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Facts and Figures: Leadership and Political Participation Women in parliaments

- Only 21.8 per cent of national parliamentarians were female as of 1 July 2014, a slow increase from 11.3 per cent in 1995 [1].
- As of January 2014, 9 women served as Head of State and 15 served as Head of Government [2].
- Rwanda had the highest number of women parliamentarians worldwide. Women there have won 63.8 per cent of seats in the lower house [3].
- Globally, there are 38 States in which women account for less than 10 per cent of parliamentarians in single or lower houses, as of January 2014 [4].



Across regions

- Wide variations remain in the average percentages of women parliamentarians in each region, across all chambers (single, lower and upper houses). As of 1 January 2014, these were: Nordic countries, 42.1 per cent; Americas, 25.2 per cent; Europe excluding Nordic countries, 23.3 per cent; sub-Saharan Africa, 22.5 per cent; Asia, 18.4 per cent; Pacific, 16.2 per cent; and the Middle East and North Africa, 16.0 per cent [5].

Other domains of government

- As of January 2014, only 17 per cent of government ministers were women, with the majority overseeing social sectors, such as education and the family [6].
- Women's representation in local governments has made a difference. Research on *panchayats* (local councils) in India discovered that the number of drinking water projects in areas with female-led councils was 62 per cent

higher than in those with male-led councils. In Norway, a direct causal relationship between the presence of women in municipal councils and childcare coverage was found [7].

Expanding participation

- 30 per cent is widely considered an important benchmark for women's representation. As of January 2014, 39 single or lower houses were composed of more than 30 per cent women, including 11 in Africa and 8 in Latin America [8]. Out of the 39 countries, 32 had applied some form of quotas opening space for women's political participation. Specifically, 13 use legislative candidate quotas; 6 use reserve seats; and in a further 10, parties have adopted voluntary quotas [9].
- In countries with proportional electoral systems, women hold 25.2 per cent of the seats. This compares with 19.6 per cent using the plurality-majority electoral system, and 22.7 per cent using a mixed system [10].
- More women in politics does not necessarily correlate with lower levels of corruption, as is often assumed. Rather, democratic and transparent politics is correlated with low levels of corruption, and the two create an enabling environment for more women to participate [11].

Notes

[1] Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in Politics: 2014."

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Inter-Parliamentary Union, March 2014, "Progress for women in politics, but glass ceiling remains firm."

[7] R. Chattopadhyay and E. Duflo, 2004, "Women as Policy Makers: Evidence from a Randomized Policy Experiment in India," *Econometrica* 72(5), pp. 1409–1443; K. A. Bratton and L. P. Ray, 2002, "Descriptive Representation: Policy Outcomes and Municipal Day-Care Coverage in Norway," *American Journal of Political Science*, 46(2), pp. 428–437.

[8] Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in Politics: 2014."

[9] UN Women calculation based on IDEA, Stockholm University and IPU, Global Data Base of Quotas on Women, accessed June 2014, and IPU, <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>.

[10] Ibid.

[11] UN Development Fund for Women, 2008, Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009: Who Answers to Women?, New York.

