

WOMEN'S POLITICAL LEADERSHIP STRATEGY

WOMEN'S ACTION FOR VOICE AND
EMPOWERMENT (WAVE) PROGRAM

MAY 2018

IWDA gratefully acknowledges support from the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands through the Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women (FLOW) Programme.



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the
Netherlands

IWDA INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S
DEVELOPMENT
AGENCY

WAVE 
WOMENS ACTION FOR
VOICE AND EMPOWERMENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Women's Action for Voice and Empowerment (WAVE) is a ground-breaking women's leadership program that brings together and supports individual women, organisations, and movements in Asia and the Pacific region to increase the representation of women in diverse leadership positions. WAVE's goal is for diverse women to be equally represented as leaders at all levels of society and to be able to use this power to drive systemic change toward gender equality.

A major element of WAVE is increasing women's political leadership in WAVE countries; Cambodia, Myanmar, Timor Leste, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. Women's political participation is well below the global average of 23.8%. As at April 2018, the percentage of women in Pacific parliaments is the lowest in the world, at just 7.5%, and Asia is also below the global average at 19.7%.

This Strategy sits within the broader WAVE Theory of Change. It aims to guide decision making within the WAVE Program based on international best practice and evidence and the experience of IWDA and other WAVE partners of what works.



Participants at the Young Women's Leadership Forum, Buka. Credit: Harjono Djoyobisono

Women's Rights Organisations and Movements

IWDA, through the WAVE Program, works to achieve its goals through partnerships with women's rights organisations. It works by supporting programs and initiatives that are devised by local women and organisations working for change, because women are stronger together and local knowledge drives long-term solutions. This Women's Political Leadership Strategy, therefore, is shaped by the particular contributions that local women's rights organisations and movements can make towards the goal of increased women's political leadership.

Women's Leadership for Gender Equality

The WAVE Program sees women's leadership as a strategy for achieving transformative, sustainable change towards gender equality. As such, the Strategy prioritises support to women leaders who are committed to advancing a gender equality agenda.

Politically Smart Approaches

Much political decision making takes place through informal spaces and networks, informed by deep structural inequalities. It is essential, therefore, that women leaders are equipped to be politically smart. This Strategy thus prioritises initiatives that integrate a political and power analysis and that are led by local constituencies.

Strategic Objectives

Building on the above cross-cutting themes, WAVE's Women's Political Leadership Strategy prioritises the following strategic objectives within the broader WAVE Theory of Change:

1. Gender quota models introduced in electoral frameworks and party policies

The effectiveness of gender quotas in increasing women's political leadership is well established globally. Worldwide, a significant success factor for the introduction of quotas has been long, hard fought battles by women's movements. The WAVE Program will support coalitions and networks in both their strategic, long term advocacy to introduce electoral and party quotas and rapid mobilisation as new opportunities are identified.

2. Women are perceived as equally legitimate and effective political leaders as men

Adverse gender and social norms are the greatest obstacle to women entering politics, so changing social attitudes regarding women's role in society is key to bringing about change. WAVE partner organisations have strong community level networks supporting wide ranging initiatives aimed at improving community perceptions of women as leaders. These networks will be utilised to promote women as legitimate actors in the political sphere and to encourage votes for women candidates.

3. Increased numbers of women are interested in being a candidate

An important aspect of increasing women's political leadership is encouraging women to enter the formal political sphere. Women's rights organisations have good access to highly capable women leaders who are potential candidates. They play an important role in connecting women with progressive political parties. Given WAVE partners' strong community level networks, including in rural and remote areas, WAVE partners will be supported to encourage women to consider entering politics.

4. Women candidates are supported throughout the electoral cycle

Research findings and experiences of IWDA partners demonstrate the importance of sustained support to women candidates throughout the electoral cycle. WAVE will support long-term, tailored support to individual women candidates, including mentoring and coaching. WAVE will support women's rights organisations, including those working in coalition, to build the profiles of progressive women candidates as individuals who can deliver for the community. WAVE will also capitalise on the women's movement's ability to mobilise quickly, during the election period, to support the campaigns of endorsed women candidates.

5. Elected women have improved power and influence to advance women's rights

Once women achieve elected office, it is essential they are supported to retain office so they can achieve roles of substantive decision making and effectively advance women's rights. WAVE partner organisations will support elected women with research, profile building, connection to constituencies and in developing networks with their peers, including in other countries.

BACKGROUND

The Women's Action for Voice and Empowerment (WAVE) Program supports 18 women's rights organisations in five countries with the resources, skills and networks they need to amplify their collective voice and create a more enabling environment for women's leadership. WAVE is built around four interconnected pillars which seek to support women to lead transformative, sustainable change towards gender equality, enabled by strategic feminist engagement.

The Program intends to: increase individual women and young women's political, economic and social leadership; change inequitable legal, policy and economic frameworks; strengthen a vital, visible and vocal women's movement; and ensure that evidence of how change towards gender equality happens informs and influences individuals, institutions and movements.



This Strategy sits beneath the WAVE Theory of Change as a guiding document for women's political leadership initiatives within WAVE Program. This Strategy is one of a set of sub-thematic strategies that expand upon key issues addressed in the Theory of Change, including advocacy, young women's leadership, movement building and research.

CONTEXT

The worldwide average of women's participation in national parliaments is 23.8%.¹ From a regional perspective, Asia and the Pacific Island countries are well below this global average. The percentage of women in Pacific parliaments is 7.5%², the lowest in the world. Women's representation is also below the global average in Asia at 19.7%.³

Rankings of WAVE countries

Regional averages mask considerable variation across countries. Table 1 ranks the WAVE countries according to women's participation in national parliaments, revealing significant variation.

GLOBAL RANKING	COUNTRY	LOWER HOUSE		UPPER HOUSE	
		%	NO.	%	NO.
39	Timor Leste	32.3%	21/65	-	-
95	Cambodia	20.3% ⁱ	25/123	16.7	10/60
157	Myanmar	10.2%	44/433	10.4	23/221
186	Solomon Islands	2%	1/50	-	-
188	Papua New Guinea ⁱⁱ	0%	0/111	-	-

Table 1. Women's participation in national parliaments in WAVE countries, as at 1 April 2018.
Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2018

Of particular note is the relatively high ranking of Timor Leste. With women making up 32.3% of the national parliament, Timor Leste continues to be a notable exception across Asia and Pacific countries. Timor Leste introduced legislated party list quotas in 2006, providing a strong case for the potential effectiveness of political quotas.⁴ Work in Timor Leste is ongoing to ensure elected women achieve positions of substantive power and influence.

Conversely, women's representation is particularly concerning for Papua New Guinea. Not a single woman was elected at the most recent national election in Papua New Guinea in June 2017. This was a step backwards from three women Members of Parliament (MPs).

Under-representation is even more acute at local government level across the region:

WAVE COUNTRY	LOCAL LEVEL WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION
Cambodia	16.76% ⁱⁱⁱ
Autonomous Region of Bougainville	9.4% ⁵
Timor Leste	4.75%
Solomon Islands	2.3% (Provincial and Municipal level) ^{iv}
Papua New Guinea	0.5% ⁶
Myanmar	0.25% ^v

Table 2. Local level women's political participation in WAVE countries.

ⁱ Following the dissolution of the opposition party in November 2017 and the appointment of unelected women from minor parties, as at April 2018 the unofficial rate is approximately 20%.

ⁱⁱ The Autonomous Region of Bougainville: women make up 10%. There are 3 out of 40 seats reserved for women and in 2015 a woman was elected in an open electoral seat for the first time.

ⁱⁱⁱ In November 2017, the main opposition party in Cambodia – the Cambodia National Rescue Party – was dissolved by the Supreme Court of Cambodia under the direction of the Cambodian Government. Female Commune Councillors from CNRP lost their positions and were replaced with selected men and women from the ruling and minor parties. Following the redistribution of seats, female representation in local politics increased slightly, but remains low at around 20%.

^{iv} There are 4 women out of 172 members of Provincial Assemblies across 9 Provinces.

^v Of the 16,743 elected village tract and ward administrators throughout Myanmar, only 42 are women. UNDP, Local Women Leadership: Lives and Perspectives of Myanmar, November 2015.

Election cycles

This Strategy involves a holistic electoral cycle approach, with targeted interventions before, during and following elections. Upcoming elections for WAVE countries from 2018-2020 are as follows:

2018	2019	2020
National		
Cambodia (National Assembly) – July 2018	Solomon Islands – March 2019	Bougainville
Timor Leste – May 2018		Myanmar
Sub-national		
	Bougainville Independence Referendum	
Solomon Islands (across 2018/2019)	Solomon Islands (across 2018/2019)	
Timor Leste (likely to be deferred to 2019)		Myanmar
Local		
Papua New Guinea (may be deferred to 2019)Bougainville		Myanmar

Table 3. Elections in WAVE countries from 2018 – 2020.

WAVE'S WOMEN'S POLITICAL LEADERSHIP STRATEGY

WAVE Program Approach

IWDA, through the WAVE Program, works to achieve its goals through partnerships with women's rights organisations. It works by supporting programs and initiatives that are devised by local women and organisations working for change, because women are stronger together and local knowledge drives long-term solutions. IWDA uses our resources and connections to convene spaces and processes where women leaders connect, share, learn and organise together. This work aims to strengthen and deepen the already strong and vibrant women's movement in Asia and the Pacific region.

Which Women?

The WAVE Program sees women's leadership as a strategy for achieving transformative, sustainable change towards gender equality. As such, the Program aims to support women leaders who are committed to advancing a gender equality agenda.

Nevertheless, WAVE acknowledges the deep complexity of this work. It is often difficult to identify women who support gender equality, given many women leaders go 'under the radar', to avoid resistance and backlash. Additionally, when elected women do identify as feminists, they may be constrained by party discipline or lack sufficient substantive decision making power to see their agendas realised.⁷ It is also important to note that WAVE's strategic feminist approach means the Program is always led by partner organisation's own analysis, strategy and country context, which can vary widely.

Politically Smart Approaches

In recent years the importance of ensuring approaches to supporting women in leadership are 'politically smart' has been increasingly acknowledged.⁸ Increasing women's voice and leadership involves redistributions of power and resources, and is often met with resistance.⁹ Additionally, much political decision making takes place through informal spaces and networks, to which women, typically, have limited access. Therefore, women leaders must be able to engage in strategic dialogue, alliance building with a range of diverse partners, and they must know how to frame issues to neutralise opposition and make deals if they are to gain substantive power and influence.¹⁰ Women must be supported to take pragmatic, political decisions while keeping transformative goals in sight.¹¹ Supporting politically smart work also means ensuring approaches are context specific and led by local constituencies, principles which are fundamental to the WAVE Program and IWDA's approach.

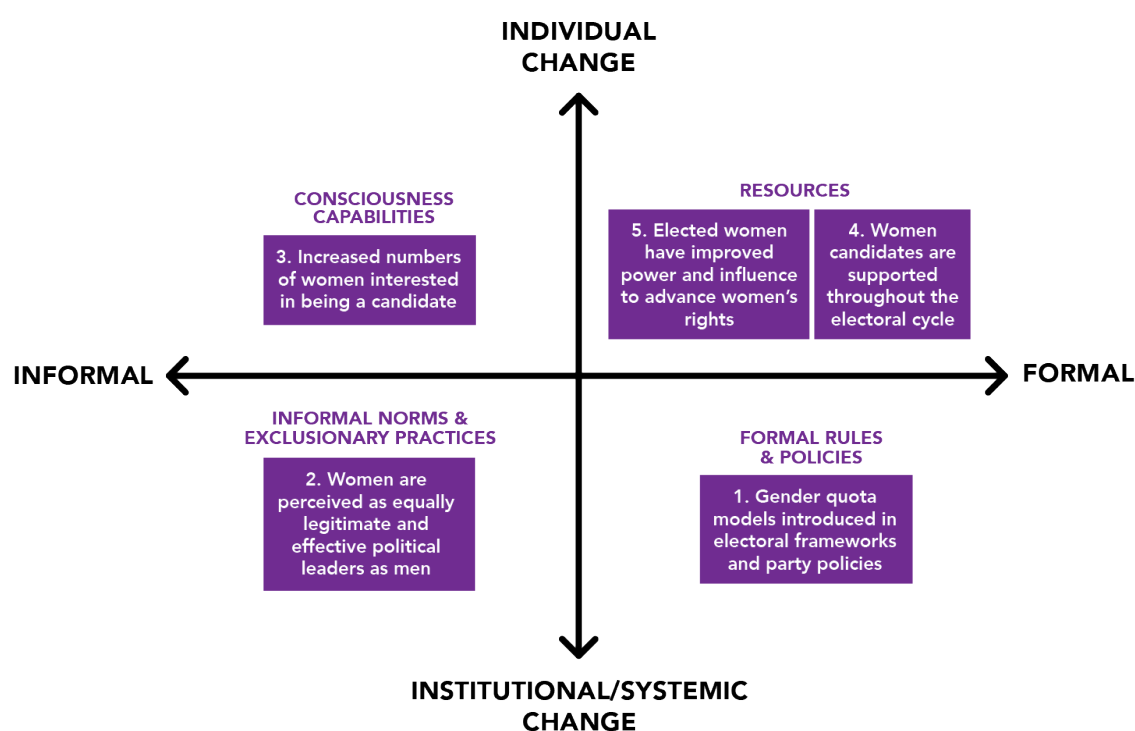
Strategic Objectives

As addressed in the WAVE Theory of Change, increasing women's political leadership requires action in multiple areas. A growing evidence base demonstrates the importance of working holistically, across the electoral cycle, in ways that address both formal and informal barriers.¹²

Through support to women's rights organisations and women's movements, WAVE will prioritise initiatives across the following five strategic objectives. Each of these objectives are interrelated and interdependent:

1. Gender quota models introduced in electoral frameworks and/or party policies
2. Women are perceived as equally legitimate and effective political leaders as men
3. Increased numbers of women are interested in being a candidate
4. Women candidates are supported throughout the electoral cycle
5. Elected women have improved power and influence to advance women's rights

Mapped against the Gender at Work Framework¹³, the five strategic objectives cross all four quadrants, ensuring our work engages in both formal and informal spaces, and with individuals and systems.



WAVE'S STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1. Gender quota models introduced in electoral frameworks and party policies

The effectiveness of gender quotas in increasing women's political leadership is well established.¹⁴ There are three main models of gender quotas: voluntary political party candidate quotas; mandatory political party candidate quotas and reserved seats. Of the 47 countries in the world with 30% or more women's participation in national parliaments, 41 countries (85%) use at least one form of quota model.¹⁵

A number of lessons can be distilled by examining the global use of gender quotas:

- The introduction of any form of quotas requires significant political will and often strong advocacy by women's movements.
- To have impact, quotas need to be designed to take account of the institutional context, i.e. the electoral and political party systems in place.
- To be effective, quotas require clearly drafted legislation or political party rules, and include sanctions for non-compliance.
- There needs to be a strong political commitment to their implementation, as well as effective monitoring.¹⁶



Myanmar MPs at Parliament of Victoria considering gender quota models. Photo: Kira Sharkie.

GOOD PRACTICE – TIMOR LESTE

Successful reforms at village level

In 2016, the number of women elected as village chiefs in the Timor Leste village level election, doubled, from 11 in 2009, to 21 in 2016. Additionally, there was a 20-fold increase in the number of women candidates running for office, from 42 in 2009 to an extraordinary 319 in 2016.

The increase in women's political representation was in large part due to electoral reform achieved by joint advocacy by actors in the women's movement. As part of the '100% I'm Ready' campaign, WAVE partner organisations Rede Feto and Alola worked in coalition with others to successfully advocate for changes to the 2016 Suco Election Law.

The Suco Election Law states that on each Village Council, there must be one female delegate and one female youth representative. The law also includes provisions on women candidates and polling station workers. For the election of Hamlet Chief, the law requires that a minimum of one woman candidate stand in each Hamlet. If there are no women candidates, the Hamlet Assembly Electoral Committee can only continue with the electoral process after hearing from the local women's organisation of their intention not to put forward a woman candidate.¹⁷ As a person must be elected to the Hamlet Council first in order then to be eligible for election as Village Chief this is an essential 'pathway' step for women to be able to run for Village Chief.



Alola Foundation staff member Francisca Alves Taolin and Rita Sarmento, Village Chief candidate.
Photo: Anna E Carlile

PROMISING PRACTICE – SOLOMON ISLANDS

Coalition advocacy for reserved seats

WAVE partner, Women's Rights Action Movement (WRAM) has played a pivotal role in guiding and supporting the Western Provincial Government (WPG) and the National Government's Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs (MWYCFA) to commit to passing legislation that will create three reserved seats for women in the Western Province Electoral Assembly.

Given WRAM's growing reputation as one of the country's leading women's rights organisations, MWYCFA approached WRAM for technical guidance and support to the Premier of Western Province in driving the implementation of these Temporary Special Measures (TSM).

In 2017, WRAM led a number of high level dialogue sessions with government stakeholders and undertook strategic engagement with key women and community leaders across Western Province to build support and understanding for TSM and secure buy in to support efforts to make the measures legally binding.

This ground breaking work being undertaken in Western Province has already led to a number of promising developments, with the Premier of two other provinces publicly declaring their support for TSM in their respective provincial governments. Impressively, this represents a third of the total number of provincial governments in Solomon Islands now publicly committed to the implementation of a TSM model.

In 2018, WAVE partner, WRAM, is continuing to play a critical role in driving the legislative reform process necessary for provincial TSM ordinances and is stepping up its advocacy efforts to maintain and strengthen political will and community support for TSM.

Influencing party policies and procedures

There is evidence of women's rights organisations effectively lobbying political parties as a strategy for increasing women's political participation.¹⁸ Political parties are gatekeepers of women's access to political participation, particularly in contexts with strong party systems.¹⁹ Reforming party policies and procedures is critical for increasing women's political leadership.²⁰ Gender quotas for candidate selection can increase the number of women MPs if fully implemented and enforced.

Consideration should also be given to informal barriers within parties. As Overseas Development Institute notes,

"the 'old boys' network' approach to party politics can hinder women's access to voice and leadership just as much, if not more, than the lack of a quota for women candidates".

Changing attitudes and behaviours within political parties is essential.



Donna Makini (WRAM) participating in the WAVE Inception Workshop, Melbourne. Photo: Gemma Carr

PROMISING PRACTICE – MYANMAR

Connecting women's movements with political parties

In Myanmar, while the Ta'ang National Party has made formal commitments to increasing women's participation in the Party, in practice women's participation remains very low. The Ta'ang Women's Organisation (TWO) will pilot a political internship program with the Ta'ang National Party. From 2018, six young women involved in TWO's activist network will work as interns within the Party.

The interns will provide research support, particularly regarding issues affecting women constituents. This pilot aims to strengthen the relationship between the women's movement and the Party, and to promote the value of women in leadership.

Advocacy for gender quotas requires a strong awareness raising component targeted at communities and elected officials. These form part of broader programs aimed at changing negative social norms regarding women's leadership. Potential challenges include:

- Women who have benefited from a quota model may be perceived as less capable.²¹
- Quotas can act as an upper ceiling to women's participation rather than a lower floor.²²
- Legislated quotas (especially reserved seats) involves women competing against other women rather than supporting each other's campaigns to achieve greater influence.

Gender quota models - WAVE Value Add

Worldwide, a significant success factor for the introduction of quotas has been long, hard fought battles by women's movements. The WAVE Program supports coalitions and networks in both their strategic, long term advocacy to introduce electoral and party quotas and rapid mobilisation as new opportunities are identified.

Actions to be prioritised

- Support to WAVE partners' joint advocacy efforts for the introduction of quota systems in their respective countries – including as part of the Our Voice Joint Advocacy Campaign on Local Women's Leadership from 2018 to 2020.
- Sharing lessons regarding effective advocacy for quotas across WAVE countries.
- Support to WAVE partners to work more closely with political parties, as a strategy for influencing their policies. This support will be determined according to relevant, country context analysis.

2. Women are perceived as equally legitimate and effective political leaders as men

As adverse gender and social norms are the greatest obstacle to women entering politics, changing social attitudes regarding women's role in society is key for bringing about change.

Perceptions studies

Identifying and understanding community perceptions of women in leadership is critical, however such research remains limited.²³ WAVE is supporting Public Perceptions of Women as Leaders research in Timor Leste, Cambodia and Solomon Islands. The studies will draw on the methodology used in perceptions research conducted by the Fiji Women's Forum in partnership with IWDA in 2014.²⁴ The purpose of this research is to deepen understanding of public perceptions of leadership and the gender norms associated with those perceptions. Research findings will assist WAVE partners and advocates for gender equality to advance women's leadership.

Male advocates for women's leadership

Both research and IWDA's program experience demonstrates shifting restrictive gender roles requires a long term strategy including interventions with men and women of all ages. There is increasing recognition of the importance of engaging men as advocates for women's leadership.²⁵ Men, particularly those who are influential within their communities, political parties and/or parliaments, can play important roles in supporting women's political leadership, including to:

- Encourage women to enter politics and then provide ongoing support to individual women during the early years of their careers.
- Challenge negative stereotypes and promote the value of women in leadership in their communities and amongst their male peers.
- Advocate within their parties for the adoption of quotas and the preselection of women.²⁶
- Contribute to the election campaigns of women candidates.

Furthermore, men play a critical role in supporting female family members with political careers, including sharing domestic responsibilities. A supportive partner and family are often a key enabling factor for women leaders. As O'Neil and Domingo of the Overseas Development Institute note:

*"Perhaps less recognised is that behind or alongside women leaders and activists are often men and families also willing to act against widespread gender expectations and norms within their society."*²⁷



Rodney Sinai and Elizabeth Tongue of Wide Bay Conservation Association. Mother-son team promoting women's leadership in East Pomio, PNG. Photo: Sangita Singh

GOOD PRACTICE – CAMBODIA

Engaging with male spouses of women leaders

A key enabling factor for women leaders is support from family members. WAVE partner Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC) promotes behaviour and attitude change amongst men to support their female spouses in leadership roles.

GADC conducts Men's Dialogue Groups to promote discussion amongst men on gender roles, gender equality and positive masculinity. GADC also works jointly with couples – women leaders and their male partners. In a three-part series of Gender Road Map²⁸ trainings, the couples are encouraged to reflect on their daily lives and consider the value of women's leadership. The couples are supported to develop a Commitment Statement, in which the men pledge support to the woman's leadership role and commit to making a greater contribution to household work. GADC staff follow up with the couple on their progress through home visits.

While it is often challenging to persuade the men to participate, feedback from participants suggest the intervention is resulting in attitude and behaviour change. As the spouse of a woman Commune Councillor in Kampong Chhnang Province said:

"Before I was not happy with my wife working as a Commune Councillor because she did not have enough time to do tasks at home. I thought women should stay at home. I blamed her, I shouted at her and looked down at her. I was feeling unvalued that I was at home while my wife was working as a leader. Now, I'm happy to see my wife is a Commune Councillor again. I'm proud of her. I see that my wife's work is helpful for the community, they need her. Now, I help with housework and help look after my three grandchildren."

Joint Advocacy Campaigns

Launched on International Women's Day 2018, WAVE's Our Voice Campaign aims to increase the representation and effective participation of women with a broad commitment to gender equality and women's rights in decision making at local levels across Asia and the Pacific region.²⁹ The campaign is jointly implemented by WAVE partners and intends to; increase public awareness of the benefits of women's leadership in decision making at local levels across all WAVE countries; increase duty bearer support for the use of gender quotas; and increase cross-partner collaboration to support local and national advocacy actions.

Perceptions of Women as Leaders - WAVE Value Add

WAVE partner organisations have strong community level networks supporting wide ranging initiatives aimed at improving community perceptions of women as leaders. These networks are utilised to promote women as legitimate actors in the political sphere and to encourage votes for women candidates.

Actions to be prioritised

- Support to wide-ranging initiatives at the community level aimed at increasing public awareness of the benefits of women's leadership, including voter education and the WAVE Our Voice Joint Advocacy Campaign on Local Women's Leadership.

- Findings from the perceptions studies are built into robust advocacy planning and implementation in 2019/2020 and beyond.
- Support to WAVE partners to enlist the support of men as advocates for women's leadership.
- Support to WAVE partners to work with male duty bearers to create supportive environments for elected women.

3. Increased numbers of women interested in being a candidate

An important aspect of increasing women's political leadership is encouraging women to enter the formal political sphere. Many women leaders have a negative perception of formal politics and consider work in civil society as a more effective means of contributing to positive change.³⁰ Conversely, many women are attracted by the role they can play in transforming politics.

As political parties are a critical entry point for women interested in political careers, promoting strategic relationships between women's movements and political parties is an effective strategy for encouraging women to run for office.³¹

Women's Leadership Pathways Research

WAVE's Women's Leadership Pathways (WLP) research project is working with women identified as leaders or aspiring leaders in social, political, and economic spheres in all WAVE countries, to collect evidence and contribute to understanding of women's individual leadership journeys and experiences, as well as the enabling factors and obstacles that affect women's leadership experiences. WLP is a multi-stakeholder, participatory research project, in line with IWDA's feminist, accountable, collaborative, and transformative approach. This research will help to profile women's leadership journeys and illuminate how women have become leaders and why, given the significant barriers, women still pursue leadership roles. The research will help to profile women leaders, documenting role models for emerging leaders to follow, as well as inform WAVE partner advocacy on creating more enabling pathways to leadership.

Targeting young women

Research suggests early interventions supporting girls' and young women's leadership is essential for fostering women political leaders.³² IWDA's FLOW1 Program (2012-2015) saw the successful expansion of young women's programs in Fiji and the establishment of a young women's program in PNG, which is now supported through the WAVE Program. These programs have had success in developing young women's leadership capacity and achieved tangible outcomes in the effectiveness of young women's voices, including in electoral platforms and candidature in Fiji.³³



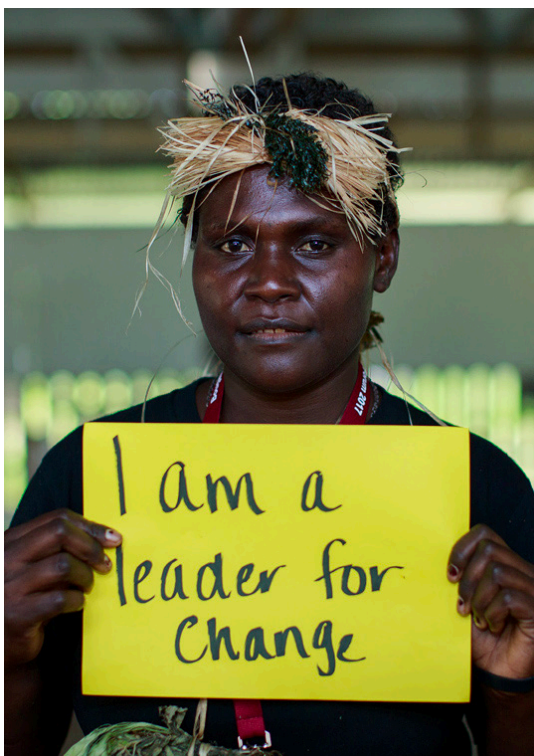
Participant in the Young Women's Leadership Forum, Buka. Photo: Harjono Djoyobison

More women interested in being a candidate - WAVE Value Add

Women's rights organisations have good access to highly capable women leaders who are potential candidates. They play an important role in connecting women with progressive political parties. Given WAVE partners' strong community level networks, including in rural and remote areas, WAVE partners are particularly well placed to encourage women in their programs to consider entering local politics.

Actions to be prioritised

- Support initiatives that involve deepening engagement between WAVE partners and political parties.
- Use the Women's Leadership Pathways Research outcomes to raise the profile of current women leaders as role models for emerging leaders.
- Support to WAVE partners for leadership programs targeting young women.
- Linkages between this Women's Political Leadership Strategy and the WAVE Young Women's Leadership Strategy.



Bridgette Mohin participating in the Young Women's Leadership Forum, Buka. Photo: Harjono Djoyobison

PROMISING PRACTICE – PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Young Women Empowerment and Mentoring Program Pilot (YWP)

Voice for Change's YWP aims to empower young women from Jiwaka Province to become leaders to advocate, educate, raise awareness, influence change and lead by example to promote gender equality and women's rights.

Young women complete a number of education and awareness raising modules on leadership, gender based violence, human rights and respectful relationships and are matched with experienced women mentors to ensure that young women feel supported, respected and motivated to exercise their leadership.

In 2017, 25 young women participated in the YWP pilot, with promising initial results. All 25 participants drew on the skills and confidence developed through the program to organise and deliver activities alongside the Voice for Change team as part of the 16 Days of Activism Campaign across 11 communities. In addition, a number of young women participants have taken part in regional women's leadership forums for the first time.

4. Women candidates are supported throughout the electoral cycle

Research findings and experiences of IWDA partners demonstrate the importance of sustained support to women candidates throughout the electoral cycle. Successful candidates are typically those who run strategic, election campaigns throughout an election cycle and more often over successive electoral cycles. It is vital to ensure strategic support is provided before, during, and after elections, including to unsuccessful candidates.³⁴

In addition to strengthening skills, women require support in building networks, including with men and potential funders,³⁵ support in raising their profiles and greater opportunities to demonstrate to their constituents that they have the capacity to deliver.³⁶

Models that involve long-term, tailored support to individual women candidates include mentoring and coaching. This support should be targeted at women with a commitment to gender equality and with genuine prospects of success.³⁷ For example, those women who have previously contested elections.

Campaign financing

Insufficient financial resources to fund election campaigns is a major barrier to women's political participation.³⁸ The rise of money politics is a particular challenge in Melanesia where clan-based exchange and accumulation of wealth is critical for a political career.³⁹

While the ability to fund individual candidate election campaigns is, in part, determined by relevant government legislation, evidence shows that providing financial support is an important strategy for increasing women's electoral chances. EMILY's List Australia provides one example of an effective campaign fundraising model.⁴⁰ It is critical for development actors to support women candidates to develop innovative approaches to fundraising.⁴¹ It is also important to consider options for direct financial support that will be politically acceptable in the relevant country context, such as the WAVE pilot in Cambodia (see case study below).



Chinda Heng of GADC participating in the WAVE Inception Workshop. Photo: Gemma Carr

GOOD PRACTICE – CAMBODIA

Campaign financing

WAVE partner, Amara, a Cambodian women led Non-Government Organisation (NGO), works to support elected, women, commune councillors and potential women candidates. In 2017, prior to the Commune Council (sub-national) elections, Amara delivered a pilot initiative which provided non-partisan, financial, campaign support to women candidates from Cambodia's two major political parties. This initiative responded to a key concern for women candidates regarding the lack of campaign financing, which is recognised as a significant barrier to women's election. The women candidates received a small cash grant of USD125 to support them with the costs associated with running an electoral campaign, such as travel to villages, campaign clothing, phone credit and personal meals.

Results from the pilot initiative indicate that the cash grant enabled women to travel to further away villages as part of their campaign, extending their reach, and supported them with daily expenses that they otherwise would take from their family budget. Moreover, women reported they felt more confident to stand for election with the extra backing of this financial support.

Women's Rights Coalitions

Coalitions of women's rights organisations and broader civil society organisations can provide vital support to the election campaigns of progressive women candidates. A coalition can mobilise support quickly across broad geographic areas, provide solidarity and help defend candidates in response to the opposition and intimidation they may experience. In the 2016 Suco (village) elections in Timor Leste, the '100% I'm Ready' Coalition was particularly effective in supporting women candidates. Coalition members allocated responsibility amongst members for managing support for women candidates and Coalition members accompanied women when they attended public events. Endorsement by the Coalition fostered legitimacy for individual women's candidacy.⁴²



Candidates receiving small funds for their election campaigns. Photo: Amara

PROMISING PRACTICE – SOLOMON ISLANDS

Solomon Islands National Women's Forum

In Solomon Islands, where women's rights organisations have not traditionally worked together in a coordinated way, Women's Rights Action Movement (WRAM) has led a number of important movement building initiatives, such as the establishment of the Solomon Islands National Women's Forum in 2016.

The Forum represents a landmark achievement in the development of a vital, visible and vocal women's movement.

In October 2017, WRAM and six women's rights organisations convened the second National Women's Forum with 70 women from nine provinces. The Forum is firmly established as an important collaborative and strategic vehicle through which a mandate for collective action on gender equality can be prioritised.

In the first forum, participants agreed on an Outcome Statement, including key recommendations aimed at increasing women's leadership. These recommendations were further developed during the 2017 forum. The Forum co-convenors later developed a Joint Advocacy Action Plan to drive this agenda. Forum co-convenors have commenced implementation of the plan with a focus on supporting momentum towards the implementation of TSMs in the country's Western Province.

Women supported throughout the electoral cycle - WAVE Value Add

Many women's rights organisations have extensive experience running women's leadership programs and have strong relationships with women leaders in the community. Women's rights organisations, including those working in coalition, are well placed to build the profiles of progressive women candidates as individuals who can deliver for the community.

Women's rights organisations can also support connections between potential women candidates with their local constituencies. The women's movement can also mobilise quickly, during the election period, to support the campaigns of endorsed women candidates.

Actions to be prioritised

- Support models involving long-term, tailored support to individual, potential women candidates, including mentoring and coaching.
- Replicate the campaign finance support model in other WAVE countries.
- Support WAVE partners in working with unsuccessful candidates, including post-election debriefing.
- Support to women's rights coalitions with development and implementation of Joint Advocacy Plans.
- Ensure WAVE's planned Movement Building Strategy and research documents the contribution of women's movements to women's political leadership.

5. Elected women have improved power and influence to advance women's rights

Once women achieve elected office, it is essential they are supported to navigate male-dominated spaces, to achieve roles of substantive decision making, to effectively advocate for legislative change in support of women's rights and to retain their seat.

While women often enter politics with greater capabilities and qualifications than men, they are likely to continue to face greater barriers in gaining access to influential roles and substantive decision making power. Women are required to navigate a male biased political environment in both formal and informal spaces, often have less access to resources (such as staffing, research support and transportation costs) and generally have greater family responsibilities.⁴³

Pacific Women has called for increased investment in efforts to develop and strengthen networks of elected women leaders.⁴⁴ Women's parliamentary caucuses,⁴⁵ coalitions and networks of elected women, and mentoring programs are models that are effective in providing support and solidarity to women candidates. These models leverage the knowledge, political skills, and networks of more experienced women parliamentarians.

GOOD PRACTICE – MYANMAR

Political mentoring program

IWDA and WAVE partner, Akhaya Women, jointly run a mentoring program for recently elected women Members of Parliament (MPs) in Myanmar. Building on the MPs' strong leadership skills, the model supports Myanmar MPs to be effective, influential parliamentarians, with greater prospects of re-election in 2020.

Six Myanmar women MPs with a commitment to advancing gender equality, are matched with six Australian women MPs with similar commitments. The Myanmar MPs are from different political parties and diverse ethnic groups, promoting important cross-party engagement.

The model demonstrates the value of sustained, tailored support to targeted women leaders throughout the electoral cycle. Following a successful pilot in 2017, there was very high interest from other Myanmar MPs to join the program in 2018.

Early results indicate that when framed with a power sensitivity and gender equality agenda, women's political mentoring programs can be an effective strategy to support newly elected women MPs, resulting in:

- Strengthened political skills, particularly continuous campaigning skills
- Enhanced cross-party networks of women parliamentarians
- Strengthened links between women MPs and women's rights movements
- Deepened political ties across countries

This program demonstrates the important role women's rights organisations can play in supporting progressive women parliamentarians. For example, Akhaya Women supported the MPs to hold International Women's Day (IWD) events in their constituencies, providing an opportunity for both continuous campaigning and gender equality advocacy. It was the first time in Myanmar that MPs had held IWD events.

The MPs are well positioned to support gender equality initiatives put forward by the women's movement. As Co-Chair of the Government's Technical Working Group on Violence against Women and Girls, Akhaya Women is poised to draw on the support of the MPs when the Prevention of Violence Against Women Bill is debated in Parliament, most likely later in 2018.

Refer to the Myanmar Women Parliamentarians Mentoring Pilot Program Practice Brief for further details.⁴⁶



Daw Nan Htwe Thu MP and former Senator Penny Wright. Photo: Shwe Wutt Hmon

Connecting elected women with their constituencies

To win and retain office, it is important for women to maintain close connections with their constituents.⁴⁷ In a number of WAVE countries, elected women face particular challenges in staying connected with the communities they represent. Barriers include difficulty traveling to remote areas, high communication costs, and limited, or no, support staff. Supporting women parliamentarians to maintain connections with their constituencies is a valuable contribution.

GOOD PRACTICE – PAPUA NEW GUINEA AND BOUGAINVILLE

Connecting elected women to constituents

Wide Bay Conservation Association in Papua New Guinea and the Bougainville Women's Federation bring together elected women and their constituents to enable ongoing dialogue. Encouraging elected women to keep in touch with their constituencies through forums and meetings helps to build elected women's knowledge of constituency issues and assists elected women to continuously develop relevant campaign strategies, which contribute to ensuring re-election.

Women's Improved power and influence - WAVE Value Add

WAVE supports women's rights organisations and movements, who are well placed to support elected women with research, profile building and connection to constituencies. Women's rights organisations play an important role in keeping elected women connected to the lived realities of women's lives; increasing the likelihood they will advance a women's rights agenda. WAVE is well placed to support connections between elected women across countries, building solidarity and sharing lessons learned. Additionally, feminists in developing countries are already working in astute ways to negotiate power through problem driven, politically smart approaches, so are well placed to support and hold women in politics accountable to do the same.

Actions to be prioritised

- Support WAVE partners to provide ongoing support to elected women, including political skills strengthening and connection to their constituencies.
- Support WAVE partners to brief elected women on gender equality issues through sharing information and data.
- Consider opportunities for supporting women parliamentary caucuses and other peer-to-peer models.
- Use the WAVE Women's Leadership Pathways research findings to inform policy advocacy for better enabling environments for elected women.
- Profile women in politics and documents their contributions.



Alzira Reis, CEO Alola Foundation. Photo: Anna E Carlile

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