K4D | Knowledge, evidence and learning for development

Effectiveness of donor support to women in formal political leadership – Narrative review

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Question

Please provide a selection of rigorous references about the effectiveness of donor support to help women in leadership positions in formal politics be effective. What roles do donors have in supporting these efforts, and what is their effectiveness? Where possible, identify evidence on various types of interventions, their effectiveness, the challenges, and the conditions required (including the wider context) for the interventions to be effective.

Contents

1. Overview

Domestic and external pressures to increase the number of women in formal politics have started to bear fruit over the past 20 years. Overall, this has led to a greater presence of women in elected, appointed, and recruited positions in public bodies, and (to a lesser extent) to their rise to senior positions in these settings. Yet, **rigorous evidence is scarce and patchy** on the support that external aid actors have provided women leaders in low- and middle-income countries[1]. This narrative review synthesises a selection of key evidence based on a rapid, non-systematic literature review (this makes it subject to limitations)[2].

The evidence base offers no comparative rankings on which types of interventions, and which specific interventions, have been more effective. Overall, it shows that **the interventions most frequently used by aid actors, including donors, have had mixed effectiveness**, although on balance outcomes and results seem to be positive. There have been four major strands of interventions: combining multiple types of interventions; directly supporting women leaders; mainstreaming gender and transforming political institutions; and focusing on political parties. Within each, **common types of interventions** have included:

- **Creating and institutionalising networks** – among elected women (e.g. caucuses), between elected women and men, or between elected women and other stakeholders, such as women's rights groups. This is among the more successful interventions.

- **Supporting relations between elected women and constituencies**, e.g. facilitating dialogue with individual constituents or organisations, so that representatives better understand and represent women's needs and priorities. This intervention has been effective, but has not been used much.

- **Supporting parliaments to become gender-responsive and women-friendly**. This can address women and men. It includes, for example, gender audits and monitoring, setting up structural bodies for gender-responsive policies and budgets, and supporting legislation and policy for gender equality. It can also be about encouraging the promotion of more women into leadership, as well as shifting parliamentary norms, infrastructure, and culture. Activities to do this can include media campaigns, engagement with men parliamentarians and citizens, better rearranging of sitting hours, entitling members to parental leave, providing breastfeeding rooms, and establishing childcare centres in parliament. Interventions in this area appear to have largely been effective.

- **Building up capacity and influence through trainings or peer learning**. This can cover diverse topics, such as the formal functioning of institutions or parties, leadership skills, strategic practical knowledge on politics, or policy issues. Such interventions mostly address women. Effectiveness varies widely, but can be achieved when there is a combination of high-quality programming and favourable conditions, such as politically savvy coalitions of men or women representatives in favour of gender equality.

- **Conducting, supporting, or facilitating dialogue, advocacy, or influencing** for gender equality or women leaders' effectiveness. This can involve elites, organised groups (e.g. media, civil society organisations, marginalised groups), wider society, and both men or women. It can be about building coalitions, or bringing together opponents. Effectiveness has been mixed, though positive overall, and seems specific to context.

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[1] In addition, some successful support involved no foreign aid, and resulted instead from domestic dynamics.

[2] See the annotated bibliography associated with this report for details (Combaz, 2018).

- **Working to make political parties gender-responsive**, in their internal organisation and in their governance after elections. Effectiveness seems to be mixed.
- **Supporting women's participation in negotiations about peace or political transitions, in peacebuilding, or in the writing of a constitution**. This is typically used in 'fragile or conflict-affected states'. It usually takes the form of funding and advocacy by donors. Effectiveness has been mixed, with significant failures to even request, let alone obtain, women's participation and influence.

There are variations by region and country in the interventions frequently used, and in which interventions were effective. Further, aid actors have under-used some effective interventions.

Many common interventions can be effective if designed, implemented, and combined well, and if enabled by favourable external variables (those are often specific to each context). **Successful strategies balance comprehensiveness and context-based prioritisation**. The most effective strategies reflect the combination of factors that affect women's individual and collective political agency (e.g. capacities, resources, and social norms). They bring together multiple interventions, sectors, and stakeholders, and work at multiple levels (e.g. local, national, and regional). They address multiple inequalities (e.g. class, ethnicity, disability), not just gender. They work with groups of women, not just individuals. They also factor in the roles of families, communities, men, and boys, as allies or resistors at elite and grassroots levels. Further, they do not assume that women will advance gender equality. Instead, they connect with diverse women and men who are able and willing to do so, exploring how to collaborate and provide support. They work politically, and look beyond the formal State. They providing ongoing support over more than one or two years, cover the entire electoral cycle, and seize political opportunities. They use peer-based, collective learning, providing it through established institutions.

On the other hand, the most effective strategies also entail strategic prioritisation based on the country context, to choose the right sequencing and interventions. This requires a deep understanding of context – not just on gender, but also on formal and informal politics, economy, society, culture, and security, and how these interact with gender issues. Approaches are then tailored accordingly, rather than copying 'good practices'. Interventions draw on cultural understandings to reduce cultural resistance to gender equality. They build on local initiatives and locally defined needs. They partner with local actors (e.g. organisations, parties, or women leaders) as relevant. For some donors, it is effective to position themselves as neutral enablers of exchanges and learning between and among diverse actors in State and society.

Aid actors' own practices affect effectiveness. They need to commit enough funding and staff, and apply good programming. They also need to promote women into leadership, stop relying on separate gender programmes and teams, and incentivise collaboration, not silos.

Lastly, **a number of factors and conditions outside interventions matter**, but evidence is insufficient and too context-specific to identify the necessary or sufficient variables. One finding is that even otherwise effective programme will fail when political, economic, social, or cultural factors and conditions are overwhelmingly negative, for example due to structural gender inequalities, or to patronage-based loyalty to party over gender justice. Conversely, positive factors include: a higher presence of women in formal politics; higher socio-economic development of the country; the presence of a strong autonomous women's movement with links to government or bureaucracy; politically savvy coalitions of men and women committed to gender equality; and women leaders having been elected by a constituency rather than appointed.

2. Methodology

This report is based on rigorous evidence selected through a rapid, non-systematic review of academic, practitioner, and policy literature. Its findings and recommendations should therefore be understood in the context of these limitations. Its given scope was to look at literature about donor support to women in leadership positions at any level of formal politics (national or local), in low- and middle-income countries, drawing on references published in the past 10 years (2008-2018). The steps involved in the searches and selection of references are summarised in the methodology section of the annotated bibliography associated with the present report (Combaz, 2018).

3. State of knowledge

There is scant research and knowledge on the effectiveness of donor support to women in formal politics in low- and middle-income countries[3]. **A majority of the available relevant references are based on rigorous methods**. The evidence base, taken as a whole, is based on diverse data – quantitative, qualitative, and mixed –, and diverse methods. It involves a fairly balanced mix of academic, practitioner, and policy literature (with academic literature somewhat less represented). Taken as a whole, the literature examines all world regions, and many different individual countries. In addition, the findings from the more rigorous references are **conclusive**, although they cannot always demonstrate more than correlations. Findings are also broadly **consistent** across references.

On the other hand, the relevant literature has **several weaknesses**. There are **no systematic comparisons** to identify and rank which types of interventions, and which individual interventions, are most effective relative to one another. There is uneven evidence about effectiveness regarding interventions. There are also few general findings about the **factors and conditions *outside* interventions that affect effectiveness**. There is **limited diversity in the institutions and individuals who publish evaluations or studies on the topic** (although there remains significant diversity among academic and policy authors). Moreover, practitioner literature typically considers the effects of interventions in the **short- or medium-term** only (academic publications, and most policy publications, do not have this problem). There is scant evidence about various **sub-national levels**, and about **more adverse contexts of intervention**, such as FCAS. Thematically, most of the evidence is about interventions that focus on women leaders, while **interventions to change the political environment** are less examined. Lastly, there is a lack of systematic engagement with how distinct and intersecting **structures of inequalities** (such as class, caste, age, ethnicity, culture, disability, and sexualities) shape women leaders' experiences and how they would affect the effectiveness of donor support.

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[3] For further details on the state of knowledge, see the corresponding section in the annotated bibliography associated with this report (Combaz, 2018). For reviews of the state of research, knowledge, and aid on this topic, see, in addition to the annotated bibliography (Combaz, 2018): Buvinic, Furst-Nichols, & Koolwal, 2014; Domingo et al., 2015; Domingo, Holmes, Rocha Menocal, & Jones, 2013; O'Connel, 2011; O'Connell, 2011; O'Neil & Plank, 2015; Seckinelgin & Klot, 2014; Wales, 2016.

4. Findings about interventions

General findings, presented in sub-section 4.1, are drawn primarily from references about approaches and programmes that combine multiple types of interventions, and from references that present cross-cutting findings based on a variety of interventions. From that basis, additional points related to the same findings that were found in references about specific types of interventions were aggregated into the section as well. The rest of the sub-sections (4.2 to 4.4) present any further findings that are associated with specific strands of interventions.

Throughout this section, findings about interventions in adverse contexts are presented separately at the end of each sub-section. These are about settings of armed conflict or their aftermath, other settings with high levels of violence, and States with weak institutions or capacities[4]. They are presented separately because a number of interventions are specific to them, and because several rigorous references emphasise that findings from other contexts are not necessarily applicable to adverse contexts. A systematic review thus notes that many studies generalise their findings beyond their context, wrongly giving the impression that "all of the factors identified in developing, developed and transitional democracies are in some way applicable to fragile and conflict states" (Seckinelgin & Klot, 2014, p. 43).

4.1. General findings about multiple interventions and contexts

4.1.1. General findings about the types of interventions, and their effectiveness

Aid actors have used a few major types and combinations of interventions, and effectiveness has been mixed, though seemingly positive overall (see e.g. on USAID Krook, Ashman, Moughari, & Pournik, 2014, pp. 1, 35). External players in humanitarian and political assistance can provide critical support, but can also compromise progress (IDEA, 2013, p. 362).

Within programmes, effectiveness has been uneven among different activities. This is the case at UN Women with parliamentary support, which is the organisation's most common programming for women's political participation (UN Women, 2018, p. 45). Further, **how central women's political empowerment** (WPE) **is to a programme sometimes determines its effectiveness**. For example, in 56 USAID programmes dealing with women's leadership and political empowerment between 2008 and 2013, WPE was a secondary objective of programmes on transition and democracy in most cases. In such programmes, fuzzy designs and a lack of follow-through on WPE led to weak performance on WPE (Krook et al., 2014, pp. 1–2, 35).

Further, **there can be regional variations in which interventions were used and were effective**, as found in the meta-evaluation of UN Women's multi-donor Fund for Gender Equality (FGE) (Barnes, Bishop, & Vaca, 2016, p. 34):

- Asia-Pacific and Africa: community-driven approaches were most effective. There was "a strong focus on garnering community and family support for women's political participation". Projects in Asia-Pacific also used innovative strategies (including through information and communication technologies, including social media) "to connect women elected leaders with women's organisations and movements in order to increase their capacity to represent and voice the needs and priorities of women in their communities".

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[4] In some references, such contexts are referred to as 'fragile or conflict-affected States' (FCAS).

- Arab States region: the focus was on supporting women leaders' and elected representatives' participation in normative processes, "to secure women's rights, foster coalitions, and leverag[e] international instruments".
- Latin America and the Caribbean: the focus was "on increasing and reinforcing a strong body of women leaders through capacity building, and leveraging this to influence legislative and policies to advance decent work and social protection".

In FCAS, interventions seeking to connect state-building and gender justice have had **some success** with women's participation in formal politics, but there have also been a number of **lost opportunities** (O'Connell, 2011, p. 455). During transitions, supporting inclusiveness has helped make formal politics women-friendly and gender-responsive (Barnes et al., 2016, p. 5).

4.1.2. General factors and conditions of effectiveness within interventions

Comprehensive strategies that clearly understand and address women's barriers and enabling factors, while identifying the right priorities and sequencing in context (which issues to address first, with what strategies), have led to successful programming (Barnes et al., 2016, p. 35; Krook et al., 2014, p. 35).

Developing comprehensive strategies that address multiple factors and sectors in WPE, and combining multiple interventions towards this

Programming and theories of change "need to **reflect the combination of factors** that support" women's leadership over time (O'Neil & Plank, 2015, p. 22). For example, while support for particular leadership skills can matter, leadership development needs to be embedded in the "broader social, political and institutional context" (O'Neil & Plank, 2015, p. 22).

Combining multiple interventions and sectors is crucial. Gender programmes alone "cannot increase women's substantive power", so sectoral programmes are "needed to build the capabilities and resources" women need (O'Neil & Domingo, 2016, p. 12). In particular, women's "political power is strongly associated with their economic power" (O'Neil & Domingo, 2016, p. 12). For example, in programming for marginalised women in politics, combined interventions may involve promoting "inclusive constitutional, legislative and legal reforms", reforming political parties, and implementing initiatives for income generation, literacy, physical infrastructure, and community education (IDEA, 2013, pp. 357–358).

Connecting various sectors of interventions often takes results further and makes programmes more effective, as progress in one domain can lead to progress in another. This is true in programming to support marginalised women in politics (IDEA, 2013, pp. 357–358) and in programming about political parties (Ballington et al., 2012, p. 2). It is also true in direct support to women in political leadership. In particular, women's economic empowerment (WEE) can be leveraged to promote women's political participation (Barnes et al., 2016, p. 36; UN Women, 2018, p. 53). Similarly, programming for WPE could create synergies with peace, security, humanitarian action, or environmental decision-making on disaster risk management, climate change, or water (IDEA, 2013, p. 357; UN Women, 2018, p. 53)[5].

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[5] This being said, some authors warn about the complex effects of trying to bring together several policy objectives – see the point about the complex links between peacebuilding and gender later in this sub-section.

Taking action at several levels, and connecting stakeholders within and between levels

Multi-level interventions are very often required – at the local or district level, provincial level, national level, and even international level. This is especially relevant to tackle multiple or intersecting discrimination, e.g. against women from ethnic or religious minorities. Interventions that focus on just one or two levels have often been ineffective (IDEA, 2013, pp. 357–358).

Moreover, donors must also aim to **facilitate "connections among different organisations (peer–peer, grassroots–elite)"**, and to help women organise around common interests and problems without determining their agenda (O'Neil & Domingo, 2016, p. 12). Similarly, where constituency service is important to women MPs' success, aid could promote cooperation between MPs and community-level councillors in charge of economic development (M'Cormack-Hale, 2015, p. 102).

Paying attention to both the formal and informal aspects of political leadership

Where much politics operates in the informal sphere, emphasising women's accomplishments in the formal arena marginalises **the other roles women play which are valued by women leaders' constituents**, and by wider society. International interventions often target leadership only within the formal public sphere, even as some women also exercise strong informal leadership, e.g. as Mammy Queens and Chiefs in Sierra Leone (M'Cormack-Hale, 2015, p. 101).

Working with diverse women, men, girls, and boys, and addressing multiple inequalities

Aid actors should **never assume "that women leaders will act in the interests of women more generally"** (O'Neil & Domingo, 2016, p. 32). Participation or leadership by women, and gender equality are two related but distinct objectives[6]. Aid actors must examine how the 'critical mass' of elected women engages with gender, and what kind of legislation it advances (Tadros, 2011, pp. 5–6). Otherwise, they may legitimise agendas that are "antithetical to gender justice under the guise" that women have advanced them (Tadros, 2011, p. 6).

Providing specific support to *marginalised* groups of women in politics by tackling multiple inequalities has positive results. This requires considering that more than one group experiences marginalisation, that "there are hierarchies and excluded sub-groups" within marginalised groups, and that inequalities between and within groups are interlinked (IDEA, 2013, p. 363). Programmes must address all elements of marginalisation, including by involving men as key influencers, and by involving young women, young men, girls, and boys as agents of change (IDEA, 2013, p. 363). Effective interventions to that end address the cultural context, and provide "a space for marginalized women to organize" (UN Women, 2018, p. 54). Indicators should disaggregate women as both a group and a sub-group, especially when working with youth, persons with disabilities, and other marginalised groups (Krook et al., 2014, p. 4).

In fact, a more productive focus than women leaders is to **look at "the women and men who have an interest in gender equality, the power to advance it, and how they do this** in practice"[7]. To "achieve gender-sensitive policy and better outcomes for poor and marginalised women, it matters which women (and men) have political power" (O'Neil & Domingo, 2016, p. 32). While gender is important, the broader agenda for social justice is critical. Aid policies could "support parties and coalitions not with the most numbers of women but rather those with the

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[6] (O'Neil & Domingo, 2016, p. 32; Seckinelgin & Klot, 2014, pp. 36, 39, 43; Tadros, 2011, p. 4)
[7] (Childs and Krook, 2008, 2009, cited in O'Neil & Domingo, 2016, p. 32)

most progressive gender agendas in parliament", which can comprise men as well as women (Tadros, 2011, p. 6). Aid policies also need to better address "any disconnect between the feminist movement and various power elites", for example by finding "scope for engagement with the gender agenda" among elites (Tadros, 2011, p. 7).

Donors also need to **work with families and communities, not just with women**, to change gendered beliefs and expectations about roles and capabilities (O'Neil & Domingo, 2016, p. 12). For example, so far, the family does not feature in capacity development, despite its proven importance to women's engagement with politics. Capacity support needs to become more about relations than individuals. It should be "tailored to women's ongoing networks of support and influence", to strengthen "the network of enabling agents in which women are embedded" in their families and communities (Tadros, 2011, p. 9). Capacity development for women's leadership may also integrate men, such as key community actors who, in a coalition, would be influential in creating an enabling environment to challenge gender hierarchies (Tadros, 2011, p. 9).

International support should **factor in men's and boys' role** in supporting women's leadership. Men and boys are necessary and critical partners in sustainably changing gender norms while maximising aid resources[8]. A caveat is that depending only upon men political leaders for inclusion can easily make reforms compromised and short-term (IDEA, 2013, p. 360). One effective approach to involve men and boys is **helping male champions for women's leadership emerge, learn, and contribute** (Barnes et al., 2016, pp. 37–38). Successful examples include drawing on men parliamentarians' contributions to gender equality (Palmieri, 2011, p. 3), and involving men in promoting women's participation and gender equality in political parties (Ballington et al., 2012, p. 6; Krook et al., 2014, p. 2). Another approach, for instance in support to marginalised women in politics, is **anchoring efforts in local values and customary structures**, as this is likely to overcome men's resistance to WPE (IDEA, 2013, p. 361).

Developing longer-term, continuous strategies, while seizing opportunities

Programmes should **run over longer periods** to achieve sizeable and sustainable changes, "especially in countries with lower percentages of women in parliament" (Krook et al., 2014, pp. 4, 36). Activities for WPE that are "one- or two-year add-ons to existing programs" are insufficient to create significant change (Krook et al., 2014, pp. 4, 36). Similarly, programmes should **cover the entire electoral cycle, from pre- to post-election** (Krook et al., 2014, pp. 4, 36). This approach encourages more focus on the post-election period, and on possibilities for reforms and capacity development between elections (Ballington et al., 2012, pp. 10–11).

In particular, **support to leadership capabilities needs to be ongoing and part of a longer-term strategy** for women's continuous learning, from their election to their development and adaptation in office[9]. Whereas longer-term work is more effective, discrete, *ad hoc*, one-off, or short-term interventions (e.g. before elections, or based on project cycles) are not effective (O'Neil & Plank, 2015, p. 22; Tadros, 2011, p. 9). Certainly, one-off activities, such as trainings, can be yield good results, especially in response to a specific need. Still, they offer little replicability, efficiency, or sustainability, and should be avoided[10]. Similarly, programmes that

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[8] (Ballington et al., 2012, p. 6; Krook, Ashman, Moughari, & Pournik, 2014, p. 2; O'Neil & Plank, 2015, p. 22)

[9] (Krook et al., 2014, pp. 4, 34; O'Neil & Plank, 2015, p. 22; Tadros, 2011, p. 9; aslo see IPU 2010, cited in Tadros, 2011, pp. 9–10)

[10] (Krook et al., 2014, p. 4; O'Neil & Domingo, 2016, p. 12; IPU 2010, cited in Tadros, 2011, pp. 9–10; UN Women, 2018, p. 54)

focused exclusively on elections are less likely to perform well, according to a review of USAID programming on WPE (Krook et al., 2014, p. 2; also see Tadros, 2011, p. 9).

Lastly, while long-term, ongoing support is required, aid actors also need to **pick the right phasing for some interventions and** "to **capitalize on political opportunities**" (Ballington et al., 2012, p. 11; Barnes et al., 2016, p. 5). Timing campaigns for marginalised women in politics "with other events of national, provincial and local significance is likely to increase the pace and extent of change" (IDEA, 2013, p. 367). With political parties, the electoral cycle helps determine the most timely and relevant interventions. For example, the periods before and after elections are important for implementing reforms. By contrast, support to capacity development "should likely span all periods […] to be most successful" (Ballington et al., 2012, p. 11).

Developing strategic prioritisation and sequencing tailored to the political, economic, social, and cultural context

While a comprehensive approach is necessary, resource scarcity and competing demands call for strategic prioritisation. Specifically, providing country offices with a holistic set of options needs to be complemented with **strategic prioritisation in the particular country context**[11]. An evidence-based tool could help country offices to assess the country context and the relative contributions of potential activities, and to prioritise the most crucial activities, integrating them into the country strategy (Krook et al., 2014, p. 35). Helpful strategies to maximise results include: collaborating with other organisations (e.g. local universities or government); building on collective structures (e.g. women's caucuses), programmes, or materials; and focusing on scale and sustainability (UN Women, 2018, p. 55).

To make strategic choices, policy-makers and programmers must therefore **tailor their approach to WPE to context, and to the bottom-up dynamics of women's pathways and struggles**. Adapting programmes to context is also necessary because rigorous evidence and lessons are not a blueprint (Tadros, 2011, p. 10). In fact, earlier attempts at a 'cookie cutter' transfer of best practice from one country to another, or from one political party to another, have had limited success, have not worked, have backfired, or have been "instrumentalised by authoritarian regimes to enhance their power"[12].

Strategies to support marginalised women in politics must **be consistent with the cultural, socio-political, and security context of the country**. For example, the cultural and security contexts will often determine whether to adopt non-confrontational or more adversarial stances. In each socio-political culture (and subculture), women are best placed to identify and adopt the appropriate array of strategies (IDEA, 2013, p. 365). International support should be rooted in an understanding of institutions and communities, and of their underpinning values and norms. From there, external agencies and their local partners can help identify, and sometimes provide, useful technical expertise, and general political strategies and tactics (IDEA, 2013, p. 363).

As part of this, aid actors could develop a feminism rooted in countries' cultural context. For instance, some interventions to reduce cultural resistance to WPE could acknowledge women's accomplishments in indigenous political institutions, women's domestic capacities as mothers and caregivers, and the perception that women have greater concern for communities' welfare[13].

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[11] (Barnes, Bishop, & Vaca, 2016, p. 35; Krook et al., 2014, p. 35; UN Women, 2018, p. 55)

[12] (Tadros, 2011, pp. 9–10; also see Ballington et al., 2012, p. 12; UNDP IEO, 2015, p. 62)

[13] (M'Cormack-Hale, 2015, p. 102; Oyewùmi 2003, cited in M'Cormack-Hale, 2015, p. 101)

Such perspectives could reduce "the perception that politics is zero-sum, where women's gains will result in men's loss" (Day 2010, cited in M'Cormack-Hale, 2015, p. 102). Symmetrically, aid agencies may generate men's engagement by emphasising their role in protecting the rights and well-being of their daughters, sisters, mothers, and wives (IDEA, 2013, p. 361).

Building on local dynamics and initiatives, and working through partnerships

External **support to marginalised women in politics must build on local initiatives,** in order to be constructive and consistent with the human rights pursued (IDEA, 2013, pp. 362–363, 369). Home-grown solutions, and initiatives "based on local responses to locally identified needs invariably produce more effective and sustainable results than responses relying on a one-size-fits-all approach using external players and large-scale resourcing" (IDEA, 2013, pp. 365, 370). Solutions that are externally imposed most often don't work (IDEA, 2013, p. 365). Marginalised women fully understand issues of gender and politics. What they often ask for "is support in undertaking their advocacy in more methodical ways, drawing on lessons provided by activists in other polities […]" (IDEA, 2013, pp. 362–363).

Creating partnerships to enhance the local relevance and sustainability of interventions maximises resources, helps transform the status quo, and avoid duplication (IDEA, 2013, pp. 369–370; Krook et al., 2014, p. 2). Such partnerships can involve, for example, local organisations already working for WPE, "and local parties and female leaders as trainers and advocates" (IDEA, 2013, pp. 369–370; Krook, Ashman, Moughari, & Pournik, 2014, p. 2). In direct support to women MPs, UN Women can best support MPs' substantive impact through close coordination with partners that have specialised expertise in the policy areas considered (UN Women, 2018, p. 45). To establish and strengthen women's parliamentary caucuses, donors need to mobilise interest and resources among partners (Krook et al., 2014, p. 3).

Making the best of donors' position within the local context

For some donors, one success factor is their **combination of neutral mandate and positioning into enabling roles**. For example, UNDP has advance gender equality thanks to "the neutrality of its mandate and its role as convener, knowledge broker, advisor and enabler supporting civil society, civic oversight actors and political parties as well as governments" (UNDP IEO, 2015, p. 62). One example was UNDP's support to political parties and to political dialogue during the drafting of a new constitution in Tunisia in 2012. Its mix of interventions included: training for women delegates and young women candidates from a wide range of parties; hands-on technical advice on the drafts of the constitution, in light of international human rights law; and using its mandate to bridge gaps in opinions. UNDP helped safeguard women's rights and inclusive participation (UNDP IEO, 2015, p. 62).

Factors and conditions associated with the practices of aid actors themselves

Aid actors, including donors, need to put their house in order, to be credible in their advocacy and assistance (O'Neil & Domingo, 2016, p. 12). **Externally**, they need to **commit enough funding and staff to make an impact**, through both programmes dedicated to WPE and other programmes that mainstream gender (Krook et al., 2014, pp. 2, 34). Aid actors also need to **improve how they and their partners manage programmes on WPE**, from design to management to evaluation (Krook et al., 2014, pp. 2, 34). Interventions to support marginalised women in politics must, themselves, reflect diversity and gender empowerment, and model "transparency, accountability, honesty, [and] integrity" (IDEA, 2013, pp. 369, 371). In addition, a review of USAID programmes found that the highest-performing ones were managed with three

to five indicators associated per key activities, instead of six or more (Krook et al., 2014, p. 2). Programmes with scopes broader than WPE should integrate clear goals, indicators, and budgets for WPE (Krook et al., 2014, p. 35).

Internally, aid actors need to **stop relying on discrete programmes and teams on gender**, and instead adopt rules and systems that incentivise collaboration, learning, and problem-solving within and across initiatives. They also need to promote women into leadership (O'Neil & Domingo, 2016, p. 12). In programmes for marginalised women in politics, aid organisations should develop women staff as a long-term commitment, rather than "headhunting experienced staff from other organizations" (IDEA, 2013, pp. 369–370).

Factors and conditions relating to adverse contexts

In FCAS, international aid actors need to **work less in silos, and less in overly technical ways** to promote gender equality in peacebuilding and statebuilding (Domingo, Holmes, Rocha Menocal, & Jones, 2013, p. vii). For now, donors often lack understanding about gender across sectors, with gender issues left to 'gender experts'. As a result, "gender-responsive approaches often remain peripheral", with weak coordination across sectors and themes (Domingo et al., 2013, pp. v, vii). Aid actors miss opportunities, because interventions to connect state-building and gender justice have failed to consider or understand inequitable power between genders, within households and in wider society (O'Connell, 2011, p. 455).

Aid actors must therefore have **strong understandings of the political, economic, social, and cultural context in FCAS, and how gender intersects with it**, to identify opportunities and risks for strategic engagement on gender. "Gender-responsive approaches *in all sectors* and *at all levels* are deeply political" (Domingo et al., 2013, pp. vi–vii). For instance, getting more women into parliament is a modest gain if authoritarian structures prevail (Domingo et al., 2013, p. vi). Aid actors must deeply understand:

- **The context,** "**and how the political economy of fragility and conflict intersects with gender inequality**", as specific to each FCAS (Domingo et al., 2013, pp. vii, 26). Among the relevant dynamics to grasp are: regime types; electoral systems (including quotas); "political loyalties that are generated and secured"; patronage politics; and how all the previous variables "shape the prospects for women's participation in peacebuilding and statebuilding" (Domingo et al., 2013, p. 26).
- **The wider social norms, and the concrete structures of interests that shape the conduct of those resisting** gender-responsiveness. This is vital to changing gender and other power relations, and "to foresee the force of backlash" (Domingo et al., 2013, p. vii).

In addition, aid actors should **look beyond formal State institutions** (Domingo et al., 2013, p. v). The most effective entry points may well be working "with non-state actors and informal institutions, including community-level norms, […] as well as renegotiating women's public and private roles" (Domingo et al., 2013, p. vi). However, international aid actors "are not always equipped to engage with non-state actors and informal institutions" (Domingo et al., 2013, p. v).

Aid actors must thus "**work with a range of key stakeholders** (gender equality advocates *and* decision makers) to achieve substantive political, institutional and attitudinal change" (Domingo et al., 2013, p. vii). In line with this, aid actors must **support diverse technical and political capabilities** among a range of key stakeholders, so that these stakeholders can engage with peacebuilding and statebuilding at crucial moments, in ways that are politically strategic and technically informed (Domingo et al., 2013, p. vii).

4.1.3. General factors and conditions of effectiveness outside interventions

Women's public presence and elected positions are preconditions for their influence, but will not automatically lead to advances for gender equality (O'Neil & Domingo, 2016, p. 32; Seckinelgin & Klot, 2014, p. 36). The link between women's inclusion and outcomes favourable to gender equality is not a given (Seckinelgin & Klot, 2014, p. 39). In particular, there can be no generalisations about how elected women exercise their agency within their party, nor about their agendas. The 'critical mass' of women who get elected may well oppose women's empowerment. Which women are politically empowered is thus crucial (Tadros, 2011, pp. 2–6). Fundamentally, what matters is not the number of women – or men – elected (O'Neil & Domingo, 2016, p. 32; Tadros, 2011, p. 5). **What matters is the quality of elected women' and men's leadership, and their ability to make sure that politicians of both genders advance gender equity** (Seckinelgin & Klot, 2014, p. 39; UNDP IEO, 2015, p. 62).

With this taken into account, evidence shows how women's effectiveness in office is shaped by the **wider political, economic, social, and cultural context**.

First, **gendered patterns in social and economic life** affect women's ability to effectively advance agendas for gender equality (O'Neil & Plank, 2015, pp. 2, 22; Seckinelgin & Klot, 2014, p. 39). **Longstanding discriminatory norms, expectations, and structures related to women's roles and capabilities in public life** are the main barriers to women's effective leadership and to gender equality[14]. They also constitute a major challenge to effective programming and to sustained, transformative impact (UNDP IEO, 2015, p. 61). Structural gender inequalities can even thwart otherwise effective programmes, as observed for example in several UNDP programmes (UNDP IEO, 2015, pp. 62–63).

Other negative patterns relate to **women frequently lacking resources and knowledge relevant to formal politics**. This can stem from financial constraints (due to poverty or a lack of paid employment), illiteracy, a lack of education or low levels of education, or a lack of political experience, training, and preparation[15]. Conversely, positive factors include: professional expertise and credibility (which usually mirrors educational achievement), a supportive "family background and home environment, 'political entrepreneurship', paid and voluntary work," and community leadership (O'Neil & Plank, 2015, p. 2). Women's economic empowerment is a prerequisite for marginalised women to participate in public and political life, and can be effectively leveraged to support women's political participation (Barnes et al., 2016, p. 36).

Men leaders in the political, judicial, and religious fields are important in enabling marginalised women in political life. In particular, they can generate support from communities and their political institutions. Many men leaders will accommodate greater participation by women if they see gains for the community they represent and for women's interests. A key factor in their support is anchoring inclusion in local culture, values, and discourse. However, their support is not essential to starting an inclusion campaign (IDEA, 2013, pp. 360–361).

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[14] (Krook et al., 2014, pp. 2, 36; M'Cormack-Hale, 2015, p. 96; O'Neil & Domingo, 2016, p. 12; O'Neil & Plank, 2015, p. 2).

This being said, in a few cases, gender bias can be both a constraint and a resource for women leaders. In Sierra Leone, for example, it leads to a number of constituents to have positive (if stereotypical) perceptions about women parliamentarian (M'Cormack-Hale, 2015, p. 101).

[15] (Krook et al., 2014, p. 2; M'Cormack-Hale, 2015, p. 96; O'Neil & Plank, 2015, p. 2)

Second, the **formal and informal political economy** affects women's ability to advance agendas for gender equality. The formal political economy includes: regime type, party systems, electoral systems and quotas, decentralisation, and informal political rules, norms, and values (O'Neil & Plank, 2015, pp. 2, 22; Seckinelgin & Klot, 2014, p. 39). **Supportive formal institutions** include "quotas and women's access to and appointment into political careers" (O'Neil & Plank, 2015, p. 2). In addition, **informal processes and spaces, where alliances and backroom deals are made**, are critical. Women's ability to influence decision-making heavily depends on whether they can access, and negotiate within and around, informal institutions and spaces (M'Cormack-Hale, 2015, p. 96; O'Neil & Plank, 2015, p. 22). On the other hand, negative conditions predominate in many countries, including "uncooperative governments", and "political conflict, which generates insecurity and uncertainty" (Krook et al., 2014, p. 2; also see p. 36).

Development patterns too affect women leaders' ability to advance gender equality (O'Neil & Plank, 2015, p. 22; Seckinelgin & Klot, 2014, p. 39). On the one hand, **higher socioeconomic development creates enabling conditions** (Krook et al., 2014, p. 2; O'Neil & Plank, 2015, p. 2). On the other hand, **client-patron systems can hamper women's work** for gender equality, leading women to represent the interests of their party and elites over those of women[16]. In addition, in many countries, shortages of staff and budgets prevent local aid actors from achieving success and long-term impact (Krook et al., 2014, p. 2).

Third, some key factors for women's effective leadership lie with the **links between women's individual and collective leadership**. The factors shaping these links include: women's networks; the sharing of expertise; linkages between social movements and formal leadership; "movements standing in for political parties"; and the impact of women in leadership on socialisation (O'Neil & Plank, 2015, p. 2). An **autonomous women's movement** is a crucial positive factor in this. Not only does need to exist, it also needs to have relationships with (or support for) women in government or the bureaucracy (O'Neil & Plank, 2015, pp. 2, 22). Another similar factor is **women civic leaders' lobbying capabilities** (O'Neil & Plank, 2015, p. 2). Indeed, women's political participation can only ensure equality if it is based on citizen's control (IDEA, 2013, p. 368). Another enabling condition is "the **development of capabilities, both individual and collective**", such as marginalised women leaders' use of research and evidence (IDEA, 2013, p. 358).

Fourth, several crucial factors determining women leaders' effectiveness relate to their **political savvy**. To succeed, women need to 'work politically', and to have collaborative approaches with government (O'Neil & Plank, 2015, p. 2). In addition, in politically and militarily insecure environments, marginalised women in politics must constantly analyse context and risks, and must prepare for crisis management (IDEA, 2013, p. 365).

The remaining crucial **gaps in knowledge** mean that policy-makers need more research and knowledge to identify effective context-specific mechanisms to help women in formal politics be effective, and, distinctly, to support men and women in formal politics to advance gender equality (see e.g. Seckinelgin & Klot, 2014, pp. 36, 39, 44).

Lastly, **regarding adverse contexts**, **the factors** "**most crucial** for increasing women's substantive representation are least likely to be present in emerging democracies and developing-country contexts, and **virtually nonexistent in fragile and conflict-affected states**", a systematic review of literature on women's formal political participation in FCAS found

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[16] (M'Cormack-Hale, 2015, p. 69; Goetz, 2002, cited in Seckinelgin & Klot, 2014, p. 39)

(Seckinelgin & Klot, 2014, p. 43). Indeed, in FCAS, the "challenges of performing effectively politically are daunting for all but the most privileged women" (O'Connell, 2011, p. 459). The numerous constraints over women's substantive participation include: gender-based structures of exclusion and discrimination; negative cultural attitudes; customary rules; men- and elite-dominated political structures and parties; backlash against women's participation; pervasive violence and insecurity, together with legacies of past conflict and violence; women's frequent lack of financial resources; illiteracy; and women's political inexperience, paired with a lack of capacity-building (Domingo et al., 2013, p. iv; O'Connell, 2011, p. 459).

4.2. Interventions focused on direct support to women leaders

4.2.1. Types of interventions in direct support to women leaders, and their effectiveness

Success in directly supporting elected women to be effective leaders is positive overall, though highly mixed, depending on the type of programming approach chosen, the quality of programming, and the larger context. For example, a meta-analysis found that some of the projects funded by UN Women's FGE in 2009-2015 encountered difficulties, but that a number of others had been effective and had, in turn, advanced WPE (Barnes et al., 2016, p. 42).

Establishing and strengthening women's networks (e.g. parliamentary committees, women's caucuses, and regional networks) are one of the most common interventions used. They has been used among others by UN Women (UN Women, 2018, p. 45), by UNDP (UNDP IEO, 2015, p. 61), and by USAID (Krook et al., 2014, pp. 1–2). In terms of effectiveness, USAID programming frequently succeeded at initiating and strengthening women's networks (Krook et al., 2014, p. 2). At UNDP, supporting women in political caucuses helped open doors for women in politics (UNDP IEO, 2015, p. 61). At UN Women, support for women's networks was among the more successful interventions. In parliaments, UN Women contributed high value in helping to establish women's caucuses, in "linking parliamentarians across countries for South-South exchange", and in engaging with regional parliamentarians' networks (UN Women, 2018, p. 45). In local governments, one positive approach was to institutionalise women's caucuses at provincial level (e.g. in Pakistan), and women's councils in municipalities (e.g. in some locations in Turkey). Another was to create clubs for local women in politics and mentoring schemes, e.g. in Albania and Moldova (UN Women, 2018, p. 54). A number of projects funded by the FGE facilitated elected women representatives' access to peer networks, improving participants' capacity "to understand and represent women's needs and priorities" (Barnes et al., 2016, p. 52).

Building up women's capacity and influence, e.g. immediately after their election or later, is another of the most commonly used interventions. They have been used among others by UN Women (UN Women, 2018, p. 45), and by USAID (Krook et al., 2014, p. 1). Women in office "need support to fully engage with the institutional politics of the legislature to which they have been elected, as well as understanding how to use their agency effectively and fully to build alliances and outmanoeuvre opponents" (Tadros, 2011, p. 9). The effectiveness of capacity-building varies widely, depending on several factors and conditions explained in the two next sub-sections (see e.g. UN Women, 2018, pp. 45–55). For example, UN Women has been effective in building women MPs' capacity and influence through its parliamentary support (UN Women, 2018, p. 45). With women in local government, UN Women has done some institutional capacity-building at sub-national levels (e.g. Pakistan), and provided some support to elected officials (e.g. Palestine and Malawi) (UN Women, 2018, p. 54). A number of projects under UN

Women's FGE facilitated elected women representatives' access to strategic practical knowledge. This too improved participating women's capacity "to understand and represent women's needs and priorities" (Barnes et al., 2016, p. 52).

Interventions to support relations between women MPs and constituencies were also used, though less frequently, and were effective. There were some positive examples at UN Women, where it facilitated dialogue between women MPs and other actors or constituencies, e.g. in Timor Leste, Uruguay, and Zimbabwe. Still, an evaluation concluded that UN Women could focus more on supporting these relations, especially at district level (UN Women, 2018, p. 46). Under the FGE, a number of projects also facilitated elected women representatives' contact with their constituencies. This again improved participating women's capacity "to understand and represent women's needs and priorities" (Barnes et al., 2016, p. 52).

In FCAS, some interventions have sought to **support women's effective participation in peace-making**. This has had mixed effectiveness. In some context, aid actors have successfully supported women's movements (O'Connell, 2011, p. 457). For example, with the 2006 Juba Peace Talks on the conflict in northern Uganda, "UNIFEM's funding and advocacy support was critical in ensuring women could participate […] and have their voices heard in the negotiations" (International Alert 2010, cited in O'Connell, 2011, p. 457). However, overall, hopes invested in this area remain unfulfilled, as women have remained unsuccessful at participating in the peace negotiations in many countries (O'Connell, 2011, p. 457).

In FCAS, **interventions for gender-responsive constitution-making and institution-building** have included support for women's movements to participate. In some situations, the supported movements could leverage international law "to make the case for enshrining gender equality within new constitutions" (O'Connell, 2011, p. 458). However, overall support to peacemaking and political settlements in FCAS has failed to even integrate gender (O'Connell, 2011, p. 458).

Some interventions have been insufficiently implemented in FCAS: **strengthening democracy between elections** (O'Connell, 2011, pp. 459–460); and "**building the capacity and political expertise of newly elected women** parliamentarians and local councillors, especially those from the most disadvantaged communities" (O'Connell, 2011, pp. 259–260).

4.2.2. Factors and conditions of effectiveness within direct support to women leaders

Capacity development needs to be less conventional, to be context-sensitive, and to combine individual and collective engagement, with both women and men (Tadros, 2011, p. 9)[17]:

- **Building up "women's self-confidence and individual awareness"** has been effective (Barnes et al., 2016, p. 4).
- Support needs to **focus on *groups* of women**, not individuals. Donors need to invest in collective leadership by supporting organisations where women can hone their political skills, e.g. political parties (O'Neil & Domingo, 2016, p. 12; Tadros, 2011, p. 9).
- **A cascading and peer-based approach to knowledge and to skills training and development** has enhanced effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability (Barnes et al.,

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[17] Effectiveness is important for its own sake in this, but also because, compared with advocacy, leadership development tends to be costly (UN Women, 2018, p. 54).

2016, pp. 29, 36). Network-based strategies, such as training trainers, help transform the status quo, and leverage resources to reach more women (Krook et al., 2014, p. 2).

- **Capacity-building has particularly been effective** "**when delivered through a collective structure** (commonly a women's […] caucus)". First, this reinforces individual women's capacity, while boosting their influence through 'strength in numbers'. Second, it "often contributes to gender equality legislation". For example, through parliamentary caucuses, UN Women has promoted women's rights, by creating "synergies with other thematic areas such as Gender Responsive Budgeting […] (e.g., in Malawi, Senegal, Serbia, South Sudan and Zimbabwe)" (UN Women, 2018, p. 45; also see p. 54).

For now, most capacity support has been poorly designed, predominantly relying on short trainings to individual women about effective leadership and campaigning[18]. For example, most of UN Women's trainings for women in local politics were not combined with interventions to address other barriers (education, literacy, or financial resources) or social norms (UN Women, 2018, p. 54). This led to low retention of women who had been trained as local councillors, as they did not run again or were not re-elected (UN Women, 2018, p. 54).

Support to women in politics should also **strengthen women's relations to constituencies**. It should help women build constituencies, e.g. when women were elected through quotas (Tadros, 2011, pp. 7–8). It should also enable them to sustain relations and dialogues with constituencies, especially at district level (UN Women, 2018, p. 46). Effective approaches include:

- Creating and using spaces for connections, interactions, and dialogue between women decision-makers or elected representatives and their constituencies, and between rights holders and duty bearers. One aspect of this can be holding duty bearers accountable for international human rights commitments (Barnes et al., 2016, pp. 4–5).
- Improving dialogue between women MPs on the one hand, and marginalised groups, media, and civil society on the other hand. One objective is scrutiny of legislation on gender equality, including on women's political participation (UN Women, 2018, p. 46).
- Connecting women MPs and women activists (UN Women, 2018, p. 46).
- Using media – press, radio, TV and social media (Barnes et al., 2016, p. 5).
- Gaining community support for women's political participation (Barnes et al., 2016, p. 5).
- Facilitating marginalised women's access to electoral processes (Barnes et al., 2016, p. 5).

Giving greater visibility to politically active women in various community activities can be effective. In this way, some projects increased acceptance for women's engagement and participation in local councils or community meetings (Barnes et al., 2016, p. 36).

In post-conflict settings and major political transitions, aid actors need to invest more in women's roles. To begin, they should **advocate for women's inclusion** in peace negotiations, peacebuilding, constitution-drafting, processes of political reform, transitional governments, and the executive[19]. From there, they should participate in implementing these commitments (Krook et al., 2014, p. 33). They should:

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[18] (Tadros, 2011, p. 9; also see UN Women, 2018, pp. 53–54)

[19] (Castillejo, 2011, 2013; cited in Domingo et al., 2013, p. 25; Krook et al., 2014, p. 33; O'Neil & Domingo, 2016, p. 12)

- **Expand opportunities for training and available resources** to facilitate women's participation (Krook et al., 2014, p. 33). This includes building "the capacity of women's peace coalitions to better engage in and influence peace processes" (O'Connell, 2011, p. 458), and providing logistic support to women's networks and organisations (O'Neil & Domingo, 2016, p. 12).
- **Simultaneously organise series of women's dialogues, and ensure women's participation in the broader processes**, e.g. national dialogues or constitutional drafting committees (Krook et al., 2014, p. 33).
- **Promote coalition-building among women politicians** (Castillejo, 2011, 2013; cited in Domingo et al., 2013, p. 25).
- **Link women politicians with women's movements in civil society** (Castillejo, 2011, 2013; cited in Domingo et al., 2013, p. 25).

However, **interactions between peacebuilding and gender equality can be complex**. Policy-makers need to assess when and how international strategies on peacebuilding and on gender help or hinder women's efforts at peacebuilding. There are significant knowledge gaps on this. (Seckinelgin & Klot, 2014, p. 36). Nonetheless, the wealth of academic literature on gender power relations during conflict and in its aftermath has not informed policy on support to women's participation in peace-making (O'Connell, 2011, pp. 457–458).

4.2.3. Factors and conditions of effectiveness outside direct support to women leaders

One constraint lies with **elected women's lack of self-confidence**. For example, in projects funded by the FGE in Pakistan, the greatest challenge was "enabling women parliamentarians to have confidence in initiating legislation and [bringing] resolutions" (Barnes et al., 2016, p. 42).

Having a constituency that nominates women candidates is critical to the self-confidence and sense of worth of the women concerned. It is also critical to their political credibility, legitimacy, and assertiveness, as it helps counteract patriarchal attacks claiming that they were not democratically elected (Tadros, 2011, p. 7). The benefits of direct election and links with a constituency hold true even if the women concerned are elected in seats reserved for women[20]. Conversely, many women who come to power via a quota, especially without election by a constituency, depend on patronage, and struggle to acquire legitimacy, in the eyes of other politicians, the wider public, but also themselves (Tadros, 2011, pp. 7, 9).

Domestic actors promoting women to leadership positions in parliament has helped make parliaments more gender-sensitive. This has most commonly resulted from rule changes and temporary special measures (e.g. quotas), although women have also created their own paths "by learning the rules and taking advantage of changing political circumstances" (Palmieri, 2011, p. 1). Further, the "more women enter parliament, the easier their access to leadership […] becomes" (Palmieri, 2011, p. 1). Promotions should avoid appointing women only to positions dealing with issues traditionally associated with women, such as social affairs. Avoiding this requires transparent methods to match positions "with members' abilities, diverse working experience, and preferences", as well as, potentially, affirmative action (Palmieri, 2011, p. 1).

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[20] (Nazneen and Tasneem 2010, cited in Tadros, 2011, pp. 8–9)

Political parties can play their part to support effective strategies. They can support "cross-party networks of women and women's parliamentary caucuses", which "help channel women's interests and concerns and can help to mainstream gender" in policy and oversight (Ballington et al., 2012, p. 6). Parties can also select women to lead parliamentary groups and committees, as chairpersons or focal points (Ballington et al., 2012, p. 6).

Support to women in politics has been made more difficult by the **limited evidence** "on how to nurture leadership skills or political apprenticeship, which is part of a wider gap" on developing women's individual and collective skills in political engagement (UN Women, 2018, p. 54).

4.3. Interventions to mainstream gender and transform institutions

4.3.1. Types of interventions to mainstream gender and transform institutions, and their effectiveness

To begin, **gender audits, and benchmarking or monitoring**, are promising. Aid actors such as UN Women can use them with parliaments to raise awareness about good practices, and to work on targets and monitoring (UN Women, 2018, p. 46).

To make formal political bodies such as parliaments gender-sensitive, effective approaches tackle both everyday work and the system (Palmieri, 2011, pp. 107–111). With parliaments, for example, efforts need to **mainstream gender equality throughout MPs' everyday processes and outputs,** in legislating, overseeing, and representing (Palmieri, 2011, p. 107). Efforts also need to **shift parliamentary systems towards gender equality and inclusivity** (Palmieri, 2011, pp. 107–111). This requires aiming for more democracy, while combining several gender-specific goals[21]:

- **More women, with stronger presence in leadership.**

- **Stronger gender-sensitive infrastructure**, including shared responsibilities for gender mainstreaming. With parliaments and local governance structures, one effective approach has been to set up "structural bodies to institutionalize and sustain gender-responsive" policy-making and budgeting (Barnes et al., 2016, p. 5). Making legislative and policy-making processes inclusive has helped make politics more women-friendly and gender-responsive (Barnes et al., 2016, p. 4).

- **Stronger gender-sensitive culture**, including shared responsibilities for gender mainstreaming. Interventions to change to social norms in parliament can include:
  - **Running media campaigns** "about the role and efforts of women MPs and women's parliamentary caucuses" (UN Women, 2018, p. 46)[22].
  - **Engaging with men parliamentarians and citizens** at global, regional, and national levels, e.g. in Columbia, Ecuador, and Uruguay (UN Women, 2018, p. 46)[23]. Reaching out to men allies in parliaments maximises resources and helps transform the status quo (Krook et al., 2014, p. 2).

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[21] (Palmieri, 2011, pp. 107–111, unless otherwise indicated)

[22] UN Women has not tracked impact systematically on this work, and an evaluation concluded that the organisation needs to do more to shift parliamentary procedures, culture, and norms. So far, it has supported such reforms only in limited cases, e.g. in Moldova and Turkey (UN Women, 2018, p. 46).

[23] See footnote 22.

- **Stronger gender equality policy and legislation**, with gender awareness trainings for all members and parliamentary staff. Among possible interventions are:
    - Guidelines, policy statements, and training to strengthen the institutional capacity on gender. They maximise resources, and help transform the status quo (Krook et al., 2014, p. 2).
    - Support for post-legislative scrutiny of gender equality legislation. This is needed to ensure that laws make a difference for constituencies. Yet, a 2018 evaluation of UN Women found no examples of this type of intervention being used by this organisation (UN Women, 2018, p. 46).
- **More democratic, transparent, and accountable political parties** (see section 4.4).

The literature mentions a few other interventions. **Work on violence against women in politics is nascent**, with few interventions so far, and little evidence on effectiveness yet[24]. USAID programming commonly includes: **holding policy dialogues** on women and gender issues; **and pressuring elites to adopt gender quotas** (Krook et al., 2014, p. 2)[25].

In FCAS, international actors can contribute to "enabling conditions for gender-responsive peacebuilding and statebuilding" by: providing "strategic **support to reform-oriented coalitions**"; and "**facilitating dialogue among reformers and 'resistors'** at international, national and subnational levels" (Domingo et al., 2013, p. vii). Further, donors can play an important role in "**forging links between state and civil society institutions** on gender equality" (Castillejo, 2011, cited in Domingo et al., 2013, p. 25).

Interventions in FCAS have included **support to women's ministries or institutions**, through institutional capacity-building, donor influence, and sectoral gender audits. Evidence of success in these interventions "was slender and very context-specific" (O'Connell, 2011, p. 458).

Donors in FCAS should also **engage more forcefully** "**on gender equality with the most powerful ministries** (usually the president's office and ministries of finance and planning)" (Domingo et al., 2013, p. 25). It is not enough to support women's presence in parliament, or to help build effective institutions on gender equality – this should be combined with an engagement with powerful ministries. In turn, this requires moving away from donors' usual silos in how they engage with partners on gender equality (Domingo et al., 2013, p. 25).

4.3.2. Factors and conditions of effectiveness within interventions to mainstream gender and transform institutions

External aid can **use as entry points the many successful domestic strategies and practices** that have made some parliaments more gender-sensitive (Palmieri, 2011, pp. 1–4, 107)[26]. To make parliaments gender-sensitive, domestic actors have used a variety of effective strategies:

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[24] (UN Women, 2018, p. 49; see pp. 49-52 for examples of early activities)

[25] It also recommends that USAID provide assistance to campaigns for gender quotas, or strengthen legislation on quotas (Krook et al., 2014, p. 34).

[26] These strategies are presented under various sections in the present report. They are mostly presented under factors and conditions outside interventions that affect effectiveness, because references mostly discuss domestic actors undertaking these efforts, and just mention that aid actors can learn from and build on such efforts. The strategies are presented all together in: (Palmieri, 2011, pp. 1–4).

- **Setting up mechanisms dedicated to gender mainstreaming**, comprising women and men. Examples include: gender equality committees; women's parliamentary caucuses; research think tanks; and internal participatory gender audits (Palmieri, 2011, pp. 2–3). Beyond parliaments, effective mechanisms for consultation can be critical for marginalised women active in formal politics to be effective (IDEA, 2013, p. 361).

- **Adopting gender policies and procedures for the parliament**, through a gender policy with clear and detailed objectives and processes. Under this, parliaments should have "a suite of related policies to prevent harassment, distribute resources and allowances equitably – including access to research services, computers and office space – and define expected behaviour in a code of conduct" (Palmieri, 2011, p. 3).

- **Making parliamentary culture and infrastructure gender-sensitive**. Parliaments can support balancing work and family by rearranging sitting hours and calendars, with no late sessions at night or during school holidays (Ballington et al., 2012, p. 6; Palmieri, 2011, p. 4). Parliaments can also entitle "all members to parental leave – not just when children are born but whenever necessary to attend to their needs" (Palmieri, 2011, p. 4). For women returning after maternity leave, parliaments can: have childcare centres; allow proxy votes; and provide rooms for breastfeeding mothers (Palmieri, 2011, p. 4).

- **Making the parliamentary workplace gender-sensitive, to support staff members in parliamentary departments**. There must be continual examination of the workplace culture and infrastructure for staff. For example, some women MPs have fought against parliamentarians sexually harassing staff members (Palmieri, 2011, p. 4).

- **Ensuring that parliamentary legislation and debate pursue gender equality**. To begin, new and incumbent MPs who promote gender equality need to become familiar with parliamentary mechanisms, through induction or orientation training that integrate a gender perspective. Further, procedures such as gender checklists and gender mainstreaming must ensure that legislation actively promotes gender equality for women and men. Parliaments should also institutionalise measures such as gender advisors, gender focal points on each committee, and gender budgeting (Palmieri, 2011, p. 2). Changing legislative frameworks has helped make formal politics women-friendly and gender-responsive (Barnes et al., 2016, p. 5).

- **Drawing on men parliamentarians' contribution to gender equality**. Examples include: men co-sponsoring or sponsoring legislation for non-discrimination against women; men chairing or participating in gender equality bodies; and men included in public outreach for gender equality. Parliamentary rules could also require the presence of men and women on all parliamentary committees (Palmieri, 2011, p. 3).

Donors also need to **invest in national knowledge**, by funding think tanks and academic departments interested in women's rights and wellbeing (O'Neil & Domingo, 2016, p. 12).

4.3.3. Factors and conditions of effectiveness outside interventions to mainstream gender and transform institutions

Outside of formal political bodies, **women's collective organising to promote gender equality** has played important roles in supporting constituency building, and in supporting the capacity of members of parliament (MPs) and candidates. Conversely, where women's feminist movements become too weak or fragmented, they become unable to influence the configuration of national and local power, which can hinder women leaders' constituency-building or capacities (Tadros,

2011, pp. 6–7). Besides, **political parties** can play a role in making formal political institutions gender-sensitive (Ballington et al., 2012, p. 6).

Domestic actors using strategic litigation has helped make formal politics women-friendly and gender-responsive (Barnes et al., 2016, p. 5). For marginalised women in politics, accessible courts that can uphold inclusive constitutional provisions can be critical (IDEA, 2013, p. 361).

In FCAS, **coalitions with key male political brokers who support gender equality goals** make important contributions to changing minds and to socialisation "regarding women's access to politics and decision making" (Domingo et al., 2013, p. 25). So do "**networking and dialogue with 'resistors'** in the political sphere" (Domingo et al., 2013, p. 25).

4.4. Interventions focused on political parties

4.4.1. Types of interventions focused on political parties, and their effectiveness

Effective strategies for better participation by women **in internal party organisation** are[27]:

- Adopting measures, including action plans or quotas, to ensure women's participation in decision-making structures and on governing boards (Ballington et al., 2012, p. 4; Krook et al., 2014, p. 2). Established measures such as quotas have repeatedly been effective towards this (Ballington et al., 2012, p. 46).

- Addressing gender equality in the legal framework and governing documents of the party, such as internal statutes and rules (Ballington et al., 2012, p. 4; Palmieri, 2011, p. 3).

- "Setting targets for participation in party conventions. This can include holding separate forums for women delegates at the conventions".

- Establishing women's wings and sections. They should be formally and strategically integrated into the party structure. They should have "defined roles and responsibilities and appropriate funding if needed".

- "Ensuring that gender is mainstreamed into all of the party's policies".

Effective strategies for better participation by women **in party governance after elections** are:

- Assessing gender equality in the party, to identify and eliminate any practices or rules that directly or indirectly undermine women (Ballington et al., 2012, p. 6).

- Ensuring that party policies mainstream gender and women's empowerment. This requires both supporting gender-specific policy reform (e.g. combating gender-based violence), and promoting gender equality "in areas like access to justice, health, nationality, labour, land rights, social security and inheritance" (Ballington et al., 2012, p. 6). Parties could also adopt overarching plans for gender equality and mainstreaming, and establish dedicated committees to oversee implementation (Palmieri, 2011, p. 4).

- Pursuing a legislative agenda for gender equality. Parliamentarians' main avenue to do so is through women's wing or organisation, but it can leave women ostracised (Palmieri, 2011, p. 3). Besides, some parties hold "seminars and lectures with gender experts on important topics", and create strong links with academia and NGOs (Palmieri, 2011, p. 3).

- Partnering strategically with civil society organisations (Ballington et al., 2012, p. 6).

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[27] (Ballington et al., 2012, p. 4, unless otherwise indicated)

4.4.2. Factors and conditions of effectiveness within interventions focused on political parties

In FCAS, donors need to have **further and more strategic engagement with political parties**. They need to "encourage party leaders to include women in decision-making positions and to make party structures and culture more democratic". They need "to explore how parties can support their women members to become more effective vehicles for women's participation and representation". And they need to promote agendas of gender equality[28].

4.4.3. Factors and conditions of effectiveness outside interventions focused on political parties

"**How women participate in political parties – and how those parties encourage and nurture women's involvement and incorporate gender-equality issues –**" are essential. These factors contribute to WPE, and to whether and how gender equality is addressed in wider society (Ballington et al., 2012, pp. 1–2; also see p. 8, and Palmieri, 2011, p. 3).

Negative factors and conditions include the following:

- **Political parties remain dominated by men** (Ballington et al., 2012, p. 1; Palmieri, 2011, p. 3). Positions of power in parties are often "informal, centralized and supported by well-established relationships and networks of influence that are inaccessible to new arrivals, and particularly to women" (Ballington et al., 2012, p. 16). Typically, women lack access to networks where influence and institutional knowledge are embedded. While they are seriously outnumbered by men, they have very few role models and mentors, and sometimes receive limited support from their families and communities. They also have very limited resources (Ballington et al., 2012, p. 16; Palmieri, 2011, p. 3).

- **Parties are generally not open or transparent organisations** (Palmieri, 2011, p. 3). Women and men, including MPs, frequently find it challenging and politically costly to initiate legislative proposals which their parties do not condone (Palmieri, 2011, p. 3). How political parties function is determined not only by external regulation (e.g. laws), but also by internal rules, processes and culture. Internal processes depend on the party's ideology, history, regulation, internal bureaucracy, level of patronage, party leaders' influence, and decentralization. Party democracy depends on internal information and consultation, formal and informal organisation and decision-making, and transparency. Additional factors are inclusiveness towards different social groups, and how the party relates to women (Ballington et al., 2012, pp. 15–16).

- **Parties have a mixed record in addressing gender issues** (Ballington et al., 2012, p. 8). They rarely use gender mainstreaming, "often for lack of resources (both financial and human) or political will" (Palmieri, 2011, pp. 3–4). Domestic and foreign initiatives to make parties gender-sensitive remain needed, especially where there are still few women in formal decision-making bodies (Ballington et al., 2012, p. 8).

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[28] Source for the entire paragraph: (Castillejo, 2011, cited in Domingo et al., 2013, p. 26).

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5.1.   Key websites

- Harvard – Kennedy School – Women and Public Policy Program – Political empowerment: https://wappp.hks.harvard.edu/politics
- iKNOW Politics – Library: http://www.iknowpolitics.org/en/learn/library
- International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) – Gender & Democracy: https://www.idea.int/our-work/what-we-do/gender-democracy
- International Parliamentary Union (IPU) – Publications – Gender equality: https://ipu.org/resources/publications?theme=88&country=All
- National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) – News and publications – Gender, women and democracy: https://www.ndi.org/publications?topic=1026

- OECD – Gender equality and development: http://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/aidinsupportofgenderequalityandwomensempowerment.htm
- UN Women - Women's leadership and political participation: http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation
- UNDP – Research and publications – Gender equality: http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/library.html?start=0&sort=date&view=cards&tag=topics:gender-equality
- Wilson Center – Women in Public Service Project – Resources: http://www.50x50movement.org/resources-page
- Women Deliver – Strengthen Women's Political Participation and Decision-Making Power: https://womendeliver.org/investment/strengthen-womens-political-participation-decision-making-power/

5.2.   Suggested citation

5.3.   About this report