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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### GENDERED POWER AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

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#### ABSTRACT

Le recours aux This paper attempts to explore the embedded relationship between dynamics of gendered power and their political participation, with a particular focus on the Global South. The Global South is a concept representing nations of Africa, Asia and Latin America which share a common history of colonialism and are gripped in the shackles of economic inequality and poverty. These nations working through the South-South Cooperation help to exchange their resources, technologies and knowledge to minimize their dependency on the the historical dominant powers, the Global North. This study reflects that gender-based power imbalance is a crucial factor in determining how women and men participate in politics in the Global South which is mainly driven by the traditional patriarchal systems, past political and social systems and the intersectional identities that creates unique forms of discrimination. To explore this, the paper employs a qualitative methodology based on a comprehensive review of existing theoretical literature, historical analyses, and varied case studies from Global South experiences. The findings reveal that women in the Global South face complex barriers to political inclusion which has its roots in patriarchal norms and past injustices. Political exclusion remains a blunt reality often worsened by the intersection of gender with other identities viz. class, race and disability despite stupendous efforts in this direction. Various strategies for political empowerment of women, drawing crucial lessons from successful and challenging experiences across the Global South have been identified in the present paper. It can be concluded that achieving gender equality in political participation in the Global South is a complex, ongoing struggle. A structural transformation is required to build an equitable political future of the existing political systems, societal norms and economic structures that gives privilege to men and marginalize the women (especially those with intersectional identities). As the study is limited to secondary data, it may not capture the complete picture of local contexts and the generalizations made through broader scope of Global South may also overlook specific dynamics. Future researches may focus on localized studies and longitudinal analyses of impacts of the policies undertaken.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Global South is not merely as a geographical grouping but as a group of nations which share similar socioeconomic and political histories, generally marked by low incomes, high poverty rates, and limited access to education and healthcare opportunities (Chant, S. H., & McIlwaine, C., 2009, Dados, N., & Connell, R., 2012). Crucially, many of these nations have been the subjects of colonialism, and they actively engage in "South-South cooperation" to challenge the historical, political and economic dominance of the Global North (Gray, K., & Gills, B. K., 2016, IDOS Discussion Paper 13/2024). This historical background which has its roots embedded in power imbalances and past injustices, has shaped the contemporary gendered power dynamics within these regions (Patil, V., 2013, Martins, Alex, 2020). Adopting a Global South-centric approach to the study of gender and politics is essential. There is a need to move beyond the ideas of Western feminism to understand the gender dynamics in a better way (Medie and Alice Kang, 2018). A detailed and more

accurate picture of how gender and power work together can be gained by looking at these specific local and global contexts.

### The "Private" vs. "Public" Divide

Deeply entrenched gender norms and expectations continue to confine women to the private sphere, where their primary role is often viewed as caregivers and homemakers, thereby discouraging political engagement. This creates a significant informal barrier that often undermines formal legal advancements in women's political participation. In many MENA countries, over two-thirds of respondents agree that "men are better at political leadership than women". This highlights the need to address deeply ingrained societal attitudes and norms alongside legislative reforms (George R., 2020).

**Some Key Concepts:** To provide a deeper analysis, it is crucial to establish clear definitions for the core concepts discussed in this paper.

Gendered Power Dynamics describe how power is unequally distributed based on gender, affecting social, political, and economic life (Seguino, S., 2013). This concept shows that societal rules and structures often favor men over women, leading to disadvantages for women in various areas. These power imbalances are not just individual issues but are systemic and structural, appearing everywhere from homes to workplaces and in access to education and healthcare, widening inequalities through social norms and institutions. (Dunford, R., & Perrons, D., 2014) They contribute to problems like wage gaps and a lack of women in leadership. To address this issue, the focus must be on changing the entire system, not just individual attitudes. This indicates that gendered power is not merely about individual biases but is deeply systemic, manifesting across diverse societal spheres and perpetuating inequality through established norms and institutions (Ridgeway, C. L., 2011).

Political Participation includes range of activities where people express their opinions and try to influence government decisions. This covers formal actions like voting and joining political parties, as well as informal activities such as community organizing, protesting, and even discussing social issues with family (Khasnabis C, Heinicke Motsch K, Achu K, et al., 2010). It's about how individuals contribute to shaping the world around them. Patriarchy is a social system where men have power and authority over women. In this system, men hold the top positions in politics, lead the family and social life, and has significant control over property (Johnson, A. G., 2004). This male dominance is often justified by the belief that it's natural and divinely ordained (Godelier, M., 1981). Historically, patriarchy became more common as societies developed the idea of private property, as men wanted to control the women and make sure their wealth was passed down to their male heirs.

Intersectionality, a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, provides a framework to understand how various social and political identities—such as race, gender, and class—overlap to create unique forms of both discrimination and privilege. Instead of viewing oppression as separate issues (for example, just racism or just sexism), intersectionality shows that people from marginalized groups, such as Black women, face a more complex, combined experience of oppression (Ramsay, N. J., 2014). Emphasizing how interlocking systems of power affect those most marginalized in society. The subsequent sections will first establish the theoretical foundations for understanding gender as a power relation, then delve into the historical and contemporary realities of political exclusion, systematically detailing the multifaceted barriers women face. Finally, the paper will explore advancements and strategies for women's political empowerment, drawing lessons from diverse Global South experiences (case studies) and offering policy recommendations for a more equitable political future.

**Theoretical Foundations:** Gender is not merely a social category but a fundamental mechanism through which power operates, both constraining and constituting individuals (Koester Diana, 2015; Maharaj, Z., 1995). Societal definitions of "masculine" and "feminine" behavior are inherently linked to power dynamics, often equating "feminine" with qualities like quietness, accommodation, and obedience, thereby associating them with powerlessness. Conversely, "manly" behavior is frequently linked to "power-over," the ability to get others to do what one desires. This means that the concept of gender itself is deeply intertwined with and constituted by power relations, where societal definitions of masculinity and femininity inherently assign power and powerlessness. This "invisible power" operates not only in public institutions but profoundly in intimate, everyday contexts, making its dismantling particularly challenging as it is often perceived as "natural". These power struggles are not confined to formal "public" political arenas. They also manifest profoundly in "intimate contexts, as everyday life," within the "private sphere" of households and personal relationships. The assertion "the personal is political" is illuminated by how private power dynamics influence and shape public ones (Koester Diana, 2015). Understanding this pervasive nature of gender as a power relation is crucial for uncovering the underlying causes of inequality

and working towards a more just society. Patriarchal ideologies are a set of beliefs that rationalize gender inequality claiming it to be natural or divine and therefore normal (Nagel, M., 2013). This makes it quite hard for people to change the prevailing system. Patriarchy system is not a static one, it evolves with the economy and adapts itself. For example, "neoliberal patriarchy" describes how modern economic policies can strengthen gender inequality. Under these policies, women often face a "double burden": they must work for pay and also take on more unpaid care responsibilities at home (Thakur, A., & Goyal, S., 2025). This happens because policies like reduced social spending and market liberalization shift the responsibility of care from the state to individual households, and that burden falls unfairly on women. Because of this neoliberalism, a single western-centric model can not be used to understand its nuances. A flexible, local approach is necessitated that can even recognize the evolution of neoliberal patriarchy in the Global South. Intersectionality as an analytical framework explains that different forms of discrimination such as racism, sexism interact and overlap to make a complex experience of oppression for people with multiple marginalized identities. For example, a Black woman doesn't face racism and sexism separately; she faces a distinct type of discrimination that is a result of both of those factors combined. This concept of intersectionality has two parts:

- **Structural Intersectionality:** It explains how different forms of systemic inequality (like sexism, racism, and classism) overlap and compound each other. For example, it shows how a woman of color might be more vulnerable to domestic violence and have less access to help because of the combined effects of her race and gender.
- **Political Intersectionality:** This focuses on how political movements or activists can unintentionally exclude people with multiple marginalized identities (Kumashiro, K. K., 2001). It argues that these groups focusing on a single issue like racism or sexism in isolation fails to address the unique challenges of those who face multiple forms of oppression.

This poses a critical challenge within feminist and anti-racist movements themselves. An effective political participation and advocacy for women in the Global South must explicitly adopt an intersectional approach to avoid continuing exclusions within liberation movements. It serves as an effective tool to focus the issues of marginalization and systematic oppression that were not very evident when single axis approach was used. By applying an intersectional analysis to the political experiences of diverse populations, the research illustrates how different identities are linked to distinct attitudes, behaviors, and political outcomes, offering deeper insights into political phenomena.

### **Feminist Political Economy: A Global South Perspective**

Feminist political economy (FPE) is a way of looking at the economy that combines feminist ideas with traditional economic thinking. It focuses on how gender, class, and race all work together within global capitalism to create and sustain inequality. It is built on the work of movements like Marxist feminism and Black feminism (Luxton, M., 2014) to show how these different forms of oppression are deeply connected, drawing on key works like Angela Davis's *Women, Race and Class* (Davis, A. Y., 2011). Colonialism had established a global division of labour and this differentiation among the labouring class continued to be created through gendered and racialized processes. This is exhibited by contemporary FPE. Its analysis is not limited to traditional economic spheres of the state and market but includes the household, family, community, and social reproduction as root causes of inequality, aiming to understand oppression and exploitation holistically. Feminist Political Economy (FPE) not just criticize existing systems; it also suggests transformative solutions (Rao, S., & Akram-Lodhi, A. H., 2021; Cavaghan, R., & Elomäki, A., 2021) It is an approach that moves away from judging a country's success solely by its GDP. Instead, it measures success by how well people are doing. It reconsiders that public spending on things like healthcare and education is not just a cost, but an investment that helps the

economy grow. It further argues that this public investment creates a positive cycle: makes workers more productive, promotes social justice, and boosts the economy in a way that benefits everyone, especially in the Global South. This demonstrates that FPE offers concrete policy implications for promoting gender and economic equity in the Global South (Sibanda, M., 2025).

**Historical Legacies and Contemporary Realities of Political Exclusion:** For a better understanding of gendered power, historical accounts of pre-colonial societies in Africa and Latin America is significant which focuses that women were not always powerless. In many cultures, they held significant political roles, such as monarchs (like the Queen Mothers of Ashanti and Egyptian pharaohs Nefertiti and Cleopatra), chiefs, and leaders (Bortolot, A. I., 2000). Similarly, pre-colonial Latin American societies, like the Mixtec, had female political leaders known as "cacicas," and Nahuatl society exhibited complementary gender roles where women held equally valued positions in certain spheres. (Garofalo, L., & O'Toole, R. S., 2006) This history challenges the common Eurocentric idea that women have always been excluded from power (Oyewumi, O., 2004). By recognizing that women held important positions before colonialism, we see that gender roles and power structures are not fixed but have changed over time due to historical forces, including the impact of colonialization. Colonialism shed a disruptive impact on the political influence of women. As a regressive force, it dismantled their leadership arena and secured male dominance. The male institutions were recognized and their counterparts were largely ignored (Anderson, S., et.al. 2025). The female political roles were marginalized in the British system of colonial rule. The patriarchal norms simply changed the existing power role of women.

Colonialism significantly weakened the political power of women. In Africa, the traditional leadership roles of women underwent a loss when the colonial borders divided the ethnic groups. In Latin America, under Spanish rule, indigenous women were forced to adopt new beliefs reducing their traditional influence. They were removed from their powerful religious and political positions which further diminished their influence. This shows that the decline of women's power was not a natural development but a direct result of colonial practices that created long-lasting patriarchal systems. After gaining independence, many countries in the Global South adopted political and economic systems that failed to address gender inequalities that the colonizers had left behind (Medie, P. A., & Kang, A. J. 2018). It was observed that the new system even aggravated these imbalances and the gender power differences which existed during colonialism persisted even after that (Ewelukwa, U., 2002). The Neo-liberal policies which was marked by deregulation, liberalization and privatization did worsen gender equality by strengthening the existing patriarchal systems and putting the economic pressures on women. Challenges seen today aren't mere the internal issues, they bear actual connections to these global and political structures.

"Unilateral coercive measures" and other such imperialist policies like ruining the social infrastructure and increasing the burden of unpaid care work have disproportionately harmed women. But these hard situations did not faded the power of women but have paved the way for stronger feminist movements. This marks the fact that women can fight back those oppressive systems with all her might and power (Seppälä, T., 2016). This underscores a persistent pattern of structural disadvantage, where historical colonialism and modern neoliberalism together perpetuate gender inequality (Wilson, K., 2011).

**Barriers to Women's Political Participation in the Global South:** Women in the Global South face significant obstacles to political participation, stemming from a combination of formal and informal barriers that are often compounded by their social identities. These challenges are not uniform but vary based on a woman's unique position in society. Despite formal legal reforms and international conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action, discriminatory laws and policies continue to

limit women's access to political office and rights in many Global South contexts (Chhimwal, G. M. Razia Parvin, 2023). For example, in countries like Saudi Arabia and Iran, women face significant legal restrictions on their right to vote and run for office (Zaheer, M. A., Haider, W. A., & Yousaf, A., 2022).

Beyond the existence of progressive laws, their implementation often remains weak due to inadequate enforcement, weak accountability structures, underfunded gender machinery, and a persistent lack of political will. In Malawi, for instance, the persistent challenge in increasing women's participation in politics, decision-making, and the broader economy has its roots in deeply entrenched patriarchal structures that have not been effectively dismantled, despite progressive gender laws. This is due to limited coordination and insufficient prioritization at policy levels (<https://indepthnews.net>). Similarly, in Cameroon, specific measures for women with disabilities are difficult to identify, and their political rights are often "drowned in global provisions". This demonstrates that formal legal advancements are often undermined by practical and institutional shortcomings (Fekou Kuissu Daniela, et.al, 2024).

**Economic Disparities and Resource Constraints:** Economic disparities significantly hinder women's political participation. Gender wage gaps and limited economic independence restrict women's ability to finance campaigns or dedicate time to political activities. Globally, for every dollar men make, women make only 77 cents ([www.unwomen.org](http://www.unwomen.org)). Women's limited political engagement is a direct result of their economic and structural disempowerment, which is rooted in two key areas- Unpaid care work and lack of economic control. Estimation shows that 76% of unpaid care work valued at approximately \$10.8 trillion annually globally is performed by women (Hernando, R., 2022) which on one hand subsidizes the economy and on the other hand directly connects the private sphere of the home to a political economy of exclusion in the public sphere. In Malawi, over 70% of women are engaged in agriculture but have limited control over land and resources, trapping them in subsistence farming and preventing them from generating substantial economic power necessary for political engagement (Ager, C., 2015).

**Violence Against Women in Politics (VAWP):** Violence Against Women in Politics (VAWP) is not merely an individual act of aggression but a systemic mechanism of patriarchal control designed to deter women's political participation and maintain male dominance (Sanín, J. R., 2022). Women in politics face various forms of violence, including physical, psychological, domestic, public, and online violence. Examples include women politicians being targeted by threats, harassment, and judgmental media coverage, as seen in Kuwait where female parliamentarians received harsh scrutiny unlike their male counterparts (Al-Kuwari, L. S. M., 2024). Across the Arab region, about 80% of women parliamentarians reported exposure to violence between 2010 and 2020 (Mojahed, A., et.al (2022). This violence acts as a significant deterrent, discouraging women from running for office or actively participating, and reinforcing societal perceptions that women should not take up leadership roles. Addressing VAWP is therefore fundamental to achieving substantive gender equality in politics.

**Political Party Dynamics and Elite Resistance:** Political parties often resist giving women real power, even though they're supposed to be democratic. They use both obvious and hidden methods to keep women from getting to the top. Male-dominated party structures and "party gatekeeping" impede women's advancement through a lack of internal policies for women's inclusion, limited support, and a preference for male candidates (Ambreen, S., & Fatima, N., 2025). Political parties might use women as a tool. They can do this by using stereotypes about women to get their votes, but without truly caring about what women want. Sometimes, this leads to "tokenism," where a woman is put in a position of power just for show, given a job or a district where she can't win or have any real influence. Even when public perception of female politicians is positive, strategic voting delimit their winning because voters sometimes avoid supporting a candidate they think won't win anyway. This, along with women

having fewer resources for their campaigns, can make it hard for them to win elections. This highlights the critical need for internal party reforms and external pressure from women's movements to counter these systemic resistances.

**The Compounding Effect of Intersecting Identities (Race, Class, Caste, Disability, etc.):** In the Global South, the experiences of women are not monolithic but are profoundly shaped by the intersection of gender with other identities, creating unique and profound forms of political exclusion. This necessitates highly nuanced, context-specific interventions that address the compounded layers of discrimination, recognizing that formal political inclusion alone is insufficient without addressing underlying socio-economic and cultural inequalities.

**Dalit and Adivasi Women in India:** Dalit and Adivasi women, positioned at the bottom of caste and gender hierarchies, face compounded discrimination in land ownership, access to justice, and political participation (Sabharwal, N. S., & Sonalkar, W. (2015). Despite constitutional protections and legal reforms like the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955, and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, these are often undermined by social stigma, inadequate implementation, and economic dependence. For example, 75% of women in agriculture own less than 13% of land, with Dalit women faring worst, and assigned land is often reclaimed by dominant caste groups. The Indian legal system itself can be slow, with judicial stereotyping and gender bias leading to victim-blaming and dismissal of complaints. This demonstrates that political participation alone cannot protect Dalit women without secure access to land and economic independence.

**Indigenous Women in Latin America:** Indigenous women struggle against multiple systems of oppression rooted in colonialism, patriarchy, and capitalism (Perini, L., 2023). Despite constitutional protections, their exclusion from decision-making spaces is exacerbated by intersecting factors like geographic location (rural or urban), ethnicity, income, the legacies of colonialism, armed conflict, and uneven development.

Table 1: Intersectional Barriers to Political Participation (Examples from Global South)

| Identity Group  | Intersecting Identities   | Specific Barriers/Challenges   |
|---|---|--|
| Dalit Women in India  | Gender, Caste, Class, Religion  | Lack of secure land rights; social stigma; judicial stereotyping; inadequate implementation of protective laws; economic dependence; victim-blaming in legal system  |
| Indigenous Women in Latin America                             | Gender, Ethnicity, Geographic Location, Class, Colonial Legacy  | Multiple systems of oppression (colonialism, patriarchy, capitalism); exclusion from decision-making spaces; limited access to resources; legacies of armed conflict and uneven development  |
| Women with Disabilities in Africa (Cameroon, Libya)           | Gender, Disability, Age, Cultural Norms, Geographic Location  | Perception as passive victims/curse; stigmatization; lack of inclusive schools/specialized staff; poor accessibility of infrastructure; weak implementation of intersectional laws; family denial/exploitation; limited public opportunities |
| Source:   | <a href="https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2024/09/five-actions-to-boost-womens-political-participation">https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2024/09/five-actions-to-boost-womens-political-participation</a> |  |
| Advancements and Strategies for Women's Political Empowerment | Despite significant barriers, numerous advancements and effective strategies have emerged to enhance women's political participation in the Global South.   |  |

Gender quotas have played a significant role in increasing women's descriptive representation. Legislated candidate quotas, whether through reserved seats or candidate lists, have demonstrably boosted women's presence in parliaments and local government (Tinker, I. 2004). Rwanda, for instance, leads the world with 64% women in parliament, followed by Cuba (56%), Nicaragua (55%), Andorra

(50%), Mexico (50%), and the United Arab Emirates (50%) (Paxton, P., et.al (2020). Latin America has been a pioneer, with Argentina adopting the first quota law in 1991, and many countries subsequently shifting from simple quotas to gender parity laws, aiming for 50% representation across legislative, executive, and judicial branches. However, the impact of these quotas is not without limitations. While electoral reforms and gender quotas have been highly effective in increasing women's descriptive representation in the Global South, their impact on substantive political power and the dismantling of informal patriarchal structures is often limited and unevenly distributed, particularly for marginalized women. Informal patriarchal practices often persist, leading to the marginalization of women's voices and issues even when they are in office. Representation can be skewed towards educated, lighter-skinned women, with indigenous and Afro-descendant women remaining underrepresented. This "paradox of progress" suggests that formal mechanisms must be complemented by deeper institutional and cultural transformations.

**The Power of Grassroots Movements and Civil Society Mobilization:** Grassroots women's movements and civil society organizations are crucial drivers of political change, often challenging entrenched patriarchal structures and advocating for women's rights from the ground up (Basu, A., 2016). These movements are proactive agents of transformative political change, developing innovative forms of participation and resistance that challenge patriarchal norms and influence policy from below. Indigenous women in Latin America, for example, have developed unique and self-affirming forms of political participation and resistance (Nunes de Lima, L., 2021). These include organizing popular assemblies and consultation processes, forming national and transnational networks and alliances (e.g., Red Unión Latinoamericana de Mujeres), leading strikes, sit-ins, and marches (often at the frontline while also providing care for children and the elderly), engaging in multi-level advocacy, and employing communication strategies to raise awareness and denounce human rights violations. They also engage in documentation and judicial actions, and organize training sessions to strengthen their organizational processes.

In India, grassroots women's movements can strategically engage with political parties through "inclusive party-building," (Goyal, T., 2021) where women already in local politics are bringing in more women, changing how the parties work, and getting more influence over party leaders. They do this by getting women to vote together and organizing group actions within the parties. Concrete examples illustrate the tangible policy impact of women-led grassroots initiatives. Research on panchayats (local councils) in India discovered that the number of drinking water projects in areas with women-led councils was 62% higher than in those with men-led councils (Sahu, T. K., & Yadav, K., 2018). This directly links women's leadership to improved public services and demonstrates that grassroots efforts can lead to tangible improvements in people's lives.

**Role of International Organizations and South-South Cooperation:** International bodies such as UN Women, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the World Bank play a vital role in setting global norms, advocating for women's leadership and political participation, and providing frameworks like CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action. They provide programmatic support, including training for women political candidates, voter and civic education, and advocacy for legislative and constitutional reforms to ensure women's fair access to political spheres (www.unwomen.org). Beyond traditional aid, South-South cooperation has emerged as a key strategy for women's empowerment (Dima Al-Khatib, 2025). Global South countries share best practices and resources to promote gender equality in various domains. Examples include sharing best practices in girls' education, particularly in STEM fields (e.g., Malala Fund for Girls' Right to Education involving Cambodia, Egypt, Nepal, Nigeria, etc.), and enhancing literacy and life skills through UNESCO Community Learning Centres in Egypt. The India, Brazil and South Africa

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Source: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2024/09/five-actions-to-boost-womens-political-participation>

**Table 2. Global South Women's Representation in National Parliaments (by Region/Sub-region)**

| Region/Country                              | Percentage of Women in Parliament (Lower/Single House)       | Year/Context                         | Change from Past            |
|---|--|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Global Average                              | 27.2%  | As of Jan 2025                       | Up from 11% in 1995         |
| Latin America & Caribbean                   | 36% (36.8% in national legislatures)                         | As of Jan 2024 / Dec 2023            | Highest regional percentage |
| Sub-Saharan Africa                          | 27%  | As of Jan 2024                       |                             |
| Asia (excluding Israel, Japan, South Korea) | 23% (Southeast Asia average) / 17% (Central & Southern Asia) | 2024 (SE Asia) / Jan 2024 (C&S Asia) |                             |
| Northern Africa & Western Asia (MENA)       | 19% (MENA average) / 10.4% (MENA parliament seats)           | Jan 2024 / Jan 2023                  |                             |
| Rwanda                                      | 64%  | As of Jan 2025                       | World leader                |
| Cuba  | 56%  | As of Jan 2025                       |                             |
| Nicaragua                                   | 55%  | As of Jan 2025                       |                             |
| Mexico                                      | 50%  | As of Jan 2025                       |                             |
| Namibia                                     | 44%  | -                                    |                             |
| South Africa                                | 47%  | -                                    |                             |
| Indonesia                                   | 22%  | 2024                                 | Highest figure to date      |

Source: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/facts-and-figures/facts-and-figures-womens-leadership-and-political-participation>

**Table 3. Impact of Electoral Systems and Quotas on Women's Representation (Selected Global South Examples)**

| Country/Region | Electoral System                               | Quota Type (if any)                  | Women's Representation % (National Parliament/Lower House) | Key Observations/Impact   |
|----------------|--|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| Rwanda         | -  | Legislated Quotas                    | 64%  | World leader in gender parity   |
| Latin America  | Proportional Representation (PR) & Parity Laws | Legislated Quotas, Parity Laws (50%) | 36.8% (national legislatures)                              | Pioneering region, shift from quotas to parity, stronger implementation mechanisms  |
| Malawi         | First-Past-The-Post (FPTP)                     | -                                    | 23%  | FPTP disadvantages women; deeply entrenched patriarchal structures hinder progress despite progressive laws   |
| South Africa   | List-PR  | Complemented by Quotas               | 47%  | High representation, PR system often needs quotas for better results  |
| Mozambique     | List-PR  | Complemented by Quotas               | 42% (2009) / 34.8% (SADC)                                  | High representation, PR system often needs quotas for better results  |
| Lesotho        | Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP)                | -(except local)                      | 13.3% (2002) to 23.0% (2007)                               | Shift from FPTP to MMP increased representation, but lack of national quotas limits full parity   |
| Tanzania       | FPTP   | 35% Quota                            | 30%  | Quotas can boost representation even in less conducive FPTP systems   |
| MENA Region    | Varied (some with quotas)                      | Quotas in 10/18 states               | 10.4% (parliament seats)                                   | Quotas show positive results (24.28% with quotas vs. 7.9% without), but overall low representation due to social perception, lack of resources, party gatekeeping |

Source: Tabular Structure formed by the researcher on the basis of different studies

Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation (IBSA Fund) supports projects in Guinea-Bissau, The Gambia, and Uganda, advancing women's livelihoods through agribusiness and entrepreneurship training. The exchange of strategies is facilitated by the South-South Cooperation so that the political involvement of women can be boosted. Again the triangular cooperation plays a significant role in providing leadership training and mentorship so that female leaders can be inspired more and more. While international frameworks and organizations play a vital role in setting norms, providing support, and advocating for women's political participation, a significant financial investment—an additional \$360 billion per year—is still

needed to close the gender equality gap by 2030. This indicates a persistent resource deficit in global efforts, suggesting that while international support is valuable, it remains insufficient to address the scale of the challenge.

**Case Studies of Transformative Leadership and Policy Impact:** Rwanda's Leadership: Rwanda leads globally with 64% women in parliament, showing rapid progress with strong political will and quotas. Latin American Parity Laws: Latin America's shift from quotas to comprehensive parity laws significantly boosted women's representation in legislative and executive roles across ten countries,

reaching 36.8% in national legislatures (Hinojosa, M., & Piscopo, J. M. (2013). *Women-Led Local Councils in India*: In India, women-led local councils directly improved public services, with 62% more drinking water projects than those led by men.

## CONCLUSION

**Towards a More Equitable Political Future:** This chapter explores the complicated relationship between gender, power, and politics in the Global South. It shows how this is affected by historical events, changing male-dominated systems, and how different identities combine to create challenges. Gender is more than just a social category; a fundamental power relation, manifesting in both public and private spheres, often naturalizing male dominance. The male-dominated system in developing countries is always changing, and it now uses global economic trends like neoliberalism to make things even harder for women. When we analyze women's exclusion from politics, we have to understand that their experiences are not all the same. Their struggles are uniquely affected by their gender combined with their caste, ethnicity, disability, and social class. This means we need specific solutions that fit their particular situations. The analysis has detailed multifaceted barriers to women's political participation. Even with big problems, countries in the Global South have made a lot of progress. New rules and special quotas have clearly helped get more women elected to government, especially in places like Rwanda and Latin America. However, this has created a tricky situation. Just having more women in government doesn't automatically mean they have real power or that the old, male-dominated systems are being broken down. Indonesia is a good example of this. Grassroots women's groups and civil society organizations are key players in making real change happen. They come up with new ways for women to get involved and stand up for themselves, and they influence policy from the local level up. International groups and partnerships between developing countries also help by setting standards and sharing what works best though a significant resource deficit persists in global efforts to achieve gender equality.

### Policy Recommendations for Sustainable Gender Parity

Achieving sustainable gender parity in political participation in the Global South requires a comprehensive, multi-pronged approach that addresses the identified barriers simultaneously:

- **Strengthening Legal Frameworks and Enforcement:** Governments must move beyond merely enacting progressive gender equality laws to ensuring their robust implementation, coupled with adequate funding for gender machinery and strong accountability mechanisms to overcome political will deficits.
- **Transforming Political Parties:** Internal party reforms are critical, including the adoption of mandatory gender quotas for candidate selection and leadership positions, alongside incentives for parties that genuinely support and promote female candidates. This will help dismantle male-dominated gatekeeping structures.
- **Addressing Economic Disparities:** Policies must promote women's economic empowerment, encompassing secure land rights, improved access to credit and markets, and the formal recognition and socialization of unpaid care work through public investment in care systems. Viewing social spending as an "investment" rather than "consumption" is key to this transformation.
- **Combating Violence Against Women in Politics (VAWP):** Comprehensive measures are needed to prevent and respond to VAWP, including robust legal protections, support services for survivors, and accountability for perpetrators. Creating safe spaces for women's political engagement is paramount.
- **Intersectional Policy Design:** Policies must explicitly recognize and address the compounded discrimination faced by multiply marginalized women (e.g., Dalit, indigenous, disabled women), moving beyond universalizing approaches. This requires disaggregated data collection and tailored interventions that consider the unique barriers arising from intersecting identities.

- **Investing in Grassroots and Civil Society:** Continued support and amplification of the voices and strategies of women's movements and civil society organizations are essential, as they are proven drivers of political change from below and innovators of participatory democracy.
- **Global Cooperation and Resource Mobilization:** International actors must significantly increase financial investment to bridge the gender equality gap, complementing existing South-South cooperation initiatives that share best practices and resources among Global South nations.

### Future Research Directions and the Ongoing Struggle

Future academic inquiry should focus on longitudinal studies to assess the substantive impact of women in political leadership beyond mere descriptive representation, particularly in diverse Global South contexts. Further detailed intersectional analyses are needed to understand the specific mechanisms through which multiple forms of discrimination operate and how they can be effectively challenged. Research on the effectiveness of decolonial feminist strategies in challenging patriarchal structures, as well as the role of digital technologies in both enabling and hindering women's political participation, remains critical. In conclusion, the pursuit of gender equality in political participation in the Global South is an ongoing, complex struggle. It necessitates sustained commitment, adaptive strategies that acknowledge the dynamic nature of power and patriarchy, and a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of power, patriarchy, and intersectionality. Moving towards a truly equitable political future requires not just numerical representation, but a fundamental transformation of political systems, societal norms, and economic structures that continue to privilege men and marginalize women, particularly those with intersecting identities.

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