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**Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes,
with particular emphasis on political participation and leadership**

BACKGROUND PAPER

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I. Introduction: Achievements and Challenges

The Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) outlines concrete actions to ensure women's equal access to, and full participation in, power structures (Strategic Objective G.1), and to increase women's capacity to participate in leadership and decision-making processes and bodies (Strategic Objective G.2). The BPFA builds on numerous initiatives to enhance women's participation such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 21 and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Articles 4, 7 and 8. Since the BPFA, reviews of the actions taken to implement that document, such as the 23rd special session of the General Assembly in 2000, have further reiterated the need for women's participation in decision-making processes (UN, 2000). One of the key initiatives in this on going process was the Security Council Resolution 1325, which specifically addressed the impact of war on women, and women's contributions to conflict resolution and sustainable peace. It urged "Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management, and resolution of conflict"(UN, 2000aS/RES/1325).

Outline of the Paper

Decision-making takes place at different levels of political life – local, national and increasingly supranational. Decision-making also takes place in different areas of public life – economic, social and political. Decision-making takes different forms:

- *participation* in social movements, non-governmental organisations, civil society groups including political parties, trade unions and business organizations, which articulates interests, mobilizes support for these and lobbies governmental and non-governmental bodies to outline and implement policies addressing these interests.
- *representation* in elected public bodies such as parliaments, state and local governments and global social and economic institutions such as the United Nations, the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation which responds to participatory pressures through policy making and implementation .

Participatory indicators are more fluid than those used to measure representation. Levels of participation are judged by the number of registered civil society organizations, memberships of political parties, trade unions and business associations and key international conferences and events and the levels of voting turn out. In terms of representation specific indicators to assess the participation of women in politics generally include the proportion of women in the single/lower houses of the national/federal parliaments, proportion of women of the members of the national/federal governments and the proportion of women members of the European Commission, the number of women and men senior/junior ministers in national/federal governments, the distribution of the highest ranking women civil servants in different fields of action and the proportion of women of the members of the Supreme Courts, European Court of Justice and the Court of first Instance.

(http://eruopa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/women_men_stats/indictors; see also IPU, 2005)

This paper defines the two key concepts of political participation and political representation in the following way:

1. *political participation* allows for political agendas to take shape through a variety of ways of ‘taking part in politics’ – discussion and debate, lobbying and demonstrating in formal and informal ways;
2. *political representation* is a process by which the articulation of these political agendas is represented in institutions of decision-making in democratic societies through political parties and elected chambers of policy making such as parliaments;

The paper examines both these aspects of decision-making in order to assess why equal participation of women and men in decision-making continues to be a critical issue to address. The paper examines the underlying issues that influence the disparity between men and women in this area, assesses the various strategies to address this disparity and concludes by exploring how these strategies might be further strengthened. The paper explores the structural context within which these strategies take shape and assesses how these place constraints and provide opportunities for their successful implementation. It does so by examining the changing political and economic conditions under globalization. The paper also briefly explores how focusing on enhancing women’s political leadership capacity might provide them with greater agency to shape policy. In the concluding section, the paper assesses the challenges that women face in enhancing their presence in decision-making bodies and makes recommendations about how to overcome these challenges.

Women’s participation in decision-making bodies

Women’s participation in nongovernmental organizations, social movements and informal networks has been on the increase. This increase has been facilitated by participation in high profile UN conferences where both state and non-state actors outlined the status of women in individual countries, by increasing democratization of states since the democratic revolutions of the 1980s, by the increasing ease of communications and by the rise of state feminism (McBride Stetson and Mazur, 1999). For example, 1,761 organizations attended the Beijing NGO forum (Tinker, 1999:96) and the UN accredited women’s NGOs that attended the special session of the General Assembly “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century” numbered about 1023. Women have the right to vote in most countries today.

As the latest IPU figures show, women’s representation in national parliaments between 1995 and 2005 has shown progress in most countries but also some setbacks including in Norway and countries with economies in transition such as Hungary, China and the Russian Federation. Twenty-two countries out of 167¹ had setbacks in women’s representation, while ten remained static. Progress is noted where special measures

such as quotas have been introduced to enhance women’s participation or examples in Rwanda and reverses where quotas have been removed, such as in Russia. The threshold or ‘critical mass’ representation of thirty percent has been achieved in only a few countries. In the league table of elected presidents, queens and grand duchesses, governor-generals and prime ministers we see only fifteen women, far fewer than in the 1980s and 1990s (IPU, 2005). Although there is a slight improvement in the average numbers of women present in parliaments, their representation in executive bodies has actually stalled or fallen in the last decade.

Table 1: Women in Decision-making Bodies

Women	1995 (percent of total)	2005 (percent of total)
Heads of state or government	6.4	4.2
Presiding officers of parliaments	10.5	8.3
Parliamentarians	11.3	15.7
Ministerial positions	Data not available	14.3

Source: IPU, 2005. *Women in Politics*

The Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals

Since 1995 strong linkages have been made between women’s role in development and their participation in the political institutions of the state – influencing policy making in order to enhance the presence of women in the economy was an important linkage. (<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/decision.htm>) The link between economic and political empowerment is key to enhancing the equal participation of men and women in decision-making. The argument is that economic and political resources need to be accessible to both men and women in order to address inequalities between them. The ability of women to access the world of work, to take control over their incomes and assets would help them to access political arenas, which in turn would allow them to articulate their interests and mobilize to achieve these. This interdependence between economic and political empowerment is increasingly recognized by international organizations. As the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) Platform for Action under the critical area of concern on ‘Women in Power and Decision-making’ outlines, “The low proportion of women among economic and political decision makers at the local, national, regional and international levels reflects structural and attitudinal barriers that need to be addressed through positive measures”. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) also reflect this linkage by specifically focusing on women’s status, education of the girl child and bringing down maternal mortality rates. Goal 3 of the MGDs is “Promote gender equality and empower women”. This goal includes the following aspects:

- Ensuring gender equity and equality, and the empowerment of women depends in part on overcoming cultural, social and economic constraints that limit women's

access to education, as well as providing universal access to reproductive health education and services that allow them to protect their health, control their fertility and develop their full potential in all aspects of public and private life.

- Removing social and family barriers to women's equal social, economic and political participation, and combating violence against women are essential.
- Reproductive health and rights – such as the right to decide on the number, timing and spacing of children, free from coercion and violence – are central to women's empowerment and gender equality, and to women's enjoyment of other human rights, including to education, health and full participation in political, economic, social and cultural life. (<http://www.unfpa.org/icpd/implementing.htm>)

Gender equality is defined in the Millennium Development Goals Report (UN, 2005) as “...a human right...[which] means equal control over resources and equal representation in public and political life” (p.14). It further elaborates that “Having an equal voice in the decisions that affect their lives – from within the family to the loftiest realms of government – is a key element of women’s empowerment” (p.14). The connection between economic, social and political equality between women and men is thus clearly set out.

However, in addressing gender equality as a separate issue, MDGs do not fully incorporate a gender perspective in the other goals of development. As noted in the report of the Expert Group Meeting on ‘Achievements, gaps and challenges in linking the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals’, “[there is a] disjuncture between the challenges identified by the reviews of the Beijing Platform, which emphasized economic and cultural barriers and those raised in the MDG national reports, some of which had failed to include the goal on gender equality or to analyze gender issues in discussions of other goals... It was...critical that gender perspectives were fully integrated into the implementation and monitoring of all the other MDGs...” (DAW, 2005:11). One of the challenges that women’s movements, NGOs and international social institutions have is to address this disjuncture.

Empowerment as process and outcome

In order to assess the outcome of equal participation of women and men in decision-making it is important that we examine both the processes by which equal participation can be achieved, as well as whether increased participation empowers women to take decisions that affect their lives and the lives of others. Increased political participation needs to lead to enhanced political empowerment of women. Empowerment can be defined as processes by which women and men take control and ownership of their lives through an expansion of their choices. Empowerment is thus the process of acquiring the ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied. Empowerment can be seen both as a process, where it takes place in institutional, material and discursive contexts and as an outcome that can be measured against expected accomplishments such as numerical representation of women in political institutions. Empowerment includes both individual conscientization (*power within*) as

well as collective action, which can lead to politicized *power with others* to bring about change. Empowerment encapsulates three levels:

- *The individual* – through gaining skills, developing consciousness, participating in networks or making decisions.
- *The group* - people become empowered through collective action at the local, national and global levels.
- *The conceptual* - empowerment is both a process and an outcome. Struggles for empowerment cannot transcend power relations; they are enmeshed in relations of power at all levels of society.

Struggles for greater participation in the world of work, in political and cultural life and crucially, in decision-making bodies are critical for women's empowerment. (Kabeer, 1999; Parpart, Rai and Staudt, 2003). Box 1 provides an illustrative example of how political participation and representation results in women feeling empowered as citizens and as leaders. As they grow into their leadership roles, women show all three aspects of empowerment:

1. *Conscientization or gender awareness* – do women who participate in social movements and in representative bodies show awareness of gender specific oppression? Are they sensitive to the differences among women as well as women and men when they articulate the 'interests of women'?
2. *Self-esteem and self-confidence* – this is important for measuring leadership success at an individual level, and a belief in the relevance of women as a group challenging patriarchal norms and mores of society.
3. *Agency* – does an awareness of structural constraints of society on women's empowerment result in an acceptance of those constraints, or do conscientization and self-esteem provide the internal resources to challenge these constraints? At the same time, do women develop an awareness of the importance of structural impediments to equality and learn how to negotiate these?

Box 1: Leadership and Decision-making

“Women had always thought that public decision-making was only for men. We believed that men know better and will manage the society's affairs properly. But men are after all human beings like us and they differ in their capabilities, wisdom, intelligence etc. just as women. We learned this the hard way. When we fled the war and returned to a devastated country, women took a lion's share in picking up the pieces and helping their families and communities to survive. If we could do that, we can also make decisions for the society in general. In fact, I feel that women can do better since they are free from the addiction of 'qat' chewing, which is plaguing our society.”

Assessment of Potential Women Leaders in Somaliland, Somaliland Women's Research and Action Group, Institute for Practical Research and Training

Finally, while most work on empowerment has taken place in the context of local development, we also need to be aware of the new challenges for the concept of empowerment that are emerging with global organization of production and the huge financial flows of capital across the globe. The interrelated world system today requires empowerment strategies that will link various struggles in the different arenas that are outlined below: political participation, political representation and political leadership.

II. Political Participation and Decision-making

This section assesses the major issues in the study of equal participation of women and men, the arguments for claims of equality between them and women's mobilizing strategies at various levels. It concludes by suggesting that globalization is changing the terms of political participation and creating new possibilities of mobilization for women.

Major Issues in the study of equal participation in decision-making processes

Theoretically, political participation has a long genealogy. Like most concepts that are used today, it is an unfolding concept. From direct participation of the Greek city-states to the Schumpeterian¹ rejection of that model, the concept has been central to our conversations about democracy. There are two broad positions on political participation:

- *Participation is good in itself* – it creates the stake people have in society; it legitimises decisions that are taken in the name of people in society; it allows individuals to relate to each other as participants in a common cause; it educates in a civic culture which is crucial for the stability of the polity. Participatory politics allows for claims to be made against the state – freedom of speech, movement, association, the body of human rights today could be said to have evolved in response to the needs of participatory politics. From Rousseau to Marx, there is a strain of thought that focuses on participation as a marker of a good and unalienated society, in which citizens have control over not only their representatives, but also on the political agendas set by the state and its institutions.
- *Participation is destabilising* – from Socrates to Huntington (1968) participation has been regarded as problematic. It brings into public discourse voices that are less commonly heard – racism, sexism and ethnic cleansing have all been articulated in the public sphere and legitimised through the language of participation and of fundamental rights of speech, movement and association. Participation needs to be framed within representative institutions where the voice of Reason can be better heard.

¹ Joseph Schumpeter was an influential democratic theorist who, in his book, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (1942), argued that outcomes were not necessarily good just because they were reached democratically. Democracy should therefore be evaluated only as a method whereby leaders acquire the power to give orders after a competitive struggle for votes.

Historically, participation thus has been a language of both inclusion and exclusion; of a vibrant civil society as well as of a dysfunctional politics. In current times, especially in the post-Cold War global society, political participation is seen in positive terms. There has been a proliferation of both social movements and civic organizations which have paralleled a relative decline of interest in traditional modes of participation through political parties.

The spectrum of activities that count as political participation is wide and therefore not easy to measure. A recent study of 'Gender and political participation' by the UK Electoral Commission, for example, identifies four measures of political participation:

- *Voting*
- *Campaign-oriented*, which include contacting a politician, donating money to a political party, working for a party, being a party member and even wearing a campaign badge.
- *Civic-oriented*, which includes membership of church group, environmental, educational, trade union, social, consumer, professional group.
- *Cause-oriented*, which includes signing petitions, product boycotts and promotion on grounds of political judgement, participating in demonstrations and protests both legal and illegal. (2004:16)

In three of the four categories there is a wide variety of actions that can be classified as 'political participation'. The one unifying factor is the fact that all actions take place in the public sphere as opposed to the private, or involve (writing a cheque for a campaign or a political party) engaging with a public organisation or institution.

An historical review of the literature indicates that the struggles for greater participation of women in politics in the twentieth century emerged in different contexts. In Europe and America the focus was on women's suffrage; in Russia and China women joined revolutionary movements which led to the establishment of state socialism; and in many colonial countries it was the nationalist struggles that attracted women into politics.

Arguments for claims for equality between women and men

In the post Second World War world, both the presence of women in political institutions and the discourse of freedom are important. This underlined the lack of political freedoms that became visible under the state socialist regimes. Equality and freedom went hand in hand in the liberal discourse of politics and the framework of rights underwrote both. At the state level, there was a constitutional emphasis on fundamental rights available to all citizens, and at the international level by the adoption of two UN documents – the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and CEDAW. Article 21 of the Universal Declaration recognizes the right of every person to take part in the government of his or her country. The CEDAW convention also reflects this in Articles 7 and 8, whereby state parties agree to take all appropriate measures to end the discrimination against women and to remove the barriers to their participation in decision-making processes with temporary special measures to do so under Article 4.

These instruments were the result of struggles of peoples for equal rights vis-a-vis the state as well between groups. These struggles were subsequently supported by the UN system through the various world conferences on the status of women: Mexico - 1975, the World Decade for Women (1976-85), Copenhagen – 1980, Nairobi - 1985 and Beijing - 1995, where the issue of women's participation in decision-making bodies was reiterated in the Platform for Action. All these conferences and initiatives highlighted, the participation of women in political institutions. This period of thirty years also marked a shift in the understanding of issues of equality between men and women. Instead of wanting to integrate women into the already existing institutions and processes of power, the emphasis shifted to addressing gendered relations in these institutions and processes.

The literature on gender equality has largely confirmed the importance of participatory politics and practice at different levels – local, national, as well as global. It is through their participation in these movements that women have been able to stake a claim to citizenship and equal representation in political life and institutions. However, while reflecting upon the exclusionary practices of states and organizations, scholars have examined how participation in political movements also reflects the cleavages of class, caste, religion and ethnicity - the differences among women as well as women and men are important in shaping the future agendas for struggles.

Women's political participation in these movements has highlighted one of the most important anomalies for democratic practice - the distinction made between the public and the private spheres. In the context of mainstreaming gender perspectives into political movements, women have been characterized in motherhood terms - they have been referred to as the reproducers of nations and ethnicities, as bearers of cultural norms as makers of traditions, of embodying the past and future of nations. Women's participation has often legitimized movements without necessarily resulting in their political visibility or representative parity. Women's groups have been in the forefront of challenging the separation between the public and the private. For example, in the democratization movements against the military dictatorship, the Chilean women called for democracy in the home as well as in politics. However, these struggles have not always been successful. Agenda setting for political movements has reflected this dichotomous thinking. Political priorities have been fashioned in many cases to accommodate the dominant power relations, and in others to postpone the struggles against them (Rai, 1996 and 2002; Helie-Lucas 1991). Women's position and role within the family and presence in the public sphere have continued to be contentious issues in many contexts. Recognizing this tension between the public and the private, CEDAW emphasizes that discrimination against women needs to be eliminated not only in the public but also the private sphere. "The convention obliges State parties to eliminate discrimination against women not only by public actors but also by individuals, organizations and enterprises that are not agents of the state" (Hannan, 2005).

Women's Mobilization Strategies

Mobilization of women into political life is a key strategy for increasing the number of women in decision-making processes and institutions. Political mobilization allows for interests to be articulated, meanings to be challenged and refashioned and claims to be

made against the state and governance institutions. Women have participated in political movements as well as institutions and bodies related to government, the civil service, police and the judiciary.

Thus women's engagement can be reviewed in three different fields:

- *participation in political institutions* - women have engaged with political institutions by participating in bureaucracies, policy-making bodies and representative organizations (Miller and Razavi, 1998; McBride Stetson and Mazur, 1995; Rai, 2003). In strategizing for this, scholars and activists have argued for quotas for women in political institutions in order to make women more visible and audible in political processes.
- *Participation in the informal and formal sectors* and political spaces – women's movements, human rights groups, functional lobbying groups such as the Self-employed Women's Association (SEWA) and Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO). These groups have lobbied governance institutions at all levels from the outside. The focus has been both the protection of their members as well as lobbying for shifts in state policy.
- *political and knowledge networks* - academic and research groups and bodies that feed into policy institutions as well as debates. These are networks that have outlined and promoted equality discourses in different contexts and have worked for these to be translated or gender mainstreamed into policy. For example, gender budget groups in many countries have done useful work in pointing out the male bias against working women in economic accounting and the impact of this bias on economic policy making and on the lives of both men and women (Elson, 2004).

Women's movements have been grappling with the issue of the changing role of the state. While they have joined formal state institutions in order influence policy, argue for and encourage gender mainstreaming across different policy arenas, they have also been aware of the need to engage with regional, sub-regional and international governance bodies. As the sites of production and reproduction shift within states, as new regimes of production make for different forms of work - part-time, flexible, concentrated in EPZs, migratory - women are organizing differently. While the state continues to be a central focus of women's mobilization on various issues, supra-territorial strategies are being increasingly employed in order to either counter the state, to delegitimize its position, or to mobilize global discursive regimes in their interests. So, women's groups have participated in ethical trading initiatives (Hale, 2004), as well as challenged the erosion of welfare provision and pressed for gender sensitive economic policies at the global as well as the local level (O'Brien et al., 2000). Women's knowledge networks work both inside and outside the government; they have engaged in discussions with Treasury Departments, statistical bureaus as well women's groups to utilize their expertise to enhance the visibility of women's work.

An assessment of these mobilizational strategies is a complex task, which requires a multi-level analysis including discursive, socio-economic and cultural. The assessment

also needs to reflect upon the challenges and supports at different levels of governance – supra-national, national and local.

Participation is generally assumed to be most effective at the local level. So much so, that in some countries popular movements have struggled to institutionalize local level political participation through legislation on the premise that development policy outcomes are sub-optimal when not supported by broad based participation from the social groups targeted by the policy (Robinson, 1998; Blair 2000). In Bolivia, for example, a Law of Popular Participation became effective in 1994 and in India, under the 73rd and 74th Amendments the village level governance institutions (*panchayats*) were given greater powers and resources, and a quota of 33 per cent was secured for women's representation on these re-invigorated institutions. The increasing profile of NGO activity has also brought the local political space into focus; the most effective NGOs work at the local levels. There is the assumption, that women's participation in decision-making needs to start from the local level and go up to the national and supranational levels. This emphasis on the local has been for several reasons. First, the emphasis on the local allows a critique of nationalist agendas of political elites who are otherwise focused on big projects of industrialization. These projects were also largely based on the mobilization of men's labour in factories and infrastructural projects of the state such as road and railway construction. Second, the idea of the local implies a sensitivity to the context of people's lives. "Related to the theme of context or locale is the idea of distance which also has social, emotional or geographical dimensions...between authors and subject...[between] First Nation or Diaspora women" (Marchand and Parpart, 1995:77). As women are more rooted in the local space because of lack of access to public spaces, cultural and social constraints, an emphasis on local politics provides an increased possibility of women's participation in politics, which challenges authoritarianism by promoting decentralization and autonomy. In this view, local is democratic, inclusive, and the site for feasible politics of resistance to both global and national nodes of power. Third, a focus on the local allows people to participate in the economic and political life of their community: "Thousands of small grassroots groups are realizing that there is no need to 'think big' in order to begin releasing themselves from the clutches of the monopolistic...economy; that they can free themselves in the same voluntary ways as they entered it" (Esteva and Prakash, 1997:280). Micro-credit schemes for women rely on local networks, responsibilities and loyalties. Finally, an emphasis on the local also challenges the dominant individual and market based discourse of politics: "In most Latin American, Asian or African villages, collective or communal rights have clear priority over *personal* or *individual* rights; legitimate hierarchies (of the elders, for example) have primacy over equality ...; and concrete customs, rather than abstract universalizable laws, support communal bonds and organize social support." (Esteva and Prakash, 1997:282; see also Sachs, 1997: 290). Local politics then becomes the first training ground for women who wish to join a wider public life.

However, local politics also poses its own challenges for women. For most women living in poor countries, the local is the village in which they live. As Box 2 illustrates, for women the village is not necessarily a space of freedom or security. The levels of culturally validated oppressions, exclusions, violations and surveillance that women experience in villages are extremely high. Functioning as political activists in this space

presents challenges. The local is as fractured a space as the national or the global. It has its own hierarchy of power in operation, with the resources to defend existing relations of power, and to suppress dissent. It is also therefore the space where democratic struggles need to be organized; it is not in itself a means of democratizing life.

Box 2: The Women's Development Programme: A case study in local politics

The WDP was launched in 1984 in six districts of Rajasthan, with the assistance of UNICEF. The aims included creating "a new sense of worth among poor rural women and facilitating their awareness to develop strategies regarding social and development issues" The agents of change in this scheme were the *sathin*, (the feminine form of the word friend) at the village level, and the *pracheta* (secular preacher) at the district level... The sathin was envisaged as a worker with a difference: a catalyst of women's empowerment at the grassroots (Chakravarty, 1999:1-2). Training of the *sathin* was thus an important element of the programme. During the training sessions, the *sathins* from various villages and districts met in 1986 and identified land and health as the two areas that most needed to be addressed by WDP. The local government, however, focused only on the needs of the family planning programme and linked famine relief to this, creating a powerful tension for women in the rural areas. The local government officials, such as the Block Development Officer, even sent letters to the husbands of the *sathins* instructing them to "bring their wives to their senses" or accept the consequences. The tensions resulting from this fracturing of the WDP came to a head with the gruesome gang rape of one *sathin* - Bhanwari Devi - in 1992, and the acquittal of the rapists by the High Court on the grounds that "an upper caste man would not disregard caste,, differences to rape a low caste woman." (ibid. :16) In the last few years, the *sathin* programme has been bureaucratized, as well as starved of funds.
(Source: Chakravarty, 1999 and Rai, 2002)

An examination of the role of women's movements also shows some tensions among women, women's movements and groups. First, there are tensions around *vocabulary of participation*. In Beijing, for example, there were many women's groups who did not accept feminism as a frame for their politics. They felt that feminism is a Western ideology that does not suit their specific contexts and indeed which, if adopted as a framework for political participation can alienate people in their countries. These arguments take place in most Southern countries with different outcomes (Jayawardena, 1989; Basu, 1995). Second, tensions arise when some women's groups choose to *engage with supra-state institutions*, while others feel that the process of 'consultation' with major economic institutions or representatives can be alienating because of the power imbalances between institutions and women's groups. (Cohen, 2000). Lobbying agenda-setting institutions, such as the World Bank, means dealing with policy makers who are not necessarily convinced of the agendas of the women's NGOs, speak a language of expertise that is inaccessible to the activist women, and therefore means making time and expending energy for learning the tools of trade in specific policy arenas. Given that most NGOs work across sectors, time and energy are at a premium for most women activists. Also, funding of NGOs by economic and political institutions of power (the state, the World Bank etc.) involves the risk of creating a clientelist relations, where

political legitimacy can be bought by financing particular NGOs (Chiriboga, 2002). This in turn can fragment national and international alliances between movements, groups and NGOs. Third, the *differential resourcing of NGOs* and questions of access thus become important issues of power difference among the NGOs, between women's movements North and South, of the importance of geographical location, and also of delays in the spread of communication technologies to marginalised social movements" (O'Brien et.al, :65). For example, of the 1023 women's NGOs registered with the UN, 240 are from one country – the United States. The political costs of engaging with state and multilateral organisations - especially those associated with the enforcing of macro-economic policy decisions - is differentially felt by women's NGOs. Women in the South are often faced with abuse for engaging with 'foreign' organizations.

Globalization and the changing terms of political participation

Globalization is making an increasing impact on the debates and movements for enhancing women's presence in supra-state institutions. There has been much discussion about what the shift from government to global governance signify, and what have been the ramifications of this shift for political participation. There has been speculation about whether the terms of political participation are shifting due to the changing relations between state and supra-state institutions. Questions have been asked about how to participate in supra-territorial institutions when national institutions have proven to be so distant and unaccountable to politically marginal groups. On the one hand it is suggested that technological advances that have 'networked' women globally opened up new avenues of participation, and on the other there the argument has been made that these reinforce the economic and political gap between the rich and the poor. The rise of religious fundamentalist movements has been seen as a particular form of political participation in response to an experience of fragmentation that accompanies globalization by some and as manifestations of sectarian politics by others.

Meyer and Prugl have mapped three arenas of participation by women at the global level. First, women have become involved in *institutional structures* in which they have found or carved out niches for themselves and their interests as women and therefore "introduce into global governance women-centred ways of framing issues..." (1999:4-5; Stienstra, 2000; Liebowitz, 2002). Gender mainstreaming processes have seen feminist bureaucrats and gender policy advocates join state and global governance structures. (Sawer, 2003; Staudt, 2003; Miller and Razavi, 1998). The outcomes of these engagements have varied greatly depending upon the level of bureaucratic hierarchy at which feminists are able to operate, the political culture of the site of governance, the dominant framework of analyses used by organisations to fashion policy, the resources that gender work has been able to attract – both financial and political capital – as well as the support that feminists within organisations have been able to depend upon from social movements engaged in advancing women's strategic interests. Such critical politics leads to "exploring the purposive, goal-oriented...social-movement strategies to influence the United Nations..." and Bretton Woods institutions (p. 5; also see O'Brien et.al., 2000).

Second, women have *mobilized to influence agendas* internationally in response to UN conferences. These, in turn, have been catalysts for women's organisations to mobilise in the interests of their constituents, as well as to develop conceptual tools to critically engage with the discourses of growth-led development emanating from Bretton Woods institutions. NGOs have mounted campaigns, such as 'Women Take on the World Trade Organisation' campaign by Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO). In the context of the regional free trade agreements, such as NAFTA, "Transnational NGO activism can actually be seen as contributing to or expanding the resources a national political movement has at its disposal," (Liebowitz, 2002: 175) thus linking the various levels of organisations and sites of resistance. Feminist and women's groups have engaged with institutions at all these levels through conventional and virtual forms of political engagement and developed insights from these engagements (Eisenstein, 1998, also Youngs, 2001).

Finally, women's groups and movements have promoted gender politics in the context of global governance through "contestations of rules and discursive practices in different issue areas" (Meyer and Prugl, 1999:5). They have done so by challenging the dominant modes of thinking, speaking and accounting for women's participation, both in the political arena as well as in the world of work. For example, they have challenged the economic concept of production (or the exchange economy) by arguing that social reproduction (or the care economy) should be accounted for at all levels of governance, particularly through the mechanisms such as the UN Statistical National Accounting (SNA) systems (Waring, 1989, Elson, 1995, Bakker and Gill, 2003, Peterson, 2003, Hoskyns and Rai, 2005);

Thus, the globalization of participation through social movements, institutional participation and lobbying through knowledge networks is regarded by many as the dynamic, creative and critical response to the forces of economic convergence.

II. Political Representation

Political representation has been defined as 'one person acting for another'. In the words of Hannah Pitkin, political representation "means acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them." In other words, representation also involves accountability by the representatives towards the represented. In the political context it is recognized as a process by which the political agenda articulated through the processes of participation in political life is represented in institutions of decision-making, in democratic societies through political parties and elected chambers of policy making such as parliaments. Who represents whom, then becomes a core political question in democratic societies.

Major Issues in the study of equal participation in representative institutions

Political representation too has a long history as a concept in the art and science of politics. Representation rather than participation has been the favoured mode of

governance for most influential theorists because it allows for an orderly, measured and regulated process of politics to take shape. The unpredictability of passion so often associated with participatory politics is removed in favour of reasoned argument. Arguably, political participation addresses the transformation of policies, of institutional culture as well as political norms. However, scholars have pointed out that changes to the electoral system is more realistic goal towards gender equality in politics than changing a society's cultural norms (Matland, 2002). This view is validated by when we note that while diverse in approach, political context and ideology, the issue of women's participation in politics has largely translated in numerical terms into state policy as well as into the work of international bodies such as the United Nations. The focus for both has remained increasing the number of women in representative political bodies. Two reasons can be advanced for this focus on numerical representation:

- First, the greater presence of women in this context signified greater representativeness of these institutions. The emphasis on liberal institutionalism after the Second World War meant that the representativeness of institutions became an important marker of the success of democratic regimes.
- Second, it was assumed that greater representation of women in political institutions would provide decision-making bodies with articulated interests of women, which will then result in women friendly policies. The measurability of women's presence then became a crucial part of discursive as well as institutional strategies to promote equality between men and women in politics.

“The political representation of a group can be understood as the presence of members of the group in the formal institutions of politics...[who as] representatives act for the groups they represent” (Lovenduski, 2005:14). For women in public political institutions as they currently function, this understanding of representation poses multiple questions:

- *Who do they represent?* Their constituents are obviously both men and women, but they need to decide whether they also take upon themselves (or not) the added burden of ‘representing the interests of women’.
- *How do they negotiate their memberships of political parties, women's movements and representative institutions?* Women members of representative bodies have to reconcile their membership of a political party with, if not membership of then sympathy with women's movements. Without such sympathy they would not be any different to men in political institutions. The question of presence of women then is not a sufficient question.
- *How do they negotiate the differences among women?* How are the differences of socio-economic positions, religion, sexuality and ethnicity reflected in the work of women representatives?
- *How do the general social position of women in society effect their participation in the political process?*

While the levels of representation of women in political institutions clearly show disparities between men and women in the area of representation in formal political institutions a closer examination is needed to show how variations in systems of voting, cultural histories and economic status influence the participation of women in

representative politics. While the Rwanda/Nordic and Arab states define the two poles of women's participation in political institutions, other regions do not show huge variations despite very different economic, social and political systems.

Arguments for claims for equality between women and men

In representative politics, the issue of women's presence in political institutions has taken precedence. There are two approaches to representative presence –

- the *representation of ideas*, which holds that the elected representative does not have to be of particular groups in order to represent the interest of all constituents and
- *social representation*, which emphasizes that the presence of varied groups of citizens in legislative and executive bodies is important to ensure the representation of varied interest groups in society.

While the first position is a challenge to thinking about the relationship between the recognition of specific identities and the representation of interests, the latter position is a challenge to when assessing the impact of historical exclusion of specific minorities on the nature of politics itself. These issues have defined the nature of the quota debate. On the one hand, women's under-representation in political institutions seemed to delegitimize the representativeness of these institutions themselves, while on the other, an insistence on women representing women's interests also did not seem satisfactory. Quotas for women seemed to be burdened with both an aspect of recognition of women's identities as well as that of redistribution of political resources. More positively, quotas have the potential to bring together the politics of ideas and that of presence. Thus, quotas can be seen both as factors that help in increasing women's representation and also as mechanisms that achieve this outcome.

Dahlerup and Freidenvall (2003:3) outline three arguments in favour of women's equal participation in formal politics, which need to be supported by quotas:

1. The justice argument – women are half the population and therefore have the right to be represented as such.
2. The experience argument – women's experiences are different from men and need to be represented in discussion that result in policy-making and implementation. Indeed, because of these different experiences, women 'do politics' differently from men.
3. The interest argument – the interests of men and women are different and even conflictual and therefore women are needed in representative institutions to articulate the interests of women

Two further arguments that are made to support quotas are:

4. The critical mass argument – quotas allow women to participate in public life in sufficient numbers, which allows for the possibility for them to make alliances,

and work together across party lines. . Women stay on longer in political life if they have support of each other.

5. The symbolic argument - women are attracted to political life if they have role models in that sphere.

The arguments against quotas are the following
1. Justice argument – special provisions for one group deny justice to the other
2. Meritocracy argument – the best person for the post should represent the interest of all rather than someone who cannot justify holding down a position other than on grounds of social representation.

Despite the strength of these oppositional arguments, quotas are increasingly been used to ‘fast track’ marginalized groups into political institutions.

Strategies to address the disparity between men and women

Quotas straddle the divide between the representation of ideas and social representation. They have become a powerful instrument for increasing the representation of women in public institutions. “The core idea behind this system is to recruit women into political positions and to ensure that women are not isolated in political life”

(<http://www.quotaproject.org/aboutQuotas.cfm>). Quotas have been introduced as a result of many different factors – national debates about the ways in which marginalised groups can be compensated for historical exclusions from public life; external pressures from global social institutions such as the UN and women’s movements, as well as the pressure from national women’s groups and the shifting position of party and factional groups within national politics. Quotas have been either measures that consolidate the success of women’s movements through the increased representation of women in elected bodies, (Dahlerup, 1988) or are a ‘fast track to equal political representation for women’ (Dahlerup and Freidenvall, 2003).

There are different types of quotas systems. The most common are the following:

- Constitutional Quota for National Parliament, which are quota provisions that are mandated in the constitution of the country. Examples are Burkina Faso, Nepal, the Philippines and Uganda;
- Election Law Quota or Regulation for National Parliament, which are quotas that are provided for in the national legislation or regulations of the country. Some countries where legislative quotas are used are Belgium, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Sudan; several Latin American countries also use these quotas.
- Political Party Quota for Electoral Candidates, which are rules or targets set by political parties to include a certain percentage of women as election candidates. The ANC in South Africa sets such quotas.
(<http://www.quotaproject.org/aboutQuotas.cfm>).

Political parties are crucial to increasing the participation of women in public life. In discussing obstacles to feminizing politics, Joni Lovenduski has included institutional sexism of political parties as an important factor. This is because “Parties are crucial

gatekeepers to government office, one of the main channels of political mobilization in a society and a major source of public policy... Voters express party preferences; hence [male domination of politics] is the result of internal party decisions” (2005:57). Nelson and Chaudhary have conducted research in forty-three countries on women in politics and have concluded that women are more successful in contexts where the party system has received a major electoral setback or in the context of conflict. The recovery of parties’ strength in the political system often leads to the erosion of women’s participation in institutional politics as ‘business as usual’, ie. male dominance of the political system is resumed (1994). Transitional political system then provide us with unique opportunities to make interventions in formalising special measures within both state and party structures in order to improve the presence of women in politics. For example in South Africa, both the constitution of the state and that of the African National Congress party have enshrined quotas for women. The attention that women members paid to this issue ensured that the ANC could not overlook its female constituency and membership.

While party ideologies are important to the way in which individual women fare in politics, they are not a predictable measure of the outcome. For example, while as a left-wing party, the Labour Party in the UK might be expected to support some special measures to enhance women’s participation in representative politics such as all women’s lists it is surprising to note that the right-wing Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) in India has supported quota measures for the national parliament and also at the level of party organizations. The two ideologies address women’s equality in different ways – as an issue of equality between men and women for Labour, and as a measure of the special role that women can play in supporting traditional Hindu way of life (Hindutva) for the BJP. Most political parties in the world do not apply any quota system at all. Lovenduski (1995) argues that it is not that people don’t want to vote for women that keeps political parties from including them in party candidate lists, but an inherent sexism that is institutionalized and supported through the processes through which recruitment and selection of women candidates takes place. As Box 3 illustrates, this poses greater problems for women to access the political system posing gender specific hurdles in their way. Changes to the ethos of political parties are therefore an important part of the strategies to increase women’s presence in representative politics.

Box 3: Candidate Selection by political parties in the UK

"I think my advice for women would be that if you are going to go for a seat, then make sure you were born there, bred there and lived there all your life.

It's not as easy for women to just up and move everything whereas a lot of men in the party had seen that the selection was going to happen and they moved to the constituency six months before the selection. It's not so easy to do if you're a woman, you're married and you have a family.

The reason they give you is that they think 'that's the candidate [the successful candidate] who the wider electorate, not the party members'... are going to choose because they're local.

Source: Joni Lovenduski, 2005, *Feminizing Politics*, p. 74

Gender Mainstreaming as a Cross-cutting Strategy

Gender mainstreaming has become the key framework for operationalizing gender equality in decision-making bodies. Gender mainstreaming was defined in the ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions (E/1997/100) "as the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action including legislation, policies, and programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and equality is not perpetuated." National, regional as well as supra-state governance organizations are now using this framework to expand the role of women in public life, decision-making in the hope that through this process different policy outcomes that promote gender equality will be put in place.

Gender mainstreaming can work when policy makers and implementers are made aware of the key gender issues and work towards addressing these in order to promote equality between women and men in decision-making. In order to mainstream this approach in decision-making, different gender training strategies have evolved (Staudt, 2003:52):

- the *Gender Roles Framework*, where trainees learn about the division of labor, assets, and returns for effective projects;
- the *Triple Roles Framework*, also associated with the Gender Planning approach, where trainees learn about the productive, reproductive, and community demands on women's time and labour burdens and strategies to address these; .
- *Social Relations Framework*, where trainees learn about the power relations between men and women in the context of other inequalities such as class and race.

"A gender mainstreaming policy requires that various staff--from top through bottom and in all divisions, be aware and/or trained toward awareness of how each policy and

operational decision will benefit and burden different groups of women and men. No action is free of gender implications, for in all societies the structure of gender relations creates different opportunity, experience, and benefit” (Staudt, 2003:56). Without such training women’s participation in decision-making cannot be effective. This approach also underscores the fact that both men and women have to take responsibility of working with each other, to challenge gender biases and to make institutions political spaces where both feel comfortable working. Finally, gender mainstreaming is a strategy through which both men and women in decision-making can make better decisions – decisions that are sensitive to the gendered nature of policies and their outcomes.

Assessing the gaps and challenges

Process and outcome, individual experience and systemic issues influence the implementation of quotas. The age, education, socio-economic status and political background of the elected women have a crucial effect on their access to both state and community resources needed for performing their roles as representatives in local government. The lack of previous political experience as well as low level of education and socio-economic status underlines the need for training and capacity-building among the elected women. In Bangladesh, for example, a 2002 study by Democracywatch (2002) showed that the elected members had received a lot of training from different NGOs but also that they wanted and needed more training. The study also showed that, effective training would mean including both men and women as well as on the nature of training itself. So far most of the training programmes have focused on rules and regulations of the local government but according to Raman the training also has to focus on problem-solving methodologies so that women can be trained for self-government (2002).

Assessing the impact that the introduction of quotas might or might not have had is difficult. One clear measurement would be the increase in the number of women in political institutions after the introduction of quotas. While there is some improvement in the numbers of women in representative institutions, the progress is very slow and in most countries the proportion of women representatives to that of women’s population or to that of male membership remains very low. There is also evidence that we are moving from viewing quotas as a strategy for consolidating the gains made by women in political life, to promoting quotas as a means of ‘fast tracking’ women into public life (Dahlerup and Freidenvall, 2003). This shift suggests that women’s descriptive or numerical representation is being given great weight rather than their substantive representation.

Together with assessing whether quotas have increased the number of women in public life, a more complex issue might be whether the increased representation of women in these institutions has increased their active participation in the work of these bodies. Here there is a need for specific indicators to examine the effectiveness of quotas. These could include attendance data, data about the number of times women speak in meetings, whether or not women have introduced and succeeded in getting through policy initiatives, levels of training, travel and networking with other women involved in representative politics, mentoring, etc. A further level of complexity might arise with the examination of the context of women’s participation – levels of education, health and cultural and economic position of women, which has crucial effect on their access to both

state and community resources needed for performing their roles as representatives in political institutions. Finally, there is the need to factor in availability, reliability and coherence of data available, which in many cases are scarce.

An assessment of successful strategies for increased participation and representation of women raises complex issues. On the one hand, scholars such as Jane Mansbridge have noted that descriptive (numerical) representation does enhance substantive representation (1999). Therefore, increasing the number of women through establishing quotas would necessarily lead to women's interests being better represented. On the other, Hannah Pitkin has distinguished between symbolic and substantive representation to indicate that increased numerical representation of a group does not necessarily lead to those elected representatives 'acting in the interest' of that group. (1967). Many studies show that women MPs for example, do not necessarily pursue women's interests in parliament (Rai, 1997 and 2003). Studies have also shown that women MPs feel unable to pursue women's interests because they are stereotyped by their colleagues as 'women's MPs'. This reduces their profile within the political parties, stymies their advancement within party structures and also reduces their effectiveness as they are seen to be the predictable voices of 'women's interests' (Liddle, 2000; Childs, 2003). However, as Lovenduski concludes 'Contemporary feminists argue that the very presence of a woman in a legislature is important for changing its culture and priorities and especially for increasing its range of concerns' (2005:18).

Finally, there is a need to assess whether an enhanced presence of women in representative institutions allows them to work a) across party lines with other women and b) with men within their own party to effect policy outcomes that will bring about equality between women and men. The evidence on both is mixed.

The conditions under which women are best able to cross party boundaries are:

- *Issue based consensus* – where a broad coalition of women's groups and NGOs and political parties agree on a specific issue. One example would be the enhancement of women's presence in political institutions. In India, for example, the quota for women in local government was provided for under the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Indian Constitution without much opposition. While the quota at the national level is encountering opposition from some key political parties and leaders, there is still a broad coalition among women MPs and party members arguing for the quota to enhance women's presence in parliament (Manushi, 96, www.indiatogether.org/manushi/issue_96/intvus.htm). Such issue based consensus also allows for women and men to work together.
- *Party system* – where the party system works through coalitions there is a greater opportunity for women to cross party lines on specific issues. Though parties tend to police their political boundaries in coalitions they have to work together. In this context, we find that a first past the post, winner takes all, adversarial party system militates against cross-party working. Proportional representation not only sees more women in political institutions, it also allows for better opportunities for cross-party work. Non-party systems at the local levels of governance also have this advantage.

- *Political contexts* – where transitional polities allow for political space to organize across party lines. These periods of transition are necessarily limited, and so the ability of women to make an impact on constitution and policy making is key to taking advantage of these windows of opportunities. The case of South Africa is an important example.
- *Critical Mass* – where women have a critical mass within representative and party institutions, they are better placed to cross party boundaries. Sheer numbers in this sense become a qualitative resource for women, as their dependence on male colleagues for support is reduced. From challenging old ways of doing politics, to restructuring the working week (as has happened in the UK parliament), women are able to form cross party alliances in the security that they can depend on a sizeable number of women to achieve their objectives.
- *Leadership positions* – where women are in leadership positions within political parties they have the potential to initiate changes, especially where there is a critical mass of women to support them. However, without such critical mass women leaders have found it difficult, as noted above, to take up women’s issues. Women leaders need to be convinced of the need for equality between women and men as well as the strategies for achieving this. In South Africa, for example, women’s groups supported by the deputy president Mlambo-Ngcuka, have called for a gender programme to be “prepared for member of the South African cabinet” in order that “women and men work together” (www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=30591).

While scholars have written a great deal about women’s participation in formal and informal politics, at the local, national and global levels, there is a dearth of material on women’s leadership. And yet this is a concept that cuts across both participation and representation.

IV. Political Leadership

Political leadership cuts across both political participation and political representation by focusing the attention on the processes by which individual political actors can be influential in shaping political agendas, taking the lead in articulating these and participating in their translation into policy. The study of political leadership has to be made at different levels. Local women elected to village councils can be counted as leaders in their communities, just as the prime minister of a country, the leader of a national movement or of a public organization. Political leadership is relational – it places people in relations to others inside and outside movements, institutions and organizations simultaneously and therefore requires different skills of communication, networking and leading in different contexts and in different ways.

Leadership is a process by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective and directs an organization in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent. This concept is different from exercising *power over* others to accomplish tasks. Leadership is based upon authority, which can be both institutional (by virtue of the position that one

occupies) or normative (because of one's abilities to lead). Innovation and trust are needed for leadership as well as a democratic practice of listening to others. These qualities are not inherent in leaders, they have to be learned. A focus on learning to lead takes the focus away from traditional masculine notions of leadership, which were often associated with Max Weber's outlining of charismatic authority as opposed to judicial/legal authority invested in individual leaders. Heroic models of leadership thus need to be questioned as *the* models of leadership if women's more associational style is to be accommodated in the study of leadership qualities.

Leadership qualities involve imagination, creativity, strategic thinking and an ability to negotiate and form alliances and to inspire others to share the leader's vision for change. For example, Ela Bhatt founded 'SEWA', Self Employed Women's Association) South Asia's first labor and trade union for Women. The presumption here was to challenge both the concept of work - - the self employed were workers - as well as of unionization of workers. She was able to see how a trade union might provide a platform as well as a protective framework for those women whose contribution to the national economy are not counted and who without such unionization did not have an organizational base from which to fight for their rights. There is a judicial and policy basis to women's leadership - the quota for women in local government in India stipulates that not only membership but leadership of gram panchayats would be covered by this quota.

Finally, leadership has to be *accountable* to be effective. Accountability can be defined as the requirement for representatives and representative organizations to answer for the exercise of their powers, listen to and act upon criticism or requirements made of them where appropriate and accept (some) responsibility for failure, incompetence, or deceit. . Accountability has three bases, all of which have particular significance for women's leadership:

- *Normative* - that women bring a different style of politics to the public sphere. In this context the accountability of leaders could be discussed in terms of access that women's movements have to them and how carefully and openly communication between the two is carried out.
- *Pragmatic* - leaders engage in dialogue with women's groups because without them they lose a strong support base that they could utilise in their negotiations with party or state bosses.
- *Efficiency* - the support of women's movements and groups increases the legitimacy of leaders, which allows them to be more effective in agenda setting discussions as well as in securing support for special measures for enhancing women's presence in public life.

Leadership in decision-making bodies has largely remained in the hands of men. Where women have become leaders, they have had to negotiate a heavily patriarchal domain, which has meant that they have often been reluctant to take up the cause of women's rights.

The *sources* of women's leadership positions have often been regarded as familial- Mrs. Gandhi as the daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru, Sonia Gandhi as the wife of Rajiv Gandhi in India. Alternatively, women in leadership have been seen as 'compromise candidates'

because of an inability of male party bosses to agree amongst themselves – Mrs. Thatcher and Mrs. Gandhi were both seen to be such compromises, with an assumption that they would be malleable in the hands of male party grandees. However, a closer study of this issue suggests that despite a few cases of familial support, women from ‘political families’ have to overcome considerable prejudice against women’s participation in politics (Wolkowitz). Participation in social movements does allow some women to translate their success into success in electoral politics. In the Indian context the rise of Uma Bharti is one such example. Bharti became the voice of right-wing Hindu nationalist attack on the Babri Masjid (mosque) and therefore impossible for the party leadership of the Bhartiya Janata Party to overlook. Despite her unorthodox and maverick behaviour, her popular base continues to be an important element of her success within the party.

Leadership, like participation and representation is exercised at *different levels* of mobilization and organization. Women’s networking is an important way of consolidating leadership qualities. Networks can provide an agenda-setting function by ‘linking up’ women’s knowledge and expertise bases as well as organizations and individuals. Sharing experience of initiating change, of institutional sexism, of strategies that work or do not work in dealing with difference among women, and of sources of funding, of information can all help women in political life to survive and perform to the best of their ability. Further, as Sperling, Ferree, and Risman have argued, the resources that networks can garner are not only financial, “but may also include access, reputation, influence and other intangible benefits” (2001:1159). Arguably, women’s networking has been a successful strategy of supporting women in leadership roles. Women Working Worldwide has lobbied UK MPs for safeguarding the labour rights of women workers, while at the same raising the profile of this issue in the media and civil society more generally. Leaders benefit from connections between the local and the national/regional and global networks. One of the best example of this would be the way in which local and national women’s groups prepared for and mobilized to lobby country representatives to the Beijing Conference and have continued to monitor the Beijing +5 and Beijing +10 processes.

Given the different *contexts* within which women and men take up the role of leaders, it is important to study the needs that such a leadership role demands. Perhaps the most important would be that of information. Often women’s participation in political institutions is undermined by lack of information on specific issues (Rai et.a., 2005). Access to information is affected by levels of literacy as well as by institutional practices. Women suffer more from exclusion from education than men. The gathering and digesting of key information is more difficult without the ability to read or write. The dependence on men, who might or might not be supportive of female leadership roles, decreases the autonomous decision-making power of women. So, the MGD goals of education of the girl child and the PoA goal of greater participation of women in political institutions go hand in hand. As pointed out above, training becomes a key resource for women leaders. There is some evidence that women leaders at different levels of governance institutions are aware of this. Training also allows women to come together to discuss issues. The space made available for training becomes a political space of interaction, support and networking. States, together with multilateral institutions, need to invest resources in such training. Where such initiatives are started, there is also the need

to sustain such training and networking possibilities over time. In the context of India there is some evidence that state support for training withers as soon as women begin to challenge the dominant social order, leading to great demoralization among women, and even putting women leaders in danger of violence (Chakravarty, 1999).

Women are often projected within political and cultural discourse as more accountable than men – women are seen as less corrupt, more transparent and generally more approachable to their constituents. While these arguments are used towards introduction of special measures such as quotas to increase women’s numerical presence within political institutions, such stereotypical delineation of women politicians also places unrealistic burdens upon women who are then not allowed any ‘failures’ for accountability in comparison to men. Gender assumptions of qualities of leadership therefore largely work against women. If the heroic model of leadership is predominant, women’s networking, community building and lobbying work is overlooked. If the normative model is applied, very often women are stereotyped in a way that the failure of some to measure up is seen as the failure of women’s ability to bring about change in society. Therefore, it is important to examine and assess more carefully the issue of leadership in the context of the argument for greater number of women leaders, training for leadership and accountability of leaders.

VI. Conclusions: Improving participatory effectiveness

In this concluding section the paper reflects upon what further measures need to be taken to increase both numerical as well as substantive representation of women in decision-making bodies.

The section on women’s participation in decision-making bodies illustrates that globally the political pressure brought about by women’s groups and movements and international institutions have begun to address some issues of under-representation. There is evidence of increasing women’s memberships of legislatures, and resulting in women becoming more involved in the government as well as in the governance institutions at the global level (Dahlerup, 2005; IPU, 2004; DAW, 2000). However, globally, “only 10 percent of the members of legislative bodies and a lower percentage of ministerial positions are now held by women. Indeed, [some transitional societies] have seen a significant decrease in the number of women represented in legislative bodies.”

(<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/decision.htm>). There is also some evidence that women representatives do attempt to address women’s basic needs, are approached by women’s groups to address their problems and there is even some evidence that on the whole women representatives are less corrupt and therefore bring to local governance some degree of credibility in the eyes of the people (Rai et.al., 2005). However, we also see quota-based representation in local government reflecting the gender regimes of inequality and worry about the co-option of women into state machinery without any significant shifts in their status or indeed the status of local government institutions. The quota strategy, therefore is a start, which has the potential to kick-start other processes of empowerment of women but which cannot by themselves be the answer to gender inequality.

A measure of effective political participation is the success of the *processes of participation* and not just the outcomes. Here an examination of the long-term sustainability of political participation in movements and institutions as well as the levels of vulnerability attached to such participation (see Box 2) would be useful measures. The current debate on deliberative democracy could be one useful framework within which to address some of these issues of processes of participation.

The deliberative democracy framework involves three elements – process, outcome and context. *Political* equality is a central theme in the deliberative democratic argument, which can be defined in the following way. As a *process* it includes:

- collective decision-making with the participation of all those who will be affected by the decision or their representatives;
- decision-making by means of arguments offered *by* and *to* participants who are committed to the values of “rationality and impartiality” such that they are able to argue in terms of public rather than simply particular interests;
- conversing such that individuals speak and listen sequentially before making collective decisions, and from the perspective of participants, ensuring that some interests are not privileged above others, and no individual or group can dictate outcome of actions of others which means that outcomes are not known before the deliberations are conducted and completed (Elster,1998; Knight and Johnson,1997: 279-319).

Scholars working on women’s movements have argued for a similar process/outcome based politics when they have spoken of ‘rooting and shifting’ or ‘transversal politics’, of situated deliberation leading to democratic outcomes as particularly suited to the way women do (or are predisposed to do) politics (see Yuval-Davis, 1997, Cockburn, 1999). In the context of political participation as well as women’s work in representative institutions this can be seen in the process of translation of political agendas of the women’s movements into policies promoting the interests of women.

In conclusion, there has been some progress in the equal participation of women and men in political processes and institutions. At the same time, there is also evidence to suggest that the inequalities between women and men as well as among women have an impact on how far women can be effective in changing policies and policy-frameworks. Political participation in women’s movements, political representation in decision-making bodies, and political leadership in both these arenas of politics are required to ensure that women and men have equal access to both the processes of decision-making and benefit equally from the outcomes of those processes. In the context of globalisation, these inequalities can only be addressed at multiple levels, which is where the work of UN/DAW, of social movements and of political institutions at the state level has to be co-ordinated.

VII. Recommendations

- Organize regular and comprehensive impact assessments of empowerment policies and programmes for women’s participation in decision-making bodies.

- Political equality for men and women in state constitutions needs to be re-emphasised, securing fundamental rights for all, while at the same time taking into account the different historical contexts of nation-states.
- Strategies to expand the participation of women in state and international bodies, such as quotas for women should be supported. Such strategies should include both participation of and leadership by women.
- Leadership training of women participating in political processes is a key resource for their effectiveness as members of organisations. However, training of men in how deliberation of policies and decision-making can enhance the processes of participation is also crucial. Conscientization of both men and women should be the focus of training.
- Economic empowerment strategies at the level of policy-decisions as well as policy-framework need to improve lives of poor women and men in equal measure. This is important if women and men from all strata of society are to participate in political decision-making.

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