



IN BRIEF



WOMEN LEADERSHIP & POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

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The Issue

Women have proven their merits as leaders and activists, pressing for a fairer and more inclusive world. However, women still do not have an equal representation in decision-making processes. Gender equality is both a requirement for effective, responsive and accountable societies, and a means of increasing the credibility and legitimacy of elected institutions.

Although Lebanese women gained the right to vote in 1953, and despite a vibrant feminist movement, women remain under-represented in public and political life. The outgoing parliament of 2009 only had 4 women Members of Parliament (MPs) out of 128 parliamentarians, representing 3.1% of the total, and only 2 additional women were elected after the 2018 election. At the local level, despite positive recent trends, women constitute less than 5.5% of elected council members. While Lebanon has a quota system to help ensure that Lebanon's 18 recognized religious denominations are represented in parliament, there are no Temporary Special Measures in place to promote women in political life.

The 2018 elections were marked by an unprecedented number of women candidates: 113 women submitted their candidacy, up from only 12 women candidates in 2009; and four women were appointed to Ministerial positions. This has generated a sense of hope around women's participation in politics amongst stakeholders. Nonetheless, the elections showed numerous systemic barriers limiting women's political participation, including: i) legal frameworks containing discriminatory provisions regarding women; ii) male dominated political parties which do not support women

candidates; iii) high costs of political financing, which limited the ability of disadvantage women candidature due to high fees and spending thresholds; iv) social norms and gender stereotypes and gender bias media coverage. Providing support to women is vital if they are to effectively participate and be fairly represented in political and public life.

Our Strategy for Change

Women's leadership and political participation (WPP) is one of UN-Women's core areas of work as mandated since its inception, recognizing the integral role of women in promoting strong and stable political processes and inclusive, just societies.

Taking action to ensure women's full and effective leadership at all levels of decision making requires a comprehensive multi-faceted strategy:

(1) Support the development and implementation of robust legal frameworks and administrative arrangements that facilitate women's participation.

This includes relevant reforms to constitutions, gender equality laws or party statutes, and policy actions such as setting numerical targets for women in leadership positions with temporary special measures (TSMs) and reforming party statutes.

(2) Expand the pool of qualified and capable women to run for election, including through initiating programmes that boost women's confidence and capacity to lead, enhancing their campaign strategies and techniques and promoting linkages with supportive CSOs.

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(3) Transform gender norms so that women are accepted as legitimate and effective leaders

including through developing campaigns that sensitize the media and electorate on the need for women in public life at all levels.

(4) Support women leaders in gender-sensitive political institutions, including parliament, political parties and EMBs, to attract, promote and retain women leaders, and highlight the constructive contribution they make to decision-making.

Theory of Change

If (1) electoral frameworks and arrangements promote gender balance in elections; (2) if a cadre of interested, diverse and capable female political leaders is formed; (3) if women are perceived as legitimate political leaders; and (4) if women are promoted as leaders in gender sensitive political institutions, then (5) women will be politically empowered and realize their rights, because (6) women will have political agency and lead in decision-making.

Achievements

In Lebanon, during 2018 UN Women implemented an elections support roadmap for the 2018 Parliamentary Elections in close collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme, and national stakeholders including the Office of the Minister of State for Women's Affairs. The activities below were implemented over the months preceding the 2018 parliamentary elections, with an aim of promoting women in politics in Lebanon and to support women's participation in the elections at all levels.

- **Public Awareness Campaign** to Enhance Women's Participation in Elections. A public media awareness raising campaign was developed and rolled out to enhance the role of Lebanese women's participation in the 2018 Parliamentary Elections. A three-phase campaign looked at issues of women in elections, as candidates and voters, and focused on promoting an inclusive electoral process encouraging political parties to nominate and view women as leaders.
- **Technical Assistance:** "Lebanese Women in Elections 2018". Leading up to the 2018 parliamentary elections, information sessions and technical assistance sessions

to aspirants and voters were provided. Sessions aimed at enhancing the capacities of women to participate in elections and gain necessary skills and information to successfully run as candidates.

- **Gender sensitization of media agencies and personnel.** UN Women worked to bring together prominent media agencies and personnel under the headline: "Meet the Media". Discussions highlighted a joint position from different media outlets to support women as candidates in the elections, while media representatives were engaged on misconceptions around gender roles and equality.
- **Providing policy decision makers with evidence-based information on measures to boost women participation.** UN Women provided technical expertise and empirical information with key recommendations to boost women's candidature and participation in the 2018 elections to policy decision makers and political party representatives from six major political parties.

Projected Objectives – 2019-2022

- **OUTCOME 1:**
Electoral frameworks and arrangements promote gender balance in elections and decision-making bodies;
 - Strengthened capacities of electoral stakeholders to promote gender balance in decision making
- **OUTCOME 2:**
A cadre of interested, diverse and capable women political leaders is formed;
 - Increased technical capacity of women to engage in leadership contests and political life
 - Diverse networks of support for women leaders created and sustained
- **OUTCOME 3:**
Women are perceived as equally legitimate and effective political leaders as men;
 - Increased community and civil society understanding of gender equality and women's rights to political participation is promoted through advocacy and social mobilization;
 - More political leaders publicly promote gender equality and women's leadership
- **OUTCOME 4:**
Women are promoted as leaders in gender sensitive political institutions;
 - National institutions made receptive to women leaders