

Women's Leadership in Public Life: Fostering Diversity for Inclusive Growth

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Women's participation in economic and public life strengthens economic growth, equitable governance and public trust, from the community level to top policymaking circles. Equal access of both men and women to economic opportunities, in both the public and private sectors, contributes to a more equitable, sustainable economy. Moreover, when the people who set public policy are more representative of the societies they serve, they enjoy greater public trust, and focus more on issues such as human development, gender-based violence and public service delivery. Indeed, public policies can only produce truly inclusive results when policy makers listen to both men and women, and integrate diverse perspectives.

This Global Forum will provide a unique opportunity to engage with leading actors from government, parliaments, justice institutions, civil society and business worldwide, to explore concrete actions on the following challenges:

- **Closing gender gaps in public life** – Women's access to public leadership positions, whether in politics, the legal profession, the private sector or academia, remains elusive across the world. Women comprise only one in five parliamentarians and just 27% of judges worldwide. A mere 22% per cent of senior managers in economic and strategic positions in the European Union's public sector are women. Why are women still significantly under-represented in decision-making roles, despite increasing participation in the labour force and strong representation in the public sector? What does it take to empower women to lead in public life?
- **Strengthening women's voice** – Despite progress and women's proven ability to lead, women's voter turnout is consistently lower than men's at both local and national levels across the world. What are the main barriers to women's political participation and expression? What is the role of government and political parties to address this gap?
- **Increasing the inclusiveness of policy making and programme delivery** – the capacity of governments to incorporate gender considerations into government spending, policies and programmes – e.g. looking at how different policy choices affect both men and women – remains uneven. What does it take to develop more inclusive policy-making and budgeting processes? What are the main barriers to and opportunities for engaging a wide range of stakeholders in policy discussions? What tools do governments have? What data and evidence are needed?

Governments will need to address these gaps to deliver on their commitments of fostering inclusive growth, restoring public trust and enhancing women's de facto equality in all arenas. To this end, the Global Forum will explore different approaches to making the state:

- **An equal opportunity employer**
- **A democratic power**
- **An inclusive policy-maker**

Progress in these areas will be essential to realise current and future Millennium Development Goals. The discussions will also provide input to the OECD Gender Initiative and the OECD Development Strategy.

Women's Access to Positions of Power: Lessons from Experience in Political Life

While the proportion of female leaders in positions of power is increasing, women remain vastly outnumbered by men. Yet there are successful examples of women who were able to access key decision-making jobs. What lessons can be learned? What are the key challenges, opportunities and success factors? What can governments and political parties do to enable equal access and encourage women to run for office?

Achieving Gender Balance in Public Leadership

The public sector is among the largest national employers in many countries, and women are strongly represented in many public sectors. Yet only a few countries exceed 40% representation in the top echelons of civil service, and women leaders are often confined to social portfolios. What are the barriers? What policies can help plug the “leaky pipeline?” Can “affirmative action” and similar programmes help women reach the top?

Women in the Judiciary and the Legal Profession

In recent decades, the number of women judges, law partners and police officers has significantly increased worldwide. In some countries, such as the United States, around half (and sometimes more) of law students are women -- but women are still outnumbered by men among judges and other top jobs in the legal profession. What are the barriers to women's leadership in the legal domain? What are the solutions?

Towards Equal Access to Opportunities in Public Life

In many areas, structural barriers still limit women's options to be active in public life, including employment, running for office or heading an NGO. What are the main barriers -- access to education, healthcare, resources, networks, childcare? What is the impact of the external environment? What are the demographic pressures? What responses are needed from government, civil society and citizens? How to involve men?

Tackling Stereotypes and Social and Legal Norms that Discriminate against Women

Women continue to face legal discrimination, discriminatory social norms and practices (e.g. the division of paid and unpaid work, early marriage) that limit their access to institutions, property, employment, etc., and inhibit their participation in the public sphere. What actions can governments take to overcome stereotypes and eliminate discriminatory social institutions? What are the good practices and lessons learned?

Strengthening Public Institutions and Governance for Gender Equality

Many countries have put in place various institutional mechanisms to support the development of gender-sensitive policies and government accountability to close the gender gap. What recent reforms have strengthened national gender-related institutional frameworks? How to ensure that such reforms and policies are effectively implemented? What role can gender equality commissioners, parliaments and civil society play?

Gender Diversity in the Public Sector: A Factor in Better Performance?

There is some evidence that improving gender diversity on corporate boards improves performance. How does gender diversity affect the quality and integrity of work in the public sector?

Towards Inclusive and Gender-Responsive Policies, Programmes and Budgets

Seemingly gender-neutral policy and programme decisions can have detrimental effects, intentional or not, on women's ability to participate equally in society. Inclusive, gender-responsive policies need to be designed and delivered in ways that are transparent, evidence-driven, and responsive to the needs of both men and women. How can governments enable both men and women to influence policy-making? What are good practices?

For further information see www.oecd.org/governance/globalforum or contact gfgov@oecd.org.

