

ATALANTA

GETTING IMPATIENT

Overcoming barriers to women's political leadership
& accelerating progress towards equality

MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDER

An increasing amount of energy and attention is being devoted to discussing gender inequality in politics. Recent revelations about widespread sexual harassment and abuse around the world (encapsulated in the #MeToo movement) have rightly prompted global outrage, even if they come as little surprise to female politicians and activists. Whether this outrage will usher in reforms that would make it easier for women to enter and succeed in politics remains to be seen, but momentum for change appears to be building.

Meanwhile, for the first time in a decade, the gender gap has actually widened.¹ Taking into account slowing progress on political equality, closing the political gender gap will take another 99 years.² So, unless something changes, almost nobody alive today will see a world where men and women can enter and succeed in politics on an equal footing.

How did we get here? And what can individual political leaders, countries, and organisations do to change the situation? Those are the questions addressed in this report, taking a look not just at the source of the problem, but at the potential solutions.

Having worked for political candidates, government ministers and heads of state for a decade and a half, I've seen first hand the particular hurdles that women face and the disparity in the resources that they have access to compared to their male counterparts. Knowing that the playing field isn't likely to be levelled any time soon, I decided to launch Atalanta to provide female candidates and officeholders with the tools and strategic guidance needed to overcome the barriers put in front of them. From campaign strategy to career advancement and profile building, Atalanta provides professional advice from a team of experienced strategists who understand the unique challenges that female leaders face.

We're also working to quicken the pace of progress towards gender equality, providing strategic support to programmes across a range of issue areas that have the potential to jumpstart a cycle of positive change.

We hope this report contributes to the global dialogue about how to improve women's political participation. But, more than that, we hope that it inspires action and prompts new and innovative approaches to catalyse change. After all, it's time we all got a bit more impatient.

Eva Barboni

Founder & CEO

Atalanta

ABOUT ATALANTA

Our mission: *To increase the number of women holding senior government positions worldwide and accelerate programmes that tackle the root causes of gender inequality.*

Atalanta was created to fill a gap in the advisory services that female candidates and officeholders have access to, providing professional expertise and strategic guidance through a female-led team of experienced consultants.

We work to advance gender equality in three ways:



Campaigns for Female Candidates

Atalanta develops tailored campaign support packages, designed to offer strategic guidance and execution assistance during the election period. Based on the needs and existing capabilities of the candidate's local campaign team, Atalanta builds and deploys teams of consultants with the specific expertise that will be most beneficial to the campaign. Each engagement includes a robust capacity-building effort, ensuring that the candidate's team benefits from the knowledge and experience of our international consultants.



Advisory Services for Female Leaders

Getting elected is just part of the battle for all politicians regardless of gender, but women often face even greater barriers to career advancement once they've passed the first hurdle. Therefore, we also offer ongoing advisory services to help female politicians succeed in office and rise through the political ranks. Services are tailored to each client's specific needs, drawing on the expertise of our staff and consultant network.



Projects Focused on Tackling Gender Inequality

Atalanta also provides consulting services to clients including government ministries, political parties, NGOs, and corporations, focused on projects aimed at advancing women's rights and tackling the root causes of gender inequality. We work on a range of issue areas including: women's rights, political participation, girls' education, economic empowerment and financial inclusion, equal pay, gender based violence, trafficking, and reproductive health. Our focus is on identifying innovative programs and interventions that have the potential to accelerate progress towards equality.

We are structured as a social enterprise, dedicating 1/3 of our profits to providing pro-bono or low-bono support for clients who can't afford our services. We are also committed to diversity and gender balance within our own organisation, setting us apart from many other traditional political consulting firms.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A lot has changed since the first female Prime Minister was elected in 1960. Since then, more attention has been focused on gender equality in politics, more countries and parties have adopted proactive policies to promote women's political participation, more male allies have stepped up on behalf of their female colleagues, and more women have succeeded in rising up the political ranks.

However, as the saying goes: the more things change, the more they stay the same. More than half a century later, women continue to face significant barriers to entering into and succeeding in politics. To compound this, for the first time in more than a decade the gender gap is widening.

In order to reverse this troubling trend and accelerate progress towards equality, we need to understand how we got here and identify solutions for the challenges that female candidates and officeholders continue to face.

Over the last 50 years, we have seen three distinct phases in women's political leadership:

- 1960-1989 was an era of precedent: women were for the first time ascending to the highest levels of political office, setting an example for future women hoping to follow in their footsteps, and fighting for acceptance in broader society.
- From 1990-1999, increasing female participation in politics began to feature more prominently on the global agenda, and gains were solidified in many countries.
- And, the period from 2000-Present marked an escalation for women's role in politics, with notable increases in the number of women holding senior leadership positions.

Despite this progress over the past several decades, data on women's political participation globally in 2017 illustrates the scale of the challenge women still face in the pursuit of equality:

- Less than 1 in 10 countries currently have a female head of state or government;
- Less than 1 in 5 ministers are women;
- Less than 1 in 4 members of parliament are women; and
- The leadership of many international organisations, notably multilateral development banks, continues to be male-dominated.

These numbers also hide underlying trends. For example, amongst women who reach the cabinet level, there is still a significant difference in the portfolios they are assigned and the level of prestige (and budget) associated with those portfolios. Female ministers are still disproportionately assigned portfolios that are considered more fitting for "traditional" female roles in society, such as social affairs and education, while men still dominate "hard" portfolios such as defence or finance. The paths that men and women take to political power also differ, with women coming into politics later, often after raising their children to schooling age.

Significant differences between regions still remain when it comes to the pursuit of gender equality in politics. The percentage of female parliamentarians varies greatly by geography. Nordic countries lead the rankings with 41.7%, followed by the Americas with 28.1%, Europe (excluding Nordic countries) with 26.5%, Sub-Saharan Africa with 23.6%; Asia with 19.4%, and Arab States and the Pacific tied for last place with 17.4%.

In terms of female ministers, Nordic countries again top the rankings with 42.5%. Other regions beating the global average include the Americas at 26.2%, Europe (excluding Nordic countries) at 24.3%, and Sub-Saharan Africa at 19.4%. The regions falling below the global average include Arab States at 10.7%, Asia at 9.4%, and the Pacific at 9.2%.

Within regions, there are outliers that are noteworthy either for their progress or their lack thereof. We identify two countries in each of the five United Nations regions who are either surging ahead or falling behind. For example, we look at the factors that distinguish Rwanda, which has the highest female parliamentary representation in the world, from its neighbour Kenya, which has struggled to meet its own quotas and tackle harassment and violence against female candidates.

Beyond basic issues of fairness, we also assess whether the number of women in positions of political power really matters. The short answer is “yes.” The long answer illustrates the positive impact that women’s political engagement has across a range of issues and outcomes. Women’s engagement in political decision-making has been shown to have a positive impact not just on the empowerment of other women across society, but also on economic growth, corruption, and peacebuilding. Women’s representation has also been credited for tangible policy shifts in countries around the world on issues from education, to health, to food security.

While more and more political leaders and countries are recognising the positive impact of increased female participation, significant barriers continue to block many women from reaching the highest rungs of politics. These include: lack of access to finance; exclusion from male-dominated networks; entrenched cultural norms; limitations imposed by structural environments; and the deterring effect of harassment and violence.

There’s no simple solution for addressing these barriers. In many countries, significant systemic changes are needed, including better regulation of campaign finance, greater transparency and accountability around gender quotas, and behavioural change campaigns aimed at addressing deep-rooted gender stereotypes. However, there are a number of practical solutions that can help female candidates overcome entrenched structural inequalities and succeed in securing political office and rising through the ranks. These include mentoring, professional campaign advice from firms that understand the specific challenges female candidates face, fundraising assistance, use of digital campaigning tools, and strategies to secure greater inclusion in the media. While we should not neglect efforts to address systemic problems, Atalanta strongly believes that more attention and focus needs to be placed on helping the current generation of female politicians make the best of the hand they have been dealt.

Many inspiring female political leaders around the world are doing just that. We profile 50 “Women to Watch” who are breaking down barriers in their countries and setting examples of what strong female leaders can achieve, often in the face of entrenched resistance.

The path towards equality will be much longer if only half the population is engaged in the fight. An increasing number of male leaders are working to change the landscape in their countries, and we have selected a few of the most dedicated and vocal allies around the world.

Finally, we end the report with a look at some of the organisations that are leading the battle for gender equality in politics and the specific support they provide to female candidates and political leaders. If we are going to accelerate the pace of change, we all need to work together in new and innovative ways, leveraging our individual strengths and amplifying our collective voices.

1.

THE CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

1.1 THE STATUS OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

1.1.1 Where We Are

Female Heads of State and Government

The vast majority of countries have never had a female leader. As of 2017, over 70 countries have had a female leader in an elected, appointed, or interim capacity at any time during their history. On the surface, 70 might not look like such a dismal figure. However, when you take a deeper look there is less cause for celebration. That's because in many of these cases, women have been in power for just five years or less.³

Currently, there are 17 female heads of state or government in office, representing less than 10% of UN member states. Nine of these female leaders are the first women to hold such a position in their country.⁴

Much has been made of "breaking the glass ceiling," with the implication often being that when women achieve the highest political office, cultural change and equality at all levels will follow. However, a few notable recent examples expose the fiction behind this narrative.

Chancellor Angela Merkel of **Germany**, often dubbed "the most powerful woman in the world," secured a fourth term in September 2017. But in that same election, the percentage of female deputies in the Bundestag - Germany's parliament - hit a 19-year low.⁵

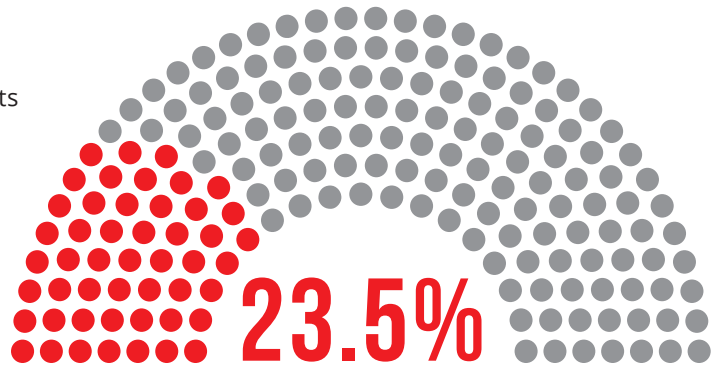
In **Liberia**, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf became the first elected female head of state in Africa, overcoming entrenched cultural views about women's role in leadership and politics. However, as she stepped down after serving a constitutionally-mandated maximum of two terms, there was just one woman out of the 20 candidates vying to replace her. That candidate saw her personal life gain more coverage and attention than her policy platform, illustrating that unfortunately gender inequality in politics remains an issue to be tackled.

In the **United States**, for the first time, a female candidate won the popular vote for the Presidency in 2016, but the election revealed deeply entrenched sexism in American politics.⁶ In the same election, the number of women in Congress remained stagnant and the number of female governors dropped from six to five.⁷ The United States currently ranks 101st out of 193 countries ranked by the Inter-Parliamentary Union for women's representation in government.

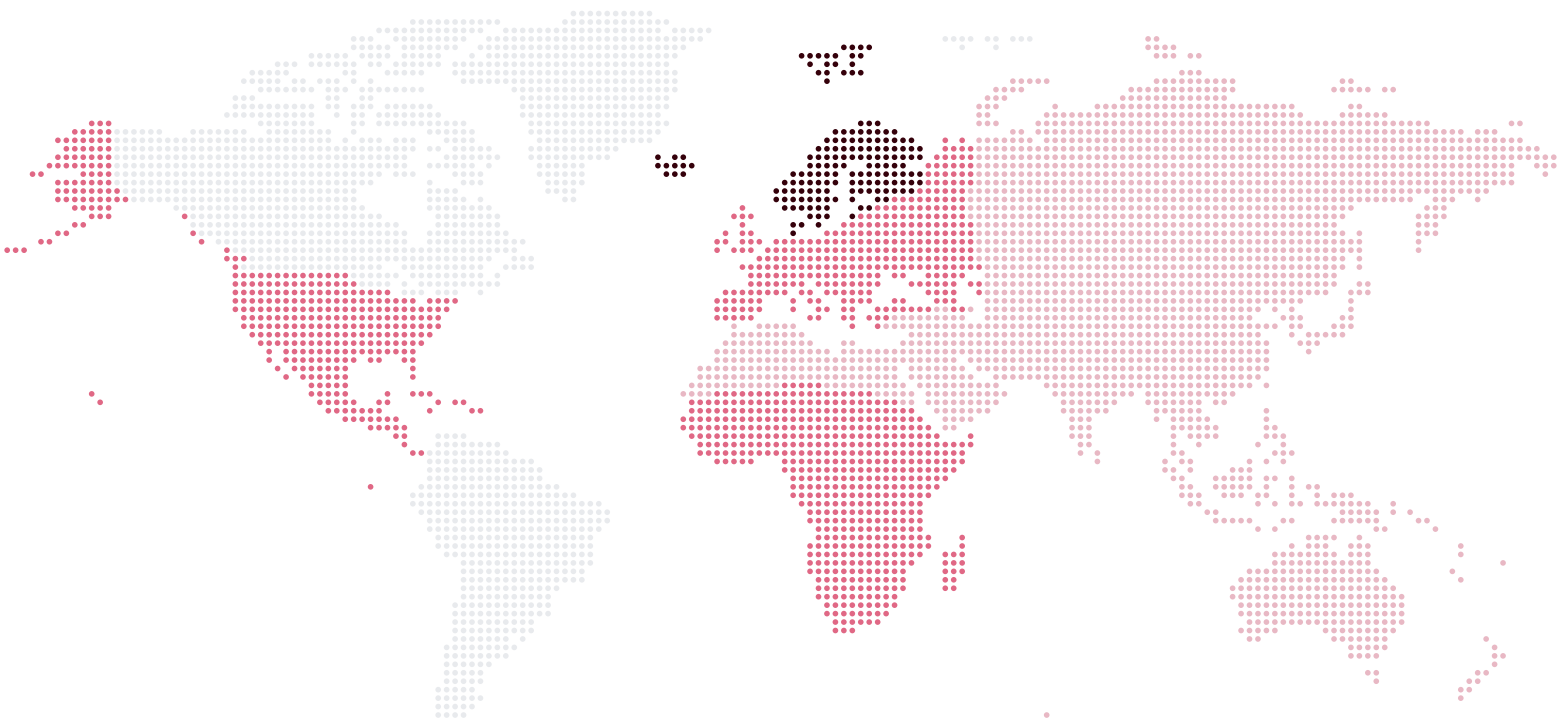
And, the **United Kingdom**, which has had not just one but two female Prime Ministers as well as strong female monarchs, is still battling entrenched sexism across all levels of its political system. A recent survey found that almost 40% of female councillors suffered sexist remarks from their own party members, and 43% said they are held back by assumptions about what they can do based on their gender.⁸ At a more senior level, the recent resignation of the defence secretary amid a growing sexual harassment scandal has further illustrated the scope of the problem of sexism in British politics.⁹

Women in Parliaments

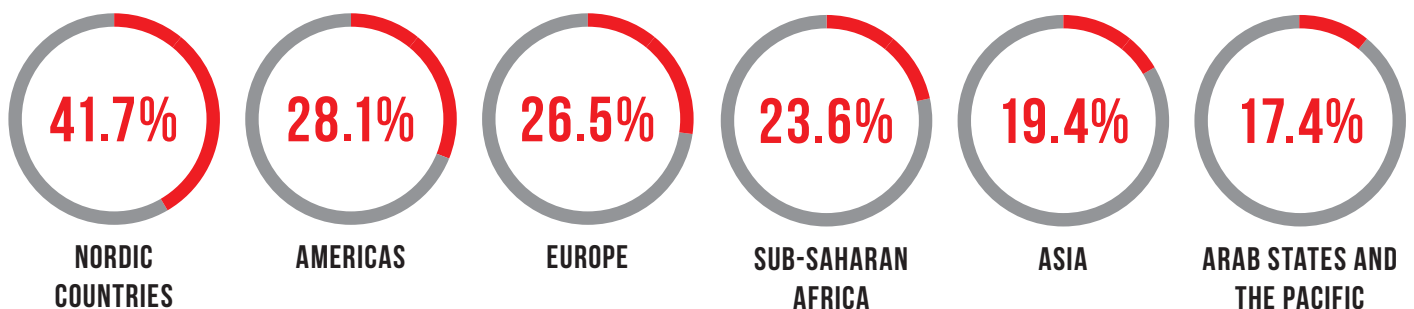
As of July 2017, women made up 23.5% of parliaments worldwide (in cases of bicameral systems, this represents an average of the houses). A slightly smaller number of women fill the upper houses of parliament compared to the lower house: 22.9% vs. 23.9%.¹⁰ The average masks the dire situation at the lower end of the scale: of the countries with any female representation in parliament, 31 have less than 10% women.¹¹



The percentage of female parliamentarians varies greatly by region. Nordic countries lead the rankings with 41.7%, followed by the Americas with 28.1%, Europe (excluding Nordic countries) with 26.5%, Sub-Saharan Africa with 23.6%; Asia with 19.4%, and Arab States and the Pacific tied for last place with 17.4%.¹²



The percentage of female parliamentarians



Female speakers of national parliaments are an even smaller proportion. Women represent just 19.4% of the total 278 presiding officer posts worldwide.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, female candidates fare better in countries with gender quotas. In countries where legislated quotas are in place, women secured twice as many seats as countries without quotas (24% vs. 12%). Even in countries with voluntary quotas, women still took 10% more seats.¹³

Women in Ministerial Positions

There are 732 female ministers worldwide, representing 18.4% of ministerial positions. This percentage has remained relatively flat over the past five years, up just 1.7% from 16.7% in 2012.¹⁴

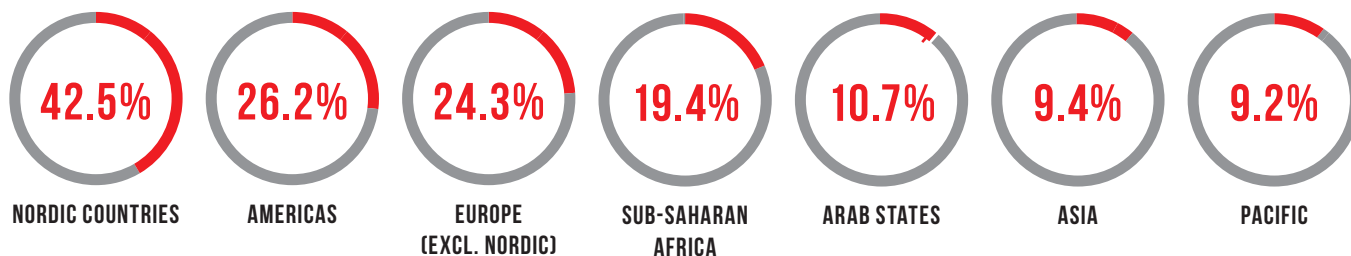
In terms of female ministers, Nordic countries again top the rankings with 42.5%. Other regions beating the global average include the Americas at 26.2%, Europe (excluding Nordic countries) at 24.3%, and Sub-Saharan Africa at 19.4%. The regions falling below the global average are Arab States at 10.7%, Asia at 9.4%, and the Pacific at 9.2%.¹⁶

The five most equitable countries for female ministers are Bulgaria, France, Nicaragua, Sweden, and Canada. All five have at least 50% female ministers, and all have ranked in the top ten for at least the past five years. In comparison, the ten lowest-ranked countries all have 0% women in ministerial positions.¹⁷ Unsurprisingly, many of these countries have a long history of low female political participation overall.

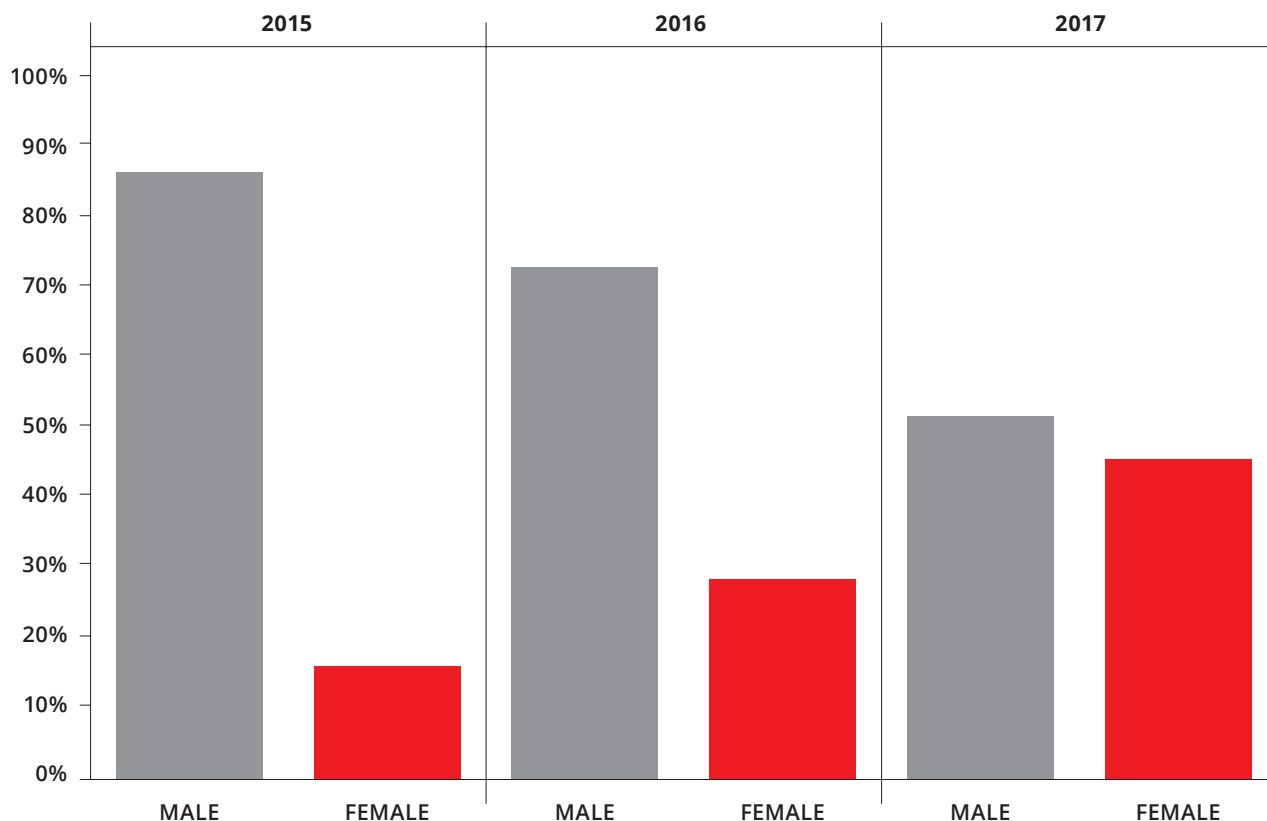
Women in International Organisations

International organisations have a crucial role in setting the global policy agenda and deploying resources and capital - both financial and human - towards achieving that agenda. Given this, the role that women have at the senior levels of these organisations ought to be a key area of focus for those seeking to advance gender equality on a global scale.

The United Nations (UN), arguably the most important international organisation, has long struggled to achieve equality within its senior ranks. Established in 1945, the UN did not have a senior female leader until 1987, when Dame Margaret Anstee became the first female Under-Secretary-General as Director-General of the UN Office in Vienna.¹⁸ Currently, 22 out of 47 senior UN positions are held by women; equating to 46.8%. Much of this progress has been very recent, with a dramatic increase from 28.3% in 2016, and a mere 15.9% in 2015.¹⁹



UN Senior Appointments by Gender: 2015-2017



Women have held all of the UN executive positions and funds except for one. However, of the 17 specialised agencies, there have only been four female leaders ever (three of whom took office since 2014).²⁰

Notably, there has never been a female Secretary-General of the UN. Three out of five Deputy Secretaries-General have been female since the post was created, though it is important to note that post is appointed by the Secretary-General rather than elected by UN member countries.²¹

In other international organisations, women have been similarly overlooked for senior positions.

Multilateral development banks (MDBs) in particular mirror this trend. At the International Monetary Fund (IMF), 25% of Executive Board positions were filled by women as of 2016, compared to 20% in 2010, and 16% in 2006.²² There has been a discernible difference between the percentage of women Executive Directors, the highest-ranking positions on the Board, in comparison to lower-ranking Advisors. In 2016, women held 33% of Advisor positions, compared to just 4% of Executive Director positions.²³ Thus, of the overall percentage of women composing the Executive Board, the majority hold more junior-level positions.²⁴ The highest position in the IMF has been held by a woman, former French Finance Minister Christine Lagarde, since 2011.

Comparatively, at the World Bank, 32% of Executive Directors were female in 2016. Further, 39% of the World Bank senior leadership team were women. The highest position held by a woman is the Chief Executive Officer role, held by Kristalina Georgieva.²⁵ But the World Bank has never been led by a woman, and neither have any of the four regional development banks (RDBs): the Asian Development Bank, the African Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

There has been increasing attention on gender equality at multilateral development banks in recent years, but progress is slow. The lack of equality has wide ranging implications. As Karen Mathiasen, senior advisor in the Office of the US Executive Director of the World Bank, has pointed out, there is a need for “more women decision-makers at the MDBs in order to ensure that strong commitments—financial and otherwise—are made to advance gender equality.”²⁶

1.1.2 How We Got Here

When delving deeper into the data on women’s participation in politics over the past 50 years, three distinct phases emerge: 1960-1989, 1990-1999, and 2000-2017. These phases are marked by changes in legislation, political climate, and social attitudes towards women in power.

While specific countries and regions have of course had their own diverse experiences, looking at these historical trends is informative for understanding the current situation.

1960-1989: Setting a Precedent

Prior to 1960, there was little opportunity for women to take on positions of political power and few examples for them to follow. When Sirimavo Bandaranaike of Ceylon (present-day Sri Lanka) became the first modern female Prime Minister in 1960, it caused “worldwide concern” over how a woman could “cope with such a demanding task.”²⁷ Israel’s Golda Meir faced similar criticisms in the late 1960s.

However, by the 1970s, the United Nations began to take proactive measures to encourage female participation in politics. 1975 was declared “International Women’s Year,” and marked the launch of the first of the *UN Women’s Conferences*; 1976-1985 was dubbed the UN Decade for Women. Anne Winslow, author of *Women, Politics, and the United Nations* explained, “These UN activities mobilised a critical mass of women from around the world to formulate strategies and goals to achieve participation as full partners with men in all spheres of decision making and to gain equal access to opportunities.”²⁸ With these UN conferences, and the accompanying international women’s groups that formed, public perception began to slowly shift, giving women more opportunity to seek political office.

The Nordic countries served as the primary examples of this. In the early 1970s, women mobilised to urge political parties to increase the number of female candidates. They were so effective at this that many Scandinavian political parties voluntarily employed gender-based party quotas.²⁹ However, despite this progress in parliamentary representation, it took Norway until 1981³⁰ and Denmark until 2011³¹ to elect a female Prime Minister, and Sweden has yet to have a female leader.³²

Different forms of quotas emerged: candidate quotas (a minimum percentage of candidates that must be women, which can be legislatively mandated, or introduced voluntarily by parties); reserved seats (seats set aside for representatives that must be female); and gender neutral quotas (setting a maximum acceptable gender ratio for both sexes).³³ However, quotas were still minimal during this period.³⁴

The period was also characterised by women coming to power during times of crisis, whether it be political turbulence or social struggles. Examples include Golda Meir being appointed Prime Minister of Israel after the sudden death of her predecessor; Margaret Thatcher becoming Minister of Education in the United Kingdom in the early 1970s when student radicalism was high, and later becoming Prime Minister in 1979 during an economic recession; and Lidia Gueiler Tejada becoming Interim President of Bolivia in 1979 after an attempted coup. Crisis begat female opportunity.

Some political scholars argue that this phenomenon may in fact persist to present day. They have dubbed it the “glass cliff,” as women first break through the glass ceiling in cases of political crisis, and thus inherit precarious positions of leadership.³⁵ Modern day examples include Benazir Bhutto, the murdered Pakistani Prime Minister who came to power after the military dismissed the previous government, and

her university friend, British Prime Minister Theresa May, who came to office following the UK's "Brexit" referendum vote.

From 1980 to 1989, representation of women began to rise, but still remained minimal: there were few female ministers, and the percentage of women in parliament averaged below 10%.³⁶ The overall period of 1960-1989, which saw 15 women become heads of state or government globally,³⁷ was an era of precedent: women were for the first time ascending to the highest levels of political office, setting an example for future women hoping to follow in their footsteps, and fighting for acceptance in broader society.

1990-1999: Building Global Political Will

From 1990-1999, increasing female participation in politics began to feature more prominently on the global agenda. The UN again played a crucial role in encouraging women to enter into politics. Notably, the 1995 Beijing UN Fourth World Conference on Women produced the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (agreed to by 189 countries), which was recognised as the most progressive plan for advancing women's rights on a global scale.

The Declaration outlined a 30% target for women in political leadership positions, which was to be achieved through a variety of strategies, including training and mentoring.³⁸ While there was no specific deadline, nor concrete promise for states to achieve this quota, it did seem to make an impact: of the approximately 100 countries worldwide that have adopted gender quotas, two-thirds have done so in the 20 years following the Beijing Conference.³⁹ Latin America made particular headway in this arena, leading to nearly all countries in the region achieving the 30% UN target by the end of the 1990s.⁴⁰

At the time the Beijing Conference was held, women made up just 11.8% of parliaments globally, and there were a staggering 109 single or lower houses of parliament worldwide that had less than 10% women.⁴¹ Nordic countries continued to set a strong example: five of the ten most gender equal parliaments globally in 1995 were Nordic, three were other European countries, one was African, and one was from the Americas.⁴² By 1999, the global percentage of women in parliaments had increased only modestly to 13.5%. More headway was made in electing female heads of state or government, with an additional 24 women brought into power during the period.⁴³

The period from 1990-1999 was a time of expansion of women's role in politics, with more women taking on leadership positions. The percentage of women in power was still nowhere close to being comparable to men, but the public was starting to become accustomed to the possibility of female leaders. Female heads of state, parliamentarians, and ministers were still largely paving the way in their own countries, but a few had begun to seek re-election, taking steps to solidify their gains.

2000-Present: Mind the (Remaining) Gap

The new millennium marked an escalation for women's role in politics, with notable increases in the number of women holding senior leadership positions. In 2000, there were nine female heads of state or government, representing 4.7% of all world leaders.⁴⁴ In 2017, this number has increased to 17, or 8.8%.⁴⁵

There were 26 (10.7%) female speakers of parliament globally in 2000,⁴⁶ compared to 53 (19.1%) as of January 2017.⁴⁷ While this represents an increase of less than 0.5% per year, there is still a stark contrast before and after the turn of the century. From 1927 to present, a total of 97 countries have had female presiding officers. More than half of these countries had their first presiding officer in the year 2000 or later.⁴⁸

The number of countries with gender quotas has also steadily increased during this period. As of 2015, a total of 128 countries worldwide have constitutional, electoral, or political party quotas.⁴⁹ This increase in quotas was in part inspired by the previous UN declarations, and the additional 2011 UN General Assembly Resolution 66/130, which called for states to substantially increase the number of women in government, both elected and appointed.⁵⁰



At the time the Beijing Conference was held, women made up just 11.8% of parliaments globally, and there were a staggering 109 single or lower houses of parliament worldwide that had less than 10% women. ”

An initial blueprint for female leadership and inclusion has been formed in many countries. In countries where female leadership has begun to normalise, there are now 30-40 years of experience to draw from. The next generation of female leaders seeking to run for office can benefit tremendously from this experience, if the right mechanisms are in place to take full advantage of it. This is particularly important, as recent studies have emphasised the need for experience, networks, and mentorship in order for women to continue to advance in the political sphere.⁵¹

While there has undoubtedly been progress towards larger scale acceptance of female political leadership, a massive gender gap remains across all levels of politics. Recent estimates from the World Economic Forum project that at the current pace of change, gender parity in politics won't be achieved for another 99 years.⁵² If this timeline is to be shortened, innovative solutions and collective action will be essential.

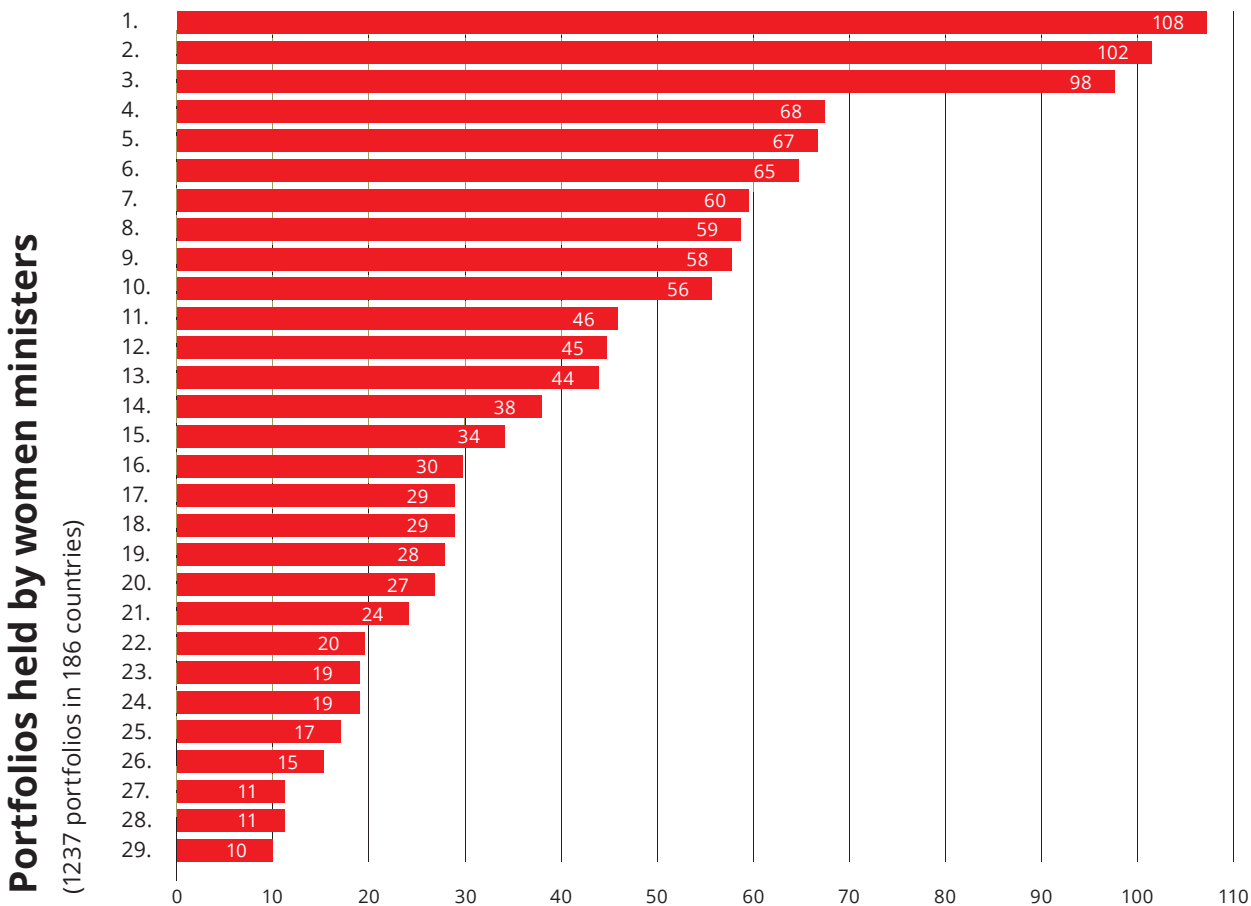
1.1.3 Common Themes

Two larger themes become apparent, from this study of history, related to the type of roles women hold and the paths they take to political office.

Portfolios Held by Female Ministers

The top-line data on women’s political representation can mask underlying differences between the types of roles that men and women hold. For example, just looking at the percentage of cabinet level positions held by women globally (currently 18.4%) doesn’t address the differences in the prominence and prestige of those positions. Often, even if women gain cabinet positions, they hold portfolios that are considered more fitting for “traditional” female roles in society. These positions are generally perceived as less important strategically than “hard” portfolios such as defence, or finance, for example.⁵³ They also often come with smaller budgets.

A closer look at the data illustrates this point. As of January 2017, women held 1,237 ministerial portfolios across 186 countries (with some ministers responsible for more than one portfolio). The top 5 portfolios held were: environment / natural resources / energy (108); social affairs (102); family / children / youth / elderly / disabled (98); women’s affairs / gender equality (68); and education (67).⁵⁴



- 1. Environment/natural resources/energy
- 2. Social affairs
- 3. Family/Children/Youth/Elderly/Disabled
- 4. Womens affairs/gender equality
- 5. Education
- 6. Culture
- 7. Employment/labour/vocational training
- 8. Trade/industry
- 9. Foreign affairs (including development assistance)
- 10. Health
- 11. Research and development/science and technology
- 12. Public works/territorial planning
- 13. Agriculture/food/forestry/fishing
- 14. Justice
- 15. Home affairs/immigration (including integration and refugees)
- 16. Public administration/public service
- 17. Tourism
- 18. Local Government
- 19. Sports
- 20. Communications/telecommunications/postal affairs
- 21. Housing/urban affairs
- 22. Human rights
- 23. Finance/budget
- 24. Economy/development
- 25. Transport
- 26. Defence and veteran affairs
- 27. Population
- 28. Parliamentary affairs
- 29. Information/media

A further breakdown of data on cabinet level positions between 1980 - 2005 by policy domain and prestige illustrates the stark differences between male and female cabinet appointments.⁵⁶

Policy Domain	Men	Women
Economic	42.65	23.46
Foreign affairs & national defence	9.33	3.72
Government operations	17.86	10.98
Law & order	8.97	4.92
Social welfare	21.20	56.92
Prestige		
Level High	29.08	13.04
Medium	64.68	67.49
Low	6.24	19.51
Portfolio years	20,865	1,748

Political scholars Mona Lena Krook and Diana O’Brien take a deeper look at the specific cabinet positions to which women are typically assigned and the underlying factors driving cabinet-level appointments.

Their research tested three hypotheses to explain the nature of women’s representation in cabinets around the world:

1. The Institutional Hypothesis: The structure of political institutions, including the form of government, the electoral process, and the degree of legislative control;
2. The Equality Hypothesis: The gender equality ethos created by women’s social and economic status; and
3. The Elite Hypothesis: The presence of women amongst political elites.

Detailed analysis and testing of each hypothesis led the authors to conclude that the cabinet compositions for the majority of countries (60%) could be attributed to the “elite” hypothesis, and a significant minority (20%) could be attributed to the “institutional” hypothesis. Importantly, their research showed little evidence of the “equality” hypothesis, leading to questions about the link between greater gender equality on a broad societal level with equality in appointed senior political leadership positions.

Further research has examined whether, in light of the current under-representation of women in senior leadership positions, female candidates are putting caps on their own political ambitions.⁵⁷ *The Female Political Career*, a report commissioned by the Women Political Leaders Global Forum, investigated a possible “ambition gap” for female politicians:

“When asked what position they hoped to hold in ten years, men reached for cabinet minister. Women expressed lesser parliamentary ambitions, settling for committee chair; or diversified their preferences by naming the possibility of leading a national organisation or transnational organisation.”⁵⁸

Although this “ambition gap” is likely to be due to structural, rather than personal, limitations, it is noteworthy that the systemic lack of female representation in high-ranking positions is internalised by female politicians.

Paths to Power

Another theme that emerges is that female politicians tend to take different paths to power than their male counterparts. Generally speaking, female candidates must often make a family/career trade-off that requires a more sensitive balancing act than for male candidates. The societal pressure for women to raise children and perform motherly duties still remains strong, across cultures and countries. This often means that women start their political careers later than men.

Men typically get elected to their first political position around age 40, whereas women get their first political position at an average age of 45-50 (the point at which the average woman's youngest child is of schooling age).⁵⁹ For this to change, societal issues related to the availability and cost of childcare as well as cultural norms around working women need to be addressed. This kind of systemic and cultural change is not an easy or quick fix.

Additionally, the way in which women are first brought into politics is typically different from men. In a proportional representation system, for example, women are most often brought into politics through party sponsorship (top-down). Men, comparatively, are most often promoted by local leaders in a bottom-up manner.⁶⁰

Within women's paths to power, three subcategories have been identified: substitutes, insiders, and outsiders.⁶¹ A "substitute" is a female leader who took over a position of power from a family member. An "insider" gains power from working her way upward from inside the party. An "outsider" gains power from outside the party, perhaps coming from an NGO or other profession.⁶² The most common way for women to gain leadership is the insider method, followed by substitutes, and then outsiders. To quantify this, a 2010 study examined 73 of the top global female leaders. Of these 73 women, 48 (66%) were insiders, 14 (19%) were substitutes, and 11 (15%) were outsiders.⁶³

This data points to the need for political parties to adopt new strategies to recruit female candidates from other fields and for international organisations and consultancies to provide support and training for women entering politics at a later stage in their career.

1.2 MAPPING EQUALITY

Within this global context, there are several countries that stand out: some for surging ahead towards achieving equal representation, and some for falling behind their neighbours. While this list is far from exhaustive, we've identified two countries in each of the five UN regions who are either noteworthy for their progress or their lack thereof.

1.2.1 Africa



Rwanda

Following the 1994 genocide, Rwanda put a significant emphasis on elevating women's roles in rebuilding the country. Women played a significant role in the immediate aftermath of the conflict, forming hundreds of women's organisations that worked to influence policy and government.⁶⁴

The Rwandan government's effort to incorporate women more seamlessly into the political sphere has continued into the new millennium. The 2003 Constitution introduced a mandatory quota of 30% women in all "decision making positions."⁶⁵ Further legislation securing women's political rights has been added in recent years, including a 2013 law barring gender-based discrimination in political parties, and a 2013 law instituting "gender responsive governing" in the national budget.⁶⁶ Today, Rwanda has the highest percentage of female parliamentarians in the world: 49/80 (61.3%) seats in the Chamber of Deputies are occupied by women.⁶⁷ It has maintained the number one spot in the parliamentary rankings since 2003, and given that the country in second place is more than 8% behind, it does not seem likely that its ranking will be surpassed in the immediate future.⁶⁸



Kenya

The recent elections in Kenya at first glance seem to be indicators of hope for the future of female politicians in the country: the level of women in the National Assembly was raised to 22% (up from 18.6% as of the 2013 elections), and women have for the first time been elected to governor and senate seats (3/47 governorships, and 3/68 senate seats).⁶⁹

However, women's representation still falls far short of the gender quota adopted in the 2012 constitutional reform process, which states that both the National Assembly and the Senate must have "not more than 2/3 of any gender."⁷⁰ It was ruled by the Kenyan Supreme Court that there could be a progressive adoption of the gender quotas, but they needed to meet the requirement by August 15, 2015, which was then extended to August 27, 2016.⁷¹ Thus the deadline had already lapsed well before the 2017 elections. As the election approached, it became clear that there were not enough female candidates running to possibly meet the quota, and the parliament again faced the question of constitutionality.

Female candidates in Kenya face an additional challenge: gender-based violence. A recent analysis of Kenyan politics noted that "While male candidates also regularly experience violence in Kenya, research suggests that women candidates may be uniquely targeted for gender-specific violence, which may be on the rise as a backlash against increased numbers of women competing for elected office."⁷²



1.2.2 Asia-Pacific



Bangladesh

Over the last half-century (which encompasses the entire existence of modern-day Bangladesh), the country has had the longest stretches of female leaders in power in the world.⁷³ The current Prime Minister,

Sheikh Hasina, and her political opponent, former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia have ruled for a total of 23 years since 1992.⁷⁴ Bangladesh is notable for another reason as well: it is the only country in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation with a female leader.⁷⁵

In her current role, Sheikh Hasina has made significant strides in women's empowerment. She has emphasized the importance of education, and has championed free education for girls up until grade 12. These efforts are paying off: child marriage has dropped by 35% in the past ten years, women are entering the workforce in record numbers, and the number of female politicians continues to rise.⁷⁶



South Korea

The election of Park Geun-hye, the first female president of South Korea, in February 2013 marked a historic moment for the inclusion of women in Korean politics.

However, her administration has since been marred in scandal, tied to allegations of fraud, coercion, and influence-peddling, leading to her impeachment on 10 March, 2017.⁷⁷ Her impeachment is seen by some political analysts as fuelling the flames of anti-feminist sentiment that are already present in the country, with critics of equal representation in politics using it as a reason to block women from holding senior government positions in the future.⁷⁸

Korea has a long way to go to achieve gender equality in the political sphere. Women currently compose a mere 17% of the parliament, placing the country 117th out of 189 countries analysed by the Inter-Parliamentary Union.⁷⁹ Firmly entrenched traditional gender roles exacerbate the issue.⁸⁰



1.2.3 Eastern Europe



Bulgaria

In the past few years, Bulgaria has seen an increase in women's participation in both the private and public sectors.⁸¹ As of January 2017, Bulgaria was ranked number 1 in the world for having the highest percentage of women in ministerial positions (52.9%). These posts include high-ranking portfolios such as Foreign Minister.⁸² Since 2005, there has been a *National Strategy for the Promotion of Gender Equality*, which outlines specific goals, and measurable targets for achieving gender equality.⁸³

Prime Minister Boiko M. Borisov has been credited with creating a "revolution" in the country's politics by appointing a legion of women into office during his tenure. For example, during the 2009 European Parliament elections, 60% of the candidates suggested by Borisov's party were female.⁸⁴



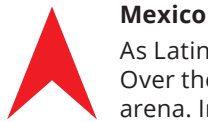
Hungary

Out of all European countries, Hungary has the lowest proportion of women in government: only 10% of parliamentary seats are occupied by women and there are currently no female ministers.⁸⁵

The European Union and the United Nations have been taking notice of the lack of representation of women in Hungarian politics. In 2016, The United Nations Working Group On Discrimination Against Women visited Hungary to assess the situation for women in political, social, and cultural spheres. The Group's remarks were scathing: "Our Working Group regrets that women are significantly disempowered in Hungary's political life. Underlying this situation is the pervasive and flagrant stereotyping of women, with repeated statements by some public figures that women are unsuited to political power and insistence on a woman's role as primarily wife and mother. This is aggravated by multiple discrimination and xenophobia regarding minority women who are virtually invisible in the political system."⁸⁶



1.2.4 Latin America & Caribbean



Mexico

As Latin America's second largest economy, Mexico helps to set the standard for gender equality in the region. Over the past five years, Mexico has been taking significant steps toward advancing women's role in the political arena. In 2014, the country reformed its quota law to mandate that 50% of legislators in both houses of Congress be women.⁸⁷ Legislation was passed allowing the Electoral Court to reject any party list that does not include enough women. Further, women make up 55% of Mexican political parties, which is 31% above the regional average.⁸⁸

For the upcoming July 2018 election, one of Mexico's political parties, the Zapatista National Liberation Army, has put an indigenous female presidential candidate on its ballot. A woman has never held the presidential post, and an indigenous person has not been president for 145 years. The nomination stands as a significant gesture towards inclusion and equality.⁸⁹



Brazil

Dilma Rousseff was the first elected female president in Brazil, and assumed office in January 2011.⁹⁰ Throughout her entire time in office, she was criticised and called sexist names by the public and press alike. In the scandals that have followed, beginning in 2013 with corruption associated with the state-run oil company and followed in 2014 with the FIFA World Cup, Rousseff swiftly lost public approval. She was eventually ousted by the Senate, which voted to impeach her in August 2016.⁹¹

The interim president who followed, Michel Temer (Rousseff's vice president), proceeded to appoint an entirely male cabinet, which was last done nearly 40 years ago.⁹² In an equally alarming move, Temer eliminated the Ministry of Women, Racial Equity, and Human Rights, absorbing it into the Justice Ministry.⁹³



1.2.5 Western Europe & Others

France



In 2016, under former president François Hollande, France ranked at the top of the table for the percentage of women in ministerial roles: over 50% of portfolios were held by women.⁹⁴ With the election of Emmanuel Macron in April 2017, this trend continued, with Macron filling 11 of his 22 cabinet positions with women.

After the June 2017 parliamentary elections, France made further progress towards gender equality in politics, filling 39% of parliamentary seats with women. This marks a significant improvement over the 2012 elections, which saw women win 26% of parliamentary seats.⁹⁵

France began taking significant steps toward gender equality in politics with the passing of the *parité* law in 2000, which mandates that an equal number of men and women be nominated in local and national elections. The law has been reinforced five times since; parties are heavily taxed if 50% of candidates put forward are not women.⁹⁶ France had its first and only female prime minister in 1991, though her tenure was marked by controversy. It has yet to have a female president.

Turkey



Only two Turkish political parties have implemented gender quotas: the People's Democratic Party (HDP), which mandated 50% female candidates, and the Republican People's Party (CHP) which mandated 33% female candidates.⁹⁷

In reality, election results fall far short of these parties' optimistic quotas. After the 2015 elections, female MPs made up just 15% of the parliament. In the past 15 years of government, there have only been 7 female ministers. In total, in 90 years of modern Turkey's government, there have been a mere 20 female ministers.⁹⁸

Even when in government, female politicians often have to submit to their male colleagues, not wielding real policy-influencing power: "When women only occupy 10-15% of legislative seats, they usually have to act in sync with their male colleagues to survive politically. This is particularly true among the right-wing parties. For example, over the last four years, only one female AKP member, out of 45, submitted a parliamentary query."⁹⁹



1.3 WHY IT MATTERS

Beyond basic issues of fairness, does the number of women in positions of political power matter? Does it make a difference to outcomes rather than just ensuring that society allows all its members to participate equally in the political process? The short answer to both questions is “yes,” and the reasons are outlined below.

1.3.1 Women’s Empowerment

While the number of female leaders has been slowly rising, women ascending to the highest political office is still a rarity for a large part of the world. As such, many of today’s female prime ministers and presidents are the first women in their countries to hold the office. In such a position, the female political leader becomes a role model not only for women looking to take similar career paths, but also those seeking to excel in other fields.

Studies conducted in multiple countries, most notably India, have found a correlation between the election of women and an increase in women’s political participation and empowerment at a grassroots level.¹⁰⁰ “[H]istorically underrepresented groups like women will participate in politics to a greater extent when they have descriptive representatives,” explains political scholar David Broockman.¹⁰¹ Beyond the political sphere, women’s representation in politics is thought to have a positive impact on daily life as well, reinforcing women’s ability to make decisions about their lives and follow through on them.¹⁰² For example, studies in India have shown that introducing female leaders “produces significant shifts in adolescent girls’ educational attainment, career aspirations, and household roles.”¹⁰³

1.3.2 Policy Implications

Women’s representation in political decision-making has also been credited for tangible policy shifts. These policy implications can be best understood when looking at a country-level.

In **Norway** there has been a direct causal relationship between the number of women on municipal councils and coverage for childcare.¹⁰⁴

In **Rwanda**, since the gender quota was instituted in parliament, women have been directly responsible for forming cross-party caucuses that focus on issues such as land and food security.¹⁰⁵

In the **United Kingdom**, female MPs have been credited for working across party lines on social issues such as employment and equal pay.¹⁰⁶

In **Malawi**, the women’s caucus in parliament has played a major role in pushing through an amendment to the constitution outlawing child marriage.

In **Chile**, President Michelle Bachelet was central to changing the country’s law on abortion from an outright ban to legalisation in cases where the mother’s life is at risk, the foetus is not viable, or the pregnancy is the result of rape.¹⁰⁷

And, in **Ecuador**, women have been more likely than their male counterparts to introduce bills related to education, health, and the environment.¹⁰⁸

1.3.3 Economic Growth

Recent research has shown that in ethnically diverse countries, “the presence of a female national leader is correlated with a 6.6 percent increase in GDP growth in comparison to having a male leader.”¹⁰⁹ A number of factors underlying women’s ability to perform in diverse contexts are identified, including their typically more participative democratic style and the symbolic impact of female leadership empowering other groups that had previously been marginalised.

1.3.4 Corruption

A study by The World Bank has shown that higher levels of female representation in government are associated with lower levels of corruption.¹¹⁰ The report builds on behavioural research, which has found that women are typically more likely to score highly on “integrity tests” and take stronger stances on ethical behaviour.

While there are of course high-profile instances of corruption and political impropriety by female political leaders, the findings illustrate the positive impact that increased female participation in politics can have on the prevalence of corruption.

1.3.5 Peacebuilding

When female leaders are involved in peace agreements, or mediating conflicts, evidence shows that peace is more likely to be secured and maintained.¹¹¹ Research has shown that there is a 20% increase in the probability of a peace agreement lasting at least two years and a 35% increase in the probability of an agreement lasting at least 15 years when women are involved.¹¹²

There are a multitude of historical case studies illustrating women's impact in peacebuilding, including: in **Guatemala**, where women were responsible for helping to end the 36-year civil war, and negotiating indigenous rights and labour protections;¹¹³ in **South Africa**, where, after the end of Apartheid, the Women's National Coalition was created, and outlined women's fundamental rights in its "Women's Charter for Effective Equality;"¹¹⁴ and in **Liberia**, where women staged street demonstrations to force negotiations to end the civil war in 2003.¹¹⁵

The way that women typically make decisions and their negotiating style may also help in securing peace. "Research shows that women's leadership and conflict resolution styles embody democratic ideals and that women tend to work in a less hierarchical, more participatory and more collaborative way than male colleagues."¹¹⁶ Women are also typically more likely to work across party lines, which gives more flexibility in negotiations.

From crafting and implementing policy, to driving economic growth, to ensuring stability, women's participation in political leadership and decision-making has been shown again and again to have a positive impact.

2.

WHAT'S STOPPING PROGRESS & HOW TO ADDRESS IT

2.1 BARRIERS TO PROGRESS

While there has clearly been progress in women's representation in politics in recent years, significant barriers still remain. These barriers can be narrowed down to five categories: finance, networks, social norms, structural environment, and harassment and violence.

2.1.1 Finance

A lack of equitable campaign financing for women represents one of the most significant hurdles for would-be candidates. Surveys by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the UN, and IDEA polled more than 300 parliamentarians overall. The surveys overwhelmingly "found that female candidates' greater difficulty than men in raising campaign financing was one of their biggest deterrents to running for office."¹¹⁷

They also found that the way in which female candidates are supported is fundamentally different than male candidates. Specifically, female politicians receive fewer private donations, making them rely more heavily on sponsorship and support from their parties. This in turn means that women must campaign harder to raise money from more, but smaller-sized, contributions. Further, women's campaigns are generally more dependent on indirect resources (i.e. in-kind contributions such as office space or volunteer support), due to their limited access to funds.¹¹⁸

Women's unequal access to financing has a compounding effect of excluding them from political activities, and their associated "moneyed networks."¹¹⁹ In such cases, women may need to invest their family's resources into campaigns, which jeopardises the well-being of the family should the candidate not get elected (this is especially common in Africa, Asia, and Latin America).¹²⁰ Female politicians already in office tend to rely more on their parliamentary income as a source of support, whereas male parliamentarians usually have greater outside income and investments.¹²¹

The lack of gender parity in campaign finance creates a vicious cycle: female candidates have less access to resources, leading to the perception that their campaigns are less viable. Donors thus have less incentive to put resources into the campaign, deeming it a risky investment. Indeed, "female candidates generally depend upon female donors for financial viability and win monetary support from men only as their odds of election approach certainty."¹²²

Addressing inequalities in campaign finance is essential for increasing the number of viable female candidates. Preliminary research in the United States and Canada has shown that when women are able to raise an equal amount of campaign funding as men, (under campaign spending caps, for example) they are just as likely to win.¹²³

Organisations that assist female candidates in fundraising

or provide discounted or pro-bono campaign support have a crucial role to play in bridging this gap.

2.1.2 Networks

Women often struggle to raise funds because they are less likely to be a part of business and professional networks that give resources and expertise. These networks are often part of a "boys-club" of organisations that have been traditionally male-dominated and can provide points of entry, or strategic introductions.¹²⁴ There are exceptions to this rule: women who are political "insiders" (e.g. daughters or spouses of established politicians). Insiders already have established connections and capital granted by the nature of their relationships. But for those who are not already part of elite political circles, the network disadvantage is difficult to overcome.

“

Addressing inequalities in campaign finance is essential for increasing the number of viable female candidates. ”

International and local organisations that provide networks of support for female candidates outside the realm of the "boys club" play an essential role in overcoming this disadvantage.

2.1.3 Social Norms

While social norms vary significantly by country, entrenched cultural beliefs about women's roles remain a significant hurdle for female political candidates around the world. Perhaps not surprisingly, there is significant evidence that social norms about women's roles have an impact on both women's likelihood to come forward as potential candidates and on the criteria that political gatekeepers (and ultimately voters) use to judge them.¹²⁵

Importantly, the impact of these norms doesn't disappear once a female candidate is elected to office. They continue to shape views of her performance and priorities in a way that men often do not have to contend with.

While policy solutions can be put in place to address many of the barriers for women seeking public office, changing social norms will likely be a much slower process, requiring engagement from a broader range of stakeholders including government, civil society, and religious organisations.

2.1.4 Structural Environment

In developing countries in particular, the economic and political environment can present structural barriers to women's participation in political leadership. UN Women, the world body's agency dedicated to support women, outlines these issues:

“Income level, race and ethnicity, level of education, dominant language skills, geographical location, sexual orientation, age, family relations, and phenotype of women candidates all tend to affect their political participation throughout their careers, especially the ability to acquire campaign funds during electoral campaigns. The poorest and most disempowered women from developing countries, including women from ethnic minorities, face a completely different economic reality when campaigning than do women from developed countries who are supported by their parties or other mechanisms.”¹²⁶

Despite the advances of women in the political sphere thus far, strong external factors can discourage women from political advancement, because it is simply not economically feasible or practical.

2.1.5 Harassment and Violence

The influx of women into politics has prompted a backlash in many countries, which can manifest in harassment and violence. A recent survey of female politicians in 39 countries by the Inter-Parliamentary Union revealed high levels of intimidation and violence. Of those surveyed, 81.8% reported psychological violence, and 44.4% reported threats of death, rape, beatings, and abduction during their term. 21.8% reported being subjected to sexual violence, and 25.5% reported being subjected to physical violence. 65.5% reported being subjected several times, or often, to humiliating sexist or sexual remarks.¹²⁷ The incidence of violence and harassment against women, which shows no sign of abating any time soon, keeps many potential candidates from deciding to enter the political arena.

2.1.6 Chilling Effect

Taken together, all of these factors have a chilling effect on the number of women seeking political office. Faced with significant barriers to entry, entrenched societal views, and economic realities, many women choose not to pursue political careers. Those who do face significant hurdles to achieve electoral success and build their portfolios.

2.2 STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME THESE BARRIERS

There’s no silver bullet for solving gender inequality in politics. In many countries, significant systemic changes are needed, including better regulation of campaign finance, greater transparency and accountability around gender quotas, and behavioural change campaigns aimed at addressing deep-rooted gender stereotypes. However, there are a number of practical solutions that can help female candidates overcome entrenched structural inequalities and succeed in securing political office and rising through the ranks.

2.2.1 Mentoring

The benefits of mentoring have been extensively corroborated both in the political sphere, and in the private sector.¹²⁸ Training for female leaders is the most common indirect resource that is utilised during campaigns, and is implemented by a diverse range of actors: international donors, women’s organisations, and political parties themselves.¹²⁹ Mentorship can take on a variety of forms, including informal guidance and strategic advice, assistance with fundraising, and introduction to networks for support.

While some political parties have this ingrained within their strategy for recruiting and advancing female candidates, it is often left to the candidates themselves to find potential mentors and solicit their support. International organisations that pair aspiring female political leaders with successful female politicians can play a crucial role in bridging the gap when local support structures are limited.

“ Faced with significant barriers to entry, entrenched societal views, and economic realities, many women choose not to pursue political careers. Those who do face significant hurdles to achieve electoral success and build their portfolios. ”

2.2.2 Professional Campaign Advice

Particularly where local party support structures are limited, professional campaign advisors can serve an important role. That said, the demographics of the international political consulting industry tend to look fairly similar those of government, with many of the top firms led by men. Their fees also often put their services out of reach for female candidates, who typically have less access to campaign finance. Organisations that include a significant proportion of women in their leadership teams and provide pro-bono or low-bono support specifically for female candidates can help address this imbalance.

2.2.3 Fundraising Assistance

More than 80% of parliamentarians and activists cite lack of access to funding as one of the biggest challenges facing female candidates.¹³⁰ This is especially acute in developing countries, where campaign finance networks can be particularly male-dominated. In this atmosphere, female candidates often find it difficult to fund the day-to-day operations of their campaigns, let alone access the level of professional political advisory services available to their better-funded male competitors.

In this context, providing fundraising assistance to female candidates, either in the form of access to networks or effective fundraising strategy, can have a major impact.

2.2.4 Digital Campaigning Tools

Digital campaigning tools have tremendous potential for allowing candidates of any gender to compete against competitors who are better resourced or enjoy greater establishment support. For female candidates, they can be particularly powerful when leveraged effectively, both in building grassroots networks and raising small online donations.

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Female candidates typically receive less news coverage and purchase less advertising than men. When female candidates do get media coverage, it can often be discriminatory, centred on their personal lives, or trivialising their candidacies.
”

Whether through direct engagement with social media and online organising platforms (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, NationBuilder, etc.) or through assistance from campaign consultants, building an effective digital strategy to engage and mobilise supporters is an increasingly essential ingredient for success.

2.2.5 Inclusion in Media

Female candidates typically receive less news coverage and purchase less advertising than men.¹³¹ Changing this can be done through legally mandated subsidised media coverage (such as seen in East Timor in 2001, and Brazil since 2009), or through external actors (such as strategy firms) helping candidates generate earned media coverage.¹³²

When female candidates do get media coverage, it can often be discriminatory, centred on their personal lives, or trivialising their candidacies.¹³³ In fact, a recent study of female candidates in the US found that they are subjected to four times more media coverage based on their appearance in comparison to their male competitors.¹³⁴

External actors, such as strategy firms, are best positioned to take action in this arena; by pushing positive, issue-centred coverage of clients, there is an opportunity to change the narrative surrounding female candidates. The impact of media inclusion is very tangible. As Erika Falk, author of *Women For President: Media Bias In Nine*

Campaigns, explained, “Being ignored by the press or being portrayed as loser almost certainly becomes prophecy.”¹³⁵ Taking proactive measures to improve media inclusion can make a measurable difference both in individual campaigns and in advancing broader acceptance of women in politics.

3.

INDIVIDUALS & ORGANISATIONS LEADING THE FIGHT

3.1 WOMEN TO WATCH

While we may have a long way to go towards achieving gender equality in politics, countless inspiring female leaders are making a difference around the world every day. It was hard to narrow down the list, but we've picked 50 "Women to Watch" who are breaking boundaries and setting examples of the positive impact of strong female leadership. The list is broken down into five regions, with ten women selected for each.

3.1.1 Africa

Kemi Adeosun

Nigeria | Minister of Finance

Previous positions: Commissioner of Finance in Ogun State; Managing Director, Chapel Hill Denham Management

Adeosun comes from a finance and accounting background and has held senior positions at PricewaterhouseCoopers and Chapel Hill Denham Management. She entered into politics with her 2011 appointment as Commissioner of Finance in Ogun State, and was then appointed Nigeria's Minister of Finance in 2015. She has a longstanding focus on women's financial empowerment, which predates her appointment as minister. Prior to entering the political arena, she authored a weekly personal finance column aimed at Nigerian women.

Winnie Byanyima

Uganda | Executive Director of Oxfam International

Previous positions: Member of Ugandan Parliament; Director of Women, Gender and Development, African Union; Director, Gender Team, UNDP

Byanyima served 11 years in the Ugandan parliament and is a renowned expert on women's rights, democracy, and conflict resolution. Byanyima was a signatory on Uganda's 1985 peace agreement and also helped to broker peace settlements in other conflict-affected African states. She founded the civil society organisation Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE), co-founded the Global Gender and Climate Alliance, and chaired a UN task force on gender equality in the Millennium Development Goals.

Fadumo Dayib

Somalia | Acting Country Manager of UN Women in Somalia

Previous positions: Presidential Candidate; Critical Care Nurse; UN Health Specialist Trainer; Mason Fellow, John F. Kennedy School, Harvard University

Relocating to Finland in wake of the Somali Civil War in 1990, Dayib has 12 years of public health experience with organisations such as the UN, focusing on maternal health and HIV prevention. She announced her candidacy in Somalia's presidential election in 2014, and is the first woman in the country's history to do so. Despite death threats, Dayib persevered in what she describes as, "Somalia's most corrupt, unconstitutional and unethical (s)elections of all time."¹³⁶ Her platform included elimination of the clan system, tackling traditions such as female genital mutilation, and addressing corruption; Somali sovereignty; and beginning dialogue with Al-Shabaab. She pulled out of the race in December 2016, but is recognised as paving the way for female participation in Somalia's political system.

Ameenah Gurib-Fakim

Mauritius | President

Previous positions: Managing Director, CIDP Research & Innovation; Dean of the Faculty of Science and Pro-Vice Chancellor, University of Mauritius; Chairperson the International Council for Scientific Union – Regional Office for Africa

Gurib-Fakim is Mauritius' first elected female president. Trained as a biodiversity scientist, she has worked on highlighting environmental issues during her presidency, collaborating with international organisations such as the World Bank. She has made significant contributions to furthering sustainable development and biodiversity conservation in Africa: she co-authored the first ever African Herbal Pharmacopoeia; founded the CIDP Research and Innovation Centre; and has published extensively on the subject.

Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila

Namibia | Prime Minister

Previous positions: Minister of Finance; Member of the National Assembly; Director General, National Planning Commission

At the age of 13, Kuugongelwa-Amadhila was forced to go into exile, getting her education in Sierra Leone and the United States. In 1994, she returned to Namibia and began working as a Desk Officer in the Office of the President. She quickly rose in politics, being appointed Director General of the National Planning Commission at age 27. As Prime Minister, she has emphasised the importance of gender equality, striving to improve the gender gap during her term.

Sahar Nasr

Egypt | Minister of Investment and International Cooperation

Previous positions: Professor of Economics, American University in Cairo; National Coordinator, National Committee for the Follow-Up on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

Nasr is a well-known economist and academic, having worked with the World Bank for 17 years in partnerships focused on SME investment projects in Egypt. As Minister of Investment and International Cooperation, she has restructured the Ministry, creating new units (such as a monitoring and evaluation unit) in order to improve effectiveness. She became the first Egyptian woman to join UNDP's Social Impact Fund Advisory Board in June 2017.

Rosine Sori-Coulibaly

Burkina Faso | Minister of Economy, Finance and Development

Previous positions: Economist, Ministry of Economic Planning and Development; Member, Social and Economic Council; Deputy Special Representative, UN Office in Burundi

Sori-Coulibaly is an expert in development and planning who spent many years working for the United Nations prior to entering domestic politics. She was reportedly a favourite to become Prime Minister under Roch Marc Christian Kaboré's Presidency in 2016, but was instead named Minister of Economy, Finance and Development.

Fatoumata Tambajang

Gambia | Vice President, Minister of Women's Affairs

Previous positions: Chair, Coalition 2016; Chair, Gambia National Women's Council; Advisor to Former President Dawda Jawara; Secretary of State for Health and Social Welfare.

A career politician with a long history of activism, Tambajang has long advocated for women's rights. She was a strong supporter of bills that discouraged early marriage and female genital mutilation. Tambajang has also made headway in anti-corruption policies, creating a national commission to reclaim assets lost during former president Yahya Jammeh's presidency.

Peris Tobiko

Kenya | Member of Parliament

Previous positions: Chair, Tanathi Water Services Board; District Officer and later Benefits Manager, National Social Security Fund

Escaping three attempts to make her a child bride in order to further her education, Tobiko has bucked tradition from an early age. In 2013, she made history when she became the first woman from the conservative Maasi community to win a seat in parliament, in a country with the lowest female representation in the region. Her campaign came at significant personal risk: she received death threats, and her two daughters were attacked by young men who opposed their mother's decision to run. Speaking about her determination in the face of violence and threats, Tobiko told the Thomson Reuters Foundation, "If I shy away, then how else do we encourage other women? It's a cause I believe in and somebody must do it."¹³⁷

Aminata Touré

Senegal | Special Envoy of the President of Senegal

Previous positions: Prime Minister; Justice Minister; Programme Manager, Gender and HIV Programme, UNFPA

Known as the “Iron Lady,” Touré has spent her career focusing on anti-corruption campaigns and advocating for human rights and women’s rights. As the Justice Minister, she brought Karim Wade (the son of a former Senegalese president) to trial, and also supervised the arrest of Chad’s former president Hissène Habré. Touré has pushed for “gender mainstreaming” in politics, and fought to have women’s reproductive rights included in the government’s health budget.

3.1.2 Asia Pacific

Shaharзад Akbar

Afghanistan | Director, Open Society Afghanistan / Co-founder, Afghanistan 1400

Previous positions: Reporter, BBC Dari; MPhil Development Studies, University of Oxford

Akbar was the first Afghan woman to complete postgraduate studies at the University of Oxford. She is a co-founder of the Afghanistan 1400, which is a youth-led political movement that emphasises democratic values. Akbar is the Director of Open Society Afghanistan, focusing on issues including women’s rights, rule of law, and good governance.

Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury

Bangladesh | Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad

Previous positions: State Minister, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs; Member of Parliament; Supreme Court Advocate

Focused on women’s empowerment and combating violence against women, Chaudhury is recognised worldwide as a leader in women’s rights and humanitarianism. She is the first woman in Bangladesh to have reached the level of Speaker of Parliament. Prior to entering parliament, she worked for 15 years as a lawyer in the Supreme Court.

Grace Fu

Singapore | Minister for Culture, Community and Youth & Leader of the House

Previous positions: Minister, Prime Minister’s Office, Second Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Second Minister for Environment and Water Resources; Senior Minister of State in the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts, and the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources; Chief Executive Officer, PSA South East Asia and Japan

Fu is the first female cabinet minister in Singapore with her own portfolio, breaking new ground for women in the country. In an interview following her appointment, Fu said “I am glad to be part of [the] movement to push the boundary for women.”¹³⁸ Recently, Fu was joined in the top ranks of Singapore’s government by another woman - the country’s first female president, Halimah Yacob. While Yacob was elected by default (no other candidate qualified to run) both women are paving the way for greater female representation in politics.

Tsai Ing-Wen

Taiwan | President

Previous positions: Chair, Democratic Progressive Party (DPP); Minister, Mainland Affairs Council; Advisor, National Security Council; Lawyer

Tsai is Taiwan’s first female president, but her election was notable for another reason as well: her background. Unlike many other female leaders in the region, she doesn’t come from a political dynasty and doesn’t have a “traditional” family herself (she has never been married and has no children). Taiwan has the most gender-balanced parliament in the region, with women representing 38% of parliamentarians.

Bulgantuya Khurelbaatar

Mongolia | Deputy Minister of Finance

Previous positions: Secretary, Mongolian People's Party; Director of Business Development, Petrovis LLC; Principal Commercial Advisor, Oyu Tolgoi LLC

Young, dynamic, and Yale-educated, Khurelbaatar has quickly gotten to work on tough issues including addressing the country's budget deficit. Speaking about the challenge of getting more Mongolian women involved in politics, Khurelbaatar said, "Encouraging women to get into politics is quite tough. The political world is not a 9-6 job. You could be out in the countryside, travelling any day – it's very much unplanned, which discourages women to participate."¹³⁹

Yuriko Koike

Japan | Governor of Tokyo

Previous positions: Member, House of Representatives; Minister of Defense

Running on a platform of tackling corruption, environmental advocacy, and women's empowerment, Koike won the election for governor of Tokyo in a landslide victory. In office, she has focused on helping women balance familial and career responsibilities, and making childcare accessible to all. Koike formed a new political party, the Party of Hope, shortly before Japan's national elections in October 2017, mounting a challenge to Prime Minister Shinzō Abe's Liberal Democratic Party. Ultimately, the ruling party prevailed, leading Koike to note that "After this recent election, I felt again [that] there is a very strong barrier for women."¹⁴⁰

Marvi Memon

Pakistan | Minister of State, Chairperson of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP)

Previous positions: Member, National Assembly; Advisor to the President of Pakistan on Media Management and on Investments

Awarded the Speaker's Democracy Award by the UK House of Commons, Memon is recognised for her contributions to fair and transparent government. She has focused on a wide range of issues over the course of her political career, including investment, technology, and women's empowerment. As Chair of the BISP, the primary economic and social safety net in Pakistan, she has emphasised the role that the programme can play in the empowerment of women. By treating women as the head of their families, the BISP has increased their role in family decision making. The programme has also provided many women with identity cards for the first time, enabling them to exercise their voting rights.

Wafa Bani Mustafa

Jordan | Member of Parliament

Previous positions: Lawyer

Mustafa is an outspoken fighter for women's rights in Jordan. One of her most notable victories was spearheading a change in the law that allowed rapists to escape prosecution if they married their victims. She has also pushed to change Jordan's nationality law so that children of Jordanian mothers married to non-Jordanians can get citizenship and to make sexual harassment a crime. Speaking about these efforts, Mustafa said, "In Jordan and the Arab world women in politics should focus on women's rights, and not be ashamed to focus on women's rights. I can't see the things around me and be silent."¹⁴¹

Sima Samar

Afghanistan | Chairperson of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Sudan

Previous positions: Deputy President; Minister of Women's Affairs; Founder, The Shuhada Organization

After fleeing Afghanistan during the Russian Conflict, Samar spent 17 years in Pakistan, founding The Shuhada Organisation, which provides healthcare for women and girls. She returned to Afghanistan in 2002, serving as Deputy President, and later, Minister of Women's Affairs. During her ministerial role, she won the right for female government employees to return to their jobs, supervised the return of girls to the education system, and opened a women's legal department.

Sushma Swaraj

India | Minister of External Affairs

Previous positions: Supreme Court Lawyer; Member of Parliament; Member of the Legislative Assembly; Chief Minister of Delhi

Dubbed “India’s Best Loved Politician” by the Wall Street Journal, Swaraj has a long history and strong reputation in Indian politics. She was elected as a member of parliament seven times, and a member of the Legislative Assembly three times. She is the second woman in the history of India to hold the position of External Affairs Minister.

3.1.3 Eastern Europe

Anna Maria Anders

Poland | Senator and Secretary of State for International Dialogue

Previous positions: Communications Department at UNESCO; Personal Assistant to the Chairman, Rezayat Paris

During her tenure as Secretary of State, and as Senator, Anders has focused on external affairs and diplomacy. She has also put emphasis on the importance of education as a developmental tool, and on veterans’ affairs. She represents Poland in the Women in Parliaments Global Forum (WIP), advocating for gender equality in politics.

Ana Brnabić

Serbia | Prime Minister

Previous positions: Minister of Public Administration and Local Self Government; Director, Continental Wind Serbia

Brnabić broke two barriers upon becoming Serbia’s Prime Minister: she is both the first female and the first openly gay person to hold the position. She was previously the country’s first openly gay minister. In a country where the LGBT community still faces widespread harassment and violence, her appointment has been met with both praise and staunch opposition.

Tamar Chugoshvili

Georgia | First Deputy Chairperson of the Parliament

Previous positions: Chairperson, Young Lawyers’ Association; Assistant to the Prime Minister of Georgia on Human Rights and Gender Equality Issues; Head of International Relations of Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia party

Chugoshvili comes from a legal background, having obtained her J.D. from Harvard, and having chaired the Young Lawyer’s Association. As the Assistant to the Prime Minister of Georgia on Human Rights and Gender Equality Issues, she helped to formulate the government’s first comprehensive action plan on human rights protection.

Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović

Croatia | President

Previous positions: Minister of European Affairs; Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration; Assistant Secretary General of NATO for Public Diplomacy; Ambassador to the United States

Grabar-Kitarović has repeatedly pushed boundaries in her decorated political career: she was the first woman to be elected to the office of president since the multiparty elections, was the youngest person to become president, and remains the highest-ranking female official to have served in NATO’s administrative structure.

Kersti Kaljulaid

Estonia | President

Previous positions: Representative, European Court of Auditors; Economic Advisor to Prime Minister Mart Laar; Director, Iru Power Plant

Kaljulaid’s experience in finance and investment led to her appointment as Economic Advisor to former Prime Minister Mart Laar, marking her entrance into politics. Put forward as a unity candidate in a highly contested parliamentary vote, Kaljulaid won the Presidential seat unanimously. She is known for her liberal outlook on issues such as LGBT rights, immigration, and other social issues.

Andreja Katič

Slovenia | Minister of Defence

Previous positions: Director, Municipal Administration of the Municipality of Velenje; Vice President of Parliament

Katič was appointed Minister of Defence in 2015, joining a small group of female defence ministers worldwide. In this role, she received international attention for her decision to approve the deployment of Slovenian military equipment and instructors to support the fight against ISIS. She has also spent her political career advocating for local communities, acting as a commissioner in the UNICEF project “Velenje – UNICEF Child-Friendly City” and as a member of the Panel for Improved Security of Municipality Residents.

Mimoza Kusari-Lila

Kosovo | Member of Parliament and Leader of Alternativa Party

Previous positions: Mayor of Gjakova; Deputy Prime Minister; Minister of Trade and Industry; Spokesperson and Political Adviser to the Prime Minister

In 2003, Kusari-Lila was offered the position of advisor to former Prime Minister Bajram Rexhepi, the first woman to have been given such a post. She served in this position during a time of intense turmoil: the March 2004 riots. In 2011, she was named Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Commerce and Industry. In 2013, she broke barriers in Kosovo by becoming the first female mayor in the country. Speaking about the threats that she has received throughout her political career, Kusari-Lila said, “All these efforts only make me stronger. I know it might frighten many young women from entering politics [but] this is a pattern. We have to win the war to win the peace. You keep throwing stones at me and I will keep paving roads.”¹⁴²

Merle Maigre

Estonia | Director, NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence

Previous positions: Security Policy Adviser to the President; Policy Advisor, Policy Planning Unit, Private Office of NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen; Deputy Head of the NATO Liaison Office in Kyiv

Maigre has focused her career on security and defence, having worked in various departments of NATO, in the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and serving as a researcher at the International Centre for Defence Studies. She assumed her most recent position, Director of the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence, in September 2017.

Dana Reizniece-Ozola

Latvia | Minister of Finance

Previous positions: Minister of Economics; Member of Parliament; Ventspils City Council, Head of Investment Division; Ministry of Transport of the Republic of Latvia, Parliamentary Secretary

As a chess grandmaster, Reizniece-Ozola is no stranger to high stakes contests. The dedication and strategic thinking that have led to her success in the World Chess Championships have also served her well in politics. As Minister of Economics, she led the liberalisation of Latvia’s gas sector. As Minister of Finance, she is setting her sights on regulating the country’s rogue banks. Given her fearless approach, it’s no wonder she has said, “I’m a person who likes to take on the difficult tasks that no one else would dare to start.”¹⁴³

Radmila Šekerinska

Macedonia | Minister of Defence

Previous positions: Acting Prime Minister; Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration and National Coordinator for Foreign Assistance; President, Social Democratic Union of Macedonia

In 1998, Šekerinska was elected to parliament for the first time. Four years later, she was appointed as Deputy Prime Minister. In this office, she was responsible for integrating Macedonia into the European Union. She was additionally appointed President of her party, becoming the first Macedonian woman ever to lead a political party. Šekerinska was violently attacked and swung around by her hair during a mob assault on parliament. Her attacker was later jailed. Speaking about the incident, Šekerinska said, “Our profession is risky - but never before in my life have I felt the imminent danger of being killed because of a political position.”¹⁴⁴

3.1.4 Latin America & Caribbean

Mia Amor-Mottley

Barbados | Leader of the Barbados Labour Party (BLP)

Previous positions: Senator, Upper House; Minister of Economic Affairs and Development; Deputy Prime Minister; Attorney General and Minister of Home Affairs; Minister of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture

Amor-Mottley is leading the opposition Barbados Labour Party (BLP) into the 2018 elections, mounting a strong challenge to Prime Minister Freundel Stuart. Amor-Mottley has served in a range of high profile positions in government, having secured her first ministerial portfolio at the age of 29.

Marisol Espinoza Cruz

Peru | Member of Congress

Previous positions: First Vice President of Peru; Speaker, Nationalist Party

Espinoza Cruz served as First Vice President of Peru from 2011-2016. She spent the beginning of her career working in journalism, in both print and broadcast. In 2005, she joined the Union for Peru Party, and ran on the party's ticket for the 2011 Presidential Elections. In 2015, she left the party, joining the Alliance for Progress bench for her current congressional term.

Christiana Figueres

Costa Rica | Convener of Mission 2020

Previous positions: Executive Secretary, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); Director, Renewable Energy in the Americas (REIA); Director, Center for Sustainable Development of the Americas (CSDA)

Figueres has dedicated her career to fighting climate change, having founded the non-profit Center for Sustainable Development of the Americas in 1995. More recently, she worked as Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and is currently convening Mission 2020, an initiative focused on curbing greenhouse gases.

Gina Godoy

Ecuador | Representative in the National Assembly and Vice President of the Justice Commission of the Assembly

Previous positions: Representative, National Assembly

Godoy is a well-known advocate for women's rights and has been a member of Ecuadorian Centre for the Promotion and Action of Women since 1997. Legislatively, she has pushed for human rights, women's empowerment, and anti-trafficking laws. Further, she was a key proponent of including femicide in the criminal code.

María Ángela Holguín

Colombia | Minister of Foreign Affairs

Previous positions: Permanent Representative to the UN; Ambassador to Venezuela; Representative to the Development Bank of Latin America

Spending over two decades working in the public and private sectors, Holguín is a career diplomat. She served as Ambassador to Venezuela, as well as to the United Nations. Following the 2008 Andean Diplomatic Crisis, Holguín's ambassadorship is widely regarded as helping to smooth tense relations between Colombia and Venezuela.

Alix Boyd Knights

Dominica | Speaker of the House of Assembly

Previous positions: Attorney-at-Law

Knights has served four terms as Speaker of the House of Assembly, making her the longest-serving speaker in Dominica's history (the previous record stood at two terms). She has been an attorney since 1990, and has focused on advocating for the rights of women and children, passing laws addressing domestic violence and human rights.

Marta Gabriela Michetti

Argentina | Vice President

Previous positions: Deputy Head of Government in Buenos Aires; Senator for Buenos Aires

Joining the Commitment to Change Party in 2003, Michetti first began her career in municipal politics as a member of the Buenos Aires City Legislature. By 2007, she had won the office of Deputy Mayor of Buenos Aires. In 2015, she assumed the role of Vice President.

Blanca Alcalá Ruiz

Mexico | Ambassador of Mexico to Colombia

Previous positions: Mayor of Puebla City; President, National Association of World Heritage Mexican Cities; Under Secretary of Social Development; Delegate of the National Bank of Public Works and Services

Ruiz has focused her career on both municipal and federal-level administration. She is most well-known for governing the city of Puebla, and was the first-ever woman to do so. Her political focus lies in development, social policies, and gender equality.

Isabel Saint Malo de Alvarado

Panama | Vice President and Minister of Foreign Affairs

Previous positions: Assistant Resident Representative, UNDP; Independent Consultant for International Organisations; Alternate Ambassador to the Panamanian Mission to the UN

Saint Malo de Alvarado is the first woman in the history of Panama to hold both the Vice President and Minister of Foreign Affairs positions. In her current office, she advocates social policies centred on eradicating poverty, tackling corruption, and fighting gender discrimination.

María Eugenia Vidal

Argentina | Governor of the Province of Buenos Aires

Previous positions: Deputy Mayor of the City of Buenos Aires; Minister of Social Development for the City of Buenos Aires

Vidal is the first woman, and non-Peronist, to hold the office of the Governor of the Province of Buenos Aires. Prior to this position, she worked for several public sector organisations, such as ANSES (social security administration), and the Ministries of Social Development and Foreign Relations.

3.1.5 Western Europe & Others

Jacinda Ardern

New Zealand | Prime Minister

Previous positions: Member of Parliament and Labour Party Spokesperson for Security and Intelligence, Arts, Culture and Heritage, and Children; President, International Union of Socialist Youth (IUSY); Policy Advisory, Better Regulation Executive, UK Cabinet Office.

At 37 years old, Jacinda Ardern is New Zealand's youngest Prime Minister since 1856. Laying out her priorities for the country shortly after her election, Ardern noted that "I have great ambition as a woman and as prime minister elect that we will make great gains as a government in issues like equal pay, in issues like supporting women in the roles they choose to take, whether they be work or in caring roles ... I hold that issue close to my heart."¹⁴⁵ She has also committed to achieving gender parity within her caucus.

Audrey Azoulay

France | Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Previous positions: Minister of Culture and Communication; Culture Adviser to President François Hollande; Deputy Director for Multimedia Affairs, Chief Financial and Legal Officer and Deputy Director-General, French National Centre of Cinematography and the Moving Image (CNC); Rapporteur for the Court of Auditors and legislation expert, European Commission.

Azoulay was elected Director-General of UNESCO in a closely fought contest in October 2017. Her platform in her candidacy for the role included a strong focus on leveraging education as a catalyst for development and gender equality. During her time in government in France, she also worked to advance gender equality, introducing gender parity measures for cultural institutions into the Law on Equality and Citizenship.

Ada Colau

Spain | Mayor of Barcelona

Previous positions: Co-Founder, Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (PAH) (Platform for People Affected by Mortgages); Spokesperson, Barcelona en Comú

The first woman to hold the mayoral position, Colau is a former activist who was once dragged away by riot police from a protest against a bank that had refused to negotiate with an evicted family. During her term as mayor, she has attempted to reduce the mayor's salary to 28,000 Euros, restored school meal subsidies, and levied fines on banks owning vacant properties. Her position as Mayor of Barcelona during the Catalan referendum has put her at the centre of a crisis that has attracted global attention. She has called for the European Union to intervene and facilitate negotiations between the Catalan and Spanish governments.

Anne Hidalgo

France | Mayor of Paris; Chair, C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group

Previous positions: Deputy Mayor; Technical Adviser, Ministry of Justice; Technical Adviser and later Consultant, cabinet office of the Secretary of State for Women's Rights and Vocational Training; Adviser, cabinet office of the Minister of Employment and Solidarity.

In her victory speech, Hidalgo acknowledged the milestone that her election represented, saying "I am the first woman mayor of Paris. I am aware of the challenge."¹⁴⁶ Since coming into office in 2014, she has spearheaded bold projects aimed at environmental-protection, including calling for a total ban of gas-powered cars from the city by 2030. As Chair of the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, she oversees their Women4Climate initiative, aimed at supporting and mobilising the next generation of women leaders to fight climate change.

Michaëlle Jean

Canada | Secretary-General of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie

Previous positions: Governor General of Canada; Journalist; Filmmaker

Jean began her career at Radio-Canada as a reporter and broadcaster. She moved to several different outlets, and eventually ended up making documentary films with her husband about poignant social issues, such as refugees. She also worked to build a network of emergency shelters for battered women and their children across Canada. In 2005, she was appointed Governor General of Canada, where she emphasised preserving Canadian culture, the environment, and youth empowerment. In her current position, as Secretary-General of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, she coordinates multilateral cooperation amongst French-speaking countries around the world.

Annie Lööf

Sweden | Leader of the Centre Party

Previous positions: Minister for Enterprise; Member of the Riksdag

At age 23, Lööf was elected to the Riksdag (making her the youngest member at the time), and five years later became President of the Centre Party. As Minister for Enterprise, she helped to create the new cabinet position Minister for IT and Energy, expanding technology and enterprise's role within the government. She has spoken out about sexual harassment in politics, saying, "Aside from all the online hate, which often has a crude sexual undertone, I've also had unwelcome hands on my body within a political context."¹⁴⁷

Safak Pavey

Turkey | Member of Parliament

Previous positions: Secretary, CRPD Secretariat at UNHCR; Founding Member, UN Interagency Support Group for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN IASG for CRPD); Humanitarian Officer, UNHCR

Pavey has been a member of parliament for the opposition Republican People's Party for six years, becoming the first disabled woman ever elected to the Turkish parliament. She has been an outspoken critic of President Erdogan's jailing of journalists and activists, visiting more than 50 prisoners and working to draw attention to their cases in the international media. In 2012, she received the US Secretary of State's International Women of Courage Award. During the ceremony, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton praised Pavey as "an effective local and global champion for the rights of women, refugees, persons with disabilities and so many others."¹⁴⁸

Stav Shaffir

Israel | Member of the Knesset

Previous positions: Founder and co-chair, Lobby for the Advancement of Fair Rental Conditions; Founder, Lobby for Social Justice; Journalist.

Shaffir is the youngest member of the Knesset (Israel's parliament) in the country's history. Prior to running for office, she led the biggest social protest since the establishment of the country, focused on addressing housing costs. The demonstration, which became known as the "Tent Protest," saw hundreds of thousands of Israelis take to the streets. Since coming into office, she has been an outspoken advocate for tackling corruption and advancing social justice issues.

Simonetta Sommaruga

Switzerland | Head of the Federal Department of Justice and Police

Previous positions: President of the Swiss Confederation; Director and later President, Swiss Consumer Protection Foundation; Councillor, Köniz Municipal Government

Over the course of her career, Sommaruga has been an advocate for greater women's leadership in politics and business, including calling for a 30% quota for women on the boards of publicly-listed Swiss companies. Sommaruga's election to the Swiss federal council in 2010 marked the first time that women were in the majority on the council, which was no minor milestone given that women had been given the right to vote in national elections only four decades before.

Margrethe Vestager

Denmark | European Commissioner for Competition

Previous positions: Member of Parliament; Minister of Economic Affairs and the Interior; Leader of the Social Liberal Party; Minister of Education; Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs

Involved in politics since age 21, Vestager has served in a multitude of ministerial and parliamentary roles. She has classic liberal views, believing in free speech, free trade, and free assembly. Her current position as European Commissioner for Competition has put her in the global spotlight and pitted her against powerful technology companies including Google, Facebook, and Apple. She has taken on a powerful role in antitrust lawsuits and legislation, including fining Google £2.1 billion in April 2017 as a part of the Google Shopping antitrust case.

3.2 ALLIES FOR EQUALITY

Recognising that gender equality is not just an issue of fairness but is also a significant benefit to society as a whole, male political leaders are stepping up. Their advocacy is essential for accelerating the pace of change, particularly given that men still occupy the majority of positions of power in most countries around the world.

While there are many to choose from, we have selected a few of the most prominent male allies who are leading the charge for gender equality in politics and beyond.

Akinwumi Adesina

Nigeria | African Development Bank (AfDB) President

As President of the African Development Bank, Adesina has had a central role in promoting gender equality across the continent. Initiatives pursued since his election in 2015 include support for women in agriculture and providing greater access to finance for women. He has emphasised the potential for entrepreneurship to advance women's economic and social position. Under his leadership, the bank has launched the Affirmative Finance Action for Women programme, which will help leverage \$3 billion for women-owned businesses.

Bjarni Benediktsson

Iceland | Prime Minister

Benediktsson's cabinet achieved gender parity, with five male and five female appointees. In the past year, Benediktsson has introduced several ground-breaking equality-focused measures. As of March 2017, Iceland became the first country in the world to mandate equal pay, committing to closing the pay gap by 2022. Additionally, Benediktsson's government has committed to achieving equal representation for women in media.

Beji Caid Essebsi

Tunisia | President

In August 2017, Essebsi announced proposals to amend Tunisia's laws on marriage and inheritance. If the measures are approved, the new laws will allow women to marry non-Muslims, and also to have property and inheritance rights fully equal to men. While many in more conservative circles have opposed the reforms, Essebsi has pressed ahead, saying that, "The state is obliged to achieve full equality between women and men and to ensure equal opportunities for all responsibilities."¹⁴⁹

Emmanuel Macron

France | President

Emmanuel Macron's appointment of 11 female cabinet ministers (out of a total of 22) marked an important milestone in France's strides toward greater representation of women in politics. During his campaign, Macron pledged gender parity in his cabinet, and stuck to his promise. He has also set his sights on tackling sexism, supporting a push by his gender equality minister to impose fines for street harassment.

Justin Trudeau

Canada | Prime Minister

Upon coming into office in 2015, Justin Trudeau appointed Canada's first gender-equal parliament. Speaking of his commitment to advancing equality, Trudeau has said, "I believe that women and girls can do - and be - anything they want. But I also know that meaningful cultural change can't and won't happen when only half of the population works toward that change. Men need to act, to set examples, and be role models for youth, too."¹⁵⁰

Joko Widodo

Indonesia | President

In 2014, Widodo appointed Indonesia's first female minister, Retno Marsudi. Currently, the number of female ministers stands at 9, or 26% of the cabinet, making it the highest ratio of female ministers out of the 10 most populous countries in the world. A HeForShe Impact Champion, Widodo has committed to rolling out new measures to reach at least 30% representation of women in parliament and improve women's representation in other decision-making processes.¹⁵¹ Additionally, Widodo has pushed for legislation preventing violence against women and girls.

3.3 ORGANISATIONS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

A growing number of international organisations are tackling the barriers to women's political inclusion and working towards closing the gender gap in government. Notable organisations working in this space include:

African Women's Development Fund (AWDF)

AWDF "supports local, national and regional women's organisations working towards the empowerment of African women and the promotion and realisation of their rights." Focused on grant-making, AWDF supports organisations on the continent that focus on women's leadership, participation, and peace in politics.

Council of Women World Leaders (CWWL)

Focused on network building and mentorship, the Council is a network of current and former female prime ministers and presidents. Through initiatives such as the "Spotlight on Leadership Series," the Council provides opportunities for female leaders to connect and collaborate.

Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace & Security

Led by Melanne Verwee, the first US Ambassador for Global Women's Issues to the UN, the Institute, "examines and highlights the roles and experiences of women in peace and security worldwide through cutting edge research, global convenings and strategic partnerships." Such initiatives include creation of an international consortium dedicated to deepening knowledge about women's political participation, an online repository, and the formation of the International Council on Women's Business Leadership.

Inclusive Security

Inclusive Security focuses on creating more opportunity for female leaders in the realm of peace, security, and policy. The organisation provides training for female leaders in conflict resolution scenarios and forms partnerships with public and private sector organisations for knowledge building.

International Republican Institute (IRI): Women's Democracy Network (WDN)

The WDN concentrates on connecting and enabling female leaders in politics worldwide. With more than 60 member countries and 20 field offices globally, the WDN concentrates on training, network creation, and mentorship of emerging and established female politicians.

Mina's List

Mina's List works with regional women's rights organisations and female legislators to provide culturally relevant, country-specific educational and capacity-building resources to aspiring female political leaders. They host empowerment workshops and also run a mentorship program that pairs aspiring female political leaders with successful female politicians.

National Democratic Institute (NDI): Gender, Women and Democracy Programme

NDI undertakes a wide range of partnerships and initiatives centred on overcoming barriers to women's political participation on three levels: individual, institutional, and socio-cultural. Initiatives include an advocacy campaign on stopping violence against women, structural trainings through fellowships and grants, and the creation of a Global Action Plan intended to guide political parties in greater inclusion of women.

UN Women

UN Women focuses heavily on capacity building for female politicians, carrying out valuable research and providing training courses around the world. The organisation also advocates for greater female inclusion in politics, and pushes for adherence to UN statutes and conventions regarding women's rights.

Vital Voices Global Partnership

Focused on mentorship, Vital Voices works with female leaders in human rights, economic opportunity, and political and public leadership, developing strategies and providing training to women in emerging economies. The organisation also contributes to thought leadership and advocacy on women's political participation.

Wilson Center: Global Women's Leadership Initiative

The Initiative highlights the importance of increasing female political leadership through capacity building and mentorship. Training programs are tailored to emerging politicians, and "grounded in research, building networks, encouraging dialogue, and connecting women leaders in all sectors."

Women Political Leaders Global Forum

This non-profit organisation focuses on increasing "both the number and the influence of women in political leadership positions." The organisation's approach centres on "communication, connection, community," which is applied to all of the Forum's programmes and initiatives. There are four communities under the WPL umbrella, tailored to specific groups of female politicians: Women in Parliaments, Women Government Leaders, Women European Leaders, and Women Mayors International.

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ABOUT OUR FOUNDER

Eva Barboni is a campaign strategist with experience managing projects across four continents, in often complex and demanding environments. Since her first national campaign in 2003-2004 on behalf of US Presidential candidate Howard Dean, Eva has developed and implemented innovative communications and grassroots engagement strategies for a diverse range of clients.

She has extensive global campaign experience, with a strong focus on the EMEA region, where she has managed multilingual projects in numerous countries. Her work has taken her around the world: from Iraq, where she helped launch a new political party, to the Democratic Republic of Congo, where she managed an effort to push for free and fair elections.

Mayoral and national-level campaign victories have included Boris Johnson's re-election campaign for Mayor of London in 2012, Nana Akufo-Addo's campaign for President of Ghana in 2016, and Goodluck Jonathan's campaign for President of Nigeria in 2011.

She has also successfully managed campaigns for the leadership of international organisations. Victories include managing Dr. Akinwumi Adesina's campaign for President of the African Development Bank (AfDB), which required an extensive international lobbying and public relations effort to mobilise support for his candidacy and secure victory in the election.

In addition to her campaign work, Eva has advised corporate, NGO, and government clients on effective international communications strategies. She has provided strategic counsel to CEOs, leaders of philanthropic and non-governmental organisations, government ministers, and heads of state on a wide range of issues impacting their global reputations and relationships.

Eva has a B.A. from Swarthmore College, where she studied Political Science.

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If you would like to learn more or join our effort to transform the political landscape for female leaders and accelerate progress towards gender equality, please get in touch:

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