

Speaking out promoting women as decision-makers worldwide



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WOMANKIND Worldwide
Development House
56-64 Leonard Street
London EC2A 4LT
www.womankind.org.uk

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Cover photograph: Dhaka garment workers demonstrate after a fire killed 70 co-workers and injured over 100, most of them women. These women are calling for justice – and for proper safety standards.
GMB Akash /Panos Pictures

Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	5
FOREWORD	5
INTRODUCTION	7
INTERNATIONAL, REGIONAL & LEGAL AGREEMENTS	8
WOMEN AND GOOD GOVERNANCE	10
WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?	11
WOMANKIND'S APPROACH	13
MOBILISING WOMEN TO PARTICIPATE IN POLITICS	13
WHO DECIDES? THE FACTS	15
ZIMBABWE – TRANSFORMING POLITICS	16
ALBANIA – LOBBYING FOR ELECTORAL REFORM	18
QUOTAS & ELECTORAL SYSTEMS	19
HOLDING POLICYMAKERS ACCOUNTABLE	21
PERU – CREATING SPACE FOR WOMEN	21
SOUTH AFRICA – SHAPING POLICY	24
SOUTH AFRICA – RIGHTS IN THE WORKPLACE	26
ADVANCING PEACE & SECURITY – WOMEN'S ROLE	27
AFGHANISTAN – CHALLENGING CULTURAL NORMS	27
YOUNG AFGHAN WOMEN HAVE THEIR SAY	29
SOMALIA – CREATING NEW STRUCTURES	30
INDIA – SUPPORT AFTER THE TSUNAMI	32
BOLIVIA – USING THE MEDIA	33
UK SCHOOLS – CREATING SAFE SPACES	35
MOVING FORWARD & RECOMMENDATIONS	37

‘Women must be involved in politics because we need help in the community and they can address the politicians. Those in higher ranks must know what is happening in our communities. Maybe one day the whole of South Africa will be led by women, because women are so strong!’.

Florence Njila, from Paarl district, Western Cape

Foreword

'You don't stand with your mouth shut when you see women abused. We need to grab pots and pans and spoons and make a noise!'

Women on Farms member, South Africa.

It's hard to believe that, in 2008, the views and concerns of half the world's population continue to be sidelined or ignored in the decision-making processes that govern everyday life. From decisions about how the family's money is spent, to how the government runs the country, women the world over are still facing huge obstacles when it comes to voicing their opinions – and influencing the decisions that shape their lives. But there is some good news. Despite these barriers, women and girls are finding ways to affect and contribute to the political, socio-economic and cultural development of their communities and countries. They are learning how to change the rules of engagement and, in doing so, they are challenging power dynamics and decision-making – and tackling poverty.

Sue Turrell

Director, WOMANKIND Worldwide

Acknowledgements

*Written and researched by
Ceri Hayes*

Edited by Mary Breen

*Designed by
Anne Metcalfe*

*With contributions from
WOMANKIND's Brita
Fernandez-Schmidt,
Sue Turrell, Emily Brown,
Susana Kliem, Hannah
White, Kanwal Ahluwalia,
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Gender Advocacy Project,
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Introduction

Women have the right to participate fully and equally with men in all aspects of decision-making. This includes all aspects of public and political life, family life, cultural and social affairs and the economy. This right is enshrined in a number of human-rights instruments, as well as in national constitutions and laws.

Furthermore, without their active participation, efforts to end poverty are futile: sustainable social and economic development at community and national level – and good governance – is dependent on women taking part in all decision-making processes (see box on p.10). Decision-making that is fully representative benefits not just women, but society as a whole: ‘Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women’s perspectives at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved.’ (Beijing Platform for Action, 1995)

Through their dedicated efforts to challenge the status quo, women *have* reached positions of power in recent years; they have been elected as Heads of State in countries including Liberia, India, Chile and Argentina; there are now equal numbers of women and men in the Rwandan parliament; and over a third of the judges elected to the International Criminal Court are women.

We have also seen gains at the local and community level – although rarely recognised, or resourced – with more women having their say on everything from healthcare provision to protection of the environment and crime prevention, by making use of informal mechanisms, such as self-help groups, women’s organisations and networks and co-operatives at the community level, to ensure that their needs and the needs of their families are addressed. And in doing so, they are benefiting not only themselves and their families, but society as a whole.

But progress towards women’s full and equal participation with men at all levels of decision-making is still far too slow. Whether in politics, the media, the environment, the economy, culture, religion or the law, women are still under-represented and marginalised within the

Through concerted efforts women *have* achieved positions of power – there are now women Heads of State in Liberia, India, Chile and Argentina.

INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL AGREEMENTS AND LEGAL INSTRUMENTS

A woman's right to participate equally with men at all levels of decision-making is a human-rights issue. Human-rights standards guarantee women the right to full and equal participation in all aspects of political, economic and social life — and to access to power at all levels. Their enjoyment of other human rights is dependent on their ability to

participate fully in decision-making.

Governments' obligations to protect and fulfil a woman's right to non-discrimination in all aspects of decision-making are set out in a number of international and regional human-rights conventions and declarations. Many of these standards are also enshrined in national constitutions and legislation.

- ▶ **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) article 21**
www.unhchr.ch/udhr/lang/eng.htm
- ▶ **Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1952)**
www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/22.htm
- ▶ **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) article 25**
www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_ccpr.htm
- ▶ **International Covenant on Economic, Social & Cultural Rights (1966)**
www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_cescr.htm
- ▶ **Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (1979)** articles 2-4, 7 and general recommendations 23, on women and public and political life, and number 25, on quotas
www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/e1cedaw.htm
- ▶ **Beijing Platform for Action (1995)** sets out steps required to increase women's participation around the world: paragraphs 181, 190, and 195
www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/
- ▶ **Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000)** reaffirms the importance of the equal participation and full involvement of women in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, as well as the need to increase their role in decision-making
www.peacewomen.org/un/sc/1325.html
- ▶ **UN Commission on the Status of Women Agreed Conclusions (1997 & 2006)** — these documents further elaborate governments' commitments to promoting an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women in the fields of education, health and work — and equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels
www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/index.html#frequency
- ▶ **Millennium Development Goal 3 (2000)** — the third of eight goals, set by world leaders in 2000 to be achieved by 2015, aims to promote gender equality and empower women and includes the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments as one of its indicators of progress.

- ▶ **Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003)** article 9 (regional women's human-rights instrument that supplements the provisions of the African Charter)
- ▶ **Inter-American Convention on the Granting of Political Rights to Women (1949)**
www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/politicalrts.html
- ▶ **Inter-American Convention on the Granting of Civil Rights to Women (1949)**
www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/civilrts.html

Women use these instruments to press their governments to take action on many different issues — adopt and reform laws, raise awareness, develop new policies — to increase women's influence and representation in decision-making.

For example, WOMANKIND's partners in Africa lobbied tirelessly for the introduction of the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women (see above); this 'home-grown' instrument gives them added leverage when pushing their governments to domesticate and implement agreements made at the international level.

Governments must now ensure that the obligations they have signed up to are implemented effectively and without delay.

structures and institutions that govern their lives.

And even when they are able to participate, real power and influence is often out of reach, because the systems and institutions at the heart of decision-making processes tend to be controlled by dominant political interests — bodies that perpetuate power inequalities between women and men.

In the international development sector there is now a widespread recognition that women's participation is a prerequisite for sustainable development. This has led many development actors to promote 'women's empowerment' as a central tenet of their poverty-reduction strategies.

But in reality, 'empowerment' and 'women in decision-making' have come to be synonymous with small-scale economic empowerment projects or initiatives to increase the number of women in parliament, rather than the wholesale transformation of gender roles and power imbalances between women and men that women's rights activists have advocated for.

While getting more women into politics and engaging them in the local



Michelle Bachelet, Chile's first woman president. Despite such high-profile electoral successes, women are still under-represented at all levels of decision-making.

WOMEN & GOOD GOVERNANCE

Governance — the process of decision-making and how decisions are implemented — is a term being used more and more by international-development actors. ‘Good governance’ has become the litmus test of the degree to which a country has attained democracy — and its central tenets include freedom of information and the media, government accountability, and respect for human rights.

Promoting good governance — key to attaining equality between women and men — is about much more than simply increasing the numbers of women in Parliament. Effective approaches to good governance will also address the root causes of gender inequality in governance institutions and processes, including: gender bias in the media; barriers to women’s access to justice and public services; failure to reform and/or implement relevant national laws and legislation; failure to ensure adequate funds for measures to promote women’s rights; a lack of gender-sensitivity in priority-setting and accountability systems; and failure to tackle violence against women.

economy are significant first steps on the path to women’s empowerment and gender equality, the focus on these measures sidesteps the need to address the underlying inequalities and deep-rooted discrimination that prevent women from playing an equal role in society.

WOMANKIND believes that measures to promote women’s meaningful participation in development and all aspects of decision-making must be seen in the wider context of women’s unequal status in society. They need to be accompanied by concerted efforts to address some of the root causes of discrimination against women, including the imbalance of power between women and men — and the way in which gender roles are articulated at all levels of society, including the state, the family, the economy, education and the media.

This means addressing power imbalances at the institutional and policymaking levels, rethinking existing strategies and priorities and resource distribution, building strong women’s-rights organisations and networks to increase women’s voices in decision-making processes — and strengthening accountability to tackle discrimination against women.

Speaking Out explores the barriers women must clear before they can fully participate in decision-making in different areas of their lives — and

sets out the various strategies that WOMANKIND and its partners are using to increase women's quantitative and qualitative participation at all levels; and the actions that should be taken to address these challenges.

What are the challenges?

Women who want to participate in decision-making face serious and persistent barriers the world over. In the course of its work over 19 years, WOMANKIND has learned that these obstacles exist in all countries, regardless of their level of political, social or economic development, and constitute a serious impediment to the advancement of women and the eradication of poverty.

One of the biggest challenges facing the women we work with is the discriminatory cultural and social attitudes and negative stereotypes that dominate family and public life. Cultural traditions and religious beliefs often confine women to the home and exclude them from public spaces and activities. They have less access to education than men so may be unable to use the same opportunities to express and negotiate their interests. And even when the women have received a formal education, dominant stereotypes perpetuate the notion that they should be submissive and not question men's rights to make the important decisions.

Their participation in decision-making is further constrained by poverty, which manifests itself in a number of ways. For example, the women WOMANKIND supports often find that they are excluded from meetings and opportunities to raise their concerns, because they are unable to afford the travel costs. Their disproportionate levels of poverty (it is estimated that 70 per cent of the world's poor are women) and economic dependency on men may cause them to feel ashamed, humiliated and stigmatised — leading to low self-esteem and further exclusion.

And, as is the case in countries like Albania — making the difficult transition from communism to capitalism — it is usually the women who pay the price when the state fails to provide basic services such as education and healthcare; they shoulder the burden of care responsibilities, in addition to their domestic chores and paid work. WOMANKIND's dual focus on tackling violence against women and

Women who don't participate in public and community life can be more vulnerable to violence in the home — but those who do become decision-makers may be attacked by men threatened by this power shift.

working to promote women's civil and political participation stems from a belief that violence against women constitutes one of the biggest obstacles to women's participation in decision-making in the home and the community. Aside from the toll it takes on women's physical, psychological and emotional health, it also severely limits their ability to participate in activities such as paid work, education, travel and community meetings.

Conversely, our experience and research proves that women's isolation from public and community life can contribute to increased violence. Women who become more involved in community groups and social networks decrease their vulnerability; they get support and access practical solutions such as legal protection, counselling and advice. But we have also observed that violence against women can actually increase when women start to play a greater role in decision-making, because of the ensuing shift in the power dynamics, which the perpetrators of violence perceive as a threat to their own status.

'Politics in Albania is aggressive — women are actively put off from entering the political world and standing as candidates because of the highly confrontational environment they would have to work within.'

Ms Gazmira Fakulli, Councillor in Elbasan, Albania

Discrimination is interlinked

WOMANKIND believes that solutions to the problems of women's exclusion are destined to fail unless they address the complex linkages between these different forms of discrimination. Our approach is mindful of the interconnected nature of the full spectrum of women's human rights when developing new programmes.

In practical terms, this means ensuring that our work to promote women's participation is complemented by efforts to challenge the denial of their rights in other areas, such as ending violence against women, promoting indigenous rights, guaranteeing women's sexual and reproductive health and rights — and promoting understanding of how gender inequality affects the spread of HIV and AIDS.

Our approach also involves working in partnership with other social-justice organisations and networks to ensure they include a gender perspective in their interventions — and lobbying policymakers and



A ceremony in La Paz for women who have completed training on their rights with WOMANKIND's partner FLP.

WOMANKIND'S APPROACH

WOMANKIND works in partnership with organisations around the world to increase women's ability to participate in all aspects of public and political life and decision-making through a range of strategies and interventions — from supporting women to vote and stand for election in Albania to helping women farm workers in South Africa negotiate their rights with employers.

Our global approach highlights the fact that women not only face many of the same obstacles to participation the world over, but also share similar aspirations, such as the desire to sit in public office, to participate in the work of community or informal organisations — and to sit at the decision-making table with men and have their voices heard.

And, as *Speaking Out* demonstrates, the strategies they use to challenge their unequal status with men have much in common too: increasing women's access to information, education and awareness of their rights; creating support networks and coalitions to mobilise women and share knowledge; working with men and involving the wider community in challenging attitudes and behaviours that discriminate against women; setting the agenda for the development of their communities; lobbying for reform of the institutions and structures that reinforce women's exclusion; and holding their elected representatives to account for the promises they make at election time.

development practitioners to call more broadly for an end to discrimination in the laws, policies, institutions and structures which regulate women's lives.

Finding solutions

1 MOBILISING WOMEN TO PARTICIPATE IN POLITICS

Women's participation in all aspects of politics and the electoral process is vital — whether as candidates, campaigners, election monitors or voters. It is not only about exercising their human right to participate, but also a crucial factor in ensuring that their views are taken into account.

As the **Who decides?** box on page 15 illustrates, women still do not have the vote in a handful of countries, and remain massively under-represented in all levels of decision-making. But they are increasingly active in political processes around the world today and have made impressive electoral gains in recent years, most notably in Africa — the election of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf as President of Liberia and the first elected woman president in Africa was a significant milestone — and

many more women elected at local level are gaining the skills to move into national politics. However, these advances do not yet amount to a step change in the political landscape.

The women WOMANKIND works with begin from a point of disadvantage — being less likely to have access to education, training and information than men, they are less likely to know their rights, understand the electoral process and how they can engage. As one Peruvian community leader put it: 'This is one of the problems of a lack of education — you cannot participate in politics...society makes you feel excluded. You can't be a Councillor if you have not completed secondary school.'

They have little time to get involved in politics, because the burden of work and family responsibilities tends to fall more heavily on women than men. And when they do have the capacity to get more involved in politics and decide to stand for election, they find their way further blocked: both men and women don't always respect women as leaders; new women candidates lack funds and support because they may not have the affiliations and connections of their male counterparts; political campaigning is combative and, in some cases, violence is used to intimidate women against standing; and electoral systems are unfavourable towards women.

It would be wrong to assume that once women gain access to political office, they are automatically able or willing to champion policies that promote gender equality and more equitable development. This underestimates the ability of existing power structures and institutions to corrupt, co-opt or marginalise women elected representatives in the same way that men can be manipulated.

But WOMANKIND believes that when women are represented in politics, their views and experiences are more likely to be taken into account. Their representation can also reflect the greater diversity of experience of those making the policies and provide important role models for wider society, as the following examples demonstrate.

Linking women MPs with their constituents

WiPSU has developed 20 Community Constituency Forums (CCFs) nationwide to **develop community-level political dialogue and activism amongst women**. Forum members and their woman MP or councillor



Women are becoming more active in political processes – the electoral gains made in Africa are impressive.

WHO DECIDES? THE FACTS

The following statistics illustrate how women are currently participating in power structures and decision-making processes around the world. While the numbers involved are a useful benchmark, much more information is required about the quality of women's participation and whether they are able to participate fully — or whether they are marginalised, despite holding positions of power.

- ▶ At current rates of progress, gender parity in national legislatures won't be achieved until 2068 (*Gender & Equality, DFID, 2007*)
- ▶ As of January 2008, women accounted for just 17.2 per cent of all parliamentarians worldwide (Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)). See www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm
- ▶ Only 19 countries have achieved the goal of 30+ per cent women's representation in national legislatures, a goal adopted by the Beijing Process in 1995 (IPU)
- ▶ Women's emancipation — there are still countries where women do not have the right to vote or to stand for election, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, although the latter expects to extend voting rights to all citizens by 2010. See www.wisergeek.com/in-which-countries-are-women-not-allowed-to-vote.htm
- ▶ Regional averages — the Nordic countries have the highest regional average for numbers of women in national parliaments (41.6 per cent); while the Pacific states (excluding Australia and New Zealand) come in at 2.5 per cent.
- ▶ UN peacekeeping — women have steadily increased their level of representation in peacekeeping missions in recent decades and now make up 30 per cent of civilian staff, but the number of women serving as uniformed peacekeepers — both police and military — remains unacceptably low. In early 2006, women made up only 1 per cent of the UN's military strength and 4 per cent of its police. (Department for Peacekeeping Operations)
- ▶ In some regions of the world, especially sub-Saharan Africa, women provide 70 per cent of agricultural labour, produce over 90 per cent of the food, but are nowhere represented in budget deliberations. (World Economic Forum, 2005)
- ▶ The BBC reports that only 10 per cent of Directors of the UK's FTSE 100 firms are women.

— from any party — are nominated to these forums with WIPSU's support and comprehensive training on political processes and gender equality. They receive training in leadership skills, personal empowerment, communication and networking, and political processes. They are then supported to work closely with their woman MP or councillor to develop joint action-plans that map out community and policy priorities for the year ahead — and meet regularly to check progress, hold their MP or councillor to account on the delivery of promises made and to reflect on next steps.

Women MPs and councillors are thus challenged to take up the

CASE STUDY

TRANSFORMING THE BUSINESS-AS-USUAL APPROACH TO POLITICS IN ZIMBABWE

As we write, the current socio-economic and political situation in **Zimbabwe** constitutes what is probably one of the world's most challenging environments in which to change existing political institutions and the dominant political culture. People live in a climate of fear and violence, spiralling economic decline has dramatically reduced their access to food, healthcare, education and employment — and the AIDS pandemic has claimed countless lives and orphaned more than a million children.

And it is women who are disproportionately affected by these conditions: women shoulder the burden of care for orphans and relatives living with HIV and AIDS; domestic-violence cases have increased as political and economic frustrations have escalated; and women's marginalisation from decision-making means that their experiences of poverty are less likely to be addressed. Women in Zimbabwe now have the lowest life expectancy in the world.

Since 2001, WOMANKIND's partner in Zimbabwe, the **Women in Politics Support Unit (WiPSU)**, has been working with women in poor and marginalised communities to increase their ability to advocate collectively and individually. In a country where 'spaces' for open and non-partisan public discussion about democratic processes and principles are virtually non-existent, they are using creative ways to support women's participation in political decision-making — and to foster a culture of leadership which is more inclusive and accountable, by responding to the vagaries of Zimbabwe's constantly changing political landscape in a strategic way.

demands made on them at Parliamentary and Council level and to find ways of lobbying further so that they are addressed properly. For example, in Ghutu South constituency, the woman MP took the CCF's concerns around high unemployment to local training institutions and secured vocational college places for young women. Ghutu South now boasts the highest young women's employment rates in the country.

As one MP explains, 'Our CCFs give women MPs a unique springboard to represent these issues in Parliament.' An example of this is the issue of sanitary ware, the costs of which escalated beyond reach. The Glen Norah constituents brought this to the attention of their MP Priscilla Misihairabwi who raised the issue in Parliament and approached organisations such as Zimbabwe Women's Resources Centre, Crisis Coalition, WiPSU and Musasa Project to push for the 'delisting' of sanitary ware as a luxury item — thus making it more affordable. This

strategy was successful.

The process of linking CCFs and their elected representatives has also enabled members to support the re-election efforts of their MP or councillor, thus maximising the numbers of strong women candidates running for office — 11 out of 13 MPs were retained in the 2005 national elections with support from these constituency forums. And where women MPs lose their seats to men, WiPSU continues where possible to work with forum members and the new male MP to ensure that women’s concerns continue to be raised and addressed in that constituency.

Increasing solidarity across party lines

WiPSU also co-founded the cross-party Women’s Parliamentary Caucus which has facilitated **successful exchanges between women MPs** and councillors from Zimbabwe’s two main political parties, Zanu PF and the Movement for Democratic Change, on a number of subjects, including the impact of early marriage on girls, and bride inheritance. By maintaining a strictly non-partisan stance, WiPSU has been able to develop good working relations with members of both parties — and maintain access to otherwise sensitive political spaces. As one MDC MP explains, ‘I went to Zambia with a Zanu PF MP and we spent four days together. There was no shouting as we were two women from one Parliament, one country. When we came back we were quite a team!’

Campaigning in Zimbabwe

WiPSU also **campaigns to increase the representation of women at all levels of political decision-making in Zimbabwe** and is one of several WK partners to promote the **international 50/50 campaign — a global campaign launched by WEDO (the Women’s Environment & Development Organisation) in 2000** — at country-level. The main aim of the campaign is to increase women’s participation and representation, with an emphasis on national governments, around the world.

More than 300 organisations around the world have now signed up to the campaign and 18 national and regional campaigns have been launched under the umbrella of the global 50/50 network. The network provides members with an opportunity to share resources and information for promoting gender equality and women’s representation, link with other organisations and individuals working on the same



WiPSU, based in Harare, campaigns to increase the representation of women at all levels of decision-making in Zimbabwe.

issues, and assess which strategies are successful.

In line with the Africa Union position currently being developed by the Southern Africa Development Committee, which stipulates that women should have equal representation with men in all areas of political decision-making, WiPSU embarked on a campaign to achieve 50 per cent representation of women in Zimbabwe's Parliament, Councils and the Senate in elections in 2013. This involves lobbying political parties, engaging the Women's Movement, and mainstreaming the 50/50 campaign to other civil-society organisations, the media and the public.

Lobbying for electoral reform in Albania

Another strategy WOMANKIND partners are using to increase women's representation in politics is to **lobby for electoral reform**. Some voting systems can hinder the election and representation of women, whereas others may significantly increase their chances. The introduction of affirmative-action policies, such as quotas, may also help women overcome some of the obstacles preventing them from entering politics in the same way as their male counterparts.

In Albania, women's representation in government is one of the lowest in Europe — at around 7 per cent — and the current electoral system is just one of a number of factors preventing women from being elected to local and national government.

The country is struggling to make the difficult transition from 47 years of Communist rule to a multi-party democratic system and a more open-market economy. Some state institutions are inefficient, corrupt and regarded with suspicion — and there is violence both inside and outside party politics — but a resurgence of traditional and patriarchal attitudes and the burden of domestic responsibilities on women in the absence of welfare provision also continue to obstruct progress.

Forming a coalition

At the beginning of 2006, WOMANKIND's partners, the **Albanian Centre for Population & Development (ACPD)** and the **Independent Forum of Albanian Women (IFAW)**, formed a **coalition** made up of local and national women's rights and youth organisations, political forums, lawyers, journalists and MPs to promote women's participation in politics. This increases the number of voices calling for electoral reform,



South African women on the march for better jobs and better lives.

QUOTAS & ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

Electoral systems and the use of quotas affect women's representation in different ways, depending on how they are combined and which system is used. Research has shown that those countries with a critical mass of women parliamentarians — at least 30 per cent — all implement quotas in combination with a proportional-representation system.

Electoral systems — electoral systems are usually described as either proportional-representation or majority systems. Both exist in a variety of forms, but PR systems broadly refer to systems where seats in parliament are more or less in proportion to the number of votes cast. Majority systems refer to the division of voters into multiple electoral districts, and are often known as 'first-past-the-post' or 'winner-takes-all' because the candidate who wins the highest number of votes within that constituency wins that election.

PR systems are widely thought to be more favourable to representation of women and other traditionally excluded groups, such as ethnic minorities, than majority systems, but a whole range of different variables within this will influence whether women are elected, such as the attitude of the electorate, women's ability to participate in voting, whether women candidates are trained in campaigning, running for election and raising funds for election campaigns, the size of the district and political party, and the individual-country context.

Quotas — quotas refer to the percentage of seats reserved for citizens who are under-represented in political and other institutions. This type of affirmative-action policy may kick-start moves towards gender equality and greater representation of women in parliament and local government. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, of the 19 countries that had reached 30 per cent or more women in Parliament in 2006, 16 of them use quotas. But again, other variables need to be considered, such as whether the quota is legally enforceable, or if certain provisions of the electoral system negate the effects of a quota system. Opponents of quotas, including some women, claim that women should be selected on merit, but this assumes a level playing-field from the outset.

and promotes greater public acceptance of women leaders through the media — and educates young women and men about the importance of voting and becoming politically active. The coalition is represented in 32 out of 36 districts of Albania, ensuring grassroots support and inclusion in the campaign.

Their collective campaign to reform the electoral process has focused on a quota to reserve for women a minimum of 30 per cent of all seats in local and national government — and a move to a proportional-representation system from the current mixed electoral system in which some members are elected through a PR system and others are elected through a majority system. Lobbying in-country has been complemented

by lobbying of members of the European parliament — with WOMANKIND — to put pressure on the government to adopt these reforms as a necessary step towards fulfilling the country’s ambitions for EU accession.

The coalition’s strategy proved partially successful. The main political parties agreed to set quotas at the 2007 local government elections — 25 per cent for the Democratic Party and 50 per cent for the Socialist Party, respectively. But, while these quotas are established in party statutes, they cannot be legally enforced, unlike legislative or constitutional quotas which allow sanctions to be issued.

These results also highlight that reform of electoral systems and the introduction of quotas are only two measures for increasing women’s representation — it is important to work on many fronts at the same time. For this reason, ACPD and IFAW are also working to address the changes needed in attitudes to strengthen society’s view of women’s leadership roles and to encourage a more progressive style of politics in the future.

Working with the media to change attitudes

The influence of the media in an election process cannot be overstated. So both of WOMANKIND’s Albania partners, together with other members of the coalition, have invested considerable time and resources in building alliances with local and national reporters and editors — and in training them to challenge existing stereotypes. This has had remarkable results: women leaders and their views are presented respectfully on TV and radio, and women candidates say that the quality of coverage given to women’s issues is starting to improve. These changes increase the public’s awareness of the issues — and challenge the commonly held belief in Albania that there is no place for women in politics.

Other important aspects of the coalition’s approach include lobbying male MPs to support women’s candidacy, and providing support and training to women candidates and MPs. The lobbying has not yielded significant results as yet — the MPs’ verbal commitments have yet to translate into action — so our partners are now targeting the party leaders to gauge the level of their support and to hold them accountable for these clear promises. They are also exerting pressure through the

‘Helping women develop their leadership skills led to a 245% increase in women candidates in the 2005 election.’

combined voice of members of the coalition.

Conversely, the strategy of equipping women candidates and MPs with the information and skills they need to become effective leaders has seen spectacular results, with a 245% increase in women's candidacy in the 2005 general election.

2 HOLDING POLICYMAKERS ACCOUNTABLE

WOMANKIND believes that women's participation is a prerequisite of a functioning democracy — democratic governance relies upon the full participation of both women and men in shaping legal and political institutions — and policies — that promote their rights. Otherwise, the laws, policies and government institutions that govern everyday life will not reflect the needs of all citizens, and there will not be progress towards gender equality.

Creating a network

Another of WOMANKIND's partners in Peru, **Calandria**, has found a different way to ensure women take advantage of the decentralisation process in Peru — by creating a regional network of women community leaders in the district of San Martin. The women, already active

CREATING SPACE FOR WOMEN IN PERU

In **Peru**, government decentralisation has provided women's-rights advocates with an opportunity to promote local women's involvement in public policymaking. As the decision-making powers of regional and local government have increased, so have citizens' opportunities to scrutinise and influence public policies — and to hold public officials accountable.

WK's partner **Asociacion Aurora Vivar (AAV)** is supporting the Regional Governments of Ica, Pasco and La Libertad to develop **Regional Equal Opportunities Plans** that include specific measures to tackle violence against women, reduce maternal mortality, and promote women's employment, education and literacy.

AAV facilitated the participation of women from these communities in the drafting of the plans, thus ensuring that *their* concerns were addressed. In Ica and La Libertad, AAV also helped to establish Women's Watchdog Committees to monitor the implementation of these plans. Women were elected from within their communities and AAV has provided training in advocacy, negotiation, gender budgeting, employment law and ongoing advice and support to the committees.

CASE STUDY

SCHOOL FOR ALBANIA'S WOMEN LEADERS

In 2006, IFAW and ACPD established a summer school for potential women leaders, in collaboration with the University of Tirana. The annual gathering fills a gap in traditional education with its specific focus on the factors that contribute to and hinder the role of women in Albanian politics; the study of democracy-building and election systems; looking at strategies for engaging in politics; and exploring gender equality and women's-rights issues.

The course lasts 10 days, and afterwards the participants have the opportunity to link up with the Coalition and to political parties. It attracts women from all sections of society, including office staff, students, members of political forums and women running as councillors in local elections. **Kamila Petriti**, a 30-year-old, part-time law student and police officer, attended the 2007 summer school. She had been thinking about a career in public administration, but now she hopes to enter politics: 'This course has given me the confidence to make a career out of politics. If women try hard to enter politics, the future will be good. Greater numbers of women in politics will mean a less aggressive style of politics. Men shouldn't think that women can't hold these jobs. It's not easy as men don't want to give up their positions of power to women, so we need to join forces and work with men to convince them. Women should take up these positions and show others that they have the solutions.'

Another summers-school participant realised that aggression doesn't equal success: 'Before, I felt that a woman needed to be like a man to be successful. But having participated in WOMANKIND's programme I've learned that to be successful doesn't mean one needs to be aggressive. Women should and can be themselves.'

Diana Çuli is the Chair of IFAW: 'When we started to campaign on women's issues 10 years ago, we would have struggled to find women to participate on such a course. Now we have to turn many women away. This is a very positive sign that the women's movement is growing — and there are more and more women who are taking a proactive attitude towards politics and are willing to take the time to prepare themselves for a political career.'

members of their communities, were invited to join the network and were given in-depth training on producing gender-sensitive budgets, media training, monitoring and implementation of government policies and legislation, mechanisms for holding regional and local governments to account, and public-policy formulation.

Calandria provided individual support to women leaders. This took the form of advice, information and support with proposal-writing for participatory budgets — a process of involving the community in decisions about spending priorities. They also helped network members

to understand the opportunities to engage with and influence public officials — and supported them in the process of engaging with government representatives. Paulina Valdivieso (right) is a member of the regional network of women leaders: *‘Our work began when Calandria established a network of women working to address violence.*

‘Before long, we were analysing the other problems women in San Martin face — we decided to form a network of women leaders. We were, more or less, 80 women from different provinces and we created a proper management structure for taking decisions.

‘Through the network, we produced a “gender agenda” outlining our main priorities for tackling gender inequality and presented this to the regional government. At first they were not interested, but we kept going! Then, just before the regional elections, we organised a public event at which we presented the agenda to all candidates. Now we have established working commissions with the authorities and we meet regularly to discuss these issues in more depth.’

The network took advantage of the regional electoral process in 2006 and prepared a ‘gender agenda’ based on the needs and concerns of women in their communities. They presented this to all the regional candidates standing for election in San Martin. All the candidates signed up before the election, and many of the proposals have now been implemented by the Regional President. In addition, 11 of the women involved in drawing up the agenda were invited to run as candidates by political parties in the local and regional elections — and one was elected, a tremendous achievement in such a male-dominated political environment.

While there are still numerous obstacles to meaningful participation in politics at this level, the experience of Calandria and AAV shows how decentralising governance can make it easier for women and other marginalised groups to influence decision-making processes. But this needs to go hand-in-hand with training and support for women activists, so that they can lobby public officials for more transparent governance and policymaking that is responsive to the needs of women and other marginalised groups. Crucially, the experience in Peru has given the women’s organisations increased credibility — and the impetus to continue campaigning on these issues.



Paulina Valdivieso and her network colleagues presented their ‘gender agenda’ to regional government: ‘at first they were not interested, but we kept going ...’

Shaping local-government policy in South Africa

Decentralisation of power and authority has also provided greater opportunities for local people to become involved in the scrutiny of government policies, delivery of local services and allocation of funding to communities in **South Africa**.

WOMANKIND partner, the **Gender Advocacy Programme (GAP)**, plays a key role in getting women from marginalised communities to start a dialogue with local-government decision-makers. GAP workers 'translate' the legal jargon of legislation into accessible language, and mobilise and train women to build their skills and confidence, so that they can advocate and lobby for themselves.

In 2005, GAP assisted the municipal government in Drakenstein, Western Cape, to **develop a gender policy**. This initiative arose out of research GAP conducted which examined and assessed how the impact of municipal services differed, depending on whether you were a man or a woman. One of the many recommendations to emerge from the report was the need for municipalities to take steps to strengthen internal structures to promote gender equality across all functions of municipal government to: ensure that municipal services were better able to respond to women and men's specific needs and interests; and to encourage a more gender-sensitive, organisational culture within the municipality and in all its systems and processes. The process of formulating the policy took seven months in total and involved focus-group sessions with all stakeholders, including the mayor, deputy-mayor, key officials and staff within the municipal government and, crucially, community women, to help the municipality understand issues of diversity, inequality and gender discrimination in the community.

Listening to women when drafting policies

Consulting local women was at the heart of the process. Over 10 weeks they took part in a series of focus groups at the municipal-council chambers with councillors, municipal officials, community-based organisations and trade unions. By working together, the participants were able to agree the key priority areas to be addressed — and to establish roles and responsibilities for implementing the plan.

The issues they raised ranged from concern about the lack of support



Posters illustrating the role of memorable slogans in calling for change: 'A stronger nation needs women's representation.'

for women providing, on a voluntary basis, home-based care to those living with HIV and AIDS, to dealing with domestic violence and refuse collection. Women municipality staff were also given the opportunity to raise their concerns and suggest ways of transforming the institutional culture by, for example, increasing the number of women in management, and paying greater consideration to the specific needs of female staff.

Creating a level playing-field at the beginning of meetings so the women did not feel intimidated by officials was key to their success. The methodology used in focus groups deliberately encouraged participants to work collectively around key themes. There were also opportunities to exchange skills and share learning between participants and the facilitators and amongst participants themselves. This all helped to establish an environment of mutual respect and understanding.

'Women must be involved in politics because we need help in the community and they can address the politicians. Those in higher ranks must know what is happening in our communities. Maybe one day the whole of South Africa will be led by women, because women are so strong!'

Florence Njila, from Paarl district, Western Cape

Unfortunately, despite all the hard work, Drakenstein municipality did not formally adopt the policy at the end of the process but, in the words of one of the organisers, 'one shouldn't undermine the empowering aspects of the process itself where women felt that they were able to influence policy and programmes at local level.'

As we write, GAP is continuing to push for the adoption and implementation of the gender policy. In the meantime, in recognition of the strength of the process and resultant draft policy in Drakenstein, GAP was contracted by the Department of Provincial and Local Government to draw up a national gender-policy framework. This was finalised and launched in September 2007. This policy provides guidelines on how to integrate women and men's specific needs and concerns in all aspects of policymaking and WOMANKIND and GAP hope that, ultimately, the policy will be used by all municipalities in South Africa.

(see report on WOMANKIND's website at www.womankind.org.uk)

CASE STUDY

SECURING SAFE WORKING CONDITIONS

A farm in Grabouw, the commercial centre for what is the largest, single-export fruit-producing area in Southern Africa, produces apples for the local and international market and is a great example of how, once they understand their rights, women can take action and realise their entitlements.

Women on the Grabouw farm did occupational health and safety training with Women on Farms in April 2005. Shortly after, they were instructed by the farm manager to go into a section of the orchard that had just been sprayed with pesticides. In the past this had been normal practice and the women would have complied without thinking twice. But because they'd attended the WFP workshop, the women refused to comply and, at a meeting with farm management, they challenged the manager on his failure to adhere to the relevant provisions of the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

During the meeting the women explained that they now knew how to protect themselves from exposure to pesticides. The manager was not happy, but eventually conceded and, since then, the women have not been forced to work under such unacceptable conditions. A small victory by women, for women!

3 DEMANDING AND NEGOTIATING RIGHTS IN THE WORKPLACE

One of the basic rights of women is not to be discriminated against in the workplace — but women continue to experience marginalisation and abuse in employment which prevents them participating equally and achieving their full potential.

Not only do they tend to be paid less than their male counterparts, but they are more likely to be employed in low-paid work in the informal economy because work that is seen as traditionally 'female', such as caring and cleaning, tends to be underpaid and undervalued. These jobs are characterised by poor working conditions, with little or no labour-standards protection. In addition, women's massive contribution to agriculture globally is not well-recognised within the market economy.

In order to improve their rights and have a say in what they want and need from employers, women need a voice in the workplace. Yet they are often sidelined, even within the unions which are meant to represent their needs, because they tend to be dominated by men.

Organising for change

Women on Farms Project, another WOMANKIND partner in the Western Cape region of **South Africa**, provides support to women working in the agricultural sector so that they can organise and speak for themselves. WFP’s approach has centred on building the capacity of women as agents of change and as leaders in their farming community, but it also works with men and young people to counter stereotypes and strengthen women’s position in agriculture and the home – and facilitates networking between people from different farms to learn from each other’s experiences and strengthen collective action.

Providing training to build women’s confidence and skills

Women on Farms provides training on personal development and leadership skills – in addition to training in specialist areas, such as labour rights and the safe use of pesticides – and their sexual- and reproductive-health rights and services. Farm committees mobilise to lobby and raise awareness amongst farmers and their community on a range of issues, including housing, labour contracts, working conditions, access to basic healthcare and sick leave – as well as sexual violence perpetrated by farmers and farm managers.

As a result, women involved in the programmes are gradually learning to represent and help themselves and secure significant improvements in their living and working conditions.

In 2004, Women on Farms’ support for the development of farm-women’s participation and agency led to the creation of a sister organisation, the women-led trade union *Sikhula Sonke* (‘We Grow Together’), which plays a very active role in negotiating better working and living conditions for its predominantly female membership. Around 3,650 members now take part in negotiations through 85 farm committees. *Sikhula Sonke* members often speak on behalf of farm workers on key platforms such as public hearings on the agricultural-sector minimum wage.

4 PROMOTING WOMEN’S ROLE IN ADVANCING PEACE AND SECURITY

Women suffer disproportionately during and after war and civil conflict, because existing inequalities are magnified and social networks and government infrastructure break down, leaving them more vulnerable to displacement, violence and abuse. They are often portrayed as victims



Women on Farms, in Western Cape, lobby on housing, farmworkers’ terms and conditions – and sexual violence in the workplace.

of conflict, but this ignores the crucial role that women play in negotiating peace, preventing outbreaks of violence and providing support to those affected by conflict.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, adopted in October 2000, stresses the importance of women's equal and full participation as active agents in peace and security. But governments have been slow to implement it and have made little effort to integrate gender perspectives in conflict prevention, management and resolution. A review of progress five years after the adoption of 1325 highlighted that women are still massively under-represented in decision-making to negotiate peace agreements or post-conflict reconstruction processes; defence-force peacekeepers are not trained in gender analysis, and few women participate in peacekeeping missions.

Challenging prevailing cultural norms in Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, a country that has experienced some of the world's most brutal and protracted violent conflicts, there have been significant gains in the numbers of women in Parliament in recent years — there are currently 91 female MPs representing over 25 per cent of the Lower House in the National Assembly — but this has not delivered true empowerment for women, as some Western leaders have claimed. In reality, women MPs are regularly silenced or intimidated. Women's-rights activists express deep frustration at the little say they have in setting the development-aid and reconstruction agenda for their country — and ordinary Afghan women continue to face systematic discrimination and violence in their households and communities.

WOMANKIND has been supporting three Afghan women's organisations — **the Afghan Women's Education Centre, the Afghan Women's Network and the Afghan Women's Resource Centre** — in Kabul, Jalalabad, Mazar-i-Sharif and Peshawar since 2003. We are promoting the active participation of women and girls in Afghan society, by giving them the practical skills and resources they need to rebuild and develop their communities after decades of conflict.

Afghan women face enormous obstacles: violence against women and girls is pervasive within Afghan society; deeply entrenched patriarchal attitudes and values dictate that women should be confined to the

home and should not get involved in politics; and the deteriorating security situation combined with grinding poverty overshadows every aspect of daily life for ordinary Afghans, as well as posing huge risks and stressful conditions for the staff of WOMANKIND’s partner organisations. But gradually they are starting to see change in the communities in which they work. By **providing education on basic literacy, women’s rights within Islam, conflict resolution — and training in vocational skills** — women and young girls are beginning to develop the knowledge and confidence they need to overcome poverty and participate in everyday life.

Mayhan (right) attends AWN’s youth programmes where she learns about politics, the constitution and women’s human rights. Her mother says: *‘When she first wanted to join the youth group, I did not want her to because I didn’t like anything political, but now I’ve changed my mind. Now she knows more than me on these issues. I was surprised because I didn’t know what politics was, or who a politician was. Now I realise politics has a link with economics and now I am thinking about that all the time.’*



Youth committee members get things changed within their schools – and support other young women in the community.

Afghans’ habit of sharing anything they learn with family members, neighbours and friends means that this knowledge is spread to others — and the impact of the training grows. Another key to their success has been the strong relationships partners have established with community and religious leaders — this means their work is widely trusted and respected.

Encouraging young women to ‘have their say’

WOMANKIND’s Afghan partners have also established **Youth Committees**, creating opportunities for participation and leadership among young women. Youth Committees work within their schools to highlight important matters such as child rights, the environment, changes needed in the curriculum, and early/forced marriage. Supported by AWN, they run small campaigns with their peers and teachers to put issues on the school’s agenda and to push for change. In less than three years they have successfully secured more sports activities at school, launched a tree-planting project in their school grounds, and run journalism courses. The teenagers also use their new

leadership skills to talk to the families of girls who are not allowed to attend school, or are about to be taken out of school for marriage, so that they can carry on their education.

'The biggest change is that they have the courage to talk to people, speak publicly, in front of others. They have new ideas, can express their ideas. They can convince others.' WOMANKIND Afghanistan Programme evaluation, 2007.

Working with Afghan men and boys

A critical aspect of WOMANKIND partners' work in 2008-9 will be integrating more activities which engage men and boys in promoting gender equality. This will bring about a longer-term shift in established gender norms and attitudes in the home and the wider community — while maintaining the integrity of the work focused on women.

Our partners also campaign at the national level on a range of different issues, such as improving the legislation to tackle violence against women and ending impunity for the perpetrators of violence. WOMANKIND's lobbying of the UK Government, the EU and other key players in Afghanistan, such as NATO, complements these efforts. In particular, we are continuing to push for more resources for the Afghan women's-rights organisations that operate so effectively within their communities — and for women to be represented at all decision-making levels in peace and reconstruction initiatives.

Alternative political structures – Somalia

The sustained and violent inter-clan warfare between Somalia's five fiercely independent clans has resulted in widespread poverty and deprivation — with women hit hardest in this strictly patriarchal society. Women have experienced multiple human-rights violations, from rape to displacement and violence. The peace and reconciliation effort launched in 1999 failed to incorporate women into the process.

WOMANKIND's partner, **Save Somali Women and Children (SSWC)**, challenged women's exclusion by initiating the formation of a 'sixth' clan consisting of women, which has been officially recognised and incorporated into the peace process. This has given women the opportunity to negotiate their gender-specific needs and interests and participate in politics and the democratic government planned for 2010.

'I want to work among the people of Afghanistan to see the problems and find the solution. I would like to be a politician.'
Mayhan, Kabul Youth Committee leader.

Women's involvement has been key, both in uniting disparate clans and gaining the trust of the population. Significantly, they negotiated the removal of militia roadblocks and the provision of livelihood support for the demobilised militia. By forming the sixth clan, women played a vital part in bringing, if only temporarily, peace to Somalia and have opened up a new space for the participation of women.

As violence and instability threaten once again to undermine the functioning of formal governance structures in Somalia, it is clear that efforts to end the conflict will not succeed unless women's crucial role in conflict prevention and peace-building is fully recognised and addressed.

5 MOBILISING AFTER NATURAL DISASTERS

As with conflict, WOMANKIND has found that it is also women and children who are the most vulnerable during and after natural disasters. They are far more likely to die than men (in the 2004 tsunami, as many as three times as many women as men perished); they face an increased risk of violence — the usual breakdown of law and order leaves women particularly vulnerable — and disaster-relief efforts often fail to take their specific needs into account (for example, sanitary supplies are often in short supply).

Women are rarely given the opportunity to have their say in decisions about relief and reconstruction priorities, which means that many of the plans and decisions made by governments and relief agencies exacerbate existing gender inequalities — for example, the distribution of aid is usually controlled by men despite the fact that women and children account for the majority of displaced persons.

Yet, despite these obstacles, the women WOMANKIND supports have often been at the forefront of unofficial emergency responses — running relief centres, distributing food supplies and administering medical assistance. While they may never have had to respond to an emergency situation before, local women's organisations are able to bring a unique perspective to reconstruction plans: they usually have extensive experience of working with the poorest and most marginalised communities — and can identify the barriers which might prevent them from accessing relief efforts.



**Asha Hagi Elmi
of SSWC: 'My
only clan is
womanhood.'**

Supporting the most marginalised in relief efforts

When the tsunami swept across the Indian Ocean in December 2004, the lives of the Irula indigenous people of the coastal villages of Tamil Nadu in Southern India were devastated. But their specific needs were mostly overlooked in government and non-governmental organisation-led relief efforts.

The Irukulas were already living on the margins of Indian society — displaced from the forests where they traditionally lived, they owned very few assets and were dependent on fishing. They lived in precarious housing and had little access to education, placing them amongst the most marginalised societies in Southern India.

But it was the women who were most affected when the tsunami struck: many died because they were unable to swim or because they stayed behind to help children and older people when the waves struck; cash relief was often given out to men as heads of the household, with little or no focus on women's needs; and early marriage — particularly between very young girls and older men who had lost their wives — increased, severely compromising those girls' development, constraining their decision-making and life choices even further.

Increasing women's access to resources

WOMANKIND's partner in India, the Irula Tribal Women's Welfare Society (ITWWS), was able to turn the tragedy into an opportunity to **empower Irula women and to increase their participation in local governance**. Not only was the organisation able to rebuild housing for entire communities, they also ensured that the houses were registered in the women's names, providing them with land rights for the first time; and helped them to register bank accounts in their own names so they could save money from desperately needed income-generation projects and channel it into healthcare and education for their children. As a result, the women have been able to **increase their standing in the community and have gained greater respect from men**.

Leadership skills and training

The leadership training ITWWS had provided to women before the



These Irula women turned the tsunami tragedy into an opportunity – with WOMANKIND's partner's help they built these new homes and gained land rights.

tsunami also gave them the skills and confidence they needed to represent their concerns to local government officials and to demand basic amenities such as water and electricity. In the words of one woman from Masimaganagar Village, 'Before the tsunami, we never saw a government officer, never went to a Panchayat, bank or office. Now we sit with them and demand from them.'

6 THE MOST MARGINALISED HAVE THEIR SAY

WOMANKIND's work on the ground over nearly 20 years shows that the obstacles preventing women and girls from participating in decision-making are often further compounded by other forms of discrimination, based on age, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, caste or refugee status. These constitute an enormous challenge to creating and sustaining interventions that can increase women's influence and participation in decision-making in a way that integrates and reflects the different issues and agendas of marginalised women.

These different layers of discrimination require us to understand that what works to advance the rights and opportunities of, for example, a white middle-class woman living in North America, will not necessarily work for a poor indigenous woman living in a rural community in India. It forces us to examine the strategies we use to support the most marginalised and socially excluded women and girls.

Using the media in Bolivia

The rights of indigenous people, who constitute around 60 per cent of the population, have been invisible in Bolivia for centuries. Their ancestral lands have been expropriated on a massive scale, and their natural resources plundered — with virtually no benefit to the indigenous communities themselves. As a result they are far poorer than non-indigenous people, have less access to health and education — and higher mortality rates. Gender discrimination means that this pattern is most entrenched for indigenous women.

The election of the country's first indigenous President, Evo Morales, in 2006 was seen as an unprecedented opportunity to redress some of the injustices of the past by giving indigenous people more of a say in the running of the country — and a share of the proceeds of the country's vast oil and gas reserves. A number of women, including indigenous women, were awarded key government posts when Morales formed his

new Cabinet. Out of the 18 Ministries, five Ministers are women and two of them indigenous women. Thirty-four per cent of the Constituent Assembly — responsible for drafting a new constitution for Bolivia — are women, and around 40 per cent of them indigenous women, including the President of the Constituent Assembly.

Morales' government has also committed itself to developing policies that support the poorest Bolivians, of whom women are the majority. In 2006 he announced he was increasing the salaries of workers in the education and health sector — the vast majority of whom are women — by 7 per cent, and introducing legislation for registering for National Identity Cards, as most of the undocumented people are women.

WOMANKIND's Bolivian partner, **Red ADA**, is led by and works with indigenous women to promote women's rights within their communities — and to challenge negative perceptions of indigenous women outside their communities by **ensuring that local women's stories and experiences are reported in the media.**

Red ADA has made extensive use of radio broadcasts to disseminate information to women in the nine 'departments' of Bolivia, and to encourage them to share their views and concerns with others. Information and programmes are prepared in Spanish, Quechua and Aymara, to ensure that they reach the indigenous communities. As many of the women are illiterate, radio is an ideal medium for overcoming this barrier to political organising — and helps indigenous women make their voices heard.

Red ADA also trains and supports journalists all over the country on gender equality and women's human rights, to create allies in the struggle to get indigenous women's voices and needs heard in the public arena. Politicians, public officials and other opinion leaders debate these issues on the radio shows and in the newsletters that they produce for their networks. As a result of this support and, buoyed by the growing opportunities for indigenous women — and men — to exercise their political rights in Bolivia, the indigenous women in the communities where our partner works are feeling more confident about asserting their rights.

Through the radio programmes, it has become clear that, **for indigenous women, exercising their rights depends on securing land rights and**

'For Bolivia's indigenous women, exercising their rights depends on securing land rights and access to natural resources'

access to natural resources, which they see as the basis for their identity, culture and tradition. Violence against women is also a concern within and outside their communities, but they are clear that this stems not only from their subordination within their families and communities, but from the historical discrimination against collective indigenous rights.

Red ADA believes the challenge now is to integrate the distinct vision and experience of indigenous women into the broader women’s-rights movement in Bolivia — and to develop joint political agendas and ways of working that respect diversity, equality, and the complementarity of rights — this means embracing both individual and collective rights.

Young women in the UK voice their concerns

Girls and young women also experience additional barriers to their participation in crucial decision-making processes — because of their age AND because of their sex. The views of young women and men are often overlooked because they are thought to lack the knowledge, credibility and experience to make informed decisions. For young women, these assumptions are further compounded by their sex. Other factors, such as their ethnicity, may also combine to further exacerbate the discrimination they face in everyday life.

Challenging stereotypes

WOMANKIND’s UK programme, *Challenging Violence, Changing Lives*, works in schools to help create an environment where violence against women and girls is not accepted. The programme has highlighted how prevailing attitudes and beliefs that support violence — and the failure of schools to address different forms of violent behaviour — combine to create a climate of intimidation and fear that prevents many young women from speaking out. It has also shown that more ‘safe’ spaces are needed so that young women can get together and express themselves.

One aspect of the programme has focused on tackling sexual bullying in schools. Research conducted at the beginning of the programme showed that 1 in 3 female students in the UK has been the target of sexual bullying. Later in the programme, a group of young people interviewed fellow pupils and found that over 55 per cent of young women and 30 per cent of young men surveyed had experienced inappropriate touching.



Red ADA broadcasts in indigenous languages all over Bolivia. The information they provide helps even the ‘hardest-to-reach’ women exercise their rights.

SEXUAL BULLYING

WOMANKIND defines sexual bullying as any bullying behaviour, whether physical or non-physical, that is based on a person's sexuality or gender. It is when sexuality is used as a weapon by boys or by girls. It can be carried out to a person's face, behind their back, or by using technology.

Creating safe spaces to discuss 'taboo' subjects

Young women and men's **active participation** in the creation of a school environment where violence against women is not tolerated is at the heart of this programme. WOMANKIND has developed lesson plans and activities that enable young people to discuss the causes and consequences of violence, providing them with the tools to share their experiences and articulate their concerns.

An essential component of these lesson plans is building a safe and supportive environment for both young women and men to openly discuss the issue and to enable them to develop the skills required to negotiate gender stereotypes. WOMANKIND provides training and support to teachers to help them facilitate these discussions.

WOMANKIND also supports young people to raise awareness of the issue of sexual bullying within their school and with local authorities.

'Together we looked at how sexual bullying affects people around us — girls and boys. It was obvious that no one really stands up to the issue. There are different types of sexual bullying happening all around us. It is time something is done to stop it...as a group it made us feel good that we had a chance to participate in bringing sexual bullying to a stop...we want the government to listen to us and raise awareness of the problem by letting people know exactly what it is and how to challenge it.' Deborah Felix, a North London school student, addressing policymakers at a WOMANKIND event, November 2007.

Other activities involve drafting recommendations for school anti-bullying policies and behavioural guidelines. We have also worked with young people to draft a code of practice to stop sexual bullying in schools. See www.womankind.org.uk/sexual-bullying-definition.html



WOMANKIND's lesson plans and activities support teachers and students to discuss 'taboo' subjects — and address them in school.

Moving forward

'It is clear that no single approach or quick-fix solution will resolve the ongoing marginalisation and exclusion of women from decision-making.

The key to progress lies in the combination of building individual women's skills and knowledge, continuing to develop a strong and inclusive women's movement, injecting greater political will and sustained efforts at the national and international levels to promote women's participation at all levels — and tackling gender inequality.

Women's ability to organise, mobilise and influence, in spite of the challenges they face, is at the heart of many of the gains already made. But, as the stories in *Speaking Out* reveal, much more needs to be done to tackle the structural and societal barriers that underpin women's exclusion.

While the approaches WOMANKIND and our partners use to promote women's participation vary according to the context, the strategies also have much in common, such as: strengthening the skills and capacity of women — as voters, constituents, candidates, elected officials, and activists; forming coalitions or networks of organisations and individuals committed to the promotion of women's participation at all levels of decision-making — to increase public interest and ensure that policymakers and the public pay attention; using the media — to challenge gender stereotypes and behaviour that prevent women from participating equally with men; lobbying for increased funding — to strengthen women's organisations and networks working to tackle gender inequality; and working with public officials - to introduce gender analysis and women's concerns in all areas of government.

The following recommendations are based on what WOMANKIND and its partners have learned from nearly 20 years of working to enable women to voice their concerns and claim their rights.

We call on governments, the UN, the international financial institutions, civil society — including the private sector and NGOs — and other international-development stakeholders to take these actions to address women's marginalisation in all aspects of decision-making:

- ▶ **Implement international women's human-rights commitments**
 - the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Convention

on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 must be implemented in full; increase funding and political will to implement the commitments set out in these instruments as a pre-condition for achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals by 2015, with additional support for women's organisations and networks working to advance gender equality and women's human rights.

- ▶ **Involve women in all pre and post-disaster planning and reconstruction efforts** — pay particular attention to women's specific needs and vulnerabilities by conducting a thorough gender analysis when planning responses to natural disasters; ensure relief efforts reach single-woman households and widows, use relief efforts as an opportunity to promote social change and advance the rights of women in the community; raise awareness of frameworks used for analysing gender in emergency situations, such as the Sphere Project guidelines — and conduct proper consultation and dialogue with women in the community both before and after disasters.
- ▶ **Involve women in all aspects of conflict prevention and peace-building** — raise awareness of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and promote women's involvement in all stages of any peace negotiation and the reconstruction process. Ensure a gender perspective is included in any Truth & Reconciliation processes, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programmes — and at all stages of security-sector reform. Ensure services and support get to those women who have suffered gender-based violence during conflict.
- ▶ **Promote women's participation at all levels of political decision-making** — promote the use of quotas and other positive-action mechanisms to increase women's access to and participation in politics — and monitor their impact; reform voting systems that hinder the election and representation of women; encourage shared parenting and domestic responsibilities between women and men to enable women to participate in politics and other decision-making processes; increase funding for initiatives that promote community and national-level political dialogue and activism amongst women; promote women leaders as positive role-models in the media; increase recognition given to community-level and informal mechanisms of decision-making.
- ▶ **Prioritise women's full participation in public policymaking** — provide technical and financial support to enable women, and,



Indigenous women must be fully involved for governance to be truly representative and effective.

particularly the most marginalised, such as young women and indigenous women, to participate fully in the development and implementation of national policies, legislation, programmes, projects, budgets and regulatory frameworks, to ensure they are informed by and allocated to meet women and men's different needs; decentralise decision-making to strengthen democratic governance and make it easier for women to participate; ensure young women, indigenous women and other traditionally marginalised groups are fully involved throughout these processes.

- ▶ **Promote measures to end violence against women** — publicly condemn all acts of violence against women as an abuse of their human rights and a major barrier to their equal participation in decision-making processes; include mandatory indicators on reducing violence against women when measuring the quality of governance; take all necessary measures to eliminate violence against women, including strengthening legal frameworks, providing support to survivors of violence and increasing investment in prevention initiatives.
- ▶ **Challenge gender stereotypes** — promote gender-sensitive guidelines for media coverage and representation and encourage public and community media to work in support of gender equality and women's human rights; promote gender-sensitive guidelines for national curricula to challenge gender stereotypes and support women's participation in society — and to encourage them to take on leadership roles and provide training and support to teachers to enable them to incorporate these guidelines in their work.
- ▶ **Promote education and training opportunities for women and girls** — ensure that men and women, and boys and girls are educated on girls' rights — and encourage their active participation in eliminating violence against women and girls.
- ▶ **Ensure equal opportunities for women in the workplace** — monitor gender representation in different vocations and levels of work with a view to increasing women's participation in decision-making at all levels; take action to end sexual harassment, violence and other forms of abuse in the workplace.
- ▶ **Promote research and data collection on women's participation** — increase the availability of sex-disaggregated data on women's civil and political participation; promote research into exactly how women's participation at different levels brings about significant change in political, economic and social processes.

Find out more

Electoral Reform Society — provides information and resources on public elections and electoral procedures, lobbies politicians, political parties and opinion makers, analyses public elections and implements an education programme for schools, colleges and the general public. www.electoral-reform.org.uk/article.php?id=35

Global 50/50 campaign — read the latest news on the campaign to increase women's participation and representation in governments around the world. www.wedo.org/campaigns.aspx?mode=5050main

International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics — online workspace for women candidates, elected officials and those interested in advancing women in politics. www.iknowpolitics.org

Inter-Parliamentary Union — focal point for worldwide parliamentary dialogue. www.ipu.org

International IDEA (Institute for Democracy & Electoral Assistance) — provides resources, expertise and a platform for debate on democracy issues. www.idea.int/gender/index.cfm

Peacewomen.org — full text of UN Security Council resolution 1325 can be found here, together with full history and analysis of its implementation and useful links and latest news related to women and conflict. www.peacewomen.org/un/sc/1325.html

The Sphere Project — Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response, including guidelines on mainstreaming gender issues. www.sphereproject.org/

WOMANKIND Worldwide — go to www.womankind.org.uk

How is it possible that, in 2008, the views and concerns of half the world continue to be sidelined and ignored?

In *Speaking Out*, WOMANKIND Worldwide and its partners show that, with the right support and strategies, women and girls *can* realise their human right to contribute to the political, socio-economic and cultural development of their communities and countries.

WOMANKIND calls on the international community to urgently tackle the barriers to women's participation; barriers being challenged right now in Afghanistan, Somalia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Peru, Albania, Bolivia – and the UK. Without women's full participation, equality, sustainable development and peace can never be achieved.



WOMANKIND Worldwide

Development House

56-64 Leonard Street

London EC2A 4LT

Phone: 020 7549 0360

Website: www.womankind.org.uk

e-mail: info@womankind.org.uk

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