through the use of
 - unfair qualifying conditions,
 - discriminatory administrative rules, and
 - the mobilization of bias – where by virtue of the ability to set the agenda, men monopolize power and exclude women from decision-making (Shettima 1995).

The UNDP provides some insight into international efforts to address gender equality. These efforts point out that without cooperation between men and women there will be no meaningful change in the direction of gender equality.

Main Recommendations of International Conferences Focusing on Women's Political Participation:

- 50% representation by women at all levels of government and other formal institutions by 2005
- More resources by international actors for capacity-building, networking and exchange of experiences and best-practices at all levels, as well as for the development of time-bound monitoring mechanisms to realise their targets by 2005.
- Elimination of barriers that inhibit a greater participation of women in the public sphere, and the affirmation of the need, in some instances, for affirmative action measures - e.g. quotas in political parties and in parliaments, equality clauses in the constitution and all national legislation (citizenship laws, labour laws, criminal laws, land rights/inheritance laws), the creation of specialised budgets, as well as of specialised national machinery or institutions.
- Combining changes at the macro level with empowerment measures at the grassroots level... a stronger influence of women on policy formulation at the national level would bring about increased emphasis on capacity-building. In this regard, the role of capacity building organizations... in the context of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) - which would undertake to promote the capacity to play an advocacy role, rallying support to form pressure groups, and influencing decision-makers, among other aspects such as education and training for girls.
- Mechanisms to translate recommendations and policy from international bodies such as UN to the micro or national level; and
- Broadening national social dialogues to include media and academic and intellectual circles (Karam 1999)

Without a coordinated and cohesive set of strategies that bring women and men together in partnership for gender equality, not much will be accomplished. As reported by the UNDP, THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION (IPU) REPORT: TOWARDS PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN IN POLITICS also throws some light on this subject, and the recommendations flowing from the deliberations include:

- Consider women's political rights in the overall context of human rights;
- Critical mass of women evaluated at 30%;
- Parties [should] become more open to women and more receptive to their demands;
- Gender-neutral quotas targeting candidatures rather than seats in parliament, and being established by parties rather than by parliament;
- Reservation of a certain number of seats in local and national representative institutions to compensate for women's poor chances of being elected;
- an affirmation of the fact that the proportional representation system or a mixed electoral system are more favourable for women's elections to political posts than first-past-the-post systems, while asking political parties to ensure

- that women are well placed on electoral lists;
- Internal democracy within political parties: measures to facilitate equal participation of both men and women;
- Address the fact that men and women share paid and unpaid work very unequally;
- Importance of women's education in general and political and electoral training in particular. As far as training is concerned, it was urged that it target the following aspects:
 - that it should begin at school age
 - that it build self-confidence and not merely target filling ballot boxes
 - that it enables the learning of parliamentary procedures in order to fulfil electoral commitments.
 - that it be provided by both men and women trainers
 - that the responsibility be shared by other institutions such as universities and NGOs
 - that it be focused on the working of government, the building of democracy and the problematic of social relations between the sexes; and include communication, campaigning, media and NGOs and the role of political parties, and elements of legal and political literacy.
- Prepare a directory of world-wide institutions that provide such training for women, with accompanying training manuals in different languages;
- Importance of campaign financing in terms of:
 - encouraging political parties, national governments, local foundations and international financial institutions to allocate specific sums of money for women's campaigns
 - establishing systems for partial public funding of campaigns, which should in turn, include incentives for parties to put forward and fund women candidates
 - establishing additional premiums to parliamentary political groups, linked to the proportion of women MPs stressing the importance of bringing about a radical change in attitudes so that the image of women politicians in the media may be more realistically portrayed. To that end certain recommendations were made mainly focusing on creating more opportunities for communication and exchange of values and opinions among women politicians and media. An innovative idea in this regard is the suggestion to award an annual prize to press bodies who prove their impartiality in coverage of both men and women politicians.
- Establish national bodies/commissions for women and multidisciplinary advisory boards with supervisory functions to ensure that women's concerns are being taken into account in every field.
- Parliaments should establish special committees in charge of monitoring national, international and regional provisions concerning women's rights.
- Need for gender-equal participation in the work of international bodies (Karam 1999).

Bearing in mind the analysis and recommendations above, it becomes important to answer the following questions:

- What does women's political participation mean?
- What happened historically with regard to women's political participation?
- Have we learned the lessons of history?

Alternative explanations

- There are cultural constraints that ensure the entrenchment of social discrimination against women. Such constraints infect both economy and politics to the detriment of women.
- Underdevelopment/Structure and Nature of Power in the Global Economy:
 - The structure of the global economy and the consequent nature of power is such that most of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East was underdeveloped in the same process that caused the development of Europe and the United States of America. The gender relations at the time of conquest and colonialism favored the subjugation of women. The sensibilities of the vanquished and colonized nations still remain loyal to such modes of social organization, and thus, the marginalization of women thrives.
 - In developed countries, the vagaries of the global economic system and persistence of male dominant values and privileges accruing from them militate against women's participation in decisionmaking
- Lack of Modernization: most of Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Middle East are pre-modern, and their social relations are necessarily geared toward the marginalization of women in society. The more progressive these areas become, the more the women would be liberated from the bonds of oppression and vagrant rights violation.

For Okeke-Ihejirika and Franceschet (who focus on state feminism, or feminism that is supported by the establishment of state sponsored machineries and institutions, and where women's issues are woven into the policy process), in their comparative study of Nigeria and Chile, advanced three factors that shape the strategic options open to women when they seek to benefit from openings and opportunities offered by transitions to democracy:

- The substantive philosophical orientation on gender.
- A unified women's movement that can successfully make political demands.
- Contemporary gender relations that affect women's access to arenas of power and influence.

State feminism is concluded to have failed in some countries due to:

- Lack of women's access to political power during transition from military to civilian rule
- Lack of a powerful women's movement that does not succumb to ethnic, class, religious and other divisions

Women's roles in transitions follow the patterns below:

- Many become key actors in human rights movements during transitions because they are primarily responsible for their families, gender based demands can be made without their being subsumed to class, ethnic, or nationalist considerations.
- May be rewarded for participating in process by grant of privileged access to patriarchal political systems and allowed to include gender-based demands during the new dispensation. In such instances, demands include
 - Gender equality,
 - Executive & Legislative Quotas
 - Legislative mechanisms to increase women's power

These patterns are shaped by domestic, regional and transnational relations as well as by the nature of women's organisations.

- Discursive and political strategies are used
- The nature of existing political discourse whether it's democratic, authoritarian, nationalist, or otherwise.

Much of the literature is silent on the negative impact of military development and spending, a factor that put a strain on families, and much of the brunt is borne by women, who are primarily responsible for childcare and family welfare. Education and other social issues take a back seat to military in many countries, which are also yet to seriously address social health and well being. In many African and Pacific countries, as a result of the economic crisis faced from the mid 1970s, and in Asian countries after the collapse of the Asian tigers, cutbacks in welfare and social programs had deleterious effects, particularly on the poorest and most vulnerable, who are predominantly women. These are matters of concern for many women who are disheartened that they were denied an opportunity to respond as bona fide members of the legislature or executive.

In addition, many developing countries have huge sanitation problems that affect the systems of food preparation and family care. The latter are usually the sole province of women, and their workload increases tremendously. No viable and comprehensive government response exists to date. Equally, or maybe even more important are the environmental issues facing the world and oil producing countries in particular with oil pollution, and the unchecked recklessness of the multinational

oil corporations and government parastatals that do not sufficiently consider the environmental impact of their production.

Agribusiness and multinational capital play similar roles in countries where their foreign investment is aggressively sought, and the opening up of the domestic economy to them contributes to the growth of the GDP to the detriment of the workers in these sectors, particularly the women. The loss of pharmacopeia through the destruction of forests (to facilitate increased industrialization) also has tremendous negative significance for the world at large. This problem is especially compounded where the high price cooking fuel for the poor has become astronomical. This situation has had a negative impact on the forests, since there's growing use of wood as cooking fuel, and no systematic government or widespread NGO effort for re-forestation.

Many women activist organisations recognise that there is a need for concerted government sponsorship for free education at all levels and a commitment to full academic access for young girls to raise the literacy rate. A related issue is the need for employment for young school-leavers. In Nigeria, while she was Speaker of the Federal House of Representatives, Mrs. Patricia Olubunmi Etteh said in an interview that "youth restiveness", unemployment, underemployment, and the pervasiveness of youth gangs, popularly dubbed "cults" in Nigeria, are some of the most serious concerns that she has and wants to help find a solution for". She also expressed the desire to fight for the cause of women (July 2007). Similar concerns are to be found in development literature, and attract external funding from international NGOs, as well as multilateral and bilateral donors. However, for many low and medium income Commonwealth countries, there is a need for national policy that connects education with job creation, implementing affirmative action policies for women, removing protective legislation that discriminates against them, policy reforms should be based on serious needs analysis and more selective aid acceptance. For high income Commonwealth countries, affirmative action also remains relevant, particularly given the persistence of male-female wage disparities, and the operation of "glass ceilings" that continue to monopolise governance and decision-making in economic and political systems for men. Equally important are stimulus and job-training programmes to support women marginalized due to drastic changes in the world economy. These policies will be more meaningful only if women are a significant part of the decision-makers who formulate and implement policies and programmes.

Under What Conditions will Gender Equality thrive?

- Where women's movements are strong and democratization relatively meaningful, women stand to benefit more. Where the contrary applies, they don't. This means that the nature of democracy affects women's capacities to promote their interests effectively within the political system, and the extent to which women are able to enjoy the rights of citizenship.

- Where organized women can draw on an existing political discourse, gender ideologies and the existence of broader socio political movements that they can ally with, the possibility of success in pushing the women's agenda is higher. The inability of women to participate as full equals with men in broad based democracy impedes the level of success as do divisions along racial, ethnic and class lines.
- Where there is a well-functioning state women's policy machinery to enhance the chances for women's rights through viable and effective institutional mechanisms that promote and guarantee women's rights by mainstreaming gender through a sound institutional framework. Many women's policy machineries do not fit the bill.
- Where Gender Responsive Budgeting is used as a strategy to document government priorities and shows gaps in gender equity and equality.

Political Economy: From Economic Growth to Human Wellbeing

Human well-being is increasingly recognized as the goal of development. Democracy is an avenue toward the achievement of political conditions that underpin well-being. Therefore, democracy cannot be conceived only within political boundaries. Economic considerations are also important. Thus, the manner in which the world's political economy is managed has international, regional, domestic, local and household consequences. Trade liberalization affects gender inequalities through employment, wages their effects on the domestic and larger economy. On the other hand, gender inequalities affect trade performance especially through the relative power and expertise of actors in production. Trade, gender and democracy should be considered along with development as an integral part of an agenda geared at achieving human well-being for all.

While market criteria that focus on income, consumption, and size of the economy are important indicators of development, without considering human wellbeing, economic growth is meaningless. The world economy grew fourfold in the post-World War II era, there were also periods of significant downturn, the most recent being from 2008 to the present. Even for developed countries, these downturns threaten to reverse democratic and welfare gains made in good economic times. For developing countries, the challenge is even more significant, and there is a need to reconsider the fundamental underpinnings of the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization with a view to democratizing the architecture for governance. Democratization in this respect is not only for its own sake, it is to be done with a view to increasing the participation in decisionmaking both for women and for developing countries. This has implications not just for the manner in which economy affects the market, but also its social impacts. Access to markets, terms of trade, gains from trade should be considered as related to social relations of production. Thus, status, class, gender and race should be considered

such that genuine equality is not just an elusive dream, but the proportion of gainers to losers is increased substantially, and such increase foregrounds the interest of the formerly marginalized, particularly women.

The progress in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment has been slow and uneven.^{vii} The meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at the 54th session of the United Nations held from March 1 to 12, 2010 at the United Nations headquarters in New City, considered progress, successes and continued challenges since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration in 1995. Discussing the key issues of poverty, education and training, health, violence against women, armed conflict, economy, power and decision making, institutional mechanisms, human rights, media, environment and girls, the parties present concluded that the agenda of the Declaration was largely unfinished and there had to be an preparedness to tackle these challenges in the future. A number of cross-cutting issues were seen to be limiting progress:^{viii}

It was agreed that in order to move forward, political leadership is essential to countries properly and effectively implementing and successfully meeting the goals of the Declaration as well as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). A commitment to the MDGs is a commitment to the Beijing Declaration. The Report of the Secretary-General on the Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the Twenty-third Special Session and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective in the realization of the MDGs also stated that the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) is essential for the achievement of all the MDGs. The MDGs thus represent "an opportunity for increasing the focus on national-level implementation of the BPfA, and – through the specific targets and indicators established – for measuring progress and outcomes."^{ix}

Gender parity in education is one of the building blocks to the achievement of economic growth and a key constituent of gender equality. Virtually all countries have expressed a commitment to the achievement of gender parity in education but regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa, Oceania and Western Asia still reveal great gaps in primary enrolment and thus MDG 3: to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education by the year 2015 is yet to be achieved. While women hold almost 40 percent of all paid jobs, (compared to 35 percent in 1990) two-thirds of women in developing countries still work in vulnerable jobs, i.e., as self employed persons in the micro-scale sector, or as unpaid family workers. More than half a million women still die every year due to maternal mortality; in Sub-Saharan Africa, approximately 60 percent of people living with HIV are female and; even though by January 2009, women had reached the highest parliamentary position – presiding officer – in 31 parliamentary chambers, present conditions indicate that it might take another 40 years before the achievement of gender parity.^x

The Commonwealth Secretariat has worked assiduously to address the goals of the Beijing Declaration and the MDGs. On February 27 2005, the Secretariat

hosted the Commonwealth Beijing+10 Meeting of Women's Affairs Ministers in New York. The goals of this meeting were: to identify the priorities and mechanisms for effective implementation of the new Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 (PoA); to build and strengthen partnerships with governments, Commonwealth associations, multilateral and regional agencies, and civil society organisations (CSOs) for effective implementation of the PoA; to facilitate the articulation of a unified Commonwealth voice in the Beijing+10 Review process at the United Nations; and to send a strong message from Women's Affairs Ministers to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in November 2005 on the imperative of their endorsement of the PoA.^{xi} This new PoA has past iterations: PoA on Women and Development (1987) and PoA on Gender and Development (1995). The 1995 PoA on Gender and Development was the Commonwealth's contribution to the BPfA and it acted as a catalyst in shifting the focus from women in development to a gender mainstreaming approach.^{xii}

According to the report, the new Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 (PoA) has been updated to provide a framework for two new policy areas: human rights, peace and political participation, and macroeconomics and social development. The PoA provides the framework within which the Commonwealth will advance its commitment to gender equality and equity. It incorporates Commonwealth responses to the differential impacts of global changes on women and men, builds on achievements to date, seeks to close persistent gaps, engages with new and emerging challenges as well as stipulates a mid-term review in 2010 and updates as necessary.^{xiii}

The PoA identified four critical areas for gendered intervention: democracy and conflict; human rights and law; poverty eradication and economic empowerment; and HIV/AIDS. Concerning gender, democracy and conflict, the Commonwealth Secretariat emphasized its commitment to, and support of democracy, representative government, transparency, accountability, equal participation and responsiveness to all citizens. Thus, in calling for governments to take measures to ensure gender equality in the political, public and private spheres, delegates at the Fifth Meeting of Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs (5WAMM) in Trinidad and Tobago in 1996, and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), set the target that 30 percent of key positions in these sectors were to be occupied by women by the year 2005. However as of January 1, 2005 only 17 countries in the Pacific region had implemented the 30 percent representation by women in the parliament. In the Africa region, post-genocide Rwanda stands out. By 2005 women held 48.8 percent of parliament seats.^{xiv} After the country's September 2008 general election, Rwanda had the best record since women are in the majority in its Parliament, with 56 percent of total seats, including the position of Speaker.

According to Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) statistics, by February 28, 2010, the global percentage of women Members of Parliament (both houses combined) is 18.9%, an increase from 15.7% in 2005. Such an increase can be accounted for by

an increase in the number of women MP's in all regions, as follows: 42.1 percent in Nordic countries, 22.1% in the Americas, 21.4% in Europe OSCE member countries (including the Nordic countries), 19.9% in Europe OSCE member countries (excluding the Nordic countries), 18.8% in Sub-Saharan Africa, 18.5% in Asia, 15.3% in the Pacific at 8.3%, and 9.5% for Arab states (See Table 1).

Table 1: Percentage of women in national parliaments by region in 2005 and 2010

	SINGLE HOUSE OR LOWER HOUSE	SINGLE HOUSE OR LOWER HOUSE
	2005	2010
Nordic countries	39.9%	42.1%
Americas	19.0%	22.2%
Europe - OSCE member countries including Nordic countries	18.7%	21.9%
Europe - OSCE member countries excluding Nordic countries	16.9%	19.9%
Asia	15.0%	18.7%
Sub-Saharan Africa	14.9%	18.4%
Pacific	11.2%	13.2%
Arab States	6.7%	10.1%

Source: Inter Parliamentary Union statistical data on the percentage of women in national parliaments- February 28, 2005 and February 28, 2010.

Fifteen years since the Beijing Declaration and the Beijing Platform for Action it has become necessary to assess the political landscape of the Commonwealth in terms of women's representation, decision making and empowerment. (See Figures 1 and 2). This report seeks to respond to the challenge. It is important to highlight the accomplishments made by women with respect to political representation and participation, and their importance in public policy and governance. The report explores the factors that enable women's political empowerment in the Commonwealth. These factors include countries' constitutional provisions and national policies. Many countries afford women full de jure rights as citizens; discrimination against women is unlawful, and women have full access to the political sphere. However, de jure rights are not always matched by de facto conditions of women. This is why the creation and implementation of national policies that are specific to women and their advancement in governance are important objectives.

This report also explores non-governmental initiatives; advocacy by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), multilateral

and bilateral agencies. Where there are shortfalls in the creation and implementation of pro-woman policy, it is the NGOs and CSOs, often with the assistance of international organisations that advise governments, lobby, advocate and pressure them on gender equality and women's empowerment. Many, taking up the cause of increased women's representation in key decision making positions and in democratic governance, have initiated training, programmes and campaigns for this very purpose. Thus, the initiatives of many NGOs and CSOs in partnership with multilateral and bilateral agencies, have contributed to the increased presence of women in the public sphere.

As well, this report deals with the obstacles to women's political empowerment. These factors include:

- Government machinery in the form of women or gender ministries responsible for the advocacy, creation and implementation of policies that affect women
- Constitutional provisions,
- Socialisation,
- Economics,
- Education,
- Political parties, and
- Governance structures.

Finally, the report deals with recommendations and key actions that should be taken to increase women's political participation and representation in the regions. The report also evaluates the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals, with specific focus on how women have been affected. The report reviews through gendered lens, the governance systems and other policies which have been critical to the crisis, those affected, and how to avert a recurrence of the worldwide financial crisis/ Great Recession.

Table 2: Percentage of women in National Parliaments, GDP per capita; PPP

Source: World Bank					Source: CIA factbook		
% of women in the national parliament							
Countries	2000	2004	2008	28 February 2010	Independence:	Population (July 2009 est.)	GDP - per capita (PPP): 2009 est.
Cyprus	5	11	14.3	12.5%	1960	1,084,748	\$21,200
Malta	9	9	8.7	8.7%	1964	405,165	\$23,800
Gambia	2	13	9.4	7.5%	1965	1,778,081	\$1,400
Lesotho	4	12	25	24.2%	1966	2,130,819	\$1,700
Malawi	8	9	13	20.8%	1964	15,028,757	\$900
Mauritius	8	6	17.1	17.1%	1968	1,284,264	\$12,400
Mozambique	30	30	34.	39.2%	1975	16,099,246	\$900

			8				
Seychelles	24	29	23.5	23.5%	1976	87,476	\$19,400
Sierra Leone	9	15	13.2	13.2%		5,132,138	\$900
Zambia	10	12	15.2	14.0%	1964	11,862,740	\$1,500
United kingdom	18	18	19.5	19.5%		61,113,205	\$35,200
Nigeria	3	7	7	7.0%	1960	149,229,090	\$2,400
Rwanda	17	49	56.3	56.3%	1963	10,746,311	\$900
Kenya	4	7	8.9	9.8%	1963	39,002,772	\$1,600
Namibia	22	26	26.9	26.9%		2,108,665	\$6,400
Uganda	18	25	30.7	31.5%	1962	32,369,558	\$1,300
Botswana	17	17	11.1	7.9%	1966	1,990,876	\$13,100
Cameroon	6	9	13.9	13.9%	1961	18,879,301	\$2,300
Tanzania	16	21	30.7	30.7%	1960	41,048,532	\$1,400
South Africa	30	30	33	44.5%		49,052,489	\$10,100
Swaziland	3	11	13.6	13.6%	1968	1,337,186	\$4,400
Ghana	9	9	10.9	8.3%	1957	23,887,812	\$1,500
Australia	22	25	26.7	27.3%	1901	21,262,641	\$38,800
Kiribati	5	5	4.3	4.3%	1979	112,850	\$6,100
Nauru				0.0%	1968	14,019	\$5,000
New Zealand	29	28	33.1	33.6%	1907	4,213,418	\$27,300
Papua New Guinea	2	1	0.9	0.9%	1975	5,940,775	\$2,400
Samoa	8	11	10.8	8.2%		219,998	\$5,400
Solomon Islands	2	1	0.9	0.0%	1976	595,613	\$2,600
Tonga	0	0	0	3.1%	1970	120,898	\$4,600
Tuvalu				0.0%	1978	12,373	\$1,600 (2002 est.)

Vanuatu	0	0	0	3.8%	1980	218,519	\$4,800
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TABLE 2a: Percentage of women in parliament (lower house), date of independence, population and GDP (per capita) of Caribbean Commonwealth countries...

Source: IPU					Source: CIA factbook		
% of women in the national parliament							
Countries	2000	2004	2008	28 February 2010	Independence:	Population (July 2009 est.)	GDP - per capita (PPP):2009 est.
Antigua and Barbuda	5.3	5.3	10.5	10.5%	1981	85,632	\$18,100
Bahamas	15.0	20.0	12.2	12.2%	1973	307,552	\$29,800
Barbados	10.7	13.3	12.2	12.2%	1966	284,589	\$18,500
Belize	6.9	3.3	3.3	0.0%	1981	307,899	\$8,100
Dominica	?	18.8	16.1	20.0%	1978	72,660	\$10,200
Grenada	26.7	26.7	26.7	13.3%	1974	90,739	\$10,800
Guyana	18.5	20.0	29.0	30.0%	1966	752,940	\$3,800
Jamaica	0	0	0	3.1%	1962	2,825,928	\$8,200
St. Kitts and Nevis	13.3	13.3	6.7	?	1983	40,131	\$15,200
St. Lucia	11.1	11.1	11.1	11.1%	1979	160,267	\$10,900
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	4.8	22.7	18.2	21.7%	1979	104,574	\$18,100
Trinidad and Tobago	11.1	19.4	26.8	26.8%	1962	1,229,953	\$23,100

FIGURE I: % of Women in Parliaments, 2010 Worldwide

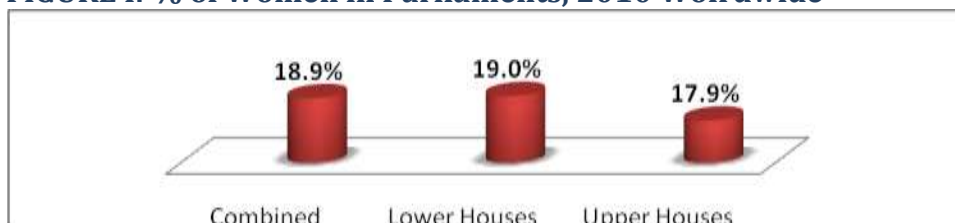


Table 3: Percentage of Women in Upper and Lower Legislative Chambers Worldwide

Region	Single House or lower house	Upper House or Senate	Both Houses combined
Nordic countries	42%	---	---
Americas	22%	22%	22%
Europe - OSCE member countries including Nordic countries	22%	20%	21%
Europe - OSCE member countries excluding Nordic countries	20%	20%	20%
Asia	19%	16%	19%
Sub-Saharan Africa	18%	20%	19%
Pacific	13%	32,6%	15%
Arab States	10%	8%	10%

Source: One World Action's 2008 report: *Just Politics Women Transforming Political Spaces*
<http://www.oneworldaction.org/Resources/One%20World%20Action/Documents/PDF/JustPoliticsReport.pdf>
 Accessed June 1, 2010

It is no exaggeration to observe in most of the world, the paradox of a plenitude of women's social, economic, and political participation combined with their profound lack of visibility and prominence particularly in the public political sphere. This creates a situation where there are gross deficits in women's political participation, both quantitatively and qualitatively, i.e. in terms of numbers and effectiveness^{xv} inequitable distribution of power. There is also the persistence of male dominance, systematic and systemic disenfranchisement of women, danger of cynical acceptance of male dominance as the norm, a strong perception that women who succeed in politics are mere tokens, and the general subversion of democracy. Particularly in the case of Africa, there is a tendency to believe that women's political leadership is relatively new, Aili Mari Tripp is a good example of scholars who contend that there was only a trickle and active participation was a late 20th Century phenomenon that began only in the 1990s, which was the first time in the post-

colonial era for more women to strive for national and local public elected office. Refusing to be deterred by the low impact and visibility of their initiatives, there was even more insistence on women's political representation and participation. New women's parties were formed to address challenges like non-sensitivity and lack of responsiveness to women's issues; and to encompass women's political aspirations, which were either absent or excluded from the male dominated parties. The female political parties were also better able than the male dominated ones, to attract multidimensional coalitions that transcend religious and ethnic lines.^{xvi}

Regardless of presenting women's political participation as a recent phenomenon, Tripp paints an encouraging picture that gives much cause for optimism for anyone interested in women's empowerment, but does not capture the experiences of African women either accurately or completely. It is well-documented for instance, that women were equal participants in the nationalist and liberation struggles in most African countries, and that while colonialism eroded a significant amount of women's formal political power, drawing upon their precolonial bases of power, women in most African countries asserted their rights,^{xvii} sometimes even succeeding in extending such rights, even in the weakened indigenous political structures and institutions.^{xviii} Multi-religious constituencies than was possible with existing parties.

Apart from malicious and pernicious myths about women's inferiority, the impact of high levels of socioeconomic indicators is misunderstood. For example, it is generally believed that better and higher levels of education and socio-economic status signal increased levels of women's political participation. This assumption is questionable, since countries like Nigeria (Southwest geopolitical zone) and Brunei have women who are well educated and affluent, but who have not done significantly better than women in the Nigeria's Northern geopolitical zones or as in Rwanda in producing women who are elected into political office. According to *Just Politics* "The UK has "only 19.7 percent in the lower house and 18.9 percent in the upper house! Interestingly, of the top 10 countries which have the highest women's representation in formal politics, four are Southern countries" (Brace-John 2008). Even parties that claim to be devoted to women's advancement may not engender policies that support Affirmative Action and promote women's issues. Often political parties are also beset by factionalization, dissension, clashes among opposing forces, carpet-crossing to bandwagon with the winning coalition, and a benign neglect of any agenda that would propel women into the forefront of politics.^{xix}

Evidence from many Commonwealth countries show that the impediments to women's participation in politics include:

- Lack of consideration for women's issues,
- Violation of party rules and plans for affirmative action,
- Weak political institutions, including constitutions
- Use of zoning and other gerrymandering strategies to prevent women from attaining political office,
- Pervasiveness of an "old boys' club", supported by rich and powerful

- “godfathers”,
- Collusion to engage in corrupt practices,
- Construction of religious and cultural prohibitions against women’s public role in governance, lack of financial capacity, power politics,
- Use of strong arm strategies, intimidation and violence,
- Machinations within political parties,
- Constructions of gender that forbid women’s active participation in politics, and women’s acceptance of the status quo,
- Structural collusion and smear campaigns that ruin the reputation of women who dare to participate.^{xx}

Gender imbalance in governance can be caused by a number of reasons. Tambiah (2003) identifies the division between the public and private spheres as one of the main reasons why women are restricted from government and political office. Being part of the public sphere, politics has traditionally been classified as a male arena, with no place for women who are relegated to the household and their immediate community. According to the April 2009 BRIDGE Gender and Governance Overview Report, such inequalities may also be reinforced by cultural or religious practices. At the micro level or household level, women may be excluded from decision making. Such attitudes are transferred to the macro level and women are excluded from the decision making processes for governance and politics. On the other hand, Ashworth (1996) and Baden (2000) explain that women who may be able to enter into the political sphere may have their roles “coloured” by

- The roles they are compelled to play within the household.
- Other external constraints such as
 - lack of financial resources,
 - lack of confidence and
 - lack of personal or family contacts

These external constraints include constituents of social capital sometimes needed to access a position in governance, are responsible for women’s exclusion from decisionmaking.

Affirmative Action, the use of positive discrimination to redress past injustices and inequities against marginalized populations, can be used as one of the tools to increase women’s participation. Professor Jadesola Akande identifies ten benefits of Affirmative Action for women:

- Ensure greater participation of women in politics and governance in terms of numbers.
- Enhance women’s effective participation in politics and governance in terms of quality.
- Cultivate the political culture of women voting for women
- Cultivate the political culture of men voting for women
- Cultivate the political culture of men getting used to and accepting woman

- leaders.
- Promote greater accommodation and consideration of women's views in decision making
 - Promote personal and collective development of women
 - Build the political, social and economic capacities of women over times.
 - Inspire and motivate girl-children and youths in general to aspire to greater heights
 - Entrench true and enduring democracy; promote public accountability and good governance, which will ultimately lead to sustainable human development.^{xxi}

Many Commonwealth countries give evidence of an enduring culture of the marginalization of women in their political system (See tables below). In spite of the clear desire of more women to participate in the political system, the rhetorical pronouncements by governments on the importance of including women in governance on an equal footing with men, the encouragement given by many women's Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) and Multilateral Organisations, and the impetus drawn from the Beijing Conference, the Millennium Development Goals, and CEDAW, concrete achievements that demonstrate the realization of Affirmative Action goals are lacking. This informs women's activist organisations' response in their demand for participation that is not restricted to voting in elections, but extended also to the process of ensuring the deepening and broadening of democracy. Thus, women's rights organisations demand the entrenchment of respect for the international and regional obligations undertaken by states as well as a respect for constitutional provisions. The most active women's NGOs contest the state's wanton neglect and abuse of citizens' and especially women's rights. The international platform offered by the UN conferences and CEDAW have opened up the arena to women's voices in the international community to some extent, but much more remains to be done to produce the changes they demand.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, there was significant reduction in women's political power during colonialism, and this trend continued in the postcolonial era. This is seen in many African Commonwealth countries through exploration of history and political culture. Men gained distinct political and economic advantages during the colonial era that have in the postcolonial period, been parlayed into strengthening the male-dominant and patriarchal elements of formerly fluidly determined social structure. Women's activism however, only responds to the contemporary power of men as a given, rather than a reconstructed system of advantages that can be challenged through the use of tried and true old and new mechanisms. Thus, the project that is faced by women activists today is less an unqualified embrace of feminist ideology and praxis than a welding together of rehabilitated and recovered best practices from indigenous traditions with strategies, mechanisms and institutions derived from best practices in the global feminist movement.

Table 4: Global Gender Index-2009

	GGI Rank		GGI Rank		GGI Rank		GGI Rank
Iceland	1	Estonia	37	Tanzania	73	Tunisia	109
Finland	2	Bulgaria	38	Czech Republic	74	Nepal	110
Norway	3	Botswana	39	Gambia, The	75	Guatemala	111
Sweden	4	Uganda	40	Malawi	76	United Arab Emirates	112
New Zealand	5	Kyrgyz Republic	41	Madagascar	77	Jordan	113
South Africa	6	Austria	42	Suriname	78	India	114
Denmark	7	Panama	43	Cyprus	79	Korea, Rep.	115
Ireland	8	Peru	44	Ghana	80	Bahrain	116
Philippines	9	Israel	45	Brazil	81	Algeria	117
Lesotho	10	Portugal	46	Bolivia	82	Cameroon	118
Netherlands	11	Kazakhstan	47	Georgia	83	Mauritania	119
Germany	12	Jamaica	48	Singapore	84	Burkina Faso	120
Switzerland	13	Nicaragua	49	Greece	85	Syria	121
Latvia	14	Poland	50	Tajikistan	86	Ethiopia	122
United Kingdom	15	Russian Federation	51	Belize	87	Oman	123
Sri Lanka	16	Slovenia	52	Malta	88	Morocco	124
Spain	17	Macedonia, FYR	53	Azerbaijan	89	Qatar	125
France	18	Croatia	54	Armenia	90	Egypt	126
Trinidad and Tobago	19	El Salvador	55	Albania	91	Mali	127
Australia	20	Colombia	56	Indonesia	92	Iran	128
Barbados	21	Uruguay	57	Bangladesh	93	Turkey	129
Mongolia	22	Uzbekistan	58	Brunei Darussalam	94	Saudi Arabia	130
Ecuador	23	Thailand	59	Zimbabwe	95	Benin	131
Argentina	24	China	60	Mauritius	96	Pakistan	132
Canada	25	Ukraine	61	Kenya	97	Chad	133
Mozambique	26	Honduras	62	Mexico	98	Yemen	134
Costa Rica	27	Luxembourg	63	Maldives	99		
Bahamas	28	Chile	64	Malaysia	100		
Cuba	29	Hungary	65	Japan	101		
Lithuania	30	Paraguay	66	Senegal*	102		
United States	31	Dominican Republic	67	Fiji	103		
Namibia	32	Slovak Republic	68	Cambodia	104		
Belgium	33	Venezuela	69	Kuwait	105		

Belarus	34	Romania	70	Angola	106	
Guyana	35	Vietnam	71	Zambia	107	
Moldova	36	Italy	72	Nigeria	108	

Source: *The Global Gender Gap Report, World Economic Forum, 2009* Ricardo Hausmann, Laura D. Tyson and Saadia Zahidi

There are 134 countries included in the report.

The number of all commonwealth countries is 54.

Among the commonwealth countries, 36 are included in the report, while 18 are not.

<i>Table 5: All Commonwealth Countries</i>	
Bahamas	Mauritius
Gambia, The	Mozambique
Tanzania	Namibia
Antigua and Barbuda	Nauru
Australia	New Zealand
Bangladesh	Nigeria
Barbados	Pakistan
Belize	Papua New Guinea
Botswana	Rwanda
Brunei Darussalam	Samoa
Cameroon	Seychelles
Canada	Sierra Leone
Cyprus	Singapore
Dominica	Solomon Islands
Fiji	South Africa
Ghana	Sri Lanka
Grenada	St Kitts and Nevis
Guyana	St Lucia
India	St Vincent and the Grenadines
Jamaica	Swaziland
Kenya	Tonga
Kiribati	Trinidad and Tobago
Lesotho	Tuvalu
Malawi	Uganda
Malaysia	United Kingdom
Maldives	Vanuatu
Malta	Zambia

<i>Table 6: Commonwealth Countries included in Global Gender Gap Report</i>
Australia
Bahamas
Bangladesh
Barbados
Belize
Botswana
Brunei Darussalam
Cameroon
Canada
Cyprus
Fiji
Gambia, The
Ghana
Guyana
India
Jamaica
Kenya
Lesotho
Malawi
Malaysia
Maldives
Malta
Mauritius
Mozambique
Namibia
New Zealand
Nigeria

Pakistan
Singapore
South Africa
Sri Lanka
Trinidad and Tobago
Uganda
United Kingdom
Tanzania
Zambia

Table 7: The Global Gender Gap Index 2009 rankings: Comparisons with 2008, 2007 and 2006

Country	2009 rank	2009 score	2009 rank among 2008 countries	2008 rank	2008 score	2007 rank	2007 score	2006 rank	2006 score
New Zealand	5	0.788	5	5	0.7859	5	0.7649	7	0.7509
South Africa	6	0.7709	6	22	0.7232	20	0.7194	18	0.7125
Lesotho	10	0.7495	10	16	0.732	26	0.7078	43	0.6807
United Kingdom	15	0.7402	15	13	0.7366	11	0.7441	9	0.7365
Sri Lanka	16	0.7402	16	12	0.7371	15	0.723	13	0.7199
Trinidad and Tobago	19	0.7298	19	19	0.7245	46	0.6859	45	0.6797
Australia	20	0.7282	20	21	0.7241	17	0.7204	15	0.7163
Barbados	21	0.7236	21	26	0.7188	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Canada	25	0.7196	25	31	0.7136	18	0.7198	14	0.7165
Mozambique	26	0.7195	26	18	0.7266	43	0.6883	n/a	n/a
Bahamas	28	0.7179	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Namibia	32	0.7167	31	30	0.7141	29	0.7012	38	0.6864
Guyana	35	0.7108	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Botswana	39	0.7071	37	63	0.6839	53	0.6797	34	0.6897
Uganda	40	0.7067	38	43	0.6981	50	0.6833	47	0.6797
Jamaica	48	0.7013	46	44	0.698	39	0.6925	25	0.7014
Tanzania	73	0.6797	71	38	0.7068	34	0.6969	24	0.7038
Gambia, The	75	0.6752	73	85	0.6622	95	0.6421	79	0.6448
Malawi	76	0.6738	74	81	0.6664	87	0.648	81	0.6437
Cyprus	79	0.6706	77	76	0.6694	82	0.6522	83	0.643
Ghana	80	0.6704	78	77	0.6679	63	0.6725	58	0.6653
Singapore	84	0.6664	82	84	0.6625	77	0.6609	65	0.655
Belize	87	0.6636	85	86	0.661	94	0.6426	n/a	n/a
Malta	88	0.6635	86	83	0.6634	76	0.6615	71	0.6518
Bangladesh	93	0.6526	91	90	0.6531	100	0.6314	91	0.627
Brunei	94	0.6524	92	99	0.6392	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Darussalam									
Mauritius	96	0.6513	94	95	0.6466	85	0.6487	88	0.6328
Kenya	97	0.6512	95	88	0.6547	83	0.6508	73	0.6486
Maldives	99	0.6482	97	91	0.6501	99	0.635	n/a	n/a
Malaysia	100	0.6467	98	96	0.6442	92	0.6444	72	0.6509
Fiji	103	0.6414	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Zambia	107	0.631	103	106	0.6205	101	0.6288	85	0.636
Nigeria	108	0.628	104	102	0.6339	107	0.6122	94	0.6104
India	114	0.6151	110	113	0.606	114	0.5936	98	0.6011
Cameroon	118	0.6108	114	117	0.6017	116	0.5919	103	0.5865
Pakistan	132	0.5458	128	127	0.5549	126	0.5509	112	0.5434

Table 8: Detailed rankings 2009

Country	Overall		Economic Participation and Opportunity		Educational Attainment		Health and Survival		Political Empowerment	
	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score
New Zealand	5	0.788	7	0.7842	1	1	72	0.9745	7	0.393
South Africa	6	0.7709	60	0.663	43	0.9961	70	0.9754	5	0.449
Lesotho	10	0.7495	4	0.8013	1	1	1	0.9796	34	0.217
United Kingdom	15	0.7402	35	0.7064	1	1	72	0.9745	22	0.280
Sri Lanka	16	0.7402	99	0.5734	68	0.9916	1	0.9796	6	0.416
Trinidad and Tobago	19	0.7298	44	0.6915	58	0.9937	1	0.9796	27	0.254
Australia	20	0.7282	19	0.7477	1	1	78	0.9737	39	0.191
Barbados	21	0.7236	5	0.7854	1	1	1	0.9796	67	0.129
Canada	25	0.7196	10	0.7641	38	0.9977	60	0.9783	62	0.138
Mozambique	26	0.7195	3	0.8133	126	0.7818	62	0.9782	15	0.304
Bahamas*	28	0.7179	2	0.8264	1	1	1	0.9796	109	0.065
Namibia	32	0.7167	32	0.7201	85	0.982	108	0.9683	38	0.196
Guyana*	35	0.7108	85	0.6134	41	0.9969	1	0.9796	28	0.253
Botswana	39	0.7071	22	0.742	27	0.9999	124	0.9527	66	0.133
Uganda	40	0.7067	28	0.7256	111	0.892	69	0.9758	30	0.233
Jamaica	48	0.7013	21	0.7429	1	1	96	0.9707	93	0.091
Tanzania	73	0.6797	52	0.6824	115	0.8679	105	0.9688	37	0.199
Gambia, The	75	0.6752	23	0.7412	119	0.8528	1	0.9796	68	0.127
Malawi	76	0.6738	42	0.6925	113	0.8828	116	0.9612	48	0.158
Cyprus	79	0.6706	83	0.6168	61	0.9933	114	0.9657	80	0.106
Ghana	80	0.6704	13	0.7548	112	0.886	111	0.9674	101	0.073
Singapore	84	0.6664	57	0.6707	102	0.937	121	0.9575	86	0.100
Belize	87	0.6636	79	0.6215	35	0.9985	1	0.9796	121	0.054
Malta	88	0.6635	105	0.5611	47	0.9955	77	0.9739	69	0.123

Bangladesh	93	0.6526	121	0.4552	105	0.9113	127	0.95	17	0.293
Brunei Darussalam	94	0.6524	78	0.6239	65	0.9923	113	0.9659	127	0.027
Mauritius	96	0.6513	109	0.5465	80	0.9878	1	0.9796	92	0.091
Kenya	97	0.6512	50	0.6832	106	0.9089	110	0.9681	122	0.044
Maldives	99	0.6482	97	0.5788	1	1	126	0.9508	112	0.063
Malaysia	100	0.6467	103	0.5653	77	0.9891	103	0.9695	113	0.063
Fiji*	103	0.6414	111	0.5343	72	0.991	1	0.9796	115	0.060
Zambia	107	0.631	93	0.593	116	0.865	116	0.9612	82	0.10
Nigeria	108	0.628	83	0.6163	123	0.8315	109	0.9682	89	0.09
India	114	0.6151	127	0.4125	121	0.8434	134	0.9315	24	0.273
Cameroon	118	0.6108	107	0.5498	122	0.8421	106	0.9686	95	0.082
Pakistan	132	0.5458	132	0.3403	128	0.7467	128	0.9498	55	0.146

Table 9: The Global Gender Gap Index 2009 rankings: Change in scores

Country	Change in score (2009–2008)	Change in score (2008–2007)	Change in score (2007–2006)	Change in score (2009–2006)
Australia	0.0041	0.0037	0.004	0.0119
Bahamas*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Bangladesh	-0.0005	0.0216	0.0044	0.0256
Barbados	0.0048	n/a	n/a	n/a
Belize	0.0026	0.0183	n/a	n/a
Botswana	0.0232	0.0041	-0.0100	0.0174
Brunei Darussalam	0.0132	n/a	n/a	n/a
Cameroon	0.0091	0.0098	0.0053	0.0242
Canada	0.006	-0.0063	0.0034	0.0031
Cyprus	0.0012	0.0172	0.0092	0.0276
Fiji*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Gambia, The	0.013	0.02	-0.0027	0.0304
Ghana	0.0025	-0.0046	0.0072	0.0051
Guyana*	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
India	0.0091	0.0124	-0.0075	0.014
Jamaica	0.0032	0.0055	-0.0089	-0.0002
Kenya	-0.0035	0.0039	0.0023	0.0027
Lesotho	0.0176	0.0242	0.0271	0.0689
Malawi	0.0074	0.0183	0.0044	0.0301
Malaysia	0.0025	-0.0002	-0.0065	-0.0042
Maldives	-0.00191	0.01511	n/a	n/a
Malta	0.0002	0.0019	0.0097	0.0117
Mauritius	0.0047	-0.0022	0.016	0.0185
Mozambique	-0.0071	0.0383	n/a	n/a
Namibia	0.0026	0.0129	0.0147	0.0302

New Zealand	0.0021	0.021	0.014	0.0371
Nigeria	-0.0059	0.0217	0.0018	0.0176
Pakistan	-0.0090	0.004	0.0075	0.0025
Singapore	0.0039	0.0017	0.0059	0.0115
South Africa	0.0477	0.0038	0.0069	0.0584
Sri Lanka	0.0032	0.0141	0.0031	0.0203
Tanzania	-0.0271	0.01	-0.0069	-0.0241
Trinidad and Tobago	0.0054	0.0385	0.0062	0.0501
Uganda	0.0086	0.0148	0.0036	0.027
United Kingdom	0.0036	-0.0075	0.0076	0.0038
Zambia	0.0106	-0.0084	-0.0071	-0.0049

**Table 10: Rankings by income group
2009**

LOW INCOME		
Country	Overall Score	Overall Rank
Mozambique	0.7195	26
Uganda	0.7067	40
Tanzania	0.6797	73
Gambia, The	0.6752	75
Malawi	0.6738	76
Ghana	0.6704	80
Bangladesh	0.6526	93
Kenya	0.6512	97
Zambia	0.631	107

LOWER MIDDLE INCOME		
Country	Overall Score	Overall Rank
Lesotho	0.7495	10
Sri Lanka	0.7402	16
Guyana	0.7108	35
Belize	0.6636	87
Maldives	0.6482	99
Nigeria	0.628	108
India	0.6151	114
Cameroon	0.6108	118
Pakistan	0.5458	132

UPPER MIDDLE INCOME		
Country	Overall Score	Overall Rank
South Africa	0.7709	6
Namibia	0.7167	32
Botswana	0.7071	39
Jamaica	0.7013	48
Mauritius	0.6513	96
Malaysia	0.6467	100
Fiji	0.6414	103

HIGH INCOME		
Country	Overall Score	Overall Rank
New Zealand	0.788	5
United Kingdom	0.7402	15
Trinidad and Tobago	0.7298	19
Australia	0.7282	20
Barbados	0.7236	21
Canada	0.7196	25
Bahamas	0.7179	28
Cyprus	0.6706	79
Singapore	0.6664	84
Malta	0.6635	88

Table 11: Rankings by subindex 2009

ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION AND OPPORTUNITY			EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT		
Bahamas*	0.8264	2	Australia	1	1
Mozambique	0.8133	3	Bahamas*	1	1
Lesotho	0.8013	4	Barbados	1	1
Barbados	0.7854	5	Jamaica	1	1
New Zealand	0.7842	7	Lesotho	1	1
Canada	0.7641	10	Maldives	1	1
Ghana	0.7548	13	New Zealand	1	1
Australia	0.7477	19	United Kingdom	1	1
Jamaica	0.7429	21	Botswana	0.9999	27
Botswana	0.742	22	Belize	0.9985	35
Gambia, The	0.7412	23	Canada	0.9977	38
Uganda	0.7256	28	Guyana*	0.9969	41
Namibia	0.7201	32	South Africa	0.9961	43
United Kingdom	0.7064	35	Malta	0.9955	47
Malawi	0.6925	42	Trinidad and Tobago	0.9937	58
Trinidad and Tobago	0.6915	44	Cyprus	0.9933	61
Kenya	0.6832	50	Brunei Darussalam	0.9923	65
Tanzania	0.6824	52	Sri Lanka	0.9916	68
Singapore	0.6707	57	Fiji*	0.991	72
South Africa	0.663	60	Malaysia	0.9891	77
Brunei Darussalam	0.6239	78	Mauritius	0.9878	80
Belize	0.6215	79	Namibia	0.982	85
Cyprus	0.6168	82	Singapore	0.937	102
Nigeria	0.6163	83	Bangladesh	0.9113	105
Guyana*	0.6134	85	Kenya	0.9089	106
Zambia	0.593	93	Uganda	0.892	111
Maldives	0.5788	97	Ghana	0.886	112
Sri Lanka	0.5734	99	Malawi	0.8828	113
Malaysia	0.5653	103	Tanzania	0.8679	115
Malta	0.5611	105	Zambia	0.865	116
Cameroon	0.5498	107	Gambia, The	0.8528	119
Mauritius	0.5465	109	India	0.8434	121
Fiji*	0.5343	111	Cameroon	0.8421	122
Bangladesh	0.4552	121	Nigeria	0.8315	123
India	0.4125	127	Mozambique	0.7818	126
Pakistan	0.3403	132	Pakistan	0.7467	128

Table 12: Rankings by subindex 2009

HEALTH AND SURVIVAL			POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT		
Bahamas*	0.9796	1	South Africa	0.4492	5
Barbados	0.9796	1	Sri Lanka	0.4164	6
Belize	0.9796	1	New Zealand	0.3934	7
Fiji*	0.9796	1	Mozambique	0.3047	15
Gambia, The	0.9796	1	Bangladesh	0.2939	17
Guyana*	0.9796	1	United Kingdom	0.2801	22
Lesotho	0.9796	1	India	0.2731	24
Mauritius	0.9796	1	Trinidad and Tobago	0.2547	27
Sri Lanka	0.9796	1	Guyana*	0.2535	28
Trinidad and Tobago	0.9796	1	Uganda	0.2333	30
Canada	0.9783	60	Lesotho	0.2173	34
Mozambique	0.9782	62	Tanzania	0.1998	37
Uganda	0.9758	69	Namibia	0.1964	38
South Africa	0.9754	70	Australia	0.1915	39
New Zealand	0.9745	72	Malawi	0.1586	48
United Kingdom	0.9745	72	Pakistan	0.1465	55
Malta	0.9739	77	Canada	0.1383	62
Australia	0.9737	78	Botswana	0.1338	66
Jamaica	0.9707	96	Barbados	0.1295	67
Malaysia	0.9695	103	Gambia, The	0.1272	68
Tanzania	0.9688	105	Malta	0.1237	69
Cameroon	0.9686	106	Cyprus	0.1066	80
Namibia	0.9683	108	Zambia	0.105	82
Nigeria	0.9682	109	Singapore	0.1005	86
Kenya	0.9681	110	Nigeria	0.096	89
Ghana	0.9674	111	Mauritius	0.0914	92
Brunei Darussalam	0.9659	113	Jamaica	0.0913	93
Cyprus	0.9657	114	Cameroon	0.0825	95
Malawi	0.9612	116	Ghana	0.0733	101
Zambia	0.9612	116	Bahamas*	0.0655	109
Singapore	0.9575	121	Maldives	0.0631	112
Botswana	0.9527	124	Malaysia	0.0631	113
Maldives	0.9508	126	Fiji*	0.0608	115
Bangladesh	0.95	127	Belize	0.0549	121
Pakistan	0.9498	128	Kenya	0.0447	122
India	0.9315	134	Brunei Darussalam	0.0275	127

Table 13: Primary education enrolment: Ratio of females to males

2	Gambia, The	1.09
3	Malawi	1.07
5	Namibia	1.06
6	Lesotho	1.04
8	Bangladesh	1.04
9	Botswana	1.03
11	Uganda	1.03
12	Bahamas	1.03
17	Jamaica	1.02
21	Mauritius	1.01
29	Maldives	1.01
31	Barbados	1.01
32	Ghana	1.01
37	United Kingdom	1.01
41	New Zealand	1.01
42	Zambia	1.01
43	Australia	1.01
44	Sri Lanka	1.01
51	South Africa	1
53	Canada	1
65	Kenya	1
	Brunei	
72	Darussalam	1
74	Cyprus	1
75	Malaysia	1
77	Fiji	1
78	Belize	1
92	Malta	0.99
	Trinidad and Tobago	
95	Tobago	0.99
101	Tanzania	0.99
113	India	0.96

Table 14: Secondary education enrolment: Ratio of females to males

1	Lesotho	1.55
3	Namibia	1.23
7	Botswana	1.14
17	Malaysia	1.1
18	Fiji	1.1
20	Belize	1.09
	Trinidad and Tobago	
23	Tobago	1.07
24	Malta	1.07
25	Bangladesh	1.07
26	South Africa	1.06
28	Maldives	1.06
29	Jamaica	1.06
32	Bahamas	1.05
33	Barbados	1.05
35	Sri Lanka	1.05
	Brunei	
38	Darussalam	1.05
40	United Kingdom	1.04
49	New Zealand	1.03
50	Cyprus	1.02
56	Mauritius	1.02
61	Australia	1.02
83	Gambia, The	1.00
87	Canada	0.99
102	Singapore	0.95
109	Malawi	0.91
110	Cameroon	0.91
111	Ghana	0.91
112	Kenya	0.91
113	Uganda	0.90
116	Zambia	0.87

Table 15: Tertiary education enrolment: Ratio of females to males

3	Belize	2.4
4	Maldives	2.3
7	Jamaica	2.3
8	Barbados	2.3
9	Guyana	2.3
	Brunei	
10	Darussalam	1.9
27	New Zealand	1.9
36	United Kingdom	1.9
41	Canada	1.9
43	Malta	1.9
47	Malaysia	1.9
49	Australia	1.9
	Trinidad and Tobago	
50	Tobago	1.9
59	South Africa	1.9
68	Fiji	1.9
71	Lesotho	1.9
73	Mauritius	1.9
89	Botswana	1.9
91	Cyprus	0.9
97	Namibia	0.9
99	Pakistan	0.9
100	Cameroon	0.9
103	India	0.9
105	Nigeria	0.9
109	Uganda	0.9
110	Kenya	0.9
111	Bangladesh	0.9
114	Ghana	0.9
116	Malawi	0.9
118	Mozambique	0.9

121	Singapore	0.93
122	Mozambique	0.93
124	Nigeria	0.88
127	Cameroon	0.85
130	Pakistan	0.78
n/a	Guyana	n/a

117	Tanzania	87
121	Nigeria	84
122	Mozambique	83
123	India	79
126	Pakistan	76
n/a	Guyana	—

119	Tanzania	0.
120	Zambia	0.
127	Gambia, The	0.
n/a	Bahamas	n/
n/a	Singapore	n/
n/a	Sri Lanka	n/

**Table 16: Infant mortality:
Ratio of males to females
(per 1,000 live births)**

5	Australia	0.67
5	Maldives	0.67
5	Namibia	0.67
12	Belize	0.71
12	Sri Lanka	0.71
18	Uganda	0.74
20	Cyprus	0.75
20	New Zealand	0.75
20	South Africa	0.75
34	Trinidad and Tobago	0.76
39	Brunei Darussalam	0.78
44	Bahamas	0.79
44	Malta	0.79
48	Malawi	0.79
49	Kenya	0.8
50	Mozambique	0.8
56	Guyana	0.8
57	Bangladesh	0.81
59	Tanzania	0.81
64	Mauritius	0.82
68	Fiji	0.82
72	Nigeria	0.84
73	Cameroon	0.84
74	Ghana	0.84
75	Malaysia	0.84
77	Jamaica	0.86
77	Lesotho	0.86
77	Singapore	0.86
83	Pakistan	0.87

**Table 17: Maternal mortality
ratio (per 100,000 live births)**

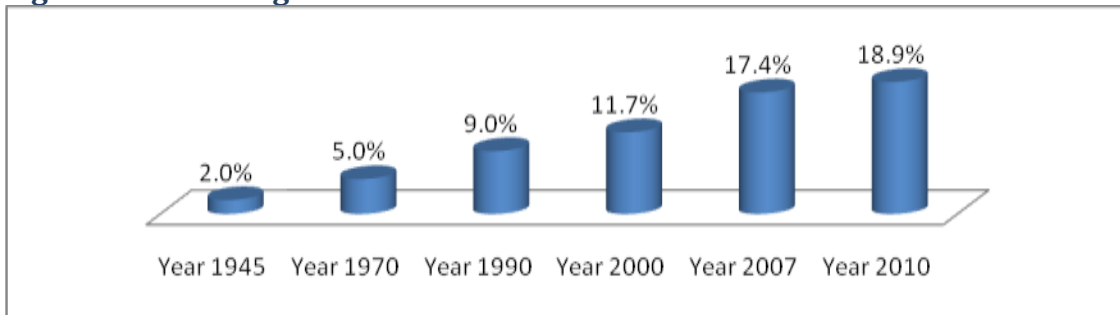
6	Australia	4
20	Canada	7
26	Malta	8
28	United Kingdom	8
29	New Zealand	9
30	Cyprus	10
39	Brunei Darussalam	13
41	Singapore	14
42	Mauritius	15
43	Bahamas	16
44	Barbados	16
61	Trinidad and Tobago	45
63	Belize	52
65	Sri Lanka	58
68	Malaysia	62
79	Maldives	120
91	Jamaica	170
96	Fiji	210
97	Namibia	210
104	Pakistan	320
105	Botswana	380
106	South Africa	400
109	India	450
110	Guyana	470
112	Mozambique	520
114	Uganda	550
115	Ghana	560
116	Kenya	560
117	Bangladesh	570

91	Gambia, The	0.88
115	Botswana	0.97
117	Zambia	0.98
118	United Kingdom	0.99
119	Barbados	1
119	Canada	1
131	India	1.02

118	Gambia, The	690
123	Zambia	830
126	Tanzania	950
127	Lesotho	960
130	Cameroon	1,000
131	Malawi	1,100
132	Nigeria	1,100

Source: *The Global Gender Gap Report, World Economic Forum, 2009* Ricardo Hausmann, Laura D. Tyson and Saadia Zahidi

Figure 2: Percentage of Women Parliamentarians-world



Source: *The Global Gender Gap Report, World Economic Forum, 2009* Ricardo Hausmann, Laura D. Tyson and Saadia Zahidi

Impact and Significance of the interplay between Gender and Political Participation for Democratization and Social Relations

It is agreed upon in feminist analysis that gender is socially constructed. Simply stated, gender concerns the manner in which a society conceptualizes the roles that men and women play, and the power capabilities that are attached to these roles. It is impossible to engage in gender analysis without considering the social context in many African countries, where seniority sometimes trumps gender, and gender roles are not necessarily biologically determined. This fundamental difference between many African societies and western social relations imply that being female does not confer perpetual second class citizenship on an individual, since the same person who may be discriminated against and assigned to a weaker social role in some respects, for example, as a wife, may also exercise significant power as a "husband" in her natal family. In the precolonial era and during the early days of colonialism, some institutions like woman-to-woman marriage also enabled women acquire other women's labour and children in order to enhance their ability to generate wealth. Applied to social relations in general, gender could empower or marginalize, depending on the existing temporal and material conditions as well as social circumstances.

What is the best way to conceptualize political participation? Most scholars tend to use elections as a gold standard for measuring levels and depth of citizen participation. However, most scholars of democracy are also highly sceptical that elections can generate the deepening of democracy,^{xxii} while activists and the development industry in general, vouch for the efficacy of elections as a tool for instantiating and consolidating democracy. A minority, including Staffan I. Lindberg, and Samuel Huntington, present a strong defence of elections as a valuable resource for the deepening of democracy.^{xxiii} The scholars distinguish between political competition (as candidates for elections) and political participation^{xxiv} (as voters who elect the candidates, and as pressure groups and interest groups in civil society). Pearl T. Robinson in considering transitions from authoritarianism highlights the strong impact of the culture of politics on regime change and democratic transitions. For Robinson, the "culture of politics," is: socially legitimated and validated political practices that are derived from a community's historical and contemporary knowledge base. Its mores can be easily apprehended by all, be they elites or ordinary people. They are also not immutable, but are subject to constant change, consequent upon political learning. They permeate the social codes, practices, traditions that regulate relations of "power, authority, participation and representation."^{xxv}

There is no consensus on how to conceptualize or understand women's political participation and the consequent effects on politics and political systems. Some scholars complain that there is much confusion and misunderstanding of what women's political participation entails, and why it is essential. Thus, there is widespread belief that women's participation in politics is only about mainstreaming gender through equitable representation of women in the political system, and thus, that it is an exclusively women's question. Instead, women's participation ought to be seen as crucial to the success and endurance of democracy. It is then imperative that those interested in women's political participation also attend to all matters related to fostering women's power throughout the political system.

According to Lovenduski,

- Women's political participation can be conceptualized as crucial to the deepening of democracy, and it involves both descriptive and substantive representation.
 - Descriptive representation concerns the election and appointment of women into office, while
 - Substantive representation can flow from descriptive representation, and it relates to the insertion and incorporation of women's issues into policymaking.^{xxvi}

Aili Mari Tripp identifies reasons for women's increased political participation as follows:

- The move toward multipartyism in most African countries diminished the need for mass organisations linked and directed by the single ruling party. Thus,

the demise of these mass women’s organisations coincided with the rise of independent women’s organisations that took advantage of the opening up of political space in the 1990s.

- With the increase in educational opportunities for girls and women there emerged a larger pool of capable women who were in a position vie for political power
- Women in many countries frequently had longer experiences than men in creating and sustaining associations, having been involved in church related activities, savings clubs, income-generating groups, self – help associations, community improvement groups and many other informal and local organisations network.
- The new availability of donor funds, channeled through international and local NGOs, religious bodies, embassies, and international foundations has been another factor in spurring the growth of national level organisations that support women’s political activities, generally on a won-partisan basis”.
- A commitment to women’s increased representation on the part of the leadership of the country is another critical factor in advancing women’s political representation
- The international women’s movement has played a significant role in encouraging women to seek political office and influence policy making
- Much of formal politics in Africa is underwritten and controlled by informal patronage politics. Most women tend to operate on the margins of clientelistic networks. This means that women have often found opportunities to advance themselves where clientelistic networks were weakened by economic crisis, as has been the case in the recent years in Senegal. Economic crisis has forced many women into formal and informal economic associations and into heightened entrepreneur’s activity^{xxvii}

Commitment to gender balance in governance and the creation of an agenda and structure that makes this possible are fundamental aspects of required strategies.^{xxviii} The persistence of gender inequalities retards both economic development and social well being for all citizens. Research-derived evidence exists that more impoverishment, less economic growth, lower quality of life and standard of living accompany gender inequality, and tilt the balance in all respects toward countries that work assiduously toward gender equality.^{xxix} In countries desirous of equal participation in the global agenda setting, gender equality is a matter of national security. There is a belief on the part of women’s organisations that there is rampant discrimination and gross marginalization of women in some Commonwealth countries’ politics. The need for increased and more effective women’s participation is widely acknowledged. Consequently, these organisations decry the incremental nature of changes but acknowledge there are some noteworthy gains. However, the fleeting nature of such gains gives cause for caution. In Nigeria, a woman became Speaker of the Federal House of Representatives but was quickly shoved aside and smeared by allegations of corruption and lack of financial probity.

Also, the percentage of women in the national and state legislatures, as well as in the executive branch, and in local government councils remains woefully inadequate. For these organisations therefore, the struggle continues, at least until the 30 percent Beijing and Millennium Development Goals recommended threshold be reached. In Rwanda, extraordinary gains have been recorded that give the country leading status globally. How has this impacted on the lives of ordinary Rwandan women? Clearly, political participation is more than a question of numbers. It is about the quality and effectiveness of women’s political participation. There is still a great deal of misperception of women’s political participation. Since most attempts to enhance women’s participation in politics focus on achieving gender equality, this issue still tends to be perceived as limited to pushing women’s interest and not as a human right that is also vital to the survival of democracy. What ought to be done is to concentrate on the initiatives that would give women more powerful roles and make their participation worthwhile. For this to be accomplished it is crucial that the political system be structurally re-designed to accomplish gender balance and gender equality in governance.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Mechanisms that are recommended by scholars and analysts for enhancing women’s participation include:

- Public action,
- Affirmative Action in Legislative bodies,
- Political Party and Electoral System Reforms,
- Action by women’s organization,
- Establishment of alliances,
- Use of role models and
- Targeting young women for a pipeline that ensures the constant supply of women into the pool drawn upon for public and private leadership positions.^{xxx}

The media plays a critical role in disseminating information, dispelling stereotypes, and informing the public of effective social, political and economic initiatives to correct gender imbalance.^{xxx} Increasingly, analysts and scholars recognize that there is an intricate relationship between political, economic and social participation. To remedy the problems caused by gender inequity, structural changes are recommended to engender women’s political empowerment^{xxxii}

The Commonwealth Action Plan for Increasing the Representation of Women in Politics identified eight strategy areas that should be employed to foster women’s empowerment:

- Setting targets (on desired goals and objectives/outcomes)
- Affirmative action

- Review of electoral systems
- Public awareness campaigns
- Encouraging women to join politics
- Support for women candidates
- Support for women parliamentarians
- Support for women in democratization, peace and conflict resolution^{xxxiii}

A country's constitution is also important as a pointer to the rights provided and protected. The constitution can be used to press for increased women's participation in politics because it provides that there should be no discrimination on the basis of sex. In reality, there is broad discrimination against women, as evidenced by their paucity in positions of power.^{xxxiv}

In addition, **National Policies on Women** should deal with politics and decision making with regard to women in very practical and effective ways. Clear objectives related to increasing women's empowerment must be identified. To accomplish the identified goals, Parliaments must pass good laws that enhance women's ability to contribute to governance, and decisionmaking. Included among the possible mechanisms for achieving the goals is Affirmative Action, with an eye to increasing women's representation in decision making to the 30% Beijing-recommended threshold in all branches of government and the political party leadership.

Some women who might otherwise pursue political careers are unable to muster the resources to fund their campaigns and embark on huge projects that could generate income and/or propel them into prominence. The lack of money makes it impossible to undertake inquiries that give them the background information to be able to make decisions on optimal strategies to reach the electorate. They are also unable to sell themselves or their programs to the public. In order to ensure that women secure access to additional funds, **international gatherings geared at engendering women's participation in the political system make strong recommendations to governments and NGOs to establish funds that are specifically dedicated to women.** However, women may still end up confined to token funds, and possibly cut off from access to other resources.^{xxxv}

With the internationally recommended solutions as our reference point, it is still necessary to return to the country-specific context to better ground the recommendations for women's inclusion, participation and effectiveness. History matters in this respect, and an **excavation, rehabilitation and re-engagement with women's hidden histories are all essential.** Doing this is in no way to be regarded as a resort to romanticism, but an excavation of the past, and contextual interpretation of the social, political and economic environment, its influences on behaviour and how culture and history can be understood as providing solutions for enduring problems.

It is necessary to **build on the reality that the essence of the acknowledgment of women's contribution to the economies of their countries is that they can exercise power as owners of capital and controllers of economic power.** In some cases such as in West Africa, as indeed in many other Commonwealth regions, women have gained more recognition as holders, controllers and wielders of economic power than for any other kind of power that they exercise. For example, many studies point to the active participation and contribution of Yorùbá women in the economy, but also accurately decry the lack of recognition by post-colonial Nigerian governments for this contribution (Awé 1992). Curiously, active participation in the economy has also not been successfully parlayed into post-colonial political power (Awé, 1992). The same assessment can be made of women's experiences throughout Africa and the Caribbean, which ought to be translated into a realization of the depth of the success of the colonial project. A homogenized existence that does not reflect the pre-colonial realities now runs rampant because there is no observable difference between one African country and others (this is in spite of South Africa's appointment of many women into political positions and the election of many female legislators). There must be more women in power, but it is also necessary to have women in power who have a deep understanding of the needs, goals and objectives of women (as multiple as these may be) given differences in their class and regional interests. This is a difficult, but not impossible agenda that will continue to challenge us in the future

When viewed from the perspective of scholarly works on gender, we see that **the gendering of society may in and of itself render women as powerless and marginal to social, political and economic life.** Many women in politics are either mothers, or they want to be. However, some scholars argue that the burdens of motherhood may be so heavy that a woman is never able to develop a sense of self. She is most likely to be impoverished, most likely to be irrelevant. Constantly, we are reminded that women are the weaker sex. Wars affect them more, economic crises prostrate them, they are the epitome of wretchedness. Statistics are deployed to confirm the reality of these depictions. Indeed, there is no gainsaying the fact that women are burdened, and patriarchy is alive and well, also, there are many instances of gender-based oppressions in contemporary society. In spite of this, we can assume as a beginning point, that women in society exercise power in multiple ways that are difficult to acknowledge, or recognize. In order to properly study human societies with a view to uncover women's contributions and potential sources of power, we have to as an initial condition, consider the reality that stares us in the face - societies are different. We can learn valuable lessons on the human condition if we take them seriously. **Gender is not deployed in the same manner in all societies.** There are multiple conditions that we cannot explain with the tools of conventional scholarship. If we really understand culture, we will find a way of conveying meaning to what is observed in a manner that successfully convey the meaning of concepts and a manner that captures both the spirit and letter of the ideological and philosophical intent of the people in whose culture a practice is grounded.

Another very important factor to realize is that **if we accept that contemporary women are commonly oppressed by patriarchy, the agency that is primarily responsible is the state.** For formerly colonized countries, the contemporary state is an imposition. Being so imposed, it bore, to paraphrase Amina Mama, the racial hierarchy and gender politics promoted values that “indoctrinated [colonies] into all-male European administrative systems, and the insidious paternalism of the new religious and educational systems” This “has persistently affected all aspects of social, cultural, political and economic life in postcolonial African states” (Mama, 47). Although Mama’s comments were applied to Africa, they are relevant to all previously colonized but now independent Commonwealth countries.

The profound lack of self-determination that pervades developing countries should also be avoided through more critical examination of the theories, concepts and solutions that were designed to explain and solve problems in other places with historically distinct legacies. Under the lens of those theories and concepts, everything non-Western begins to look absurd and pathological. Under the influence of the imported solutions, non-Western states and societies reel from one botched remedy to the next. Cosmopolitan and hybridized scholars then turn on the powerful imported lenses once again to proclaim that “tradition” is the problem. Instead, **there is a need to rethink the terms of non-western societies’ ideological, cultural, economic and political engagement with the hegemonic powers of the contemporary global system.** As the traditionalized other, the most thoughtful response is to problematize tradition and emphasize its dynamism and complexity as a concept that describes not just something stuck in the dim, inaccessible past, but processes that are constantly being defined, re-shaped, re-formed, and re-kindled. When these processes occur, tradition is transformed over and again.

The assumption that tradition is irrevocably wedded to the past is wrong. The assumption that non-Western tradition is a priori, the zone of women’s marginalization and oppression should be interrogated rather than accepted as a given. The opposite assumption that modernity is the zone of liberation also must be unpacked. For example, that women had the opportunity to participate in the public sphere and wield power within the family prior to colonization in many regions, is to say that such zones of power should be considered as opening up the possibility that arguments and struggles for women’s inclusion in the public sphere and in the exercise of power within the family do not have to be based on imported ideologies. Secondly, modernity is not an unproblematic phenomenon. It could either be oppressive or liberating. It could marginalize as well as centralize. Participation in the global system could be made more possible or made easier through the mediating power of traditions that validate, empower, and centralize the woman. The duty of the scholar is to use the right tools to create the right meaning and accurate interpretation.

What ought to be done to improve the lot of women in the world's democratic political systems? There are two possible options for those who want change:

- Legal changes that are combined with public education campaigns aimed at achieving slow and steady erosion of the male dominant social, economic, political, cultural and religious practices that discriminate against women, or
- A revolution: an abrupt, radical, break with the past.^{xxxvi}

Revolutions tend to be bloody, disruptive and destabilizing, and any change is difficult to accomplish. Women have a desire to participate in formal politics, but they are in essence, swimming upstream, being prevented from taking most of the positions of power in the political system; lacking a women's movement that is well organized. Men cannot be expected to rally to the women's cause because they gain immensely from their control of the political system. The most likely development is slow, incremental change through legislation, public information campaigns that educate about why affirmative action may be beneficial, even to men, who are after all, not immune to discrimination.^{xxxvii}

In working toward the desired change, first there must be the acknowledgement that **women are both similar and different. Race, class, and ethnicity, as well as other aspects of a woman's identity, including sexual preference or orientation, insert differences and provide possibilities for the assertion of sameness based on common socio-economic locations. The differences need not preclude the formation of coalitions, and sameness must not be assumed as making automatic unity for common purposive action possible. Instead, organizing must be done to build coalitions that cross national, class, gender, race, ethnic and other boundaries.**

The Gender Politics of the Meltdown & Recovery

The Global Economic Meltdown/Great Recession is also important. Many countries, particularly those with smaller and weaker economies, cannot meaningfully participate in trade negotiations and make appropriate trade policies. There is also a tendency to erroneously assume that globalization and trade liberalization have gender neutral consequences. Thus there is insufficient attention to the relationship between gender and trade. This is complicated by the fact that women have a productive role as economic agents. They also have a reproductive role as caregivers and caretakers within their families and communities. Gendered social norms have an impact on women's status in that they affect their socio-political, cultural and economic capabilities. These norms could cause greater gender inequality if women are subject to inequitable treatment. Trade is an economic phenomenon that has complex social and political implications, including on gender relations. In the first place, there is the possibility of positive influences on male-female income distribution due to new jobs and business opportunities being created. Secondly, and quite differently, existing inequalities can worsen or intensify women's vulnerability. In addition, adverse effects of trade liberalization may weigh more

heavily on women. Third, international trade and investment have significant effects on labor markets and working conditions. Women may be affected more due to weaker bargaining power and social norms on women's role. When such social norms change, women stand to gain both materially and in terms of prestige and/or respect for their work.

The impact of social norms mean that women and men do not enter the labor market on the same terms because women and men have different productive and reproductive roles and responsibilities and differential access to material, financial, technological and social resources. Reproductive roles within the household, in terms of childcare, eldercare and other domestic responsibilities may mean that women are unable to work long hours outside the household; they may be unable to travel extensively, they need time off for maternity care, and other women-specific needs. In addition, women may be mostly employed in the informal economy and their unpaid work subsidizes family investment in care. Women's roles as consumers also are quite distinctive from men's. Thus, trade policy is bound to have differential impacts on women and men. Women are enterprising, and some have benefitted from the opportunities created as a result of export competitiveness has created for, but many women have also had their livelihoods destroyed. Moreover, although many non-trade issues, including public health, food security and the environment, have been incorporated into trade negotiations, gender is not included in trade policy and trade agreements (Atthill et al 2007).

Sometimes international trade leads to favorable income redistribution for women when they are able to benefit from an available pool of jobs and when they can establish businesses created by trade in the manufacturing and services sectors. These opportunities do not only give women higher income, but it also increases their status in society and in their households and countries, the women are also able to make contributions to their countries' export competitiveness and industrial diversification. But where women do not benefit and are marginalized in the agricultural sector due to increased competition from trade liberalization and inability to access land and inputs. In addition, gender inequalities may continue "in the form of wage gaps, job segregation (women being confined to low-status jobs), and weak access to basic services (such as health and education) and resources" (10). There is also the risk of worsening conditions of work for women because of increased informalization of work. In the agriculture, textiles and clothing and services sectors, expanding markets generate higher income; but if imports drive domestic producers who employ women out of production, women suffer, and the cost of adjustment to the world economy is borne disproportionately by women. The recommendation that skills as well as broader human development should be enhanced makes sense, but this involves considerable time lag, and it is worthwhile to consider what would happen to the displaced workers in the meantime.

Governments must redouble their efforts. In spite of the modest efforts thus far, unfavourable effects of the multilateral trade agreements of the World Trade Organization cannot be corrected because existing social norms constrain

. Quotas have been documented to work. Three forms have been used successfully:

- Constitutional Quotas – Burkina Faso, Uganda – Seats reserved for women as constitutional right
- Election Law Quotas – Sudan – national legislature includes quota provision
- POLITICAL PARTY QUOTAS – South Africa and Mozambique – Internal rules by political parties to have a given percentage of women candidates for legislative office.

governments' ability to implement policies for gender equality. Thus, for genuine gender equality, democratic change must be pursued both in the economic and political arena. This is an opportune time to begin the mobilization because there is a clear signal that the male dominant architecture of global political economy is deeply flawed and ought to be democratized through the inclusion of developing countries and of women from all parts of the world.

Given the discussion above, it is important to consider some best practices.

Best Practices – Increasing Women's Participation in Political Governance.

This is in line with the Millennium Development Goals because gender equality is one of the eight goals, and in September 2000, when world leaders met, they promised to "promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger, disease, and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable." The MDG recommended a 30% goal if implemented through constitutional guarantee or legislation. Thus far, 97 countries worldwide have constitutional, electoral, or political party quotas. These countries have an average representation for women of 18.4%. (IDEA Quota Database <http://www.quotaproject.org/country.>)

Some Commonwealth countries have performed wonderfully in this respect. Rwanda is the leader with 53.6%, doing better than the Nordic countries' 42% and the worldwide average of 18.9% in 2010. Some African countries have met the Millennium Development Goals. They include: South Africa 44.5%, Mozambique 39.2% Uganda 31.5%, and Tanzania 30.7% women parliamentarians.

Pacific countries that have done well include New Zealand with 33.6% and Guyana with 30%.

By 2010, Sub Saharan Africa had an 18 percent average. The Americas have 22%; Europe has 21%; Asia, 19%, the Pacific, 15%; And Arab States, 10%.

How was significant increase accomplished?

WOMEN'S EFFORTS

- Heavy lobbying
- Full participation in constitution drafting
- Development of voting guidelines guaranteeing seats for women
- Creation of Ministry of Women's Affairs with mandate of promoting policies in women's interest

UNITED NATIONS and Women's NGOs, which through the Women's Conferences in the 1980s and 1990s promoted the idea of equal representation for women. 1995 Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women advocated at least 30 percent representation by women in National governments

SEPTEMBER 2000 MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGs) which established guideposts for the world's governments that emphasise women's empowerment and gender equality as integral to human development.

RECOGNITION OF WOMEN'S ABILITIES DUE TO PROVEN TRACK RECORD IN national liberation struggle

- Ugandan women fought in the National Resistance Army which is the base of the Museveni Administration. During the war, a Secretary for Women's Affairs was created in each local council. The process was institutionalized by 1986 when the war ended.
- South Africa's women also participated in the liberation struggle and post liberation democratic process.
- Rwandan women participated in peacebuilding, advocacy, mobilisation and lobbying for women's participation in politics after the genocide.

KEY: PRESENCE OF WOMEN AT THE TABLE PARTICULARLY IN WRITING CONSTITUTIONS AND CREATING LEGISLATIVE STRUCTURES

- Partnership between men and women that stresses complementarity, equality and mutual gain from differences (Inter-Parliamentary Union). This is in line with African systems that stress the complementarity of males and females in society. The challenge is how to shift the negative paradigm that encourages wholesale disrespect of and discrimination against women.
- Mentorship, mutual assistance and coalition formation to accomplish political agenda not just on the basis of friendship but on the basis of accomplishing objectives.
- Capacity building

Problems preventing increased women's participation

- NO support from Powerful political interests.
 - Societies with male dominant systems and structures on grounds of being discriminatory against men. This was the experience of Zambia's Women's Lobby Group which contends that the government did not have the political will to endorse change; that there is widespread use of intimidation, popular negative stereotypes, and
 - Lack of support to discourage women's participation.
- Masculine Model of Politics with male norms, values, and lifestyles built into the political system
- National constitutions that give more power to executive branch at the expense of the legislature.
- Popular parties who use party discipline to muzzle women's voices.
- Budgetary constraints due to hard economic times and limits on spending imposed by International Financial Institutions
- No money to run for elective office.

KEY COMPONENTS OF WOMEN'S AGENDA IN A DEMOCRATIC LEGISLATIVE SYSTEM

It is imperative that the social, economic, political and cultural barriers to women's participation in leadership of their societies be eliminated. These include: It is crucial to connect procedures and outcomes. Documentation of discrimination should inform Lobbying, advocacy. Alliances between the women's movement and elected and appointed women in cabinet and bureaucratic positions should operate as a demand-supply chain to propel laws, policies, and conditions that create gender equality. Women's activist organisations should

PROMOTE

- Laws that advance women's interests
- Transparency
- Accountability for gender equality and social justice
- Relentless networking, lobbying for advancement of women's interests, advocacy on women's issues as required for fairness, equity and social justice.
- Capacity to compromise, work hard, being approachable,

CREATE

- Conditions that allow women to participate which make it possible to change the rules to benefit women
- Conditions that end the feminization of poverty and pandemics like HIV/AIDS
- Conditions that make possible women's participation, such as ending bias,

- exclusion, and heavy weight of domestic responsibilities and traditional expectations imbricated in social values and gender roles that cause women to be relegated to the background
- Strategies that challenge security regimes that put limitations on civil liberties and curtail women’s freedom
- Strategies to fight the normalization of gender based violence

PUSH/ENCOURAGE

- All organisations, associations and institutions – political, social and economic to deliberately and systematically implement women’s participation at all levels
- Affirmative action in appointments and promotion
- Effective political intervention by women in elected and appointive positions for gender equity.
- Social, economic and political transformation for women’s and men’s equality , gender equity and social justice
- Formation of Women’s advocacy groups in the NGO sector that collaborate with Women’s Legislative Caucus and Women’s Ministry
- The development and use of citizens’ manifestoes
- Gender responsive budgeting
- The creation of safe political spaces where women can freely share ideas and strategize for social, economic and political transformation.

TRAIN

- Elected and appointed women for political effectiveness
- Women’s NGOs and CSOs for effective advocacy

MENTOR

- Young women and girls for leadership of women’s activist organisations as well as for entry into politics. People tend to learn by doing, and the mark of a great leader is the ability to inspire, encourage and motivate others.
- Newly elected and appointed women leaders in legislature, cabinet and state bureaucracies for results based effective political engagement

INVOLVE ALL STAKEHOLDERS

Pressure, engage, and lobby, governments, political parties, international institutions, civil society, social movements and women’s and feminist groups to embrace accountable policymaking and implementation for gender equality in:

- Trade negotiations
- Development funding
- Leadership of Political Parties
- Challenging corruption in governments, political parties and women’s organisations

REALIZE

- That power is never conceded and leadership is extraordinarily difficult but greatly rewarding. This being the case, women must engage past and present creatively and imaginatively to inform their struggle to gain power from a political system that is not necessarily committed to their advancement into meaningful public leadership positions.

SIGNIFICANCE OF GAINS

The Rwanda case, and by extension, the cases of similar countries that have had substantial increase in women's participation in political decisionmaking, indicate that we have to think of more than numbers. The numbers should be seen as a beginning point must among the objectives for women's equal representation. Such representation must be achieved, but there is much more to be done. The political and ideological stance of the women elected and appointed into positions of power are also important considerations. There must be connectedness between women parliamentarians/cabinet members/women's machineries and the women's movement (trans-class; trans regional; trans religious women's NGOs and CSOs), which allows for the women's movement to demand equitable policies and insist on their implementation, and the parliamentarians/cabinet members/women's machineries supply these political goods by pushing the agenda for gender equality across the board.

Acknowledge Challenges

The political skill and will of parliamentarians/cabinet members/women's machineries are important. They must be good at proposing change through legislation, negotiating, building coalitions, building peace, and other important objectives that contribute to gender equality. They must be comfortable with being leaders, as well as committed to the struggle for gender equality in the long term. The women's movement also has to draw up a "gender agenda". They must push this agenda in the political, social and economic spheres; they must be tireless advocates for the agenda.

The extent to which gender equality is achieved depends on the condition and circumstances of the majority of women, and not the affluent/powerful minority. Gender equality has become a shared goal for all humanity. It is a fundamental human right that is guaranteed in the UN Charter as well as other international conventions and declarations such as the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and Millennium Development Goals also affirm the international community to gender equality. It is also clear that if humanity wants to demonstrate genuine commitment to the social and economic advancement of women, it must not only make rhetorical statements on interest in women's empowerment but device strategies that ensure equal access by women and men, to power, decisionmaking and economic resources (Williams 2003). Political economy is essential to full understanding of the impediments to gender equality as well as giving a roadmap for

positive change. While there has been tremendous expansion in the world's economy as a consequence of globalization, it is also well documented that globalization has uneven distributional consequences that produce either wealth or poverty to some regions, sectors and genders. This for Amartya Sen is why inclusive globalization is imperative. For him, development does not amount to much if we do not put people first. This is the crux of the gender and trade discourse--that we figure out how to share potential gains from globalization between men and women, in an equitable manner. Beyond material equity, we must also have respect for human dignity and realize the equal worth of all humans.

Potentials and Possibilities

Despite the formidable challenges, a determination to accomplish gender equality does yield benefits, as evidenced by increases in some Commonwealth countries in terms of increased percentages of women participants in national legislatures. Despite the reversals in some countries, these increases should motivate countries that are lagging behind to do better. NGOs and CSOs as well as multilateral agencies are key participants in the struggle. The strategies devised must necessarily consider the intricate connections between social, political and economic structures and women's empowerment on all fronts to take equal part in making decisions that will foster human wellbeing. This cannot be done without appropriate budgetary allocations in local, national and international budgets

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