Report of Online Discussion

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP ROLES

Coordinated by the
Division for the Advancement of Women
Department of Economic and Social Affairs
United Nations

Hosted by
WomenWatch

With support from the
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

19 November to 15 December 2007

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this report reflect the opinions of participants to the online discussion and not the official views of the United Nations

Contents

1.   Introduction

The purpose of the online discussion "Women in Leadership Roles" was to analyze the status of women in senior leadership positions in several sectors. The online discussion "Women in leadership roles" was sponsored by UNHCR. It was hosted on Women's Watch, the inter-agency portal on the work of the United Nations on gender equality (www.un.org/womenwatch). The Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), coordinated the discussion from 19 November to 15 December 2007. Ms. Shaheen Sidi Mohamed, consultant, moderated the discussion and compiled this report.

This report provides an overview of the discussion, with some illustrative examples of contributions. It does not aim to give comprehensive coverage of all inputs received. All postings can be viewed at: http://esaconf.un.org/WB/?boardID=leadership. The inputs from this online discussion will serve as a resource for the work of the Commission on the Status of Women in developing concrete recommendations on this topic.

Over the past three decades, the international community has made numerous commitments to promoting gender equality and eliminating discrimination against women, including through the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), and the Millennium Summit (2000). In the 2005 World Summit, Member States reaffirmed the Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly as an essential contribution to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration.

The Beijing Platform for Action considered the inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels as one of the critical areas of concern for the empowerment of women. It stated "Women's equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved".[1]

As a result of these commitments, governments were expected to implement policies and programmes which would advance gender equality, including in leadership positions, giving women full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making. The commitments and goals pertaining to gender equality in decision-making at the political and other levels have not yet been achieved. In both developing and developed countries, women continue to be under-represented in decision-making and leadership in several areas. The consequence of this gender gap is that women do not participate fully in decisions that shape their lives; and communities and countries are not capitalizing on the full potential of one half of their societies.

The 2006 Commission on the Status of Women underscored the importance of incorporating women's leadership in a wide range of decision-making positions. The Commission's agreed

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[1] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chapter. I, resolution 1, annex II. Paragraph 181

conclusions on "equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels"[2] expressed "concern about the lack, at the local, national, regional and international levels, of sufficient information and data disaggregated by sex on the participation of women and men in decision-making processes in all areas, including the economy, the public and private sectors, the judiciary, international affairs, academia, trade unions, the media, non-governmental organizations and others;"[3] and called on "the relevant entities of the United Nations system, other international and regional organizations, including the international financial institutions, national parliaments, political parties, civil society, including the private sector, trade unions, academia, the media, non-governmental organizations and other actors"[4] to take a series of actions to improve the participation of women in decision-making.

The online discussion covered the following themes during a four-week period:

Week 1: Overview of the current situation and impact of women leaders in different areas (public administration, judiciary, private sector, academia, media and civil society, including trade unions and professional associations).
Week 2: Constraints and strategies: public administration, including the judiciary, and the private sector.
Week 3: Constraints and strategies: civil society, including trade unions and professional associations, the media and academia.
Week 4: Wrap up and other issues.

The Division for the Advancement of Women invited interested individuals and groups to participate in the online discussion. The total number of registrations was 1236 (93 per cent women and 7 per cent men) from 81 countries. Registrants came from Africa (30 per cent), Asia and the Pacific (21 per cent), North America (20 per cent), and Europe (19 per cent). The majority of registrants represented NGOs (40 per cent), followed by academia (15 per cent), United Nations (8 per cent), government (8 per cent), and the private sector (7 per cent).

During the discussion, a total of 323 messages were posted. 150 individuals contributed to the discussion with at least one posting (89 percent women and 11 percent men) from 44 countries. Contributors came from Africa (41 percent), Asia and the Pacific (27 percent), Europe (13 percent) and North America (11 percent). They were affiliated with the NGO sector (44 percent), followed by academia (19 per cent), government (9 percent), United Nations (7 percent) and the private sector (6 percent).

More specific statistics displaying the geographical distribution of all the registrants and discussion members (who contributed messages), their organizational backgrounds, geographic distribution, and countries of origin, can be found in Annexes 1 and 2.

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[2] E/2006/27 - E/CN.6/2006/15

[3] Ibid, paragraph 13.

[4] Ibid, paragraph 17.

2. Theme One: Status of women in leadership positions globally

1. While there is a considerable amount of information available on women in political leadership positions, much less is known about the representation of women as decision-makers in other public and private sector institutions. This online discussion sought to gain an overview of women in leadership positions in different domains and countries; understand the factors that hinder and facilitate the role of women in leadership at the national and regional levels; share good practices and strategies for promoting women in leadership; and discuss what is being done at the country level to measure women's impact in leadership positions.

Summary of discussion

2. The first topic of discussion was entitled "Overview of the current situation and impact of women leaders in public administration, the judiciary, private sector, academia, media and civil society, including trade unions and professional associations."

3. The Moderator began the week with a series of questions to solicit participants' views on country experiences concerning women in leadership positions in various sectors, including:
   - Issues of access or constraints women face to participate in decision-making bodies.
   - Ability of women in leadership positions to influence change.
   - Instruments and methodologies used to measure impact.

2.1. Country experiences

4. Participants' contributions indicated slow change. In many countries women are participating in areas of public life where they were not previously visible. Women are slowly but increasingly occupying senior positions in the public and private sectors, including the judiciary, the academia and the media. There was less evidence in the discussion of women in leadership roles in trade unions, professional associations, and non-traditional areas. Men are still overwhelmingly the decision-makers as senior executives and board members of corporations, public sector officials, judges and law-makers, media executives, negotiators in trade unions, and leaders of civil society organizations and may not have women's issues as their primary concern. Participants frequently highlighted the gains that have been achieved including in the political arena, with women heads of state or government in a few countries.

5. Participants shared country case studies from Argentina, Australia, Cameroon, India, South Africa, Suriname and Syria, illustrating improvements in the representation of women at the highest levels of leadership as a result of government policy. Some examples of contributions indicating overall improvement in women's representation as leaders include:

   - Victoria Kenny from Argentina noted that while women are still underrepresented in Latin America in most sectors, "there is a cultural shift that is slowly taking place, allowing a window of opportunity [for women] to move into leadership positions."

   - Phelele Tengeni from South Africa noted how "the government has laid a solid foundation in terms of policy, putting the public service firmly on the route of transformation. Non-

sexism is one of the fundamental tenets that are enshrined in the South African Constitution. The results to date have been positive." She noted that "in 1995 the equity target was 30 percent representation of women in management positions. In October 2006 many government departments achieved the minimum quota, with records as high as 40 percent women in managerial positions."

- Chitra Mohanlal, a participant contributing from the National Bureau for Gender Policy, Suriname, reported that "25 per cent of the parliament consists of women representatives. There are three female ministers [heading] the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Labor, Technological Development and Environment and the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Tourism. There are also three female ambassadors. In primary and secondary schools there are also a number of women directors. The Institute for Women Development and Gender Studies at the University is run by a woman. In the judiciary there is one female judge and seven others are being trained to become judges. NGOs are being led by women and they are organizing activities to empower women and achieve gender equality. There is a lack of data and statistics on the number of men and women in leadership roles in the private sector. In the private sector, on the board of the Cooperative Bank—GODO—there are three female members, while the director is also a woman. The general editor of a popular newspaper and the director of a radio station is also a woman."

6. Others noted that, despite positive gains by a few individual women in the country, the majority of women continue to face significant social and economic barriers to assuming leadership roles, with specific mention of Guinea, India, Pakistan, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. Challenges to women participating more fully as decision-makers include inequalities in education, health and employment, discrimination, the feminization of poverty, the urban-rural divide, as well as the effects of armed conflict, trade liberalization and HIV/AIDS—all of which affect women disproportionately.

7. Countries facing socio-political and economic upheavals have additional challenges in ensuring that women are represented as leaders. Seyhan Aydýnlýgil from Turkey pointed out that in an environment of rising conservatism, there may be backsliding in hard-won advancements made towards gender equality. She believes women in senior decision-making positions, as well as lower ranking positions within traditional and non-traditional sectors of employment, risk losing their positions. Similarly, participants from other countries felt that previously gained achievements were being reversed—as a result of, inter alia, armed conflict in Iraq, economic conditions in Bangladesh, and the transition process in Poland.

2.2. Ability of women in leadership positions to influence change

8. Several participants commented on whether having women in positions of leadership improved the gender responsiveness of policies and programmes. A few participants reported instances where women with decision-making authority succeeded in introducing changes to improve the lives of many women. For example, Margaret Rukuni of the Zimbabwe Open University, noted that the country has "finally passed a Domestic Violence Act, primarily because our Minister of Women's Affairs is a female with passion for alleviating women from poverty, ignorance and repression."

9. Similarly, Margaret Mburu of the Tabasco Community Network and the Engendering Peace Process Initiative in Kenya shared the example of how women leaders, supported by a woman parliamentarian, were able to get a 15 per cent reduction on tax levied on sanitary napkins. This was a significant achievement of benefit to the millions of women in the country who rely on these products.

10. On the other hand, participants from both developing and industrialized countries, including South Africa, Ethiopia, Philippines and Canada, indicated that having more women in positions of power does not necessarily result in "women-friendly" social, economic and political systems that are responsive to women's concerns. For instance, Lourdes de la Torre of Cagayan de Oro College, Phinma Education Network, Philippines, noted that although in academia women dominate as teachers and administrators, they "cannot assert their opposition to gender-biased admission policies that are discriminatory. An example of such a policy is that a student will not be allowed to enroll if she is pregnant and unmarried." This sentiment was echoed by participants from Pakistan and Bangladesh who felt that women's leadership, even as Heads of State in their countries, did not automatically translate into improvements in the status of women's lives.

11. In addition, a few participants noted that women in positions of power often do not have control over large budgets. This limits their influence and the resources they can allocate to gender equality. Lourdes de la Torre from the Philippines pointed out that "In the local government units, some women were chosen as chief executive while most women elected for public service are in the legislative branch of government. However, most often their initiatives to provide better opportunities to women to be productive economically are hampered by their men counterparts in the council. Budget allocations that [women] proposed were blocked and did not get approval." She added that, "The Women in Development and Nation-building Act provides that all national agencies of government should allocate 5 per cent of their annual budget for women and development. Yet, many government agencies ignored this law and nothing is done against any agency that does not follow the law. This prevents women to have full access to resources that should have been allocated by the different government entities."

12. Moses Emanuel from Tanzania reiterated that improved policy-making to address women's concerns cannot only result from appointing women in leadership positions, but requires wider gender sensitization. He said, "I believe Tanzania is among the leading African countries in promoting gender equality and giving women leadership opportunities... However, improved policy making and gender sensitization cannot easily be measured by having a woman leader in a ministry, agency or department, and if this is the case, I do not think it is sustainable. I think gender sensitivity is a culture that we are breeding, and although in a disoriented manner, it is slowly being reflected. We still need to do a lot in different socio-cultural, economic, political, public and private institutions to nurture positive gender sensitivity."

13. In the same vein, several participants concurred with Ceta Ramkhalwasnsingh from Canada who outlined a holistic approach for countering gender inequality. She stated that even though in Canada "there is a robust public policy framework and legislation, as well as an increasing presence of women in leadership roles in numerous sectors, there is not yet practical equality between men and women." She added that, "Violence against women, child poverty, inadequate access to affordable housing, limited availability of childcare, high levels of illiteracy and the presence of a significant gender wage gap continue to be significant barriers

to equality." Hence, "women's presence in leadership positions will not by itself result in equitable outcomes for women, but is a necessary aspect of change strategies. She further stressed that achieving gender equality hinges on several factors including (a) the existence of a critical mass of women and men who are committed to this goal, (b) the availability of resources applied to reaching the goal, (c) the extent to which the policies and programmes apply inter-sectorally and take into account the multiple dimensions of gender (such as class, race, disability, or sexual orientation), and (d) the commitment to measure and evaluate outcomes."

2.3.Instruments and methodologies to measure impact

14. While participants stressed the importance of measurement and impact assessment of women in leadership positions, their responses reflected the paucity of data available on women in leadership positions beyond the political arena.

15. Leontina dos Muchangos from Mozambique shared information on the African Gender Development Index, developed by the Economic Commission of Africa, to assess the gender gap in African countries and measure progress in eliminating this gap. The tool is based on a holistic understanding of the concepts of gender equality and women's empowerment, incorporating the full range of concerns which confront women, including physical, socio-cultural, religious, legal, political and economic issues. (For further information, see http://www.uneca.org/eca_programmes/acgd/default.htm).

16. Meaza Ashenfi from Ethiopia noted the importance of capturing performance data in different areas of public representation, highlighting the fact that achievements in women's representation are unequal across different areas. For instance, she noted that in a study of 12 countries using the African Gender Development Index "Egypt is one of the lowest performers with respect to women in parliament. Yet, it has done very well in women's representation in decision-making positions within the civil service. The same is true in the case of Ethiopia."

17. Jennifer Park, contributing on behalf of Women in International Security based in the US, presented the concept of a report card as a tool to measure women's representation in international security-related positions. "Women in International Security (WIIS), a global membership organization dedicated to increasing the influence of women in international peace and security fields, is currently undertaking a research project on women's leadership in key decision-making roles in international peace and security-related sectors. For the first production of this study, WIIS will be focusing on the US Government (State Department, Defense, Energy, and USAID) military, academia, think-tank, and private sector corporations (defense contractors and consulting firms). We aim to publish a report with recommendations and lessons learned in the course of a year for each of the related sectors. We hope that there will be cross-cutting solutions that will benefit the wider international audience." (For more information see: http://wiis.georgetown.edu). Similar benchmarking tools can be effectively used to rank institutions and countries on their performance in promoting women's leadership. Such high-visibility instruments often serve as incentives for parties to become lead performers.

18. Commenting on the importance of impact measurement, Phelele Tengeni from South Africa reminded participants that while equality in numbers might be a "noble" goal, ultimately it was

the impact of women's leadership that counted. She commented that, "We must continue to strive towards making ourselves as women count, beyond the politically correct statistics. We need to evaluate outcomes, and measure what the impact has been, of having women in leadership positions." She raised the following pertinent questions: "Has it been business as usual in the sense of women behaving exactly the same way as men where they control budgets or are we seeing different choices, such as channeling more resources with greater urgency to challenges of poverty, HIV/AIDS, women and child-headed families? Are we seeing campaigns reflecting women's outlook? Research is needed to test the question of outcomes."

19. Participants' responses reflected the fact that much more needs to be done by countries to track the participation and impact of women in leadership positions outside the political realm. With rigorous measurement and reporting procedures countries can be held accountable to their commitments to achieve gender equality. In addition, improved collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data can provide policy makers with data on the areas that require greatest attention for designing gender equality initiatives.

3. Theme Two: Factors that influence women's access to decision-making positions—views from public administration, the judiciary and the private sector

20. In many countries women are under-represented at decision-making levels in most areas of public administration. Women and men have different priorities for developing policies and laws because of their different gender roles in the household and community, their occupations in labor markets and their access to key resources, such as capital, property and credit. Women's leadership in the public sector, including the judiciary, is critical for increasing the capacity of public institutions to create policies and laws that respond to the different situations and needs of women.

21. Strategic, forward-looking private sector firms recognize the importance of including women at senior levels of management to improve their competitiveness. Women managers at the highest levels continue, however, to have a meager share of corporate board and other executive positions around the world.

22. Despite the odds against them, statistics show that since the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, women are slowly making inroads into male-dominated areas, particularly in political life. In 1995, women represented 11.3 per cent of all legislators in national parliaments. As of January 2008, they represented 17.9 per cent, the highest percentage in history (http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm), illustrating the very slow and uneven progress in women's political participation.

Summary of discussion

23. The discussion sought insights into the status of women leaders in executive position in the public sector, the judiciary and the private sector. It also solicited participants' input on the different constraints women face in these positions. The week began with the moderator seeking participants' views on:

- Representation of women in senior leadership positions in public administration, including the judiciary, and the private sector.
- Institutional and individual factors that constrain and facilitate women's access to decision-making positions.
- Mechanisms and good practices that promote women's role in decision-making.

24. The discussion did not generate sector-specific statistical information on the representation of women leaders and the factors that influence their presence or absence from the public and private sectors. This lack of data by sector may be the result of a lack of available data on women's representation in these areas. However, participants highlighted several cross-cutting issues and suggested strategies and mechanisms to promote women in decision-making positions across the public sector, the judiciary and the private sector.

3.1. Representation of women in the public sector

25. Participants provided examples of women's representation in the public sector:

- Dianne Lockwood from Australia noted that, as a result of government policy, women make up 35 per cent of senior executive positions in the public service and hold 34.3 per cent of all seats on government-controlled boards and bodies.

- Leontina dos Muchangos from Mozambique observed the increasing visibility of women in the public sector, and their importance as role models for other women, particularly in the rural areas. She noted, "Gradually, Mozambique is having more women in senior leadership positions. At the beginning it was more at the national level but [now increasingly at other levels] … there was a significant number of new [appointees in] district administration. Public enterprises are also witnessing appointments of women as board members of important companies."

26. Public sector institutions are important, both because of the large numbers of people they employ and because their actions influence equality of employment opportunities. Bahar Salimova of the International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics highlighted the important role that the public sector can have by leading through example. She stated, "It is important that the public sector becomes a role-model in ensuring equality of employment opportunities in public offices, i.e., the judiciary, public administration, law-enforcement, etc. It is critical to explain to the heads of public agencies the benefits of gender parity in the workforce and the importance of promoting women to decision-making positions. Once the public sector is committed to hiring women and promoting them to decision-making and leadership positions, the private sector will have to follow the example to preserve competitiveness."

Constraints identified in the public sector

27. Participants from several countries identified constraints in the public sector, including:

- Aspiring women may not have the level of education necessary for entry-level leadership positions in the public sector. Where women have been able to access positions of

leadership, participants felt that women leaders needed to be supported with skills and capacity-building to perform effectively as policy-makers. On this point, Museme Munira Issa from southern Sudan stated, "In the government, two ministries—the Ministry of Public Service and the Ministry of Gender and Social Welfare—are headed by women. Three commissions—the Commission of Human Rights, the Anti Corruption Commission and the Employees Justice Chambers—are chaired by women, and the other commissions are highly representative of women in high level positions. However, the biggest challenge is that not all the women are highly educated and have their capacity well built. This thus brings in the question that given the leadership roles held, will the women holding these positions be influential enough to change policies that will be beneficial to all and have a relevant voice?"

- Another constraint raised included the problem of corruption within the public sector. For example, Tosin Olumayowa Onabanjo from Nigeria noted that 'the level of corruption in the country is another constraint as people lobby their way into leadership positions. These positions are male-dominated, making it difficult for women to thrive or access." Shola Oshodi-John from Nigeria noted that "the last ten years have witnessed the rise of more women leaders in different areas, especially in the private sector, media, civil society, among others. These women leaders have not only been able to hold their own among the male folks but have superseded their achievements in a number of areas. Unfortunately, there has not been a commensurate increase in women's participation at the leadership level in the political and public sector, owing to patriarchy and male dominance."

- Ferdous Ara Begum of Bangladesh, a Member of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, observed that "although two women were elected Prime Ministers and were in power for more than a decade, the country has not yet been able to achieve even 10 per cent of women's leadership positions in the public sector." She added, "There is a glass ceiling of cultural and social realization that bars women to achieve gender equality."

Strategies and good practices in the public sector

28. The discussion did not generate input on good practices for promoting women leaders in the public sector. However, research from the European Union and New Zealand, shared by the moderator during the discussion, provided good practices, which may be emulated by other countries:

- The European Union maintains a database of the highest ranking women and men civil servants in their Member States. This database provides easily accessible information on the status of women in leadership positions and tracks progress towards improved representation. Databases as this one would also be useful in identifying potential women candidates for other leadership positions. (See: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/women_men_stats/out/measures_out55_en.htm)

- Another good practice is New Zealand's establishment of a database and nomination service. The government of New Zealand's target for 2010 is to have equal representation of women and men in the members of government statutory bodies. To achieve this, the Ministry of Women's Affairs has established the Nominations Service, a unit with three

staff and a budget, which focuses on identifying women with appropriate experience and ensuring these women are known to decision-makers. A stock-taking in 2004 showed that significant progress had been made: 41 per cent of the directors and committee members were women (of 397 statutory bodies with a total of 2,605 members), compared to about 25 per cent in 1993. However, there continued to be differences among sectors, with higher representation of women in social development, health and related fields, and lower numbers in sectors, such as agriculture, economic development and transport. The government has developed "a rigorous 'recruitment agency' competency matching approach," providing the links between the names of women with relevant skills and experience and the available positions in the public sector. (For further information see: www.mwa.govt.nz/women-on-boards).

3.2. Representation of women in the judiciary

29. Representation of women in the judiciary is critical for promoting greater equality, improving the status of women and ensuring a more gender-sensitive administration of justice. The forum did not receive specific data on the numbers of women in the judiciary but anecdotal responses indicated that the number of women judges may have increased over the years. In a positive example, Mallica Vajrathon from Thailand observed that the country is making 'good use' of more than 30 per cent of women as judges to further gender-specific interests. She noted "There is no doubt in my mind of the effectiveness of these female judges in bringing justice to children, women and men in the community." The positive results may be due to the fact that there is a critical mass of women judges who can effect change within the legal system.

Constraints identified in the judiciary

30. A few constraints participants articulated were:

- Museme Munira Issa from Sudan reported, "The judiciary gives appointments according to the year of bar school completion. Yet many women affected by historical factors and the conflict in Sudan, completed their studies at later stages. This means that women occupy the lower posts rather than the senior ones."

- In India, female lawyers face many barriers in establishing their practices and are often not taken seriously by the legal establishment, the public and the government. Hengasara Hakkina Sangha from India, explains that some of the barriers lie within institutions themselves, in their spirit, structure and functioning. …There is so much bias in the system against [women lawyers] that it makes it much harder for them to establish practice when compared to their male counterparts. … Senior advocates don't entrust [junior advocates in their learning stages] with challenging cases like criminal cases. They feel that women can't handle such cases which involve working with police and other investigating officers, meeting clients over a drink in the evening, etc. They are always involved in drafting and filing petitions, taking dates for the next hearing. Even after 10 to 15 years of practice many women advocates would not have conducted even a single argument or mediation."

- Financial and time resources were also cited as major constraints. Hengasara Hakkina Sangha noted that "Holding offices in bar associations is a difficult task as winning these

elections requires significant money and time" and that "even with phenomenal leadership qualities" women who do not have these resources cannot participate to the fullest extent.

Strategies and good practices in the judiciary

31. During the discussion, participants did not provide examples of specific strategies for increasing women in senior positions in the judiciary. The experience of Canada, shared by the moderator during the discussion, offers a good practice to increase representation of women judges. Canada currently uses a system in which individuals interested in an appointment are required to submit an application. The application is reviewed by committees composed of judges, lawyers and citizens. The committees determine whether the candidates are qualified before the names enter a pool for possible appointments. In this way, many women who might otherwise have gone unnoticed are brought into the system. (Source: www.iawj.org/what/sydney.asp)

3.3. Representation of women in the private sector

32. Across the world, very few women lead large companies or corporations, including multinational and transnational corporations and banks. In the United States, research shows that "despite years of progress by women in the workforce (they now occupy more than 40 per cent of all managerial positions in the United States), within the [group of chief executives] they remain as rare as hens' teeth. Consider the most highly paid executives of *Fortune* 500 companies—those with titles such as chairman, president, chief executive officer and chief operating officer. Of this group, only 6 per cent are women. Most notably, only two per cent of the CEOs are women, and only 15 per cent of the seats on the boards of directors are held by women. The situation is not much different in other industrialized countries. In the 50 largest publicly traded corporations in each nation of the European Union, women make up, on average, 11 per cent of the top executives and 4 per cent of the CEOs and heads of boards. Just seven companies or one per cent of *Fortune* magazine's Global 500 have female CEOs."[5]

33. The online discussion did not generate many concrete statistics--again, perhaps a reflection of the dearth of data available in many countries on women executives. However, participants did note anecdotally that in some countries, women were increasing in the ranks of management positions particularly in the financial sector in countries in Asia. For instance, Mallica Vajrathon from Thailand noted, "In the Asia and Pacific region, there are more and more women in leadership positions in the public and private sectors. There are large numbers of women heading important divisions in Commercial Banks and Central Banks in China, Singapore, and Thailand. The head of the Central Bank of Thailand at the moment is a competent woman widely accepted by the people in the country for having good judgment and years of experience in the financial world." Similarly, Mercia Selva Malar from India noted that women executives are increasingly found in the private sector. "Corporations performing excellently … also are beneficiaries of effective women at the helm of affairs. India's ICICI Bank is the best example for women power as decision-makers. Indian business women and women entrepreneurs speak of the capability of women as effective decision-makers."

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[5] Women and the Labyrinth of Leadership, *Harvard Business Review*, September 2007, http://harvardbusinessonline.hbsp.harvard.edu/hbsp/hbr/articles/article.jsp?articleID=R0709C&ml_action=get-article&print=true

34. The discussion around the private sector triggered dialogue around women's self employment and the increasing number of self-employed women entrepreneurs. Victoria Kenney from Argentina commented, "Even when trade unions and other sectors do not show signs of women leaders, women are moving into the private sector at a rapid pace, especially towards their own initiatives. I believe that a "glass ceiling," [non-enforcement of] anti-discrimination regulations and lack of flexibility in the workforce are encouraging women [to move] into entrepreneurship."

35. Highlighting the growing trend of women-owned businesses, Ninette Trifiletti from Australia noted that 30 per cent of the country's small businesses are owned or operated by women. Participants underscored the importance of supporting women to gain more knowledge of markets and improve the performance of their businesses. Creating business-enabling environments for women entrepreneurs was also seen as an important strategy for improving women's opportunity for economic growth and employment. Others saw women's entrepreneurship at the helm of their own businesses as an avenue for honing management skills that could be parlayed into leadership positions in the private sector.

36. Supporting women's private sector participation was also seen as an important strategy for women affected by conflict. Dr. Nada Hakki, Director of HME AID+ Hope Medical Enterprises of Iraq, advocated support for "small factories that were principally dependent on women skills" as a way to "achieve sustainable economic power for women in Iraq where women are 55 per cent of the population, to promote women's leadership and achieve gender equality and true women's empowerment."

Constraints identified in the private sector

37. Stressing the importance of access to financial resources, Nite Tanzarn from Uganda noted, "In order to have clout in the [private] sector, you need to be engaged in an enterprise with a substantial capital outlay."

38. Constraints identified by participants included:
- Lack of financial and managerial skills necessary for top-tier management positions in private sector;
- The existence of a 'glass-ceiling' which prevents women from accessing higher echelon positions; and
- Lack of access to credit.

Strategies and good practices in the private sector

39. The discussion did not generate any example of good practices from the private sector. However, research shared by the moderator during the discussion shows a forward-looking example from Norway. In a sweeping move, Norway passed legislation in February 2002 that requires state-owned companies to have at least 40 per cent representation of each sex on their boards by March 2003. The private sector was put on notice that it was expected to meet similar targets, and was given two years to demonstrate compliance. By July 2005, only 68 of 519 companies had fulfilled the requirements; while the percentage of women on boards had increased to 16 per cent, this was still far from the 40 per cent target. New legislation targeting

the private sector was passed in January 2006. The legislation requires existing companies to comply within two years and new companies to comply in order to be registered. [6] According to the Center for Corporate Diversity in Oslo, 80 per cent of Norwegian companies had women on their boards by August 2007. The number of companies with no female directors decreased considerably from 190 in March 2007 to 94 in July 2007. What these results show is that the law has had a positive impact in accelerating the inclusion of women into corporate boards. At present, Norway has the highest proportion of women corporate directors in the world. (Source: Center for Corporate Diversity, available from: http://www.globewomen.org/ENewsletter/August%202007%20Enews.htm)

4. Theme Three: Factors that influence women's access to decision-making positions—views from civil society, trade unions, professional associations, academia, and the media.

40. This week's discussion sought to assess women's access to decision-making in civil society, trade unions, professional associations, academia and the media. The discussion also sought to identify constraints and facilitating factors for women in leadership positions in these sectors, including what countries and institutions are doing to attract and retain women in leadership positions.

Summary of discussion

41. The moderator began the week with a series of questions on women's leadership in civil society, trade unions, professional associations, academia and the media. The discussion provided a global overview of the domains being explored, as follows:

- **Civil society**: There is a broad recognition of the important roles women play in NGOs, particularly in NGOs that focus on women-related issues.
- **Trade unions**: These bodies continue to be male dominated; however, women are slowly making inroads as leaders of trade unions—primarily in industrialized countries.
- **Academia**: In countries where the share of women in tertiary education is high or even higher than men's, women are still largely underrepresented in full tenure and decision-making positions.
- **Media**: The growing number of women in the media/communications sector has not been reflected in their access to decision-making positions.

4.1. Representation of women in civil society / NGOs

42. Women's leadership in women's organizations is already well recognized both at the national and local level. Typically, women face fewer restrictions in access to leadership positions in NGOs dealing with women, children and family issues. These civil society organizations play a fundamental role in increasing awareness of women's legal rights, and other issues that affect women, such as conflict, globalization, information technology, the environment, education

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[6] Sources: www.norway.org/news/archive/2003/200303gender.htm; odin.dep.no/bld/english/news/speeches/004021-070005/dok-bn.html)

and health care. Stressing the importance of women leaders in NGOs, Naba Hamid from Iraq noted "The role of government is very weak in advancement of women. To a large extent the presence of women in leadership positions in NGOs is visible where they serve as role models for other women. These women leaders advocate for their rights and encourage women not to be passive, but to take actions and stand for their rights."

43. Abiodun Baiyewu from Nigeria observed that although women tend to be involved in NGOs with women's concerns, it does not mean they are in decision-making positions. She remarked, "Because [women] are more inclined to social advocacy, they may be found in civil society organizations, which affect their needs, such as human rights, HIV and micro-finance." She further noted that "in spite of playing an active role in these organizations, they rarely take up leadership positions."

44. Participants' responses did not indicate the extent to which women leaders were found in large numbers in NGOs that do not specifically deal with women's issues. This may indicate that women in some countries are still segregated to certain occupations in this sector.

Constraints identified in civil society / NGOs

45. Margaret Mburu, commenting from the Engendering Peace Process Initiative, Kenya, noted that gender role stereotyping and violence continue to be issues that prevent women from embracing leadership positions in the NGO sector. She stated, "The society still views women in leadership positions as those whose role in the family has failed. Election violence and rejection by the community members regarding women holding positions either in the NGO sector or in political affairs contributes to a great extent to slowed development."

Strategies and good practices in civil society/NGOs

46. Nurgul Djanaeva of Kyrgyzstan shared the example of the Forum of Women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan in capacity building for women's leadership. "Women's NGOs in Central Asia face specific barriers partly due to the tense relationship between the government and the non-governmental sector. Capacity building is essential in order to help the many nascent women's NGOs grow into mature and competent organizations capable of entering into dialogue and partnership with the government and the private sector. An important aspect is to build partnerships and information sharing among women's NGOs so that they can more effectively perform the functions of lobbying and advocacy groups. Recognizing such limitations, the Forum of Women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan was established in 1995 to act as an umbrella organization to consolidate and strengthen women's NGOs in order to further gender equality, women's empowerment, and women's participation in public life. The forum works toward these goals through activities designed to build the organizational capacity of women's NGOs and to enhance their levels of active networking and information sharing." (Source: http://www.adb.org/gender/working/kgz002.asp).

4.2. Representation of women in trade unions

47. Trade unions wield considerable power as they determine the terms of labour conditions with employers. With women increasingly participating in the formal labour force, incorporation of women's perspectives in trade unions is important to ensure that their interests are represented

in labour markets. Participants' responses indicated that for the most part, women are invisible as leaders in trade unions. Abiodun Baiyewu from Nigeria noted that while progress has been made in women's representation in several areas of public life, "in particular, their participation in trade unions still leaves much to be desired."

48. On a more positive note, Rabab Kuzbari, Chief of the Intellectual Forum, Syria, observed that women are increasingly represented in different unions, albeit at low levels, "Women make up 15 per cent of the Trade Union Council and 8 per cent of the General Congress (2006). A woman was also elected to the executive bureau of Federation of Labor Unions for the first time, and also as chairperson of the Committee of Working Women."

Constraints identified in trade unions

49. Participants' responses indicated that trade unions continue to be viewed as bastions of male dominance. In some countries, such as Nigeria, this is exacerbated by the fact that unions are associated with conflict and violent actions. These factors probably make trade union leadership unattractive as a career option for women.

Strategies and good practices in trade unions

50. Kizitos Okisai from Kenya noted that "trade unions have done a great job at advocating for gender parity" but "more needs be done and women should be in the lead together with other interest groups to realize more equitable representation of women in the various walks of life, including universities."

4.3. Representation of women in academia

51. Participants' responses indicated that women were making inroads as faculty members and within the administration in academia, in countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Their numbers are lower, however, in the higher ranking decision-making roles such as chancellors, presidents, deans, and heads of departments at colleges and universities. For example, Kizitos Okisai from Kenya stated, "It is incredible that Kenya is one of the few countries in Africa with a female Vice Chancellor in one of its public universities."

52. Hortense Atta Diallo of the Université Abobo-Adjame in Côte d'Ivoire—currently Counselor to the President of the University—remarked, "The situation in Côte d'Ivoire is not much different from that of most countries. The number of women who have reached full professorship can be counted with great ease. There is none in my institution at the moment… there are no women vice-dean or above." Neeti Mahanti, from India, however noted that women are increasingly visible in the ranks of decision-makers in institutions of higher learning in her country.

Constraints identified in academia

53. Constraints identified by participants included:

- Noha Bhairy from Sudan raised the issue of forces that keep women at the bottom of the hierarchy in the academia. She stated, "Although a lot of women have high qualifications

[the institutions] prefer to select men in higher positions, so you can hardly find a woman becoming a dean for any faculty, and if she [did become dean] they would not let her work in peace." This phenomenon, sometimes referred to as the "sticky floor" syndrome, does not allow women to move upwards in their careers.

- Echoing this, Hortense Atta Diallo from Côte d'Ivoire noted, "Women in academia do not climb up the ladder as fast as our male colleagues. Most of the time we do not climb at all." She enumerated several constraints which prevent women from rising in their academic careers: "Our male colleagues can take all the opportunities they get to get promoted and we, on the other hand, have to make choices: 'My family or my career?' We cannot leave the country, go to conferences as much as we would like to because of family obligations. The same goes for some fellowship opportunities and professional meetings; there is no child care in our institutions. Therefore we have to go home early. We all know that it takes time and concentration to write a paper if we assume that you had the time and the means to conduct your research. These are just a few examples."

Strategies and good practices in academia

54. Hortense Atta Diallo from Côte d'Ivoire proposed a strategy to promote women's upward mobility in academia by creating "a conducive environment for women to enable them to get to the top. This could be done through capacity building, adequate scholarships, and installing quota systems, mentoring, networking, setting up child care systems and creating information systems for job opportunities."

4.4. Representation of women in the media

55. Several participants mentioned the importance of the media in counteracting gender stereotypes and creating more positive female role models. Even though the numbers of women in the industry are increasing, participants' comments from several countries indicated the difficulties women have in breaking into the top-tier positions in media outlets. Dr. Mercia from India noted, "Media is seeing a lot of women leaders in India. Among the [most] highly paid CEOs of India are two women media CEOs. There are women directors and CEOs in the media sector in India. Some of the [most] powerful women of India are in the media sector."

Strategies for good practices in media

56. Strategies for good practices in the media identified by participants, included:

- Assitan Coulibaly from Mali indicated that "some magazines are written by women and [there are] radio stations with women directors but it remains less than what it should be. Of course this low representation cannot bring a leadership position." There is however a good practice in place to improve gender equality in the industry. She noted, "Every year magazines and radio speakers who did well on gender equity are given a prize to encourage them to continue." This is a practice that can be readily adopted by other countries.

- Sharon Bhagwan Rolls from Fiji provided an excellent case study of FemLink Pacific, a regional grassroots organization improving women's representation and leadership in the media. In a recent initiative to take stock of women in management positions, the

organization found "on one hand while it is heartening to find out that the number of women are increasing in newsrooms, there continues to be a need to secure gender policies that will support women's advancement into management positions." To address this, the organization has developed an action plan that includes: strengthening networks across the region; publication of a Pacific Women Experts Directory, including profiles from civil society, academia, the private sector and government; provision of training on media and advocacy; development of strategic partnerships with media networks; raising community awareness on gender issues in the media; and establishment of media monitoring working groups to undertake ongoing and consistent media monitoring at national level.

4.5. Cross-cutting constraints and barriers to women's leadership

57. Participants from various countries, including Cameroon, Guinea, India, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Syria, identified a wide range of cross-cutting constraints and barriers to women's leadership. Much of the input underscored the fact that issues of women's leadership could not be addressed without tackling broader-based systemic social and economic constraints that continue to affect women, particularly in developing countries. Some of the challenges identified were inequalities in education, health and employment; discriminatory practices; the feminization of poverty; as well as the effects of armed conflict, and HIV/AIDS—all of which affect women disproportionately. The constraints participants identified at the level of: a) the country/society; b) the institution; and c) the individual, are presented below.

Country/societal level constraints and barriers

58. Participants highlighted the following country/society level constraints and barriers:

- **Education.** Women still constitute the large majority of the world's illiterate population. In several developing countries, gender gaps in education and literacy persist. Without equitable access to quality education, women do not have the means to build their knowledge, capacity and skills to access well-paid, formal sector jobs and attain positions of leadership. Unless gender gaps in literacy and education are addressed, the next generation of girls will be similarly marginalized from leadership roles. Other issues raised in relation to women's access to education were rural-urban disparities in levels and quality of education. Gender role stereotyping was also raised as a concern to be addressed, as it is often reinforced by school curricula and hinders women from taking on leadership roles.

- **Poverty**. Women constitute two thirds of the world's poor. Several participants pointed out that women's deeply entrenched poverty—now often exacerbated by globalization—means that in countries such as Bangladesh, Guinea and Pakistan, access to leadership positions remain limited.

- **Gender role stereotypes and other socio-cultural constraints**. Several participants noted that gender stereotypes and traditional conservative beliefs that a woman's place is at home raising a family, and that women are followers, not leaders, prevent women from participating in public life.

- **Dual work-family roles**. Participants from a number of countries (such as Senegal, Switzerland, Syria, and Uganda) noted that in the absence of institutional arrangements and facilities to support the combination of work-family responsibilities, women often select certain types or sectors of work and lower levels of responsibility because it allows them to balance their work and family lives.

- **Women's legal rights**. Participants from a number of countries (such as Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda and Syria) noted women's unequal treatment under the law. This includes the enjoyment of their rights to inheritance, land, and business ownership. Even where the law accords equal rights, tradition and practices may deny women's access to equal rights. Legal interpretation that de facto treats women as second-class citizens fundamentally undermines the possibilities for women to play active roles as leaders in society. For example, Edouard Munyamaliza from the Rwanda Men's Resource Centre noted that the application of the new law on matrimonial regimes, succession and liberalities proved difficult due to cultural beliefs on the roles of women and men: "Instead of taking advantage of this positive change to advance socio-economic development, once again women are victims of violence and abuse of rights."

- **Women affected by armed conflict**. Women's social vulnerability in conflicts and other crises was highlighted as a major hurdle to women assuming leadership positions. In conflict environments, even with the existence of quotas for women's leadership and a pool of women skilled to take on leadership positions, women opt not to take on such positions because of security concerns.

- **Violence against women** Participants from Austria, Cambodia, Iraq, Pakistan and Rwanda noted that violence against women, including trafficking of women, threatens women's security and greatly impedes their willingness to take on public roles.

- **Women's health**. Participants from Syria and Pakistan noted women's lack of access to health care is an impediment to women assuming leadership roles, while others pointed to the issue of maternal mortality. For example, Rottna Leang from Cambodia, pointed out that (…) "a notable health concern for women and a lagging indicator amongst the Cambodian millennium development goals is the maternal mortality ratio. Improvements in preventive and curative health care have benefited women."

- **Tokenism and lack of commitment to gender equality**. Several participants raised the issue of tokenism when women are being appointed to leadership positions to fulfill affirmative action requirements rather than on the basis of merit. Shola Oshodi-John of the Gender Initiative for Transformation, Nigeria, noted that "As democracy gets entrenched in countries within [the West African] sub-region, it is imperative that a paradigm shift is made from appointing women into leadership position as a favour [to] a question of women's right to adequate representation and participation in the affairs of their nation, as citizens with equal rights with men and not as a lesser citizen based on their sex. Although, most [West African] countries have signed various regional and international instruments to integrate women into governance, it has been more rhetoric to please their international friends and partners. So … women's role in leadership is more an add-on rather than an integral part of public policy and development." Muyunda Chlwesa of the Zambia Alliance

of Women noted the lip service rendered to gender equality. She stated that "Gender representation in all business, public and political party spheres is far below the 30 per cent stipulated in the National Gender Policy [despite the fact] that Zambia is a party to a Southern African Development Community (SADC) gender equality protocol signed by SADC heads, which adopted 50 per cent (equal) representation in all decision-making positions."

Institutional level

59. Participants highlighted the following institutional constraints and barriers:

- **Lack of affirmative action (temporary special measures)**. Discrimination, lack of institutional quotas, policies and programmes for attracting women leaders were considered systematic impediments in institutions. Participants indicated that organizations did not do enough to attract women leaders and to support them in their leadership roles. Referring to Latin American countries, Liliana Cisneros noted that in rare cases where anti-discrimination policies may be in place, a lack of enforcement mechanisms undermines them. Contributions of participants from Australia, Canada, Mali and Azerbaijan indicated that, despite gender equality legislations and policies in government and the private sector, as well as laws to combat discrimination, sexual harassment and employment inequity, there continue to be barriers preventing women from occupying senior decision-making positions. Participants from Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States expressed concern that despite ostensible commitment and legislation to promote gender equality, this goal was largely unachieved in their countries.

- **Lack of leadership training and mentoring**. A number of participants (from countries such as India, Indonesia, Iraq, Nigeria and Tanzania) highlighted a lack of specific management training, skills training, professional development, decision-making skills and mentorship programmes, which prevent women from being seen as effective leaders. Mercia Selva Malar from India noted, "The barriers that prevent [women] from making effective decisions are: resistance and acceptance from the counterparts, stigma attached to women as emotional beings and not logical thinkers, protecting them from getting exposed to decision-making situations (male-caretakers deciding on their behalf). Decision-making is a skill, which can be honed by practicing the skill. Women need to be encouraged and provided the required opportunity to make decisions for themselves and others."

- **Sexual harassment**. Within the workplace discrimination and sexual harassment were raised as challenges. Sexual harassment was considered a "major barrier to leadership positions. Women who don't acquiesce to sexual advances from male participants typically do not get promoted or they are frustrated out of the workforce" (Kenya). Joan Oviawe from Nigeria noted that sexual harassment was another "major barrier to leadership positions", that prevented "some women from occupying leadership roles. This is a major problem that the government is not tackling."

- **The role of human resources departments in facilitating women's leadership**. Participants indicated that human resources departments are largely failing to promote gender equality in senior decision-making positions. Victoria Kenny from Argentina argued that in Latin America, most human resources departments "do not do a good job in

training employees about equal opportunity regulations and do not help women reach senior level positions of decision-making. Most of these issues are seen as non-urgent and maybe not as pertinent for the local idiosyncrasies." Liliana Cisneros from the United States noted that it is important "to target human resources as key areas for transformation … because human resources departments tend to reproduce old models, serving as gatekeepers for women."

- **Other constraints**. The following constraints were also raised:
  o Gender-blind policies have a negative impact on 'promoting gender equality and limiting opportunities for women to take decision-making and leadership positions" (as noted by Bahar Salimova in reference to the former Soviet Union).
  o Rules, codes of conducts, organizational cultures of public institutions, courts and the private sector are mostly set up by men, with the assumption that men will be the main actors and will work with other men.
  o Gender-based discrimination at many levels prevents women from getting senior positions traditionally held by men. In addition, women who experience discrimination based on race, caste and social class face even greater obstacles. For example, Munjula Pradeep from India wrote, "I am deeply concerned about the situation of Dalit women in South Asia, mainly in India, Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The level of education amongst Dalit women is very low. They are forced to work as manual scavengers, i.e., manually handling of human excrement, or pushed into temple prostitution in the southern part of India. The leadership of Dalit women to some extent is coming up but they face the triple burden of caste, class and gender."
  o In countries with large youth populations women may face discrimination based on age and appearance. Liliana Cisneros from the United States noted that, in Latin America, pictures are required to be included in [a job] application package. Some employers include "good presentation" as a requisite. The problem is that good presentation can be interpreted in many ways at the discretion of the employer. Some women even go to expensive surgery operations to increase their chances to be employed. Even in academia, women over 35 are less likely to find a scholarship or to be admitted to an academic programme because of the requirements of the institutions."

Individual level

60. Participants highlighted the following constraints at the individual level:

- **Lack of self-confidence**. A number of participants stated that women felt limited by internalized gender stereotypes and lacked the confidence to see themselves as leaders. Rose Uchem, Executive Director, Ifendu For Women's Development, Nigeria, stated, "The problems and obstacles to women's exercise of leadership are complex. However, the major part consists of gender issues, which include women's obstacle to themselves in the form of internalized oppression. Internalized oppression is the cumulative impact of male oppression of women on their psyche, conditioning them to act against themselves and to take this as normal, and so try to stop any attempts to change this situation." Women who lack confidence are likely to opt out of potential leadership positions. Similarly, Geraldene Hodelin, President-Elect 2006-2008, International Federation of

Home Economics, expressed concern that women often do not feel entitled to be leaders. She commented, "What fascinates me is the notion that women do not often believe that they are entitled to occupy certain positions and often express surprise that they are selected over a man. Do we not have enough role models and mentors for us to take our leadership potential and opportunities for granted?"

- **Costs**. Mala Bhandari from India highlighted the high costs of keeping up to date in the modern world and having access to information and communication technologies and networks for leadership positions. She felt that as a potential leader, a woman needed to have access to services, such as telephone lines, fax, Internet connection, transportation, etc. Lack of access was seen as an impediment, particularly for women in developing countries.

4.6. Changing norms and challenging the status quo

61. A number of participants called for a redefinition of the male paradigm of leadership towards one that embraces women as equal partners. For example Rose Uchem from Nigeria, noted "everyone must recognize and accept that the male headship model of society must give way to the equal partnership model. Affirmation of woman's full humanity implies that she can play her part in the governance of her society and should not be debarred from exercising her abilities to full capacity. It also means that where oppressive cultures and legislations have stunted women's leadership abilities and confidence, they should be trained to increase their capacity to assume and exercise leadership roles."

62. Some participants noted that a "feminine leadership style" —often attributed to women—is characterized by cooperation, participation, sharing of power and information, consensus-building, teamwork, and enhancing the self-worth of others. This style can be a competitive advantage in the 21st century. Current leadership thinking suggests that, to be effective, organizations and firms need to capitalize on both the so-called "masculine" and "feminine" leadership attributes. Highlighting a fundamental tension, others felt that women needed to be more "aggressive" to be—and to be seen as—credible, assertive decision-makers.

63. Participants from Iran and Sierra Leone pointed out that some traditional leadership models allow women significant authority. For instance, Kerline Joseph of Canada noted, "Among the Temne [people] located in the Northern Province of Sierra Leone for example, the cultural barrier does not allow women to become chief. However, the Mende [people] located south of the country agree that women as well as men can become boss or chief." Similarly, in Iran, Nahid Motie, Director of the Women's Studies Department of the Open University, noted, "I think it is very important to understand the informal situation of women's lives rather than the formal ones, because the latter one is full of political considerations and [cannot] show the real status of women. In my country women have many [and] various leadership positions if the informal setting has been considered." Institutions looking to promote women senior leaders should identify and adapt cultural paradigms that encourage women's leadership.

64. David Kenneth Waldman, President, To Love Children Educational Foundation International, United States, underscored the role of the media and the educational system to change norms relating to women leaders, noting that there is "a need for a systemic way of thinking of gender

[equality] as a human rights issue [requiring] consistent support of the media as well as a gender [equality] education curriculum in all schools. Change happens when norms change."

5. Theme Four: Wrap up and other issues

65. The final week of the discussion was devoted emerging issues, wrap-up and recommendations for future action.

Summary of discussions

66. To counter the gender gap in senior leadership, participants provided a range of recommendations, suggesting that governments, institutions, grassroots organizations and the UN system should play an instrumental role in ensuring women that gain better access to executive positions. Participants' suggestions can be clustered around the following themes:

- Country and society level recommendations to promote equal opportunity and facilitate women's access to leadership positions;
- Gender-sensitive educational policies and systems to eliminate gender gaps in education;
- Institutional policies and temporary special measures to further gender equality and diversity; and
- Suggestions to the UN as the leading body concerned with gender equality.

Country/society level recommendations

67. Participants made the following country/society level recommendations:

- Develop gender-sensitive laws, policies and programmes based on a thorough understanding of the issues that affect women's leadership. Governments should take the lead and act as role models by adopting gender-sensitive laws, based on solid understanding of the multifaceted issues that affect women and by providing related guidelines for public and private sector organizations to create a gender-balanced workforce. According to Bahar Salimova of the International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics, "Government institutions and legislators should pay particular attention to adopting gender-sensitive laws, policies and budgets. The negligence of government agencies in recognizing that laws and policies have a different impact on women and men also negatively impacts gender equality. For example, new social-welfare laws and policies in the former Soviet Union region have been negatively affecting women's access to health care, education and professional development. These gender-blind laws contributed to increasing illiteracy among girls and women in the region and limiting opportunities for women to take on decision-making and leadership positions. Therefore, government officials and legislators should commit to creating favorable regulatory environments, adopting gender sensitive laws and policies, and ensuring their strict implementation."

- Raise awareness among national economic and business associations in the private sector about the obstacles to, and value-added of, women's leadership so that they can provide appropriate management training and support.

- Raise awareness among the general population about the effects of gender equality policies and organize voters' education programmes on how gender relations influence policy decisions and the need to appoint more women leaders.

- Develop and widely disseminate at country-level "Who's Who" directories with biographies of women in leadership.

- Require vendors who provide goods and services to governments and international agencies to increase the number of women in leadership positions in their organizations.

- Establish a national prize for enterprises that have a demonstrated commitment to women in senior leadership positions.

- Establish a national prize for universities and colleges that include issues of women's leadership training in their curricula.

- Address entrenched bias and prejudice that deny women equal status through widespread grassroots initiatives.

Recommendations for improving education

68. Participants made the following recommendations to improve women's educational profile for leadership roles:

- Governments should implement education programmes, skills building and leadership training that prepare girls and women for leadership positions. Mercia Selva Malar from India and other participants advocated for eliminating gender gaps in education and ensuring that girls and women of "all countries of all religions and ethnic groups" receive mandatory education.

- David Kenneth Waldman of the Unites States argued that academia should "lead the way in educating and creating leaders trained in gender [sensitive] education. All elementary and secondary educational institutions need to have gender education as a mandatory requirement in order [for students] to graduate."

Institutional level recommendations

69. Participants made the following institutional level recommendations:

- **Human resources departments**. Participants highlighted the important functions that human resources departments need to perform to attract women to leadership positions and support them, including by:
  - Ensuring that affirmative action quotas for hiring women are in place and enforced;
  - Establishing transparent processes for hiring, promotion and leadership development;

o Raising awareness within institutions of the valuable role played by women leaders to counter gender stereotypes;

o Providing women leaders with training and formalized mentoring to carry out their leadership roles and grow in these positions; and

o Creating enabling business practices that allow women and men to balance the demands of leadership while also being able to care for their families.

- **Management and leadership training**. Participants highlighted specific areas of training which they saw as important for women's leadership-building, including:

  o Management and knowledge of global markets;

  o Technological awareness; and

  o Advocacy and decision-making.

- **Mentoring**. Mentoring was raised by several participants as an important institutional support mechanism for upcoming leaders. Ninette Trifiletti, Chair of BPW International Mentoring Taskforce from Australia, noted the importance of formalizing mentoring institutionally, with documented goals, an action plan and measurement of outcomes.

- **Networking**. Contrary to men, women often do not have access to professional networks, which are critical for career development. Networking was therefore highlighted as a way for current and aspiring women leaders to build professional relations that enable them to grow as leaders (Australia, Nigeria, and United States).

Recommendations for the United Nations and other international organizations

70. Participants made the following recommendations for the United Nations and other international organizations:

- Several recommendations were directed to the United Nations, given its leadership position in driving the agenda for gender equality. Participants suggested that the United Nations create opportunities for women in leadership within United Nations agencies.

  o Ensure women are in decision-making roles in all areas of the United Nations, including peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

  o Host networking meetings of women in leadership roles at national, provincial and district levels, supported by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

  o Create a mentorship programme based on Principle 6 of the United Nation's Global Compact, which deals with elimination of discrimination in employment and occupation. In this programme, companies which successfully apply Principle 6 and develop sound policies for elimination of gender discrimination, would be awarded a prize and showcased in the media.

- A few participants proposed the development of a strict international watchdog mechanism on women in leadership to monitor governments' actions on their gender equality commitments. Another suggestion in a similar vein was to develop a gender equality accountability mechanism within the United Nations and other international institutions. Timothy Symonds of the United Kingdom suggested a "list of shame" be established,

adding, "It would do a lot of good if a site could be developed where an assessment could be made of senior men and senior women in international organizations, which would judge whether they were really doing their jobs" in ensuring equal opportunities for men and women. Those who were not would be entered on the "list of shame" but would have the opportunity to improve their performance and be taken off the list."

6. Conclusion

71. The views presented in the online discussion are, for the most part, borne out by research on the status of women leaders across the world. Over the past few decades many countries have made progress in gender equality in senior management positions, but globally gains in gender equality in decision-making positions outside the political arena have been slow and uneven. To date, the most powerful and best-paid managerial positions are still out of reach for most women.

72. Participants outlined a number of successful strategies for increasing women's participation in the upper echelons of decision-making in the public and private sectors. In their views, because gender-based segregation in decision-making is closely linked to the general status of women and men in employment and society as well as the roles of women and men in relation to family responsibilities, a holistic, comprehensive approach is required to specifically address the causes of gender-based stereotyping. Gender equality must also be promoted in all domains –education, public administration, civil society organizations, the private sector and trade unions.[7]

73. At the national level, legal frameworks and regulatory mechanisms are needed to eliminate discrimination on the grounds of sex. Where these rules and regulations exist, they need to be rigorously enforced. Participants from several countries (including South Africa, Australia, Syria, Suriname and Sudan) noted that their country's gender equality legislation have had varying degrees of success in promoting positive trends towards gender equality beyond the political sphere. In some countries, governments, businesses, trade unions and women's organizations are paying more attention to systemic discrimination that prevents women from entering and rising in leadership positions. Affirmative action and awareness-raising campaigns can reverse cultural stereotypes and promote more positive model of women as leaders and decision-makers.

74. At the institutional level, organizations should improve the principles of gender equality and non-discrimination in recruitment, training and promotion. To attract aspiring women leaders, human resources departments in the public and private sectors will need to ensure that women have clear, formal trajectories for career development from the entry level to the senior leader positions. They should provide ongoing opportunities for mentorship and leadership training; provide avenues for women to take on management roles; institute equal opportunity measures and equal pay policies; promote diversity in fields that are traditionally male-dominated; and prevent sexual harassment in the workplace.

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[7] Breaking Through the Glass Ceiling: Women in Management (ILO)
http://www.ilo.org/dyn/gender/docs/RES/292/f267981337

75. Providing women with the flexibility they need to allow them to balance family life with the demands of professional leadership was found to greatly enhance women's willingness and ability to take on leadership positions as this was considered a major obstacle by women from around the world. At the same time, the online discussion did not generate a great deal of discussion on the role of men in promoting women's leadership. However, effective gender equality strategies require men's engagement in the process at all levels. Identifying and engaging male champions to advance women leadership, particularly at the management level, is critical for getting high level commitment for change. Targeting measures both women and men to support a better balance between work and family will avoid reinforcing the stereotype of women being solely in charge of domestic and care work.

76. In conclusion, "no country in the world, no matter how advanced, has achieved true gender equality, as measured by comparable decision-making power, equal opportunities for education and advancement, and equal participation and status in all walks of human endeavor. Gender disparities exist, even in countries without glaring male domination."[8]

77. Given the absence of standardized data on women leaders outside the political arena, it is critical to further collect and analyze data on the status of women in leadership in all domains and in all countries. Tracking progress across countries will require internationally agreed indicators and standardized data collection methodologies on women's leadership. The data should be widely disseminated, allowing countries and the international community to assess progress, to adopt targets, and to develop more innovative strategies for promoting women as decision-makers in all sectors.

ANNEX 1—Selected resources

Gateway to United Nations resources on gender equality

- WomenWatch is a central gateway to information and resources on the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women throughout the United Nations system. www.un.org/womenwatch

Division for the Advancement of Women, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations
- www.un.org/womenwatch/daw

Institutional level strategies
- Women's Empowerment: Measuring the Global Gender Gap (World Economic Forum) http://www.weforum.org/pdf/Global_Competitiveness_Reports/Reports/gender_gap.pdf

- Improved Childcare Policies Required for Work/Life Balance (OECD): http://www.oecd.org/document/45/0,3343,en_2649_201185_39699821_1_1_1_1,00.html

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[8] Women's empowerment. Measuring the Gender Global Gap. http://ilo.org/dyn/gender/docs/RES/292/f267981337

- Get Gender Sensitive, UNESCO Education
  http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.phpURL_ID=14096&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html
- Education for Girls: see Ouagadougou Declaration
  http://www.unesco.org/education/information/pdf/283_87.pdf

- ILO (2004). *Breaking through the glass ceiling: women in management*:
  www.ilo.org/dyn/gender/docs/RES/292/f267981337

- The International Finance Corporation (the private sector arm of the World Bank)
  www.ifc.org/gem

Women in the private sector

- Women in Business portal: www.womenbiz.gov/index.html

- Catalyst (2004). *The Bottom Line: Connecting Corporate Performance and Gender Diversity:* www.catalyst.org/knowledge/titles/title.php?page=lead_finperf_04

- Women's Executive Network - a Canadian network dedicated to the advancement and recognition of executive-minded women in the workplace.
  http://www.wxnetwork.com/membership.html

Women in politics

- Inter-Parliamentary Union: http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm

- International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics: http://www.iknowpolitics.org/

- Global Database of Quotas for Women: http://www.quotaproject.org/

Women in the public sector

- European Commission, Database on women and men in decision-making
  ec.europa.eu/employment_social/women_men_stats/out/measures_out55_en.htm

- Women on Boards, New Zealand: www.mwa.govt.nz/women-on-boards

- Mentoring: International Federation of Business and Professional Women
  http://www.bpw-international.org/services/bpw-services-mentoring.htm

Women in the judiciary

- International Association of Women Judges: www.iawj.org/what/sydney.asp

Women in the media

- Femlink Pacific: www.femlinkpacific.org.fj/

- Genderlinks/South Africa: www.genderlinks.org.za

- The International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF's): http://www.iwmf.org/

Women in trade unions

- Survey of women's participation in trade union confederations across Europe, with recommendations and examples of good practice. 2003. http://www.etuc.org/a/234

Women's leadership groups

- Global Task Force on Women's Leadership in the 21st Century: http://www.marcusventures.com/womenleaders.htm

- Council of Women World Leader http://www.womenworldleaders.org

ANNEX 2: **Statistics on participation**

a) Registrants

Total number of registrations: **1236**

Registrants by sex

Male
7%

Female
93 %
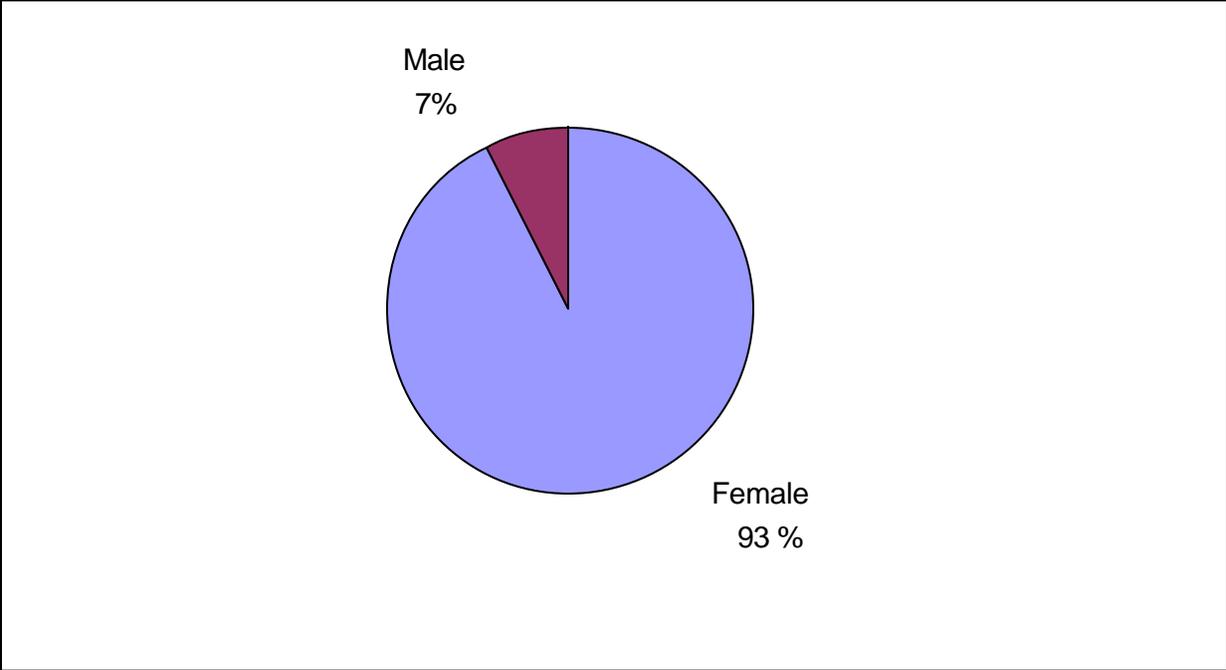
Registrants by affiliation

Other / None
17%

Elected Body
1%

Media
2%

Fund/Foundation
2%

Private Sector
7%

Government
8%

United Nations
8%

Academia
15%

NGOs
40%

Legend:
- NGOs
- Academia
- United Nations
- Government
- Private Sector
- Fund/Foundation
- Media
- Elected Body
- Other
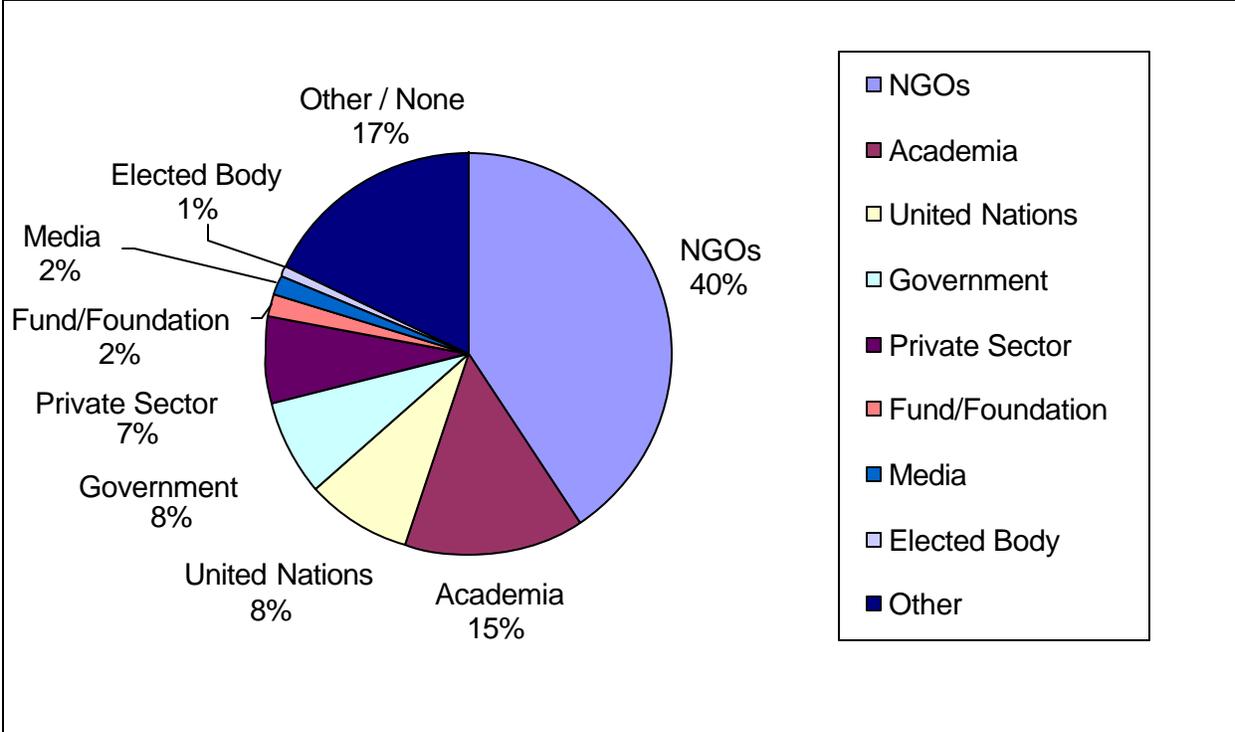
Geographical distribution of registrants
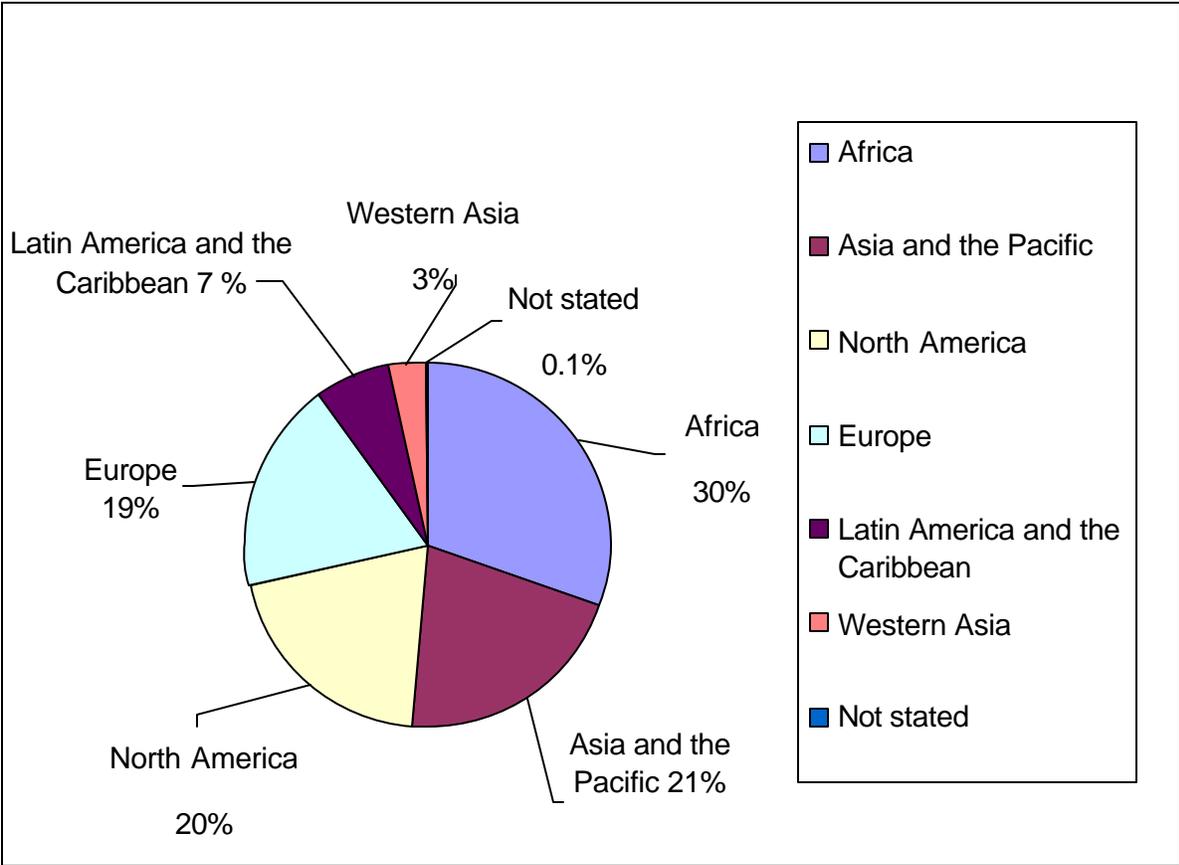
Registrants by age
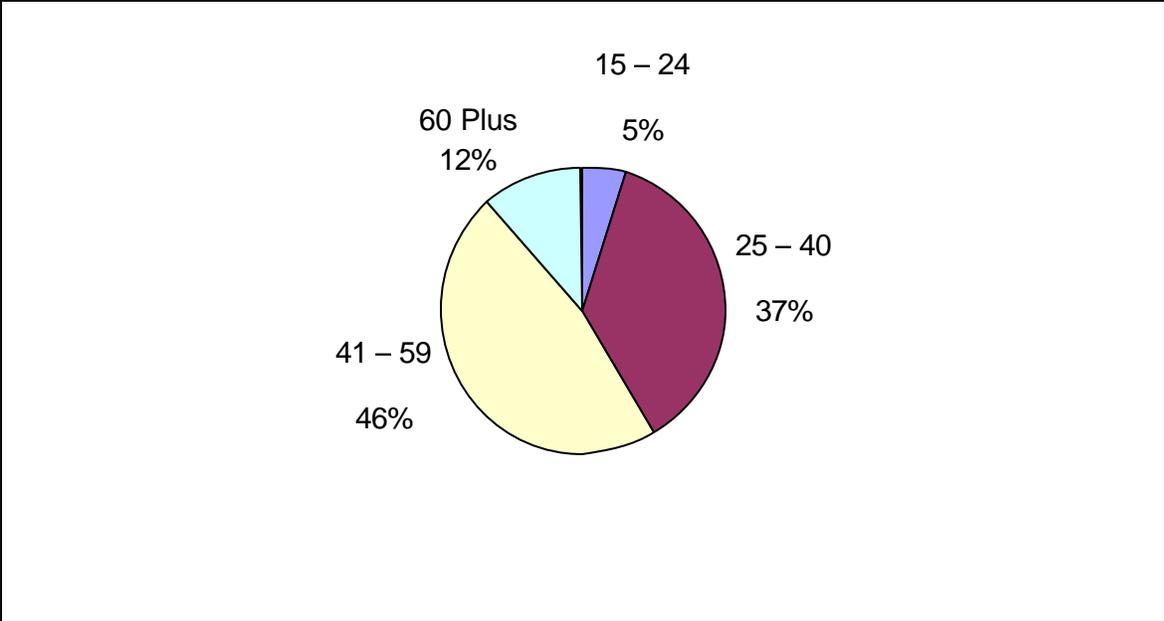
Top 10 nationalities represented in registrants
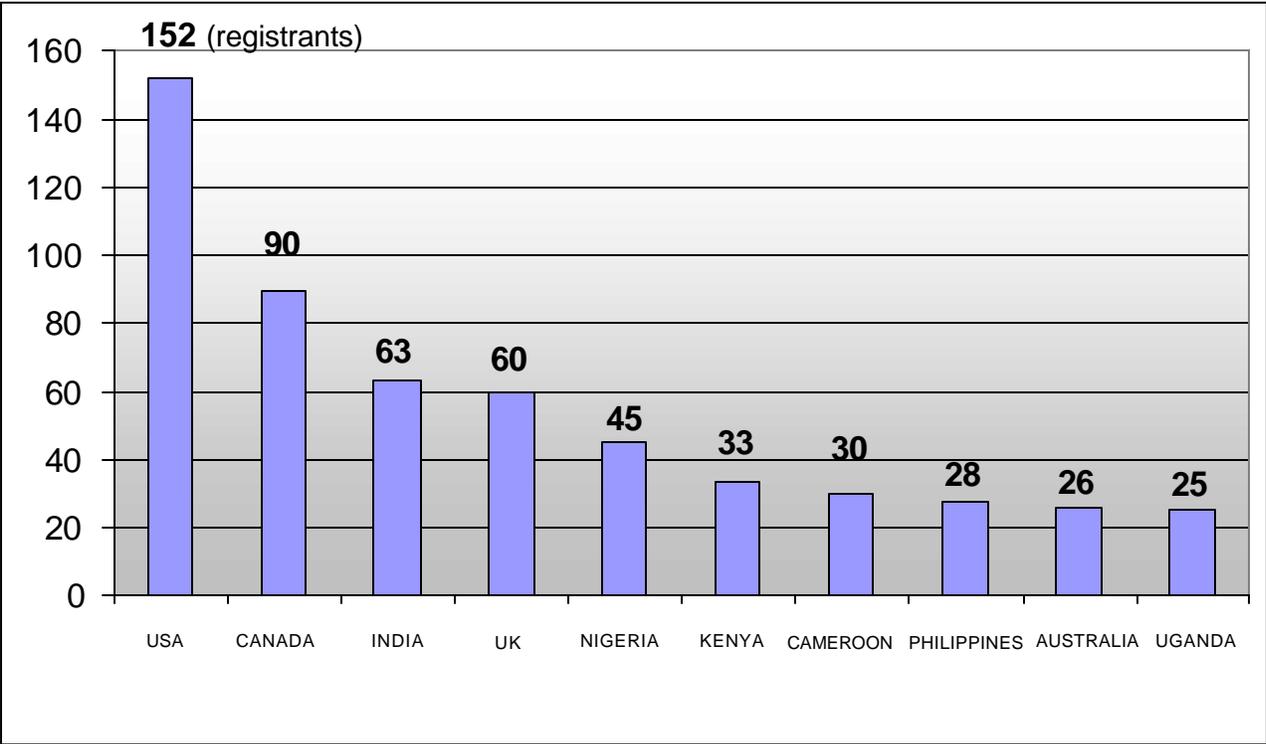
b) Contributors (i.e., registrants who posted at least 1 message)

Total number of contributors: **150**
Total number of postings: **323**

Contributors by sex

Contributors by affiliation

Contributors by affiliation

Elected Body
0%

Other/None
12%

Media
1%

Fund/Foundation
2%

Private Sector
6%

Government
9%

United Nations
7%

Academia
19%

NGOs
44%

NGOs
Academia
United Nations
Government
Private Sector
Fund/Foundation
Media
Elected Body
Other/None
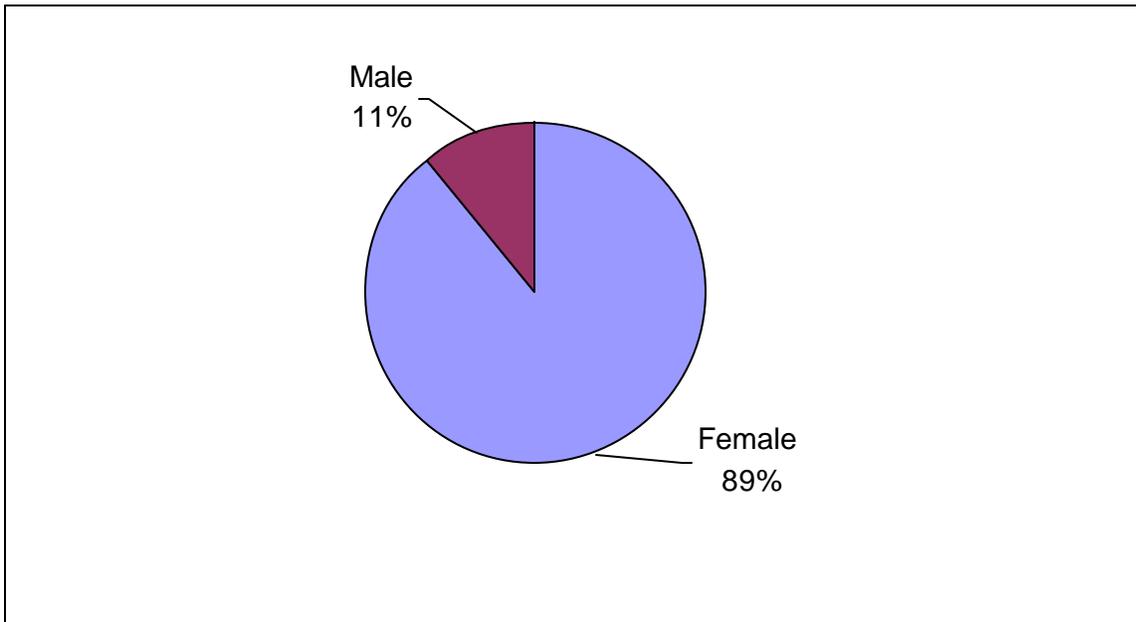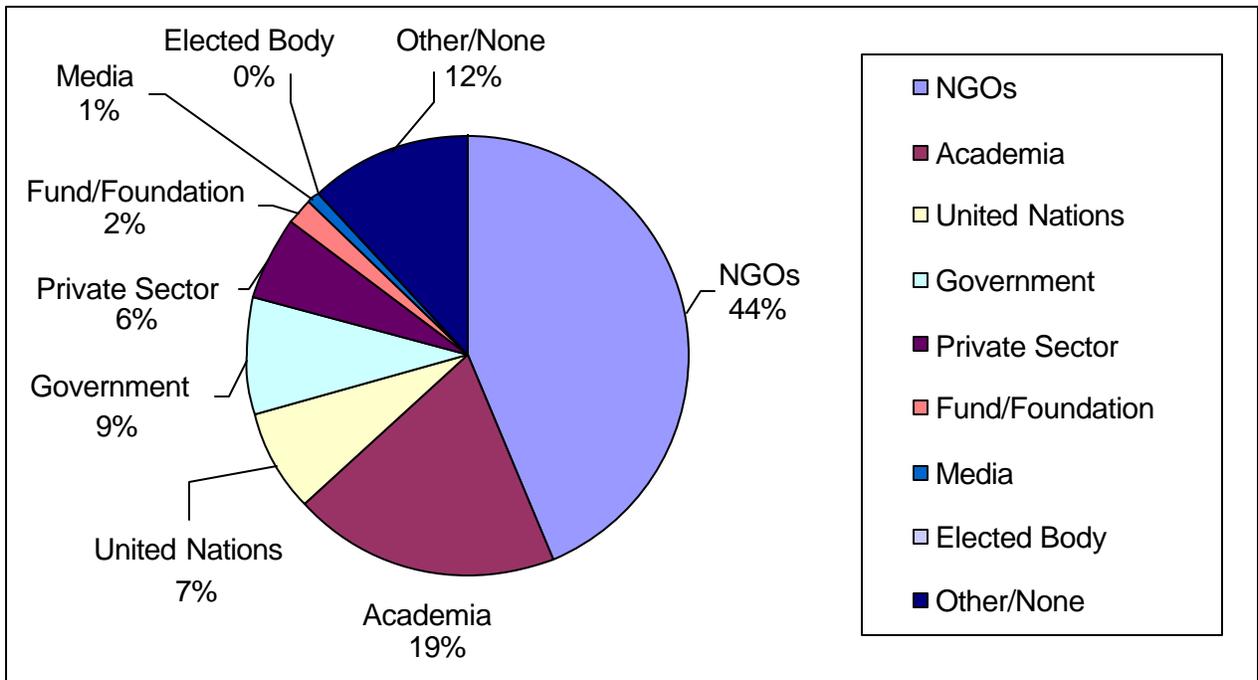
Geographical distribution of contributors

Western Asia
3%

Latin America and
the Caribbean
5%

Not stated
0%

Europe
13%

Contributors by age

North America
11%

Africa
41%

Asia and the Pacific
27%

Africa
Asia and the Pacific
North America
Europe
Latin America and the
Caribbean
Western Asia
Not stated

15 - 24
2%

60 Plus
14%

25 - 40
32%

41 - 59
52%
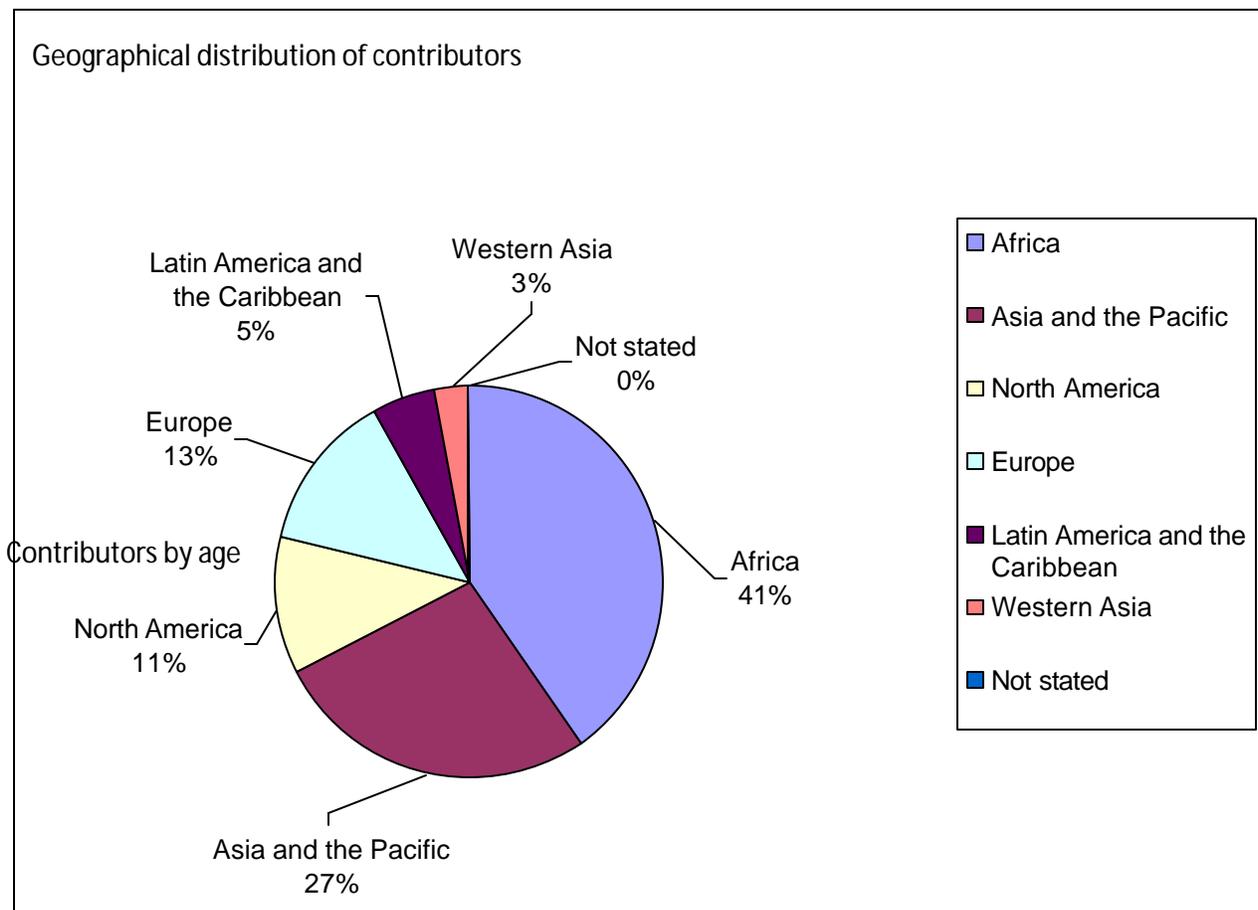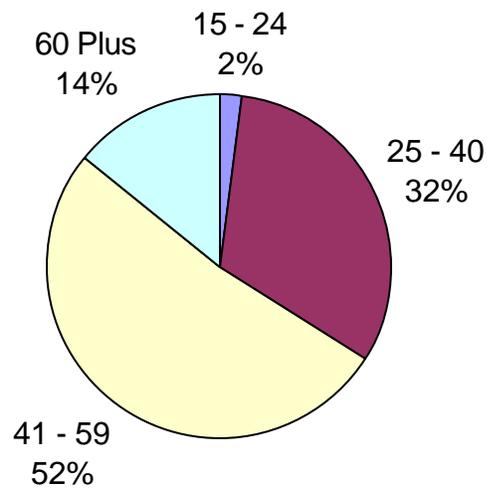
Top 9 nationalities represented in contributors
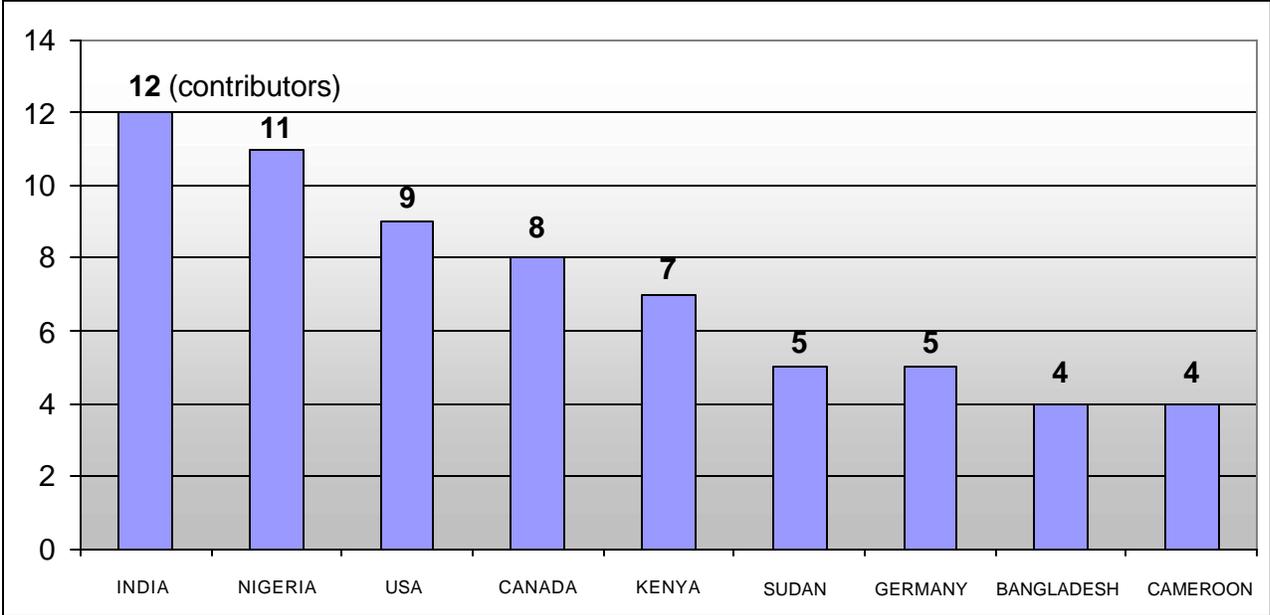
Number of participants in online discussion by country

a) Registrants:

|						
Africa	ANGOLA	2	Asia and the Pacific	AFGHANISTAN	3
	BENIN	10		AUSTRALIA	26
	BURKINA FASO	4		AZERBAIJAN	5
	BURUNDI	5		BAHRAIN	9
	CAMEROON	30		BANGLADESH	14
	CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC	1		CAMBODIA	1
	CONGO, REPUBLIC OF THE	5		CHINA	3
	COTE D' IVOIRE	5		FIJI	2
	DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO	17		GEORGIA	2
	EGYPT	8		INDIA	63
	ERITREA	1		INDONESIA	15
	ETHIOPIA	7		IRAN, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF	5
	GABON	1		IRAQ	3
	GAMBIA	5		ISRAEL	1
	GHANA	15		JAPAN	8
	GUINEA	5		JORDAN	11
	KENYA	33		KIRIBATI	2
	LESOTHO	8		KYRGYZSTAN	1
	LIBERIA	3		MALAYSIA	4
	MADAGASCAR	1		MALDIVES	2
	MALAWI	3		MONGOLIA	1
	MALI	11		MYANMAR	2
	MAURITANIA	1		NEPAL	9
	MAURITIUS	2		NEW ZEALAND	13
	MOROCCO	2		OMAN	1
	MOZAMBIQUE	4		PAKISTAN	24
	NIGER	5		PALESTINE	1
	NIGERIA	45		PAPUA NEW GUINEA	2
	RWANDA	8		PHILIPPINES	28
	SENEGAL	10		REPUBLIC OF KOREA	2
	SIERRA LEONE	3		SINGAPORE	3
	SOMALIA	4		SOLOMON ISLANDS	1
	SOUTH AFRICA	17		SRI LANKA	7
	SUDAN	19		SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC	4
	SWAZILAND	1		THAILAND	6
	TOGO	2		TIMOR-LESTE	1
	TUNISIA	3		TONGA	1
	UGANDA	25		UZBEKISTAN	4
	UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA	18		VANUATU	3
	ZAMBIA	12		VIET NAM	1
	ZIMBABWE	23		YEMEN	2
	TOTAL	**384**		**TOTAL**	**296**

Europe		
	ALBANIA	5
	ARMENIA	1
	AUSTRIA	13
	BELARUS	1
	BELGIUM	1
	BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	1
	CROATIA	1
	CYPRUS	2
	DENMARK	5
	FINLAND	3
	FRANCE	11
	GERMANY	15
	GREECE	7
	IRELAND	6
	ITALY	11
	LATVIA	2
	LITHUANIA	2
	MALTA	2
	MOLDOVA	1
	MONTENEGRO	1
	NETHERLANDS	20
	NORWAY	4
	POLAND	2
	PORTUGAL	6
	ROMANIA	2
	RUSSIAN FEDERATION	3
	SPAIN	19
	SWEDEN	3
	SWITZERLAND	8
	TURKEY	14
	UKRAINE	1
	UNITED KINGDOM	60
	TOTAL	**233**

Latin America and the Caribbean		
	ANTIGUA & BARBUDA	1
	ARGENTINA	11
	BOLIVIA	3
	BRAZIL	11
	CHILE	3
	COLOMBIA	6
	COSTA RICA	1
	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	3
	ECUADOR	2
	GRENADA	1
	GUATEMALA	2
	GUYANA	1
	HAITI	5
	JAMAICA	3
	MEXICO	13
	PANAMA	1
	PERU	6
	SURINAME	2
	TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO	1
	URUGUAY	4
	VENEZUELA	1
	TOTAL	**81**

North America		
	CANADA	90
	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	152
	TOTAL	**242**

b) Contributors:

Africa		
	BENIN	1
	BURKINA FASO	1
	CAMEROON	4
	CONGO, REPUBLIC OF THE	1
	COTE D' IVOIRE	3
	DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO	1
	ETHIOPIA	1
	GHANA	1
	GUINEA	1
	KENYA	7
	LIBERIA	1
	MALI	2
	MOZAMBIQUE	1
	NIGERIA	11
	RWANDA	1
	SENEGAL	1
	SIERRA LEONE	1
	SOMALIA	2
	SOUTH AFRICA	1
	SUDAN	5
	TOGO	1
	TUNISIA	1
	UGANDA	2
	UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA	3
	ZAMBIA	3
	ZIMBABWE	3
	TOTAL	**60**

Asia and the Pacific		
	AFGHANISTAN	1
	AUSTRALIA	3
	AZERBAIJAN	2
	BANGLADESH	4
	CAMBODIA	1
	FIJI	1
	INDIA	12
	INDONESIA	3
	IRAN, ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF	1
	IRAQ	1
	JAPAN	1
	KIRIBATI	1
	KYRGYZSTAN	1
	NEPAL	1
	NEW ZEALAND	1
	PAKISTAN	3
	PHILIPPINES	2
	SOLOMON ISLANDS	1
	SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC	3
	THAILAND	1
	TOTAL	**44**

Europe		
	AUSTRIA	3
	GERMANY	5
	IRELAND	1
	POLAND	1
	PORTUGAL	3
	SPAIN	1
	TURKEY	3
	UNITED KINGDOM	3
	TOTAL	**20**

Latin America and the Caribbean		
	ARGENTINA	2
	BOLIVIA	1
	BRAZIL	1
	JAMAICA	2
	PERU	1
	SURINAME	1
	TOTAL	**8**

North America		
	CANADA	8
	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	9
	TOTAL	**17**