

Chapter 1

Women in Leadership

1.1 Introduction

In reporting on recent developments and results concerning women in leadership throughout Commonwealth countries, this section will, in most cases (1), cover five areas closely linked to SDGs 5 and 16, and their targets. These are: 1. the extent of women's representation in the lower houses of

national parliaments; 2 their occupancy of post-election cabinets and 3. their tenure in parliamentary leadership positions; 4. their status as leaders in the corporate sector; 5. their participation in local government; and 6. their engagement in civil society organisations and the media.

1.2 Africa

1.2.1 Representation in national parliaments

While large differences exist concerning women's representation in national parliaments within and across African countries, recent figures show a direct correlation between certain policy measures and increases in the number and level of representation of women in national parliaments. Recent advances in women's representation in Africa indicate that the continent is a world leader in increasing women's representation in national parliaments. Women's occupancy of national parliament seats has increased in North Africa from 4 per cent in 2000 to 25 per cent in 2015 and in sub-Saharan Africa from 13 per cent to 23 per cent over the same period.

This compares with the global average increase from 14 per cent to 23.8 per cent (Inter-parliamentary Union [IPU] 2018b). This sustained progress is due to the implementation of policy advances, including legislated or voluntary quotas and reserved seats, increases in educational opportunities and the advocacy undertaken by women's movements.

This has been most evident in Rwanda, where women's representation has increased from 25.7 per cent in 2000 to 61.3 per cent in 2017 (2). Other Commonwealth countries have also recorded significant increases in women's representation, particularly in the lower houses of parliament. Among these, South Africa (41.8%), Namibia (41.4%), Mozambique (39.6%), Tanzania (36.4%), Uganda (34.3%) and Cameroon (31.1%) were well above the unimpressive global average of 23.8% (IPU 2018b) (see Figures 1 to 4,

Annex One, for Varieties of Democracy [V-DEM] data on women's lower house representation in Commonwealth countries in Africa between 1997 and 2017 [Coppedge et al. 2018]).

There are a number of factors that, when taken together, are likely to assist in increasing women's parliamentary representation, beginning with electoral systems themselves often playing a critical role in preventing women from increasing their parliamentary representation. Considerable evidence exists indicating that the adoption of proportional representation voting systems using gender-balanced party list tickets increases women's lower house representation more rapidly than majoritarian voting systems (Hedstrom and Smith 2013). In addition, the introduction of quotas, reserved seats and other positive action measures such as gender-targeted public funding to political parties is also likely to improve women's parliamentary representation. For example, Kenya's 2011 introduction of gender-targeted public funding to political parties appears to have led to significant increases in women's pre-selection and positioning on electoral ballots. Women have recorded a notable increase in representation from 10 per cent in 2011, when gender-targeted public funding was introduced, to 22 per cent in 2017 (Ohman 2018).

Whether changes to electoral systems and positive action measures such as those mentioned above are adopted will depend on whether political parties, historically serving as gate-keepers preventing marginalised groups such as women accessing political power, start actively supporting efforts to increase women's political participation (Kandawasvika-Nhundu 2014).

While some of the advances mentioned throughout this section are encouraging,

numerical participation in parliaments alone does not indicate *meaningful involvement* in decision-making and leadership. This shortcoming has been highlighted by case studies reflecting the challenges faced by women as new Members of Parliament (MPs) often lacking training and exposure to other confidence-building measures (International IDEA 2013).

The introduction of quotas, reserved seats and other formal gender equality measures designed to improve women's parliamentary numbers must be accompanied by training and mentoring programmes building women's confidence to function effectively as political leaders.

1.2.2 Presence in parliamentary leadership positions

The three measures used to assess women's engagement as parliamentary leaders are: 1) women's occupancy of cabinet positions in government; 2) the years that women have spent in office as prime ministers and presidents; and 3) women's occupancy of parliamentary speaker or parliamentary president roles.

The need for greater proportions of women as Members of Parliaments and attitudinal change in political parties throughout Africa to address women's exclusion from political leadership is evidenced by women's very slow entry into parliamentary leadership positions.

Although some Commonwealth countries in Africa have shown significant increases over the last 20 years in the proportion of women taking up cabinet positions, less than half of these countries (9 out of 19) currently exceed the African average of women in cabinet positions. In East Africa, all four Commonwealth countries recorded women in cabinet levels in 2017 well above the sub-Saharan African average

of 20.6 per cent. Kenya (30%), Rwanda (30%) and Uganda (29%) lead these, with Tanzania (22%) just exceeding the sub-Saharan Africa average.

In Southern Africa, countries' performances in allocating cabinet positions to women are generally significantly better than elsewhere across the continent, with South Africa (38%), Mozambique and Zambia (30%), Namibia (26%) and Seychelles (25%) well above the sub-Saharan Africa average (20.6%). Lastly, with the exception of The Gambia (30%), Commonwealth countries in West Africa struggle to match the sub-Saharan average. Figures 5 to 8, Annex One, detail these results.

A second measure of women's advancement into political leadership roles is the number of years that women have actually spent in executive office, i.e., in the prime minister or president's position, during the last 50 years (WEF 2017). On this measure, and consistent with all other regions, with the exception of Asia (see Section 1.2.1), Commonwealth countries in Africa have tended not to perform well. Only five of Africa's 19 Commonwealth countries have produced women prime ministers or presidents over the last 50 years. Of these five countries, the most impressive performer has been Mozambique, led by Luisa Dias Diogo as Prime Minister for almost six years from February 2004 until January 2010. Mauritius (2.4 years), Namibia (2.3 years), Malawi (2.1 years) and Rwanda (0.7 years) remain the only other Commonwealth countries on the continent to have featured women in executive leadership positions, and each for very short periods of time. Table 1, Annex Two, details these results.

Lastly, this pattern of under-representation at the highest parliamentary levels is confirmed by Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU 2018a) data on women's occupancy of the parliamentary speaker or parliamentary president roles, indicating that currently only 19.48 per cent of African parliaments are headed by women. The fact that this is slightly above the global average (18.35%) confirms that women's under-representation at this level remains a global phenomenon.

In summary, although there have been steady increases in women's parliamentary representation throughout Commonwealth member countries in Africa over the last 20 years, the lack of women in government leadership positions in Commonwealth parliaments – and African parliaments in general – remains a sizeable challenge.

1.2.3 Leadership in the corporate sector

In 2016, African women held 23 per cent of positions in executive committees, compared with a global average of 20 per cent. At the chief executive officer level, they occupied 5 per cent of positions, compared with a global average of 4 per cent, making Africa the top-performing region. At the corporate board level, African women held 14 per cent of seats compared with a global average of 13 per cent. However, representation varied considerably across regions and industries within Africa, with women occupying considerably higher proportions of boardroom positions in Southern Africa (20%), compared to 14 per cent across the continent as a whole. In North Africa, women's occupancy of boardroom positions was 9 per cent (McKinsey and Company 2017).

As with African women's representation in governance, while this increase

has recently been more notable across Africa than elsewhere, parity in representation will be a long way off due to the slowness with which companies are attracting women into entry-level positions, particularly in sectors such as engineering, where companies struggle to find women graduates. Women are therefore under-represented in promotional pipelines. Some, if not many, companies struggle to promote women for reasons similar to those related throughout this report, which are largely attitudinal.

Although companies make a focused effort to recruit women and establish a fairly even gender split at the non-management level, this becomes unbalanced within the first few promotion cycles, as confirmed by McKinsey's research on 55 African companies, which found that women make up 45 per cent of the workforce but receive just 36 per cent of promotions.

Some companies manage to promote women into middle management roles, but then women encounter difficulties in being promoted to senior management positions, resulting in women continuing to be kept out of top management levels (ibid).

1.2.4 Participation as leaders at the local level

Women's participation as councillors in local government in Commonwealth countries across Africa is, together with the Caribbean, well ahead of other Commonwealth regions but, with the notable exception of Lesotho, remains well below parity with men. In Lesotho, 49 per cent of local government councillors are women, representing a membership well ahead of any other Commonwealth country. Lesotho's result is undoubtedly helped by its

system of reserving one-third of local government seats for women, lending weight to the conclusion noted in Section 1.3.3 above that positive action such as quotas and reserved seats can only hasten the correction of the historical gender gap in political leadership globally.

Of the 17 African countries in the Commonwealth for which data are available, nine register proportions of women as local government councillors above the very modest Commonwealth average of 22.3 per cent. Other African Commonwealth countries tallying 40 per cent or more of their local councillors as women are Namibia (44.2%), South Africa (42.1%) and Rwanda (40%). At the other end of the spectrum, five Commonwealth countries across Africa register proportions of women as local government councillors below 15 per cent. These are eSwatini (14.4%), Malawi (12.1%), Nigeria (9.8%), Zambia (8.1%) and Ghana (6.7%). None of these countries have adopted reserved seats or quotas to assist women in overcoming political exclusion at the local government level. Table 2, Annex Two, provides more detail on Commonwealth countries'

performances on the inclusion of women in local government decision-making.

Women's representation in local leadership is also reflected in their engagement in civil society organisations and as journalists in political discourse. Ensuring women's full participation in political expression at the local and subnational levels is a key component of meeting SDG 16 and its emphasis on building accountable institutions.

The extent to which African women are able to participate as agents in civil society has been far greater than their capacity to participate as political leaders in parliaments, although in recent years there has been a marked increase across the world of governments restricting civil society freedoms (Roth 2016). In Commonwealth countries across Africa, women's engagement in civil society has reduced in several countries during periods throughout the 20 years from 1997 to 2017. These are, in East Africa, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, showing reductions between 2010 and 2017, and in Southern Africa, with Malawi and Lesotho showing declines in women's

civil society freedoms. In Malawi's case, this decline took place between 2012 and 2017, while in Lesotho, the reduction from 2013 to 2017 followed a dramatic improvement between 2012 and 2013.

However, in general, Commonwealth countries in Africa have registered improvements in women's capacity to engage in civil society in the 1997 to 2017 period. Botswana, Zambia and Sierra Leone lead specialists' assessments of women's capacity to engage as agents in civil society, scoring 0.89, 0.89, and 0.88 respectively on a scale of 0 (i.e., women do not have the capacity to express themselves and participate in civil society) to 1 (women are able to fully express themselves and participate in civil society), well above the sub-Saharan average (0.67). Nigeria (0.85), South Africa (0.83) and Mauritius have also registered advances in this dimension of women's participation.

One example of young women's increasing engagement as leaders in civil society is illustrated in Box 1.1, describing the Copper Rose project: a project facilitating young women's leadership in their local communities.

BOX 1.1

SUPPORTING YOUNG WOMEN'S ACCESS TO EDUCATION IN ZAMBIA

The Copper Rose initiative in Zambia began in 2015, started by two young women who believed that poverty was not an excuse not to make a difference. The group's mission is to make a difference in the lives of women and girls by educating them about their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and responsibilities so that they may exhibit autonomy and reach their full potential to be effective leaders and agents of change in their communities. Copper Rose aims for a world in which every woman, girl and young person is happy, healthy and living to their full potential.

The group's Candid Pride Campaign aimed to break the silence on menstruation and SRHR among adolescents in Zambian communities. The campaign highlights Copper Rose's success as a young feminist group. In January 2017, the campaign had reached out to more than 7,000 adolescents with donations of over 3,500 sanitary napkins and hygiene kits in four districts of Zambia. The group is also extremely proud of taking steps in advocating consideration for menstrual hygiene at the national level, with the result that from 2017, sanitary napkins have been included in the national budget for school-going girls in Zambia.

Lastly, in addition to Lesotho's 2012–13 dramatic improvement and then reduction in women's capacity to engage as civil society agents referred to above, similar sudden increases in women's civil society participation followed the ending of the civil war in Sierra Leone in 2002 (3) and the change of government in The Gambia in 2012. These events demonstrate the powerful impact that political events at the national level can have in creating opportunities for women to move into leadership roles at the *subnational* as well as the national levels.

Figures 9 to 12 (Annex One) detail specialists' assessments of women's capacity to participate in civil society throughout the 19 Commonwealth countries in Africa.

1.2.5 Political empowerment index

When three of five dimensions of women's presence in political leadership positions referred to throughout this section are combined, it becomes easier to draw conclusions from the wide-ranging data presented; conclusions that can augment others drawn in this section. These three dimensions are the ratio of women to men in parliamentary positions, the ratio of women to men in ministerial positions, and the ratio of women to men spending time in executive office as prime minister or president during the last 50 years.

After examining results from this composite political empowerment index assembled by the World Economic Forum (WEF 2017), the conclusions we can draw are that Rwanda is the world leader in women's political empowerment by virtue of its top world ranking in women's parliamentary representation, together with its strong performance in other political

leadership dimensions. These include its support to women via reserved seats in local government and its status as the only Commonwealth country in East Africa *not* to have reduced women's civil society freedoms.

In comparative terms, South Africa, Mozambique and Namibia have also performed ahead of their African Commonwealth counterparts in women's presence in political leadership, as shown in Table 2, Annex One. These countries have consistently scored higher than others in women's positions in parliamentary, local government and civil society representation. Zambia, Botswana and Sierra Leone should be added to these in light of their support of women participating in civil society, while Lesotho is the world leader in facilitating women's presence in local government, helped by its 33 per cent reserved seats policy for women in local government.

1.3 Asia

1.3.1 Representation in national parliaments

Women's representation in lower houses of parliament throughout both Asia and in the region's Commonwealth countries was, in 2017, very low. Only Singapore (23%) ranked above the 2017 global average (22.15%). Rates of progress in increasing women's lower house representation have also been exceedingly slow, with the exception of Singapore's women's representation increasing dramatically between 2004 and 2007. Sri Lanka (5.8%), Brunei Darussalam (9.1%) and Malaysia (10.4%) continue to experience substantial challenges in overcoming women's exclusion from political representation,

remaining considerably below the current global average of 23.8%. Figures 13 and 14, Annex One, depict women's lower house representation in Asia's parliaments from 1997 to 2017.

1.3.2 Presence in parliamentary leadership positions

In the Commonwealth's Asia region, women's movement into parliamentary leadership positions as cabinet incumbents has, as with women's entry into parliaments, also been painstakingly slow, failing to rise in any country above 10 per cent of cabinet membership, until 2005. While several Commonwealth African countries have shown significant increases in the proportion of women cabinet members, their Asian counterparts have, with the exceptions of Malaysia (15% in 2013) and India (12% in 2014), failed to exceed the unremarkable Asian average (11.75% in 2016). Figure 15 (Annex One) presents these data.

The second measure of women's advancement into the highest of political leadership roles examined here is the number of years that women have actually spent in executive office, i.e., in the prime minister or president's position, during the last 50 years. And in dramatic contrast to Asia's poor performance in accommodating women as cabinet members in government, Commonwealth countries in Asia have three of the world's top seven performing countries in ushering women into executive office. Bangladesh leads the world in approaching parity between women and men at the highest executive leadership level, with women occupying the prime minister's position for 23.6 of the last 50 years, i.e. a parity ratio of 0.896. India has also scored highly on this index, ranked third in the

world for electing women for 20.5 of the last 50 years to the prime ministership (a 0.697 parity ration), while Sri Lanka ranks seventh in the world, having elected women as prime ministers for 13.1 of the last 50 years. In addition, Pakistan also features among the world's leading countries, ranking 28 for Benazir Bhutto's 4.7 years as prime minister. Table 1, Annex Two, presents this information for all Commonwealth countries.

The contrast between the record of Commonwealth countries in Asia on women's occupancy of the highest executive position and women's presence at other levels of the political hierarchy can be explained by South Asia's attraction to dynastic party structures, with prominent families playing a large role in politics. When a husband or father dies or can no longer serve at the highest level, a female family member has often moved into that position. While men have also benefitted from family ties, women in particular have benefitted from this path to power in South Asia.

Lastly, women's occupancy of the parliamentary speaker/presidency role in Asia returns to its less-than-average performance concerning women in leadership. Only 10.3 per cent of Asian parliaments are headed by women as their parliamentary speaker or president, compared with the global average of 18.35 per cent.

1.3.3 Leadership in the corporate sector

Asia has shown considerable gains in the proportion of women occupying senior management positions in the region's largest companies, with a 60 per cent rise in gender diversity at the boardroom level between 2010 and 2015. However, this increase comes from a very low base, and even with

this level of improvement, female representation on corporate boards in Asia is still below 10 per cent, trailing behind the global average (14%) (WEF 2017) and all other regions except Latin America (Credit Suisse 2016). Figure 16, Annex One, presents this information.

Malaysia is one Asian country undertaking proactive steps to reverse women's negligible boardroom representation and their presence in Malaysia's civil service. As a result of policies adopted by the Malaysian government, women's representation increased from 6 per cent in 2012 to 15 per cent in 2016. Box 1.2 provides more details concerning these developments.

1.3.4 Participation as leaders at the local level

Women's engagement in local government throughout Commonwealth countries in Asia presents a mixed picture, although this is a significantly better picture than their severe under-representation in national parliaments and cabinets.

Of the region's seven Commonwealth countries, three countries substantially exceed the Commonwealth average (22.3%) of women in local government councils. These are India (37.1%), Sri Lanka (29.1%) and Bangladesh (25.2%), each with sizeable reserved seat allocations to women. Commonwealth countries in Asia performing below the Commonwealth average are Pakistan (19.6%) and Malaysia (13.1%) (Commonwealth Local Government Forum 2018) (4).

Women's civil society participation (5) – on a scale of 0 representing women having no capacity to express themselves or to participate in groups to 1, i.e., women having full capacity to

express themselves and to participate in groups – ranges dramatically throughout Commonwealth countries across Asia. Pakistan (0.35) and India (0.46) are placed at the lowest end of the scale, while Sri Lanka (0.88) has much greater freedoms for women as civil society agents. Three of the six Commonwealth countries producing data on this indicator – Singapore (0.72), Malaysia (0.73), and Sri Lanka (0.87) – equal or exceed the global average (0.72). Figure 17, Annex One, provides details of women's civil society participation in the Commonwealth's Asian countries. These data indicate that, as with Africa, continuing and substantial reform from opinion leaders and legislators is required to ensure that women are able to participate fully in civil society discourse.

1.3.5 Political empowerment index

Asia's performance on the composite index referred to in Section 1.2.5 – combining the ratio of women to men in parliamentary positions, the ratio of women to men in ministerial positions and the ratio of women to men spending time in executive office – lags behind the rankings of other regions, with only Bangladesh (ranked 7) and India (ranked 15) featuring in the indexes' top 60 countries (see Table 3, Annex Two). When considered with the fact that these two countries perform ahead of many others in supporting women's entry into local government through reserved seat systems, it appears that these South Asian neighbours are leaders in promoting women's political empowerment.

However, results for Bangladesh and India in areas such as women's presence in parliaments, their membership of cabinets and their freedoms to engage in civil society discourse are well below

BOX 1.2**INCREASING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN MALAYSIA'S CORPORATE SECTOR**

In June 2011, the former Malaysian Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, announced the Malaysian Cabinet had approved a policy requiring corporate companies to achieve at least 30 per cent of women occupying decision-making positions in the private sector by 2016. This policy was incorporated into the 10th Malaysia Action Plan, which also sought to boost female participation in the workforce to 55 per cent by 2016.

The Plan specified that women must comprise 30 per cent of boards and senior management positions of public and limited liability companies, in which there are more than 250 employees, by 2016. This policy is an extension of a similar government policy introduced in 2004 for civil services, resulting in the number of women working in government agencies increasing from 18.8 in 2004 to 32.2 per cent in 2011 and 35 per cent in March 2018.

Many corporations have now started to implement a succession plan, including more women's representation at the management and board levels. The NAM Institute for the Empowerment of Women (NIEW) Malaysia, an agency under the purview of the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry, has developed the Woman Directors Programmes to groom potential and qualified women leaders to be effective board directors.

The Women Directors' Programme is implemented by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) and Talent Corp, and equips female professionals with the strategies and skills to navigate, build and lead in an ever-changing work environment.

The ICAEW is an accountancy professional body which has a global membership of around 142,000. Through the Women in Leadership programme, the ICAEW provides a platform for women who are just a few steps away from the boardroom to learn from each other's experiences through peer-to-peer mentoring that prepares participants to be able to actively contribute to business board-level decision-making.

On a related matter, corporations are having to now institute flexi-work arrangements and rehire women who have left the workforce to start a family. There are now many women who had temporarily left the corporate world and would like to return, but need to enhance their qualifications to re-enter the workforce and get their careers back on track.

The government also declared that 2018 was women's empowerment year. In addition to the above policies concerning women's appointments to company and statutory body boards, the government also increased maternity leave in the private sector, proposing it be increased from 60 days to the 90 days currently adopted by public sector organisations. In addition, all new office buildings are now required to be equipped with childcare facilities and organisations failing to comply with these measures will be charged once the law has been amended.

global averages. When viewed with their poor performances in promoting women into corporate and company leadership positions (see Section 1.3.3), the assessment of Asia's two strongest performers – Bangladesh and India – becomes very mixed. Results for the five other Commonwealth Asian countries reported throughout this section indicate that the region faces considerable challenges in approaching parity on most of the indicators used throughout this analysis.

1.4 The Caribbean and Americas

1.4.1 Representation in national parliaments

In 2017 and 2018, most Commonwealth countries in the Caribbean and Americas region registered percentages of women in lower houses that are higher than the global average (23.8%). Grenada (33.3%), Guyana (31.9%) Trinidad and

Tobago (31%) and Dominica (25%) have the highest proportions of women representing constituents in their parliaments' lower houses. Further, these countries have been consistently higher than the remaining Commonwealth countries in the region since 2007. These results can be seen in Figures 18 and 19, Annex One.

As with other regions' performances discussed in this report, progress on this indicator has been very slow, although

Guyana showed a pronounced spike in women's lower house representation from 1985 to 1991, when it more than doubled the regional average with 36.9 per cent of its lower house then comprising women. This was due to the fact that women increased their proportion on political party candidate lists, particularly those of the ruling party, in a proportional representation voting system (McAlmot 2011). This is a system that, as mentioned in Section 1.3.1, tends to favour candidates from minority – or in the case of women – marginalised groups. Since then, women's representation in Guyana has fallen, but remains well above the Caribbean average (24.6%).

1.4.2 Presence in parliamentary leadership positions

Women's presence in government leadership positions throughout the region, as measured by their proportions in cabinets, has varied considerably during the last 50 years, with no discernible patterns emerging, apart from an incremental increase. In 2017, Canada's result was 50 per cent, the only Commonwealth country to achieve parity in women's cabinet membership. Trinidad and Tobago has shown – with the exception of 2010's cabinet – fairly consistent increases during the last 20 years. The country now has just over one third (34%) of its government's cabinet comprising women. Figure 20, Annex One, presents these results.

In Canada's case, Prime Minister Trudeau avoided the historical tendency of allocating only minor portfolios to women cabinet ministers after the 2015 national election. Women in the Canadian cabinet have instead assumed the International Trade, Foreign Affairs, Justice and Attorney General,

Environment and Climate Change and among others, the Employment, Workforce and Labour portfolios. A similar pattern has emerged in Trinidad and Tobago, where several economic portfolios were also allocated to women in 2015's post-election cabinet.

The second measure reflecting women's advancement into government leadership positions at the highest level is in women's occupancy of prime minister and president positions. In the Caribbean and Americas region, of the five Commonwealth countries for which data are available, only two countries have positioned women in their highest-level executive roles for more than five of the last 50 years. These are Jamaica (5.6 years) and Barbados (5.5 years). None of the remaining three Caribbean countries listed in Table 1 (Annex Two) have promoted women into this role for more than six months, suggesting that women continue to encounter prohibitive challenges in 'breaking the glass ceiling' and maintaining their positions (amid the shattered glass) for the highest level of office in this region.

Lastly, just over one in four of the parliamentary speakers or presidents throughout the region (26.8%) are women. While this is well above a very low global average of 18.35 per cent and is in fact the highest figure for all Commonwealth regions, it remains substantially short of parity (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2018a).

1.4.3 Leadership in the corporate sector

In the corporate sector, the Caribbean and Americas region comes third in the proportion of women positioned as the highest managers in companies, behind East Asia and the Pacific, and Europe (see Annex Two, Table 4) (6). However, all Caribbean states – with the exception

of Antigua and Barbuda (17.5%) – exceed the global average (18.6%) of women in top management positions.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (38.6%) registers levels above all other Commonwealth countries listed in Table 4, Annex Two. However, while many of these firms are owned by women, they operate in the textile, food, retail and restaurant sectors, often characterised as low productivity and low growth (Complete Caribbean 2017) sectors. As women fulfil multiple roles via their reproductive, productive and community contributions, their work and choices to start businesses are linked to necessity, timing, location, flexibility, family needs and child-rearing responsibilities (Minniti 2010), rather than resulting from any progressive government-instigated policies facilitating women's private sector leadership.

In Canada, gender diversity in corporate governance has increased by more than a third since 2010, due to pressure from shareholders, public bodies and a growing debate on the more general topic of women's participation in the corporate world globally. However, in contrast to Europe, Canada has not set any quotas or targets, explaining to a large extent why it is lagging behind Europe, as detailed in Figure 16, Annex One. Given the clear link between gender diversity and improved business performance (Credit Suisse Research Institute 2016), the reluctance of corporate decision-makers to adopt quotas warrants further investigation.

1.4.4 Participation as leaders at the local level

Women's representation in local government throughout the Caribbean and Americas region is significantly above the Commonwealth

average (22.3%) in six of the nine states in the region hosting *elected* local governments (7).

In fact, three countries – Antigua and Barbuda (45.4%), Dominica (35%) and Trinidad and Tobago (30.4%) – register proportions of women as local government councillors above 30 per cent. Given the absence of reserved seats or quota systems to advance women's local government representation in these countries, these results are noteworthy. However, Guyana (5%) and Saint Kitts and Nevis (12.5%), positioned at the other end of the spectrum, are equally noteworthy for their under-performance. Table 2, Annex Two, details the data reflecting women's local government representation in the region.

Consistent with the generally above-average results concerning women in local government, women's engagement in public debate as journalists and as members of civil society organisations is very high throughout the Caribbean and Americas, particularly when compared with their civil society participation in other regions. Jamaica (0.94), Trinidad and Tobago (0.92) and Guyana (0.91) provide considerable freedom for women to engage in civil society fora, while Canada (0.88)

remains well above the world average (0.72). These results (see Figure 21, Annex One) contrast markedly with the region's below-average performance on women's representation in the lower houses of parliament.

1.4.5 Political empowerment index

Only five of the Caribbean and Americas region's 13 countries register scores on the World Economic Forum's political empowerment index (WEF 2017) described in Section 1.2.5., i.e. the index combining women's status vis a vis men's in parliamentary positions held, ministerial positions occupied and time spent in executive office. Of these five countries, only one – Canada – is ranked in the world top 50 countries, with the remaining four ranking between 74th (Jamaica) and 139th, indicating that the region struggles to approach anything near parity on the indexes' constituent measures. Table 3, Annex Two, presents these rankings and their associated scores.

However, as noted in Section 1.4.4 above, the region's results in both women's local government representation and in its encouragement of women's participation in civil society is very strong and considerably above both Commonwealth and global

averages, suggesting a disconnect between women's advancement into leadership positions at the subnational and national levels.

1.5 Europe

1.5.1 Representation in national parliaments

In 2017, only one of the three Commonwealth countries in Europe performed above the global average (23.8%) of women in lower houses of parliament. The United Kingdom registered 32 per cent of women in the House of Commons. Both Cyprus (17.9%) and Malta (11.9%) fell well short of the global average. In Malta's case, the gap is considerable and remains well below the EU average (29.4%). Figures 22 and 23, Annex One, present these outcomes.

While Section 1.3.1 refers to the tendency of proportional representative voting systems to assist female candidates yield positive electoral results, in Malta, which uses a form of proportional representation, there are fewer women in parliament than in any other Western democracy. Box 1.3 (see right) details why this is the case (Lane

BOX 1.3

WHY MALTA'S PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEM YIELDS SUCH POOR OUTCOMES FOR WOMEN

A detailed analysis of voting data shows that what accounts for the paucity of women legislators in Malta is not a shortage of ballot positions, nor a lack of qualified women candidates or significant voter prejudice against female candidates. Rather, Malta's performance results from the unwillingness or inability of party elites to recruit a substantial number of women candidates, even though voting patterns create an incentive for political parties to maximise the number of candidates. Since the cause of this failure to mobilise more women candidates cannot be ascribed to the workings of the electoral system nor to voter behaviour, it will have to be sought in contextual factors that still work to stifle women's political careers. Malta's experience serves as a caution against optimistic expectations that the adoption of proportional representation will lead to greater legislative opportunities for women.

1995). In summary, the reason appears to be that political party leaders in Malta do not recruit enough women candidates and position them high enough on their candidate lists to procure the required quota of votes to be elected.

1.5.2 Presence in parliamentary leadership positions

When reviewing women's presence in government leadership positions throughout the region as measured by their proportions in cabinets, these appear consistent with women's lower house parliamentary representation in general. Again, the United Kingdom (26%) is the region's leading performer, although achieving markedly less than the EU average (34.1%). Cyprus has only 9 per cent of its government's cabinet positions allocated to women (see Figure 24, Annex One) while comparative figures are unavailable for Malta. However, a recent media report (*Times of Malta* 2013) after the country's March 2016 elections puts the figure at two female ministers in a total of 22 ministers, or 9 per cent. Both ministers occupy non-economic or lower ranked ministries typically allocated to women, i.e., Family and Social Solidarity, and Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties.

Concerning the region's performance on ushering women into top executive government positions, the region does much better than in its allocation of cabinet positions. Two of its three members, Malta (17th) and the United Kingdom (8th) rank in the world's top 20 performers, with 8.2 and 12.5 of their last 50 years respectively guided by women Heads of State.

Lastly, in 2017, one in five (20%) of Europe's parliamentary speakers or presidents were women

(Inter-Parliamentary Union 2018b), just exceeding the 18.35 per cent global average. As with all regions, this falls substantially short of parity. These results suggest that gender parity in parliamentary leadership positions across the region hosting some of the world's oldest democracies has well-embedded challenges to deal with in reversing this pattern.

1.5.3 Leadership in the corporate sector

In the United Kingdom, women are steadily increasing their presence in boardrooms, rising from 14 per cent in 2003 to 27.2 per cent in 2017. Indeed, there are now only have a handful of FTSE (Financial Times Stock Exchange) 100 companies with no female representation on their boards, but the issue remains that there have been no significant increases in the number of female executive directors.

In the absence of quotas in the UK, the corporate sector anticipates that by increasing transparency of diversity policies and targets under the UK Corporate Governance Code, the sector will improve women's presence at the highest corporate decision-making levels. However, the key issue appears to be the extent to which women occupy the pipeline supplying executive positions (Deloitte 2013). In terms of good practice, France leads EU countries with 43.4 per cent of female boardroom occupants, closely followed by Iceland (43%) and Norway (42.1%) (see Annex One, Figure 25). All three countries have set binding legislative targets of 40 per cent around gender diversity in the boardroom.

In contrast and consistent with women's parliamentary representation, Cyprus (10.4%) and Malta (8.4%) occupy the opposite end of the EU

spectrum of women's presence at the board level, with both countries well below the EU average (25.3%).

1.5.4 Participation as leaders at the local level sector

Women's local government representation in the three Commonwealth countries in Europe varies appreciably, ranging from Cyprus, registering 11.9 per cent, to the United Kingdom, electing 28.2 per cent of women to seats in local government. While the UK easily exceeds the Commonwealth average (22.3%), both Malta (19%) and Cyprus fall short, with both results indicating that women are experiencing systemic barriers to their political inclusion at the local government level. Table 2, Annex One, details these results.

In contrast, women in Cyprus face fewer barriers when engaging in civil society and political discourse as journalists. While women's civil society participation is very high in the United Kingdom (0.91 on a scale of 0 to 1.0) and above the EU average (0.89), Cyprus is not far behind, registering a score of 0.84, suggesting that women's participation in civil society organisations is much more acceptable than their participation as decision-makers in local government. Figure 26, Annex One, details these findings.

For Malta, comparative data on women's civil society participation are unavailable. However, a 2014 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) analysis noted that, as with Malta's political participation deficit for women in other areas, Maltese women face strong cultural prescriptions assigning them domestic and caring responsibilities rather than encouraging them to assume roles in civil society and political discourse.

These prescriptions leave women with considerably less time to devote to other endeavours. Strong media and educational advocacy promoting the idea that boys and men adopt more of the roles traditionally assigned to women and girls will be required, notes the OSCE, to allow women more space to devote to politics (Cutajar 2014).

After the EU identified women's labour market participation as a key challenge in Malta's Country-Specific Recommendations for 2015, the country's 2015–2017 National Action Plan committed the government to increasing women's participation in public service employment. The National Council of Women cited women's ability to 'increase public trust in political systems and engage with government in settings where ideas can be discussed, creating a collaborative atmosphere characterised by mutual respect, integrity and forthrightness'. However, in Malta's mid-term Self-Assessment Report of its National Action Plan's 2015–2017 progress, the slow progress made in this area led the government to recommit to 'ensuring a more equal representation of women in decision-making processes, and providing women with a stronger voice in political decision-making' (Government of Malta 2017).

1.5.5 Political empowerment index

When reviewing scores on the World Economic Forum's political empowerment index (WEF 2017), i.e. the index combining women's status vis a vis men's in parliamentary positions held, ministerial positions occupied and time spent in executive office, only the UK (17th) and Malta (85th) are ranked in the world top 100 countries, with Cyprus ranked at 115th (see Table 3, Annex One). The UK's position and score

(0.404) on the political empowerment index reflects the fact that, although it has had more years of women as prime ministers over the last 50 years than many other countries, it has still struggled to facilitate women's movement into the House of Commons, cabinet positions, local government and onto corporate boards. This is likely to be due to its majoritarian voting systems, and its voluntary (non-quota) system of incentives for women's advancement in the private sector.

However, the UK's higher-than-average participation of women in civil society and its comparatively stronger position than its Commonwealth European counterparts, indicate that both Cyprus and Malta have sizeable challenges in overcoming women's exclusion from political and business leadership.

1.6 The Pacific

1.6.1 Representation in national parliaments

Women's representation in national parliaments throughout the region has historically been exceptionally low, and this continues to be the case with the Pacific (13.47%) recording the lowest average of any global region in 2016 barring the Caucuses (13.17%). The Pacific is also surpassed on this indicator by the world's least developed states, with 20.11% of their parliaments comprising women.

Within the region there is considerable variation, with women legislators ranging from zero in Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands (2017 results), to 33.3 per cent in New Zealand, followed by Australia at 28.7 per cent. Several other Pacific countries register exceedingly

low proportions of women legislators, well below half of the global average (23.8%). These are Kiribati (6.5%), Tonga (7.7%), Samoa (10%) and Nauru (10.5%). If New Zealand and Australia were removed from the calculations, the region would, in fact, be the lowest in the world on this indicator. Figures 27 and 28, Annex One, present these results.

That the Pacific region contains very highly skilled and qualified women capable of holding office (Council for International Development 2012), begs the question why so few women are entering the region's top decision-making roles? The answer appears to be found in the region's history of assigning separate and complementary roles to women and men, and the region's colonial influences – particularly Christianity – and a resultant shift away from women's pre-colonial status as respected leaders. This is despite the fact that women's educational attainment is higher than that of men throughout the region (ibid).

Overcoming this phenomenon requires attracting women away from their often highly paid jobs to face the risks associated with campaigning. It will also require that legislatures develop the will to pass legislative measures allowing women to assume roles that, constitutionally, they often have the right to assume, but to which they are excluded from by an attitude that governance is an exclusively male realm. This, combined with the usual gender-related barriers such as domestic obligations, additional family care burdens, the need to hold down more flexible paid work and the risks of campaigning, mean that a great deal of work needs to be done to overcome women's political exclusion throughout the region.

1.6.2 Presence in parliamentary leadership positions

For those countries for which the data are available, Pacific women's presence in government leadership positions follows the same pattern as their severe under-representation in the region's lower houses of parliament. New Zealand again leads the regional rankings, with women occupying 35 per cent of its 2013 cabinet, followed by Australia with 26 per cent. This contrasts with Papua New Guinea (0%), Vanuatu (0%) and Solomon Islands (4%), having the lowest proportions of women cabinet members (see Figure 29, Annex One).

When reviewing the second indicator used to assess women's occupancy of senior leadership roles in parliament, i.e., their ascendancy to the positions of prime minister or president, data are only available for three of the Pacific's 11 countries. Of these, only New Zealand features in the world's top 30 countries, ranking 12th due to the 11 years that Helen Clarke and Jacinda Ardern have spent in the prime minister position. Australia is ranked 35th and Fiji 69th, registering 3 and zero years respectively on the index, and again highlighting that this is not a strong reflection of women's political leadership across the region.

Lastly, the Pacific also has the lowest proportion of women assuming parliamentary speakerships or president roles globally, with 5.9 per cent (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2018a). This compares with the global average of 18.35 per cent (2016 figures).

1.6.3 Leaders in the corporate sector

Recent research (Deloitte 2013) on boardroom composition in the Asia-Pacific region indicates that most countries' boards now have a slightly

higher percentage of female directors than two years ago, but only Australian companies have made a significant improvement on this dimension.

In Australia, female directors accounted for 16.7 per cent of directorship positions in 2015, up from 11.2 per cent in 2010. Elsewhere in the Asia-Pacific region, female directors account for less than 10 per cent of total boardroom members.

However, when the analysis turns to females as top managers in companies throughout the region, World Bank data indicate that the East Asia-Pacific region leads all regions – including Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries – with 32.7 per cent of the firms surveyed having a female top manager (see Table 4, Annex Two). This figure is considerably higher than the global average of 18.6 per cent. However, it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions from these data, because only two Pacific countries were surveyed. The Solomon Islands result of 22.6 per cent is well below the region's average, an average dominated by East-Asian rather than Pacific economies. This is confirmed by the fact that Papua New Guinea is the only other Pacific island economy surveyed, and its average of women in top management positions amounts to only 13.8 per cent, considerably below the global average (8).

Data from elsewhere note that Samoa records the highest percentage of any Commonwealth country when measuring private sector leadership positions held by women, with 60 per cent. Tonga is next highest in the Pacific region, with only 14 per cent. Four other countries in the region register 13 per cent or less, suggesting that aside from Samoa, most countries in

the region have low proportions of women in private sector leadership positions (Boardwalk Leadership 2017).

The Economist's Corporate Network notes that many women in the Pacific region outside of Australia and New Zealand are employed in the informal sector. In the formal sector, while more women are entering the workforce, comparatively few have ascended to higher professional and managerial positions. For those designing measures to counter this and move towards gender parity, the same research draws some conclusions warranting consideration. These covered the need for senior corporate leadership to develop a conscious focus on gender balance, providing mentors for women leadership candidates, exposing female staff to female managers and senior female leaders as role models, and instituting flexible work arrangements to help retain women (Wilson Towers Watson 2015).

1.6.4 Participation as leaders at the local level

With the exception of three countries in the Pacific region, i.e., Australia (32.2%), New Zealand (32.5%) and Fiji (13.2%), all remaining countries fail to register above 7 per cent of women councillors in the region's local governments. Indeed, aside from Vanuatu (6.5%), no other Pacific region country comprises local government authorities with more than 5 per cent of women as members. Three of these countries, i.e., Papua New Guinea (1.4%), Tonga (1.1%) and Samoa (0%) have negligible levels of women's local government representation. Consistent with women's severe under-representation in national parliaments, these results reveal a strong subregional exclusion of women from local government

among the Commonwealth's Pacific island states. Table 2, Annex Two, presents these findings.

In contrast to these results, women's civil society participation across the Pacific states for which data are available (see Figure 30, Annex One), compares well with its Asian neighbours, including South Asia (0.58) and Southeast Asia (0.66), and the world's least developed countries (0.61). And although ranking below most other regions, the Pacific region averages the same as the global average (0.72) (9), due to the stronger results from Australia (0.89) and New Zealand (0.94).

Until 2016, Vanuatu – notwithstanding its absence of women parliamentarians – had scored quite highly (0.83), although falling in 2017 to score just below the regional average (0.7). This appears to be consistent with the findings reported in Section 1.6.1 that women in Pacific island communities are highly educated and strong leaders, notwithstanding, or perhaps because, they have had to overcome the systemic barriers they have faced in post-colonial society in attempting to move into public leadership roles.

1.6.5 Political empowerment index

As with several other indicators reflecting women's leadership status, scores on the World Economic Forum's political empowerment index (WEF 2017), i.e. the index combining women's status vis a vis men's in parliamentary positions held, ministerial positions occupied and time spent in executive office, are unavailable for the smaller Pacific island states. When the country scores that are available from the index are examined, New Zealand (11th) and Australia

(48th) rank among the world's top 50 countries, while Fiji's ranking is 105.

The major differences between New Zealand and Australia's ratios are New Zealand's better performance in electing women to parliament, possibly due to its proportional representation system as opposed to Australia's preferential voting system, together with its much better record in allocating cabinet and prime minister positions to women.

Fiji's low position and index score reflect the difficulties that many Pacific island states have experienced in returning women to their pre-colonial status as national and subnational leaders. Samoa and Vanuatu exemplify the divergences between women's leadership in business (Samoa) and civil society (Vanuatu) on the one hand, and their severe under-representation and exclusion from national and local government on the other.

1.7 Section summary and conclusions: women in leadership

Women's leadership at the parliamentary level

After noting the global trend of advances made in women securing more seats in parliaments and the challenge of overcoming their lack of representation in political leadership, the preceding section examined the extent to which women's representation in lower houses has improved and whether these improvements had translated into women assuming more positions in cabinet and at the executive leadership level.

It found that women's lower house representation in Africa had improved markedly, with the exception – barring Cameroon – of West Africa. However, on the election of women to cabinet, although progress has been reasonable in South Africa and Rwanda in Africa, Trinidad and Tobago in the Caribbean and of course in Canada, with its 50 per cent representation of women in cabinet, in general improvements have been disappointingly slow. The same holds for women's occupancy of prime minister and president roles, with Asia being an exception – due primarily to the influence of family dynasties in assisting women to move into these roles.

In summary, although there have been steady increases over the last 50 years in women's parliamentary representation, and notably in Africa, the lack of women in government leadership positions remains a sizeable challenge.

The progress that has been made in terms of women's increasing parliamentary presence is due to the implementation of policy advances, including legislated or voluntary quotas and reserved seats, in some cases initiatives such as gender-targeted public funding, increases in educational opportunities and the advocacy undertaken by women's movements.

Women's leadership in the corporate sector

Women's progress in moving into management positions in the corporate sector has also been incremental, with the most promising advances taking place in Europe, where many countries have quota systems in place. However, this is not the case in the UK, which prefers the voluntary adoption of boardroom diversity principles and,

in doing so, has achieved an increase from 14 per cent of women in boardroom in 2003 to 27.2 per cent in 2017. While not as high as some of its EU neighbours, the result is nevertheless encouraging. Africa has also been a world leader in gender diversity at the corporate board and chief executive officer (CEO) levels, with African women holding 23 per cent of positions in executive committees in 2016, compared with a global average of 20 per cent. At the CEO level, women occupied 5 per cent of positions, compared with a global average of 4 per cent.

Women's leadership at the local level

Women's participation in local government throughout the Commonwealth has varied markedly, ranging from no representation at

all in Samoa, and less than 7 per cent representation in six other small Pacific island states, to 49 per cent in Lesotho. The Lesotho result has been helped by an allocation to women of one third of all seats as reserved. Several other Commonwealth states in Africa have also achieved a 40 per cent or more representation at the local level for women, including Namibia (44%), South Africa (42.1%) and Rwanda (40%), with Rwanda also adopting a 30% reserved seat allocation. Africa's combined results, with the exception of Ghana (6.7%), Zambia (8.2%) and Nigeria (9.8%), lead the Commonwealth regions, while Antigua and Barbuda (45.4%), India (37.2%) and New Zealand (32.5%) lead their respective regions. However, these results indicate that, at the local government level, similar attitudinal and

policy challenges still confront women in striving for representational parity.

The increasing strength of women's advocacy referred to above can be seen from the report's examination of women's capacity to engage unhindered in countries' civil society networks and journalistic discourse. Most regions have increasing levels of participation by women in civil society, with the exception of Asia, where women's participation at this level, aside from in Sri Lanka, has been in notable deficit. In the Pacific, Solomon Islands, PNG and Fiji also have lower rates of civil society participation by women. Whether this can be explained by the trend in recent years of an increase in governments restricting civil society freedoms is beyond the scope of this report to investigate.

Endnotes

- 1 That is, where data are available. Data may not be available in certain areas, and such cases are noted throughout the report.
- 2 This figure reflects women legislators in Rwanda's lower house.
- 3 The theme of women's presence as leaders in conflict and particularly post-conflict contexts, as peace builders at the subnational level, peacemakers at the national level and as combatants or perpetrators in conflict itself, is explored in Section 3 of this report on ending violence against women and girls.
- 4 Singapore has no local government, but community development councils (CDCs) providing local administration and overseen by the Ministry of National Development, while Brunei Darussalam does not have a local government system.
- 5 Again, these scores are on a scale of 0 representing no freedom to participate to 1, reflecting the capacity to fully participate.
- 6 Note that World Bank data are unavailable for Australia, Canada and New Zealand.
- 7 As Table 2, Annex Two, notes, Grenada has no local government and Barbados, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines have appointed local administrative structures.
- 8 Nor can the result be explained by distortions created by countries such as New Zealand and Australia, as these countries were excluded from the World Bank survey.
- 9 Such as, for example, East-South Europe (0.89), the Caribbean and Americas (0.8), Latin America (0.78), the Caucasus (0.76), West Africa (0.73) and Central America (0.73).

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