**Gender and Governance**

**Abbreviations/acronyms**

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| BPfA | Beijing Platform for Action |
| CEDAW | Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women |
| CIVICUS | World Alliance for Citizen Participation |
| CRC | Convention on the Rights of the Child |
| CSO | Civil society organization |
| DFID | Department for International Development |
| EPZ | Export processing zone |
| EU | European Union |
| GSDRC | Governance and Social Development Resource Centre |
| IFI | International financial institution |
| IGTN | International Gender and Trade Network |
| ILO | International Labor Organization |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| IPU | Inter-Parliamentary Union |
|  |  |
| LSP | Local Strategic Partnership |
| MDG | Millennium Development Goal |
| NGO | Non-governmental organization |
| NPM | New public management |
| NWM | National women’s machinery |
| OECD | Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| PPA | Participatory Poverty Assessment |
| PRSP | Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper |
| SDC | Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Program |
| UNIFEM | United Nations Development Fund for Women |
| WTO | World Trade Organization |

**Chapter one: Governance: Definitions, concepts, goals and principles**

## 1.1 What is governance?

*“Most agree that the central component of governance is decision-making‟* (Institute on Governance website 2009)

##### 1.1.1 Concept and Definitions of governance

In most dictionaries “government” and “governance” are interchangeably used, both denoting the exercise of authority in an organization, institution or state. Government is the name given to the entity exercising that authority. Authority can most simply define as legitimate power. Whereas power is the ability to influence the behavior of others, authority is the right to do so. The concept of governance is a ‘catch-all’ term for often messy, unpredictable and fluid’ processes. It is a slippery term with multiple definitions, depending on the agency using the term or the context in which it is used. Governance is a broader term than government. In its widest sense, it refers to the various ways in which social life is coordinated. Government can therefore be seen as one of the institutions in governance (Heywood, 1997).

However, put simply, governance refers to decision-making by a range of interested people, or ‘stakeholders‟, including those in formal positions of power and ‘ordinary’ citizens. These decisions have a huge impact on the ways in which women and men lead their lives, on the rules they are expected to abide by, and on the structures, that determine where and how they work and live. In *theory,* this means that multiple individuals and organizations or stakeholders are involved in strategic planning: “They articulate their interests, influence how decisions are made, who the decision-makers are and what decisions are taken‟. Decision-makers are expected to be guided by this input, and accountable to the stakeholders for the decisions they make and the way they are implemented through the management of public affairs and public spending. The reality, however, is that not all stakeholders have the required power or leverage to influence decisions and hold decision-makers to account.

This complexity is reflected in the different ways in which national and international agencies and institutions frame governance – what they see as the end-goals of governance. The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank emphasize efficiency of processes and resource management. By contrast, the United Nations Development Program’s (UNDP’s) conceptualization of governance builds on an understanding of governance rooted in social justice and rights – not referring to governance institutions as holders of power, but rather as enablers of equitable decision-making and accountability, and of greater citizen involvement. In turn, CIVICUS (World Alliance for Citizen Participation) brings the focus around to citizens and the need for a participatory approach to governance which is ultimately about achieving equitable power-sharing in governance processes (see definitions below).

Some definitions of governance

The World Bank: Governance is … the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised for the common good. This includes (i) the process by which those in authority are selected, monitored and replaced, (ii) the capacity of the government to effectively manage its resources and implement sound policies, and (iii) the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them.

The Asian Development Bank: Governance is the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country’s social and economic resources for development. Government means the way those with power use power…‟

UNDP: Governance is the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country’s affairs at all levels. Economic governance includes decision-making processes that affect a country's economic activities and its relationships with other economies. It clearly has major implications for equity, poverty and quality of life. Political governance is the process of decision-making to formulate policy. Administrative governance is the system of policy implementation. Governance comprises the complex mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, mediate their differences and exercise their legal rights and obligations.

CIVICUS: Participatory governance is about empowering citizens to participate in processes of public decision-making that affect their lives.

**(Extracted from McCawley 2006: 2 and from Malena 2006:3)**

**Origin and historical development Governance/Good governance**

The concept of ‘Governance’ is not new. It is as old as government itself. Both the terms are derived respectively, from the old French words gouvernance and governement. Initially their meanings were very close, referring to acts or manner of government. By the mid-16th century, however, government denoted a “system by which something is governed” and by the early 18th century it further evolved to acquire the meaning of a “governing authority.” In this process the term governance gradually became marginalized, and by the 19th century it was deemed to reflect an incipient archaism. For the next 100 years, it would hardly be used as a political term. Dictionaries would define government in terms of a governing authority, including the political order and its institutional framework, while governance was treated as the agency and process of governing, and was often viewed as archaic (Ilyin, 2013).

However, during 1980s under economic reforms, especially under globalization the use of term governance became popular with its emphasis on the process and manner of governing to the notion of sustainable development. Meanwhile, organizations such as the IMF, NGOs, the UN and its agencies, the World Bank and international media were quick to pick up the term and use it in a variety of ways. Together with its derived term, good governance, the catch-all term governance has since become a buzzword in the vocabulary of polity and administrative reform in developing countries dependent on support from international development agencies (Ilyin, 2013). The concept of Good Governance has gained prominence around the world in recent times. It has become a buzzword in the vocabulary of polity and administrative reform, mainly due to the importance given to it by international community. Actually, the term governance has become synonymous to sound development management. In recent times the concept of Good Governance first emerged in the mid-1980s as governability with the emphasis on adherence to the rule of law. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the cold war, the term governance came to be used to define the reinventing of public administration, particularly in the developing countries, to make it more receptive to the needs of globalization.

### 1.1.2. Levels of governance

Governance happens at five interconnected levels – the household, community, local, national government, and global institutions (Ashworth 1996). The institutions and actors involved in governance processes vary according to the level. For example, at the national level the institutions where governance happens include businesses, schools, hospitals, the military and the media, as well as the government. At the local level, governance takes place not only in local government offices but also in community and household decision-making processes. At a global level, governance is less easy to locate institutions, but the term global governance is often used to describe the complex processes of management, and the frameworks and rules through which international social and economic policy is coordinated and regulated (Grugel and Piper 2007: 3). The global sphere includes multinational corporations as well as international institutions such as the UN agencies and WTO. From a gender perspective, the inclusion of the household, or family, as well as communities as institutions of governance is essential – this is where many gender inequalities are acted out, shaped by decisions made at international, national and local levels that define rights and responsibilities.

1*.****2 What is effective or ‘good’ governance?***

*“Good governance means creating well-functioning and accountable institutions – political, judicial and administrative – which citizens regard as legitimate, in which they participate in decisions that affect their daily lives and by which they are empowered.* The terms governance and good governance are often used interchangeably by a range of organizations – from donor agencies to CSOs. We make a distinction between ‟governance‟ as being about *processes* of decision-making, mechanisms and management, while “good‟ or “effective‟ governance refers to the *quality* of these processes, judged against a set of governance principles (see below).

The notion of good governance is being applied in developed as well as developing countries, as a set of standards all governance institutions should be striving for, and as a recognition that “bad governance‟ happens in developed as well as developing countries. However, it is most commonly used by international development agencies – including bilateral and multilateral – which link the continuation of poverty in many countries of the South to bad governance which is viewed as inefficient, undemocratic and often corrupt. Some have argued that the polarized notions of “good‟ and “bad” governance beg the question of who decides what constitutes good governance; whether those making the judgements are leading by example, being accountable for their own governance processes and whether the way they assess the effectiveness of governance adequately captures the complexity and sometimes contradictory nature of local cultural, social and political contexts (Pettai and Illing 2004: 349). These are important questions, given that donors and financial institutions are increasingly basing aid flows and loans on the condition that “good‟ governance reforms are introduced. This means that some associate the term good governance with particular and negative manifestations of particular donor policy and behaviors. Many agencies and organizations in developed and developing countries – including bilateral and multilateral donors, country governments and CSOs agree that effective governance is a route to more democratic, corruption-free societies, but organizations differ as to what they think effective or “good‟ governance is and how it should be assessed. Some – for example, international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the World Bank – see governance that promotes efficiency in financial management and administration as a priority for achieving poverty reduction and democracy. For others, governance is only effective if it promotes social justice and equality, and furthers the realization of rights for all citizens. Here we take the view that governance can only be effective if it focuses on achieving social justice and gender equality, and that gender equality in society enables more effective governance.

**Principles of effective/good governance**

Different players – including IFIs, bilateral or multilateral donors and CSOs – assess how effective governance is on the basis of how accountable, transparent, inclusive and responsive, among other such principles, governance institutions are to citizens. Despite concerns that IFIs and donors may impose their own notions of “good governance‟ on developing counties, there is still great potential in some of these principles for achieving social justice, and particularly for enabling greater gender equality. However, they can be far more useful entry points for enabling gender equality if they are defined, implemented and measured in gender-sensitive ways. To provide a starting point for the process, definitions of selected principles are provided below, drawing on current understandings, which tend to be gender blind in that they often do reflect the different needs, roles and experiences of women and men.

This section focuses on the **eight** governance principles as UNDP (1997) that are fundamental to the overarching goals of social justice and equality: accountability, transparency, responsiveness, equity, inclusiveness, upholding rights, and following the rule of law.



**Source: Governance for Sustainable Human Development a UNDP Policy Document (1997)**

##### Accountability

Broadly, the notion of accountability means taking responsibility for the outcomes of decisions made, and being answerable for failures to meet expectations. Accountable governance means that those involved in governance decision-making in the public and private sector are expected to adhere to publicly agreed standards, norms and goals. Governance decision-makers need to justify the way they have designed, administered and implemented policies, and the way they have allocated and spent financial resources – for example, by giving an account of what they have done with the national revenue or through an assessment of specific performance measures. If they have not met their obligations, corrective action can be taken, which might entail voting politicians out of office or setting up a judicial enquiry. CSOs at local, national and international levels are often expected to play a key “**watchdog**‟ role in these accountability processes through formal procedures such as CEDAW Shadow Reporting as well as through lobbying policymakers.

Accountability can be categorized in terms of **horizontal**, and **vertical**/**social**. mechanisms. Horizontal accountability is a method or capacity towards structure accountability that relies on institutions such as legislature (parliament or congress) and the judiciary, or other autonomous institutions that can call into question, and ultimately punish to any public officer because of inappropriate ways of performing their assigned responsibilities. Horizontal accountability normally refers to internal mechanisms within government. It consists of formal relationship with in state and government itself. It focuses on internal check and oversight process. For instant executive must explain their decision to legislature. In other words, horizontal accountability is the ability of state institutions or government to check the abuses by branches of government, public agencies or other public officers. Vertical /Social Accountability usually link citizen and state through formal mechanisms, most obviously through local and national elections. In vertical forms of accountability through which citizens, media, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Civil Society Groups (CSG) play directly or indirectly roles in holding the powerful to account. In short Accountability is one of the foundations of good governance. Both types of Accountability play significant role to achieve the goal of good governance.

##### Transparency

Transparency is built on the free flow of information. It also means that information is freely available and directly accessible to those who will be affected by such decisions and their enforcement. Transparency is the provision, which makes it possible for the people to know about the' decision making process of the government. It is also one of the significant elements of the good governance. Today, transparency or openness in governance is significant in the process of development. The government must have complete transparency with all its decision makings; as well as with its implementations of laws and policies that should be aligned to the rules and regulations of good governance. Additionally, all information must be easily accessible and understandable by the media as well as by the ordinary citizens. By doing this, disseminating important information about the activities and real status of the government would be easily monitored and understood by the entire citizenry.

In support of accountability, transparency literally means that citizens should be able to “see through‟ the workings of governance institutions. This means making information freely available and not preventing citizens from seeking or sharing information. Transparent procedures include holding open meetings, issuing publicly available financial disclosure statements, passing freedom of information legislation and conducting budgetary reviews.

##### Inclusiveness and Equity

All men and women have opportunities to improve or maintain their well-being. Inclusiveness is often linked to participation, equity and diversity. Inclusiveness primarily refers to enabling people prone to marginalization – including women to participate equally in governance institutions and practices by voting freely in elections, by standing as elected representatives or through their involvement in other forms of governance planning and administration. Inclusiveness is as much about increasing citizen involvement in informal processes such as local consultations as it is about involvement in formal institutions.

Closely linked to inclusiveness, equity refers specifically to the right of all citizens to have an equal say in governance processes, and to benefit equally from their outcomes. This means ensuring that decision-making is informed by all voices, including those of the most vulnerable, and that resources are shared in ways that meet everyone’s needs. Equity is a *goal* as well as a principle of governance.

##### Responsiveness

Institutions and processes try to serve all stakeholders. Good governance requires that institutions and processes try to serve all stakeholders within a reasonable timeframe. Responsiveness in governance means *acting on* the information gathered through participatory processes in ways that benefit all citizens. This means actively listening to what citizens are saying, and providing services and policies that meet their diverse needs.

**Participation**

Participation by all citizens, both men and women are a key cornerstone of good governance. All men and women should have a voice in decision-making, either directly or through legitimate intermediate institutions that represent their interests. Such broad participation is built on freedom of association and speech, as well as capacities to participate constructively. Participation could be either direct or through legitimate intermediate institutions or representatives. It is important to point out that representative democracy does not necessarily mean that the concerns of the most vulnerable in society would be taken into consideration in decision making. Participation needs to be informed and organized. This means freedom of association and expression on the one hand and an organized civil society on the other hand.

##### Following the rule of law

It is widely political consensus that the rule of law is a necessary foundation for efforts to achieve the goal of good governance. Justice is valued as central in governance. Therefore, its values justice as most important for establishing a just society in which people from all walks of life, from different faiths can live in peace and harmony with no discrimination. Equally important, good governance requires fair legal structure that must be applied objectively in order to give full protection to the human rights of the people, most especially those minorities. And, to implement this effectively, there must be unbiased implementation of laws that require independent judiciary and an impartial, as well as corrupt-free police force.

When governance institutions follow the rule of law this means that they abide by fair legal frameworks that are established through a consensus process and do not discriminate against anyone in society. These laws must be enforced through impartial bodies, so require the establishment of an independent judiciary and a police force that is not corrupt.

**Consensus Oriented**

Good governance mediates differing interests to reach a broad consensus on what is in the best interests of the group and, where possible, on policies and procedures. Society consists of various stake holders. It is required for good governance to mediate among these different interest base stake holders in case of conflict of interest. It is responsibility of government to make consensus-oriented decision making. Today, ‘governance’ signifies a transformation from a type of relationship where a limited group of people have the ultimate authority to rule others to a set of relationships where mutual interaction takes place in order to make desirable choices for all stakeholders. It involves the mechanism, processes and institutions that individuals, corporations, groups and societies utilize in joint decision-making and implementation among social actors as well as in solving conflicts.

**Effectiveness and Efficiency**

Good governance means that processes and institutions produce results that meet the needs of society while making the best use of resources at their disposal. The concept of efficiency in the context of good governance also covers the sustainable use of natural resources and the protection of the environment (UNESCAP, 2014). Decision maker should have a broad and long-term vision on how to better the process of governance to ensure continued economic and social development. Process must be in place to ensure the most productive use of resource.

**Why is Good Governance Important?**

Good governance is about the processes for making and implementing decisions. It’s not about making ‘correct’ decisions, but about the best possible process for making those decisions. It is in this context, the study of good governance has become very important in the literature of political science, Administrative Sciences and development studies. Good governance is important for several benefits.

Good governance creates a strong future for an organization by continuously steering towards a vision and making sure that day-to-day management is always lined up with the organization’s goals. At its core, governance is about leadership. An effective board will improve the organization’s results, both financial and social, and make sure the owners' assets and funds are used appropriately. Poor governance can put organizations at risk of commercial failure, financial and legal problems for directors/trustees or allow an organization to lose sight of its purpose and its responsibilities to its owners and people who benefit from its success.

Governance is how an institution is ruled; it is how the authority, responsibility, and controls are required in the institution. Governance is relevant to any institution, small or large; for profit or not; extending from a single family all the way to global institutions that have an impact on our lives. Hence, governance is relevant for humanity for quality of life now and for its sustainability in the future. It commonly acknowledged that in the absence of democracy, peace and good governance, sustainable socio-economic progress is not possible. Another vital attribute of governance in MDGs is efficient and effective administration. The Government of India, for example, is determined to be more responsive and accountable to the public. The Government of China for example is among those taking firm measures to combat corruption and promote integrity in governance.

In the context of developing societies there has been an added emphasis on human development in recent years. It means development of human capabilities and opportunities. The good governance is a prerequisite for human development and governance which would ensure human development is human governance. It has been widely accepted now that the main reasons for human deprivation are not just economic. There are social and political factors too rooted in poor governance. It is thus clear that the issue of good governance focuses on the inseparable linkages between social-economic and political development. It has rightly been pointed out that the good governance means political pluralism with free and fair elections, it means far pending on military preparation and infrastructure and war and much more on education, health and basic amenities. It means fighting the graft and nepotism. This also suggests that good governance has to concentrate more on building a congenial political atmosphere for social and economic development. The good governance has also to ensure that the funds of the state are utilized on the development of human and productive areas instead of non-human and non-productive areas.

In short, governance is about performance. Thus, the governance in any society, aims to ensure transparency through the exercise of economic political and administrative authority. It basically strives to establish quality relationship between the rulers and the ruled. In the context, governance point out to the nature of mutual interaction among social actors as well as between social actors and public administration, and it contains the meaning of ‘ruling together’ with aim of helping individuals realize their potential for improving the quality of their lives.

***1.4 Democratization and Governance***

Some definitions of democracy emphasize the processes that underpin democratic governance, such as fair, competitive elections and freedom of speech and information. Others view democracy more broadly in terms of civil and political rights and the distribution of power in society (see the Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC) website). Democracy is an essential prerequisite of good governance. A democratic government may also face crisis of governability (Kohli, 1992). However, a democrat system is essential because that alone can promote the ethics of economic and political freedom and development for individuals increase the mass participation, which are features of good governance. The good governance is a situation where there is a mutual trust between the state and the citizen. It has been said in this context that the only tenable normative aspiration, to modern politics can be to make states more trustworthy to all who must live under them: to make them more graceful and civilized in their dealings with their citizens and with one another.

Relatively, it is very essential to give emphasis on the democratic form of governance. The government must have participation from the citizenry; both men and women in the society should take part in various activities and organizations in the government sectors. The principle of equality is one of the most important constitutional principles upon which the contemporary system rests. This means that the principle of equality contained in the individual communities are equal in rights, responsibilities and public duties that will be enjoyed by all without discrimination of race, origin, or belief (Bevir, 2006).

As, Universal Declaration on Democracy adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in 1997 states that democracy is based on the core principles of participation and accountability. It refers to citizens‟ rights to participate in governance processes, either directly or by voting in fair, transparent elections for freely chosen representatives; the need for governments to be responsive and accountable to citizens; the right of citizens, including the most disadvantaged groups, to influence their governments and criticize governing bodies without fear of punishment; and freedom of speech, information and the media.

Significantly, the Universal Declaration states that „democracy presupposes a genuine partnership between men and women in conducting the affairs of society‟ (IPU website, Universal Declaration on Democracy). It is important to note that there is often a large discrepancy between the way governance institutions talk about democracy and the way democratic principles are applied. Moreover, although many may agree with the ideals expressed in the declaration, the notion of democracy is rejected by some because of the extent to which it has been shaped by European and American thought. It should also not be assumed that democracies result in greater gender equality – it is an important foundation but not the only contributing factor – for example, in China women’s numerical participation in village committees has declined since elections were introduced.

It is believed by some scholar – Nasir Islam and David. R. Morision – believed that human rights, civil society and democratization are essential components of good governance. Mustafa Kamal has further been asserted by some scholars that the issue of building a civil society is central to good governance. It is believed that the civil society is indeed a driving force behind political and economic reforms which is a pre-condition towards good governance (Kamal, 1997). In fact, good governance has been considered as tin hall mark of a civil society: a society which ensures a democratic political culture with accountability and popular participation in the developmental process. In the present times, the globalized market process induced by globalization and liberalization has laid a greater demand for civil society and human rights. It means empowerment of people, which is possible only through good governance.

The process of strengthening institutions and electoral and legislative systems, enhancing citizen engagement in decision-making and involving civil society in political processes associated with governance reforms is often referred to as democratization. The establishment of electoral reforms that enhance women’s entry into governance are also part of this process. But – as many have argued – increasing numbers of women in governance should not be considered a guarantee of democratization; women’s equal participation in governance processes is contingent on the creation of enabling conditions such as subsidized child care and capacity building.

##### 1.6.3 Rights and governance

In light of the IPU‟s Universal Declaration on Democracy there has been renewed recognition by those promoting governance processes of the need to protect human rights (Grugel and Piper 2007: 12). These include economic rights and the right to security, as well as equality, and are laid out in UN Declarations and Conventions, including CEDAW. Some organizations such as CIVICUS promote a rights-based approach to governance.

CIVICUS adopts a rights-based approach to development and governance – it seeks to promote basic human rights (including freedoms of association, information and expression), the right to essential services (such as water and education) and citizens‟ rights, including the right of all women and men to participate in the decisions that affect their lives and the right to expect and to ensure that government acts in the best interests of the people‟. Its participatory governance program places special emphasis on the rights and participation of women, children, disabled people and other traditionally marginalized groups.

However, rights are still the most undeveloped element of governance, partly because of weak processes of claiming them and holding states to account under international conventions, and partly because there is no shared consensus as to what they mean in practice. A key message of this report is that far more attention needs to be paid to rights in the context of governance as a means to strengthen national and international commitments to gender-focused international frameworks, including CEDAW. It is also vital to expose the extent to which many people – especially women – are denied the right to be heard in governance and in society.

##### 1.6.4 Decentralization and governance

In many countries, the decentralization of governance functions is viewed as a means towards the dual goals of economic growth and democracy. Democratic decentralization entails the increasing responsibility of lower level authorities at local levels over resources and bureaucratic tasks, accompanied in some countries by the development of formal and informal spaces for citizen involvement in governance decision-making processes. Decentralization is also viewed as a means to achieving greater efficiency because decisions are likely to be quicker and more relevant to local needs, as well as improving transparency and ownership. Some have argued that the expansion of local government offices and the increase in citizen-led consultative processes has led to greater gender equality in decision-making. However, while increasing the number of women in governance processes is important, constant attention needs to be paid to the *quality* of their participation and the extent to which their voices are listened to. Furthermore, decentralization has the potential to further entrench power inequalities, with negative consequences for women.

##### 2.6.5 Social justice and citizen-led governance processes

Understandings of governance have gone through a transition since 2000 in light of an increasing emphasis on social justice, prompted by concerns that elected representatives may not always act in constituents‟ interests. Recent understandings of governance and democratization have consequently placed a much greater emphasis on enabling ordinary people at all levels of society to exercise their citizenship through consultative processes around service delivery management and other issues; partnerships with governance representatives; and online discussion platforms, known as e-governance, that enable people in diverse and sometimes remote geographical locations to share their opinions (see UNDP 2005: 69–106). CIVICUS use the term “participatory governance‟ for this (Malena 2006).

As part of their “watchdog‟ role CSOs are viewed as key actors in implementing and monitoring these participatory processes, as well as mediators in ensuring that local voices are heard at higher levels of governance. Yet whether these participatory processes amplify the voices of marginalized people in reality is debatable.

Key points from Chapter 1

* Governance refers to a stakeholder approach to decision-making processes which includes both those in formal positions of power and ordinary citizens.
* approaches are therefore – in theory – inclusive of a wide range of people or stakeholders. In reality, not all stakeholders are invited to the decision-making table, and those who are have different levels of power, or ability to influence the final decisions – with women likely to be excluded.
* Effective or “good‟ governance refers to the *quality* of these processes, judged against a set of principles, which include: accountability, transparency, inclusiveness, responsiveness, upholding principles of equity, and following the rule of law – some describe these as democratic principles or processes, with democracy invariably an overarching goal of governance.
* Organizations promoting democratic governance processes differ as to what they think effective or good governance is – this shape what strategies are used and which governance institutions or actors are strengthened and funded.
* Notions and practices of governance have not remained static; nor are they unitary – rather, they have taken different trajectories and been interpreted and implemented in different ways, depending on the agency or organization deploying them.

# Chapter two: Governance through a gender lens

***“Until gender parity is reached in governance, women cannot reach full equality with men in any sphere.”***

***“The absence of women’s voices in shaping the most fundamental political instruments...has ensured the preservation of gender inequality.”***

Why is it crucial to analyze governance institutions and processes from a gender perspective? This chapter explores reasons for the persistence of gender inequality in governance and considers the ways these inequalities are manifested. It goes on to ask what gender-sensitive governance would look like and what needs to change to ensure that gender sensitive processes are put in place to implement principles of equality. The chapter introduces an approach intended to assist those involved in governance processes in different contexts and at local, national and global levels to clarify their goals and the principles for gender-sensitive governance, understand the gendered mechanisms of governance where change needs to happen, consider what is needed to implement change – and where they could begin.

## 2.1. How gender-sensitive are in current governance institutions and processes?

It is difficult to generalize but certain markers indicate that, despite governance reforms, there has been a fundamental failure to challenge entrenched unequal gendered power relations and other forms of exclusion that have been inbuilt in governing processes and institutions. **Such markers include:**

**Gender imbalance in decision-making -** Gender-sensitive reforms in national and local government in the form of electoral quota systems and the establishment of women’s ministries have resulted in some progress in achieving a better gender balance in governance – for example, the fact that Rwanda has one of the highest figures for women’s representation in its national assembly is largely due to the application of quotas. However, there are still far fewer women than men in decision-making positions at global, national and local levels of governance – including the micro-levels of the community and household.

**Who are the decision-makers?**

* The world average of women in Parliaments in 2016 was only 22.6 per cent, with the highest number in Rwanda (61 per cent) and the lowest in the Pacific and Arab states (IPU website 2016).
* In the highest decision-making bodies of EU central banks there are five times as many men as women.
* Across UN agencies, between 1999 and 2007, the share of female Secretariat staff in professional and higher categories increased by an average of only 0.35 per cent per year between 2004 and 2006, in spite of the UN‟s commitment to a 50–50 gender balance in its staff (UN News Centre 2007).

**Women are not treated equally in governance institutions and processes -** Even when women are actively involved in governance, their struggle for equal treatment and recognition is not over. Women are often kept on the margins of decision-making in government, confined to ‘**soft** **policy’** areas such as health and education. Existing systems of governance reinforce this marginalization, with important decisions often made between men in closed “inner circles.” These forms of marginalization are just as prevalent in local government and processes designed to include ordinary citizens as they are in national and global institutions.

**Governance institutions fail to take women’s ‘double burden’ into account -** The working arrangements of governance institutions are usually inflexible, making it very difficult for women to balance work with the additional caring responsibilities they are often expected to take on. This is as true for citizen-focused participatory processes as it is for state-level and global institutions.

**Governance policies fail to challenge gender inequalities and to take the different needs of men and women into account** - As a result of these inequalities in decision-making, governance policies often remain blind to the different needs of men and women. For example, there is a vast amount of evidence indicating that women and other marginalized groups have been negatively affected by trade policy led by the WTO. At the local level, services such as the provision of health, water and education often still fail to meet the needs of women and men.

**Poor institutional accountability on gender equality and women’s rights -** Even when institutions commit to gender equality in their policies and practices by ratifying CEDAW, developing a gender equality action plan or promoting gender-sensitive electoral reform, they often fail to take responsibility for these. There can be many reasons for this, including inflexibility within the institution, but a major factor is often that there are no clear mechanisms in place to ensure that gender equality remains a priority. And gender equality may not be an indicator against which the performance of governance actors is assessed.

## 2.2. What are the roots of the gender imbalance in governance?

While many reasons have been identified for the gender imbalance in governance, the most common argument is that the division between “**public**‟ and “**private**‟ spaces has created a barrier to women’s participation in governance. Politics has traditionally been considered a male arena because it operates in the public domain, while in many societies’ women are expected to restrict their activities to the household and immediate community. It is important to bear in mind that these distinctions between private and public are not “givens‟ – they are themselves part of a set of accepted ideas about the male and female place in society that have been frequently used as a *justification* – often by partners, families, communities and women themselves – for women’s absence from public life (Rai 2008: 38).

The public–private argument does little to counteract fixed views on female and male social roles, and may conceal gender inequalities within household or family governance that may prevent women from becoming involved in more formal governance institutions and processes (Baden 2000; Ashworth 1996). These inequalities may be reinforced by cultural or religious practices – for example in some countries there are strict rules about interactions between men and women who are not related. And women may be prevented from voting or participating in other aspects of governance by male partners or relatives who are concerned their social power will be eroded if their wives, daughters or mothers are equal partners in traditionally male arenas.

There are other external constraints that prevent women from being fully integrated into governance structures, including lack of financial resources, lack of confidence and a lack of personal or family contacts often needed to ‘make it’ into governance positions. Gender-sensitive governance reforms, such as gender quotas, have facilitated women’s entry into politics to an extent, but are considered by many to be an imperfect and superficial solution that do not tackle the roots of unequal access.

## 2.3. What are the social roots of gender inequality in governance?

The low number of women engaged in governance institutions partly fuels poor levels of commitment to challenging gender inequality, but existing social inequalities and unequally gendered power relations at the micro level also present barriers to change within these institutions. Households’ implicit governance structures revolve around decision-making power, from which women may be excluded. Communities often have social rules and informal governance processes that may differ from those promoted by national or local government. Individuals working in governance institutions live in households and communities and bring values and experiences from this sphere to negotiations and working relationships. For example, men who receive more privileges than the female members of their families may assume this should also be the case at work. Similarly, perceptions of the role’s women should play in governance may be colored by the roles they are expected to play within the household and community.

## 2.4. Why does governance need to be gender-sensitive?

There are five primary reasons linked to development-focused goals and to broader goals of social justice.

##### 2.4.1. Governance cannot be effective unless it has gender equality at its center

Governance must lead to a more equitable world, where women also have choices and their rights are realized. It cannot be effective if there is no understanding of the differing needs of women and men in public spending, policies, legislation and treaties. Nor can it be effective if women cannot exercise their right to participate equally in the decisions that affect their lives. In short, governance cannot be effective, or “good‟, unless it is gender sensitive.

##### 2.4.2. Women have a right to participate in the decisions that affect their lives

Women remain under-represented at all levels of decision-making in governance institutions and less engaged in governance processes more broadly. Achieving greater gender equality in governance is an important end in itself – quite simply, those who have traditionally been excluded because of their gender, sexuality, race or for other reasons have the right to play an equal part in governance institutions and processes. For this reason, the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) devotes one of its 12 “critical areas of concern‟ to “Women in Power and Decision-making‟ – its strategic objective is to “take measures to ensure women’s equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making‟. It outlines actions that need to be taken by a broad range of actors – from governments to trade unions – to achieve a gender balance. But “adding women‟ is not enough. CEDAW echoes this statement, with a focus on women’s participation in national level institutions, stating that women should have the right to: “participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government‟ (CEDAW website 2009).

##### 2.4.3. It will result in policies that promote gender equality and women’s rights

While governance institutions can reinforce gender inequalities, they can also challenge them. So, ensuring that women play an equal role in shaping the decisions, rules and structures that influence our lives is likely to lead to long-term, sustainable changes. For example, if more women are involved in developing school curricula, there is a good chance they will challenge the gender stereotypes often reinforced through school textbooks. If they have an equal voice in developing legal frameworks, it is likely they will ensure laws do not discriminate against women and that international, gender-focused legislation such as CEDAW is honored. This could result in greater equality for women in the workplace and a greater commitment to addressing the problem of gender-based violence. It could also mean establishing legal obligations for companies to provide extended paternity as well as maternity leave so that men and women can share caring responsibilities, as well as more flexible working arrangements so the demands of domestic and work lives can be balanced.

##### 2.4.4. It is a means to shifting gender norms

Governance institutions can reinforce or challenge ideas of what it is to be a woman or a man in any society or community. Statutory or customary laws lay out what is acceptable female behavior – they can constrain women’s freedom of movement and participation in public life but they can also enable greater recognition of women’s rights as equal citizens with a potential role in governance. Strategic legislative changes could therefore provide the foundations for shifts in social expectations about the roles and responsibilities men and women should take on and the rights they should enjoy. A higher profile of women as decision-makers in governance would also contribute to a transformation in attitudes towards women in households and communities and provide positive role models for both girls and boys. The increased representation of women in governance institutions has also been shown to increase numbers of women voters – strengthening citizenship.

##### 2.4.5. It is a means to more effective, equitable resource allocation

Governance institutions determine how public resources are allocated and whether services take account of women’s needs – for example, few governments fund childcare facilities, making it easier for women to take on paid work. A greater recognition of women’s as well as men’s needs and situations is likely to result in better and more equal allocation of public financial resources – including subsidies for childcare – and more targeted delivery of services such as water, education and health services.

## 2.5. What is gender-sensitive governance?

***“Transformation requires more extensive change than simply increasing the influence of previously excluded groups…‟ (****Waylen 2008: 255)*

Interpretations of gender-sensitive governance will depend on the institutions concerned and their understanding of governance. Broadly, gender-sensitive governance begins with putting gender equality and social justice issues at its Centre. It needs to recognize the different needs, interests, priorities and responsibilities of men and women and challenge entrenched gender inequalities. Gender equality issues, such as equal pay, women’s right to participate in decision-making, domestic violence, and the recognition of unpaid care work, must be taken seriously. Its institutions and processes need to be designed to identify and integrate gender differences into all aspects of decision-making so that policies, plans and programs equally benefit all women and men across societies. Importantly, gender-sensitive governance means women and men must have equal involvement in planning and implementing these institutions and processes.

Work on gender and governance tends to equate increased representation of women in government with more gender-sensitive governance. Certainly, enabling a diverse, “critical mass” (Ashworth 1996) of women to enter government via mechanisms such as quota systems, enabling them to exercise their citizenship by voting and be part of national and local decision-making bodies is a good starting point – not least because this may create enough strength in numbers to make it impossible to ignore women’s collective demands or the gender-focused concerns of certain groups. Involving women in the accountability processes that are linked to initiatives promoting effective or “good‟ governance is also an important step forward. But it should not be assumed that these types of strategies will automatically result in gender-sensitive governance. To be effective, such strategies need to be rooted in a change of culture across governance institutions, processes and relationships. These changes need to happen at all levels, from global governance to the household, and from schools to the media. Achieving these changes requires a multi-dimensional approach which involves assessing current gender imbalances and barriers to women’s participation, and developing effective solutions.

If agencies and institutions at any level are serious about achieving a more gender-sensitive approach to governance, they need to start with the concepts themselves – what is their definition of gender-sensitive governance and how are they framing their goals? Second, they need to critically analyses the various elements that constitute the “what‟ of governance – the mechanisms through which governance is “done‟. These elements can be broken down broadly into: institutions and processes of governance and the human relationships within and between institutions. They also need to carefully consider the principles against which they assess the “how‟ or the quality of governance. To what extent does the way they understand and put principles of accountability, responsiveness and so on into practice reflect the situations of men and women; and how gender-sensitive are the indicators used to measure governance against these principles? Finally, governance institutions and agencies need to consider the practical approaches they will use to bring greater gender equality to their institutions and practices, including how they will apply more gender-aware principles to bring about effective governance.

**Some suggested ways to think through and reframe governance are provided below.**

##### 2.5.1 Developing a gender-sensitive definition of governance

A holistic, gender-sensitive definition of governance needs to acknowledge governance processes at all levels – and the diversity of citizens through their gender, sexuality and ethnicity. It also needs to recognize that existing policies, processes and traditions are imbued with inequalities, which need to be addressed for gender-sensitive reform to take place. So, a more progressive and gender sensitive definition of governance and of good governance requires:

Clarity on the gendered mechanisms of governance – what are the gender dynamics of the institutions, processes and relationships through which the everyday work of governance is done?

Clarity on the goals of governance in terms of achieving gender equality

Clarity around the stakeholders of governance – how do governance institutions understand “citizenship‟? Who do they see as participants in governance, and who do they see as recipients?

Clarity around what makes governance effective from a gender equality perspective – what does „gender sensitive governance‟ mean, and how can it be assessed?

##### 2.5.2. Looking at the mechanisms of governance through a gender lens

Definitions and understandings of governance need to recognize that the mechanisms of governance – its institutions, processes and relationships – are gendered and need to be challenged. This will enable greater clarity in identifying *what* needs to change, *where* these changes are needed and *who* needs to make the changes. To assist this process, below provided a gender perspective on some of the key components of governance.

Governance as gendered institutions

Institutions are only one element of governance, but they are arguably the most important sites for change, since they so often replicate gendered inequalities through their structures, processes and policies. *Institutions* arethe often-hierarchical structures and mechanisms, such as Parliaments, that have usually long been established.

However, institutions also exist in less tangible forms of social “contracts‟, such as marriage, that are often accepted as the norm. In either case, institutional divisions are imbued with and reproduce social power relations that are rooted in class, racial and gender differences and which privilege certain actors – often educated men (see Goetz 1997, 2007). Inequalities are perpetuated through institutions because those who are in power usually fail to challenge them, continuing to favor others like themselves for positions of authority. To effectively change institutions, it is helpful to understand how and why particular hierarchies exist, why institutional buildings and bureaucratic systems have been designed in a certain way and why certain practices have become normalized.

Governance as gendered processes

Institutions provide the foundations for the *processes* that drive governance. These processes range from high level decision-making around policy changes and implementation of new legislation, to the routine, day-to-day administration that is an integral part of governance at global, national and local levels. Governance processes happen between, as well as within, institutions. Governance processes often reinforce divisions between those working in governance institutions because of the way in which duties and responsibilities are assigned. Individuals with greater institutional presence and authority, including Members of Parliament (MPs), CSO board members or senior civil servants, are often involved in processes that have significant, traceable implications and which carry weight. Those lower down the institutional ladder – who are often likely to be women because of institutional barriers that block their progression in jobs – are likely to be responsible for the routine, clerical tasks that often remain invisible. There are other factors that reinforce these divisions and forms of exclusion. For example, often the type of language used in high-level decision-making implies a particular educational background and training from which certain people are excluded on the grounds of gender, sexuality, class, race or ethnicity (Ashworth 1996: 2; Dovi 2002, 2007).

Governance as gendered relationships

Central to institutional processes are *relationships –* the ways in which people interact within institutions and the way they behave towards people outside them. The primary issue is often-unequal power dynamics between women and men in informal and formal institutions. But it is also important to consider how men from different social strata relate to one another. Good gender relations are key to the success of gender focused reforms in governance. For example, gender mainstreaming is unlikely to be taken seriously if working relationships have not been established between gender advisors and actors in mainstream government institutions and sectors. It is also vital to enable dialogue between those involved in different levels of governance to ensure that women’s and men’s concerns feed upwards to national policymakers via local government and consultative processes, and to ensure gender-sensitive laws are effectively implemented (see, for example, the case study on gender-based violence laws in the Philippines online).

##### 2.5.3 Reframing citizenship through a gender lens

Humans are embedded in interlocking social networks at family, community and national levels Yuval-Davis 1997; Bulbeck 1998). Because of this, the notion and experience of citizenship cannot be understood in isolation from a person’s gender or other aspects of their identities. For example, if women are subject to forms of discrimination that are reinforced by culture, religion or law – such as the inability to ask for divorce or leave the house in order to vote; it is difficult to see how they would be able to exercise full, equal citizenship before those areas of discrimination were addressed (Jayal 2003: 104; Tambiah 2003). A truly citizen-led approach, therefore, needs to embrace the complexity of citizens, taking into account their often-conflicting loyalties and challenging social and cultural barriers to equality. The BRIDGE *Cutting Edge Pack* on Gender and Citizenship identifies how a gender perspective on citizenship is needed (see box below).

|  |
| --- |
| **Examining citizenship from a gender perspective means:**  *Challenging the idea of a “public‟–‟private‟ divide:*  Linking “private‟ wrongs – such as domestic violence – to public solutions  Including “private‟ gender needs in policy, such as extending rights to include welfare and childcare services  Redefining the “political‟ to include informal and private or community decision-making  *Mobilizing for change by promoting active gendered citizenship:*  Raising women’s awareness of their exclusion  Supporting women’s groups and NGOs  Creating spaces for interaction between citizens and institutions |

##### 2.5.4 Reframing the goals of governance through a gender lens

Once organizations have a clearer notion of the mechanisms of governance that need to be gender-sensitive to enable change, they need to clarify what they mean by good or effective governance. What are their goals of effective governance, and are they sufficiently focused on gender equality? What are the principles they see as crucial for achieving these goals, how gendered are their understandings of these principles, and how will they assess progress towards the goals through the application of the principles?

Gendering democracy

Institutions promoting decentralized, democratized governance approaches grounded in the governance principles of accountability, transparency, inclusiveness and so on may see democracy as a primary goal. Yet, how gender-sensitive is their understanding of democracy? Does it put rights and equality – particularly gender equality – at its Centre? Does it specify the need for governance institutions to be accountable for their performance on achieving gender equality and for their commitment to creating equal partnerships between men and women in governance processes? Does it stress the need for responsiveness to men’s and women’s needs?

Gendering poverty reduction

The way institutions define and understand poverty will affect the effectiveness of their strategies in addressing gender inequalities. If they view poverty reduction purely as an increase in material goods and financial resources for individuals and societies, they may not address the social dimensions of poverty, such as unequal access to resources or opportunities, that reinforce gender inequality. A capability approach to poverty, on the other hand, requires institutions to focus on whether citizens have equal access to resources and opportunities, including education, good health and rights and choices – which are seen as necessary for well-being. According to this approach, gender inequality is an aspect of poverty, and needs to be addressed before poverty reduction can be achieved.

Gendering the realization of rights

International human rights legislation provides a formal structure – a set of universal norms and standards against which countries legislation and procedures can be assessed. It is important, however, that governance institutions address women’s rights explicitly. Too often, rights are considered gender-neutral – i.e. they apply to all people regardless of their gender. But when the “rights-holder‟ is a woman, the ability to claim those rights can be significantly compromised. While there are few official channels for ensuring states compliance. Governments ratifying conventions such as CEDAW nonetheless have an *obligation* to promote the realization of rights within their constituencies. They are also mandated to provide the *enabling conditions* for people to claim their rights, including national laws grounded in rights, democratic legal systems and effective accountability mechanisms (Jayal 2003: 104).

Gendering social justice

Social justice refers to societies where everyone enjoys full citizenship and is treated with equal respect. This means women and men should be entitled to an income, shelter and other basic necessities, and the same opportunities and life chances. They should also not be subject to discrimination for any reason.

Gender equality

Gender equality entails women and men having equal opportunities and equal outcomes in life, including equal access to, ownership of and control over resources and decision-making. It also entails that women and men are equally valued and have the freedom to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by rigid gender roles, prejudices and discrimination. Further, it requires that all human beings – women and men – are able to realize their fundamental human rights.

##### 4.5.5. Reframing the principles of governance through a gender lens

Below, we consider how the principles of good governance outlined in Chapter 1 might be framed so they enable greater gender equality.

Gendering accountability

There are three clear steps to achieving more gender-sensitive accountability mechanisms and relationships. First, it is vital to ensure that the policies, laws and budgets and other products of decisions are informed by gender issues and concerns. For this to happen, an equal gender balance is needed in all decision-making, not only those that are seen to affect women primarily. For example, a strong female voice within these decision-making processes is likely to result in issues such as the need to address domestic violence being far higher up the policy agenda. Second, women need to be fully aware of and involved in stakeholder accountability processes, whether these are formal or informal. Third, clear measures of accountability are needed that include indicators on the performance of governance institutions on gender equality, both within these institutions and in the policies they deliver. These measures need to be appropriate, reflecting the quality of gender-sensitive accountability as well as the numbers of women involved. They need to be developed through participatory processes that draw on diverse meanings of accountability for men and women. Performance assessments based on these measures need to be conducted internally as well as through external audits.

Gendering transparency

Governance processes need to be transparent for *all* citizens. This means thinking about what transparency means for women and men in particular social or cultural situations, considering what the constraints to such transparency might be, and addressing them. Organizations need to find appropriate modes of communicating information – for example, if women have poor literacy because of unequal access to education, information could be shared verbally, through the radio or television, or other forms that do not involve the written word. Information about governance processes should also be made available in local institutions and rural areas, as women may not be able to travel to towns because of cultural restrictions on their mobility or because they need to care for dependents in the home.

Gendering inclusiveness and equity

In formulating a gender-sensitive definition of inclusiveness it helps to start by considering who might be excluded from governance processes and what would the reasons be for this. For example, women may not be present in consultations and meetings, or able to vote in elections, because there is no expectation that they should or would attend. Questions also need to be asked about who *is* included. Are those attending these consultations representative of a diverse range of citizens – for example, is there a strong minority presence? Are disabled people represented? Do all those included have an equal voice – are they able to speak freely, and are their opinions respected?

Governance institutions need to promote gender equity as a guiding principle for their policies – for example, ensuring women and men have equal access to resources. Gender equity should also be a goal for institutions – it is about sharing institutional power and opportunities equally between women and men, and ensuring they are equally rewarded for their input. It is also a broader social goal – enabling women and men the same life choices and rights to resources as well as opportunities such as education.

**Gendering participation**

Encouraging the participation of both men and women is a key cornerstone of good governance. All men and women should have a voice in decision-making, either directly or through legitimate intermediate institutions that represent their interests. Such broad participation is built on freedom of association and speech, as well as capacities to participate constructively.

Gendering responsiveness

Governance institutions cannot be responsive unless they understand the needs and situations of women and men. This not only means including more women in governance processes but also listening to women and providing spaces where they can speak freely. Effective measures for assessing levels of responsiveness are also vital – this means developing, for example, indicators that show whether changes in services have been effective in serving the needs of all members of communities, and being prepared to learn from what has not worked.

Gendering commitments to upholding the rule of law

A gendered approach to following the rule of law would entail ensuring legal frameworks and legislation are not discriminatory in any way and are grounded in principles of gender equality and human rights – including women’s rights. Importantly, the bodies entrusted with enforcing the laws need to have an equal gender balance, particularly in their own decision-making.

## 2.6. Practical approaches to gender-sensitive governance

The final, but most challenging, step to achieving gender-sensitive governance is thinking about what practical approaches should be taken – what needs to happen to bring about some of the changes talked above. If governance institutions and actors want to ensure that any changes, they make are sustainable and make a difference in the long term, they need to:

**Identify the problem.** Where do gender inequalities exist, including in specific governance institutions, processes and relationships – and how are these created and perpetuated by inequalities in societies? This will help to provide “transformatory‟ goalsfor governance institutions in terms of achieving gender equality.

**Find targeted, appropriate solutions and strategies.** Once the extent of the problem has been revealed, solutions are needed that will not only address existing gender inequalities but will *enable* greater gender equality in future processes. These include enabling women’s entry into governance institutions and building women’s capacity to participate effectively.

Recognize that **there is no blueprint for achieving gender sensitivity and gender equality** in governance processes. Rather, those who want to ensure these deep-rooted changes happen need to “identify the critical elements of existing best practice…and adapt these to the contingencies of each country‟ (Ashworth 1996: 14).

Key points from Chapter 2

Despite governance reforms, there has been a fundamental failure to challenge the entrenched unequal gendered power relations and other forms of exclusion in societies and institutions.

Decision-making processes in all types of governance institutions tend to exclude women. And if they are involved, they tend to be marginalized.

Governance cannot be effective unless it is gender-sensitive – in terms of both the gender balance of decision-makers but also of its policies and decisions and their outcome for women, the realization of their rights and the achievement of gender equality.

Gender-sensitive governance must have gender equality and social justice at its Centre – recognizing the different needs of women and men, actively challenging gender inequalities in society or the community, and based on equitable institutions, processes and relationships.

Governance institutions wanting to be more gender-sensitive need to examine their goals and principles through a gender lens. They need to assess their practices and the impacts of their processes in terms of gender equality to identify gaps and problems, then find appropriate solutions and strategies.

# Chapter three: Government and gender

*“Even if the need to go beyond the state is indisputable, the importance of state intervention for disadvantaged social groups cannot be underestimated. ‟ (Jayal 2003: 99)*

While governance goes beyond the institutions of the state, we start by assessing barriers and opportunities for gender-sensitive national and local government because of the immediate influence of these institutions on men and women, and because this is where much of the current literature lies. This chapter critically examines some of the gender equality reforms, including electoral quota systems and women’s machineries that have been introduced at the levels of national and local government. It reflects on the way these reforms have been implemented in diverse global contexts, and considers their effectiveness in the achievement of gender-sensitive governance. The chapter also looks at the potential for decentralization to enable effective participation of women in governance, considering local government structures such as the ***panchayat***system in India and consultative, citizen-led processes that inform service delivery. It considers the role of CSOs, particularly those linked to the women’s movement, in catalyzing and sustaining change. The chapter identifies current obstacles as well as areas of good practice from different global regions that can be adapted to specific cultural, political and social contexts. While our examples are drawn primarily from developing counties of the South, it is important to remember that “bad‟ and “good‟ governance can be found both in governments of the North and South.

**3.1 What is ‘the state’?**

A state is a political association with effective sovereignty over a geographic area and representing a population. These may be nation states, sub-national states or multinational states. A state usually includes the set of institutions that claim the authority to make the rules that govern the people of the society in that territory, though its status as a state often depends in part on being recognized by a number of other states as having internal and external sovereignty over it (Source: Wikipedia). A common perception is that the state[[1]](#footnote-1) is a unitary institution, but states are in reality far more complex, encompassing the diverse offices of government, including: civil service functions and local councils; the police and judiciary; the military; schools; and health services, to name a few, each of which are further divided by function (Randall and Waylen 1998: 4). As emphasized in Chapters 1 and 2, national governing processes are becoming increasingly decentralized, with some attention paid to consultation and participatory mechanisms. Yet, however decentralized governments become, the state retains a level of authority that makes it a key mechanism for institutionalizing change and endorsing decisions. In line with their commitments to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and relevant UN conventions such as CEDAW, governments need to take responsibility for ensuring that basic services are provided for and accessible by all citizens and are of adequate quality (UNDP, 2008).

National governments are increasingly seen as players in global networks as a result of their membership of global and regional institutions such as the WTO, EU and African Union, their status as aid recipients or donors, or their commitment to international human rights legislation. Partly due to these global and regional links, many country governments have pledged to contribute towards meeting MDG-3 on gender equality, honoring CEDAW and respecting the recommendations of the BPfA by taking up the issue of gender equality and women’s rights as a national concern.

The Beijing Platform for Action

The BPfA provides a strategic set of goals for participating nations, which can be summarized as: setting a timetable to end all discrimination against women, in line with CEDAW; initiating measures towards achieving a long-term goal of 50 per cent representation of women in national decision-making positions; and enabling greater access to political and economic opportunities for women (Beijing Platform website). The Platform promotes gender mainstreaming as a key vehicle for the advancement of gender equality, to be mediated through specific institutional machinery, such as women’s ministries, and through the allocation of national and international resources. These are viewed as essential steps towards ensuring women’s access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making (Karam 2000: 17).

Gender and the MDGs

In 2000, world leaders from 189 countries made a pledge at the UN Millennium Summit to meet the eight development goals of: ending hunger, achieving universal education, achieving gender equality, focusing on child and maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, achieving environmental sustainability, and creating global partnerships. MDG-3 is concerned with promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment; it is based on seven priorities: strengthening post-primary education for girls, guaranteeing sexual and reproductive rights, investment in gender-sensitive infrastructure, guaranteeing women’s and girls’ property rights, eliminating gender equality in employment, increasing women’s share of seats in national and local government, and combating violence against women and girls.

## 3.2 What are some of the gender inequalities in government?

In light of the BPfA, MDG-3 and CEDAW, a significant number of governments have stepped up existing gender sensitive measures and initiated new ones. The most visible of these are the establishment or strengthening of women’s ministries and gender units, renewed attention to the development of gender action plans, and the introduction of quotas to promote women’s representation in national and local decision-making bodies. However, there are areas where governments are failing to deliver on gender equality and women’s rights.

##### 3.2.1 Government institutions themselves reinforce an unequal gender power balance

Gender inequalities are embedded in the processes, rules and relationships of government institutions. These in turn influence decisions that shape gender relations and identities at national, local, household and individual levels, contributing to the perpetuation of gendered inequalities. The field of politics is the arena in which these inequalities have been most evident, with men holding the vast majority of powerful positions in national and local government (see Ashworth 1996; Waylen 2008; Shvedova 2005: 35). Not only do those with authority in political parties tend to be male, but they are expected to embody a stereotypically heterosexual type of maleness, and may risk losing credibility if they are “outed‟ as homosexual (Randall and Waylen 1998: 8). There are also differences *between* women – an analysis of quota systems shows that, although fundamental to increasing women’s overall representation, they do not adequately make indigenous women’s perspectives visible and do not guarantee the exercise of their democratic rights (Ranaboldo et al. 2006; see also Dovi 2002, 2007). Previously we discussed some of the barriers to women entering governance more generally, which apply to all levels of government – including government institutions and global institutions. We now turn to the challenge’s women face once in government, before looking at some of the solutions.

##### 3.2.2 Women have to struggle against the system once in government

There is a general consensus that, even when quotas facilitate women’s entry into government, leading to increasing numbers of women in elected state posts, there are still a huge number of barriers, largely within state institutions, that prevent their full participation in governmental life and decision-making processes. Until these are addressed, quotas can only provide the first building block in the creation of gender-sensitive state machinery. Some of these barriers are explored below.

Social barriers to inclusion

A social and cultural environment that discriminates against women through its laws, customs and expectations will impede the effective participation of women in political life, particularly if there are constraints on their mobility and freedom to engage in debates with men. This means that even if women have the capacity to participate in governance processes, they may be restricted from doing so.

The double burden

When women are elected to government offices, they can often expect to work long, inflexible hours, including working in the evenings and at weekends. Because women are so often expected to take on the unpaid work of caring for dependents and household duties, they may find themselves faced with a “double burden‟, balancing their professional and home lives. For some the strain of trying to reconcile and meet both these demands can affect their career progression and, in some cases, lead to their resignation from government posts. A study conducted in Britain in 1994 indicated that 85 per cent of women under 45 left government for non-electoral reasons, and in 63 per cent of cases this was because of the difficulties of balancing home and work life (Van Donk 1997, quoted in Evertzen 2001). Encouraging men to share some of these responsibilities could enable women’s participation in governance, but social attitudes about male and female roles also need to shift if this is to happen.

Discrimination

Women may also be subjected to personal discrimination based on their gender, with further discrimination if they are also black or disabled, for example. Discrimination can be passive – for example, women may be ignored in meetings. It can also be overtly abusive, expressed through verbal attacks that are often sexualized, reflecting the ambivalent attitudes of some men towards women who may be crossing cultural boundaries and defying traditional expectations in order to participate in government (Tambiah 2003), as well as towards those who depart from normative expectations of gender and sexuality. Even the physical spaces of government can alienate women MPs. A former Ugandan woman MP explained: “We used to have one toilet, and then the men have about six, and then you see all these men just walking in and out, and going back. So, one time I went to the men’s toilet, and they asked me, excuse me, what are you doing here? ‟ (Hon. Sheila Kawamara-Mishambi, personal communication). In turn, transgender people face much discrimination, and, depending on the cultural context, men who are known to be homosexual may experience such intense prejudice that these spaces become virtually impossible to enter or engage in.

Institutional barriers to inclusion in high-level processes

Commonly accepted misperceptions of women’s and men’s differential abilities and vested interests, coupled with an unwillingness to share the “real” issues in government with women, mean that highly charged political issues and their related high-level decision-making processes often remain in the hands of the privileged men who tend to dominate governance institutions. Women are likely to be assigned “soft‟ ministerial duties dealing with education or health issues, while men tackle the “hard‟ topics of trade and finance (Tambiah 2003: 84; Pedwell and Rennons 2007: 17). It is also expected that issues directly relating to women, such as reproductive health, will be under entirely female administration, which has the effect of separating women’s issues from the broader context of gender power relations and undermining attempts to promote and cooperation and understanding with men working in state institutions.

Lack of the finances needed to support political campaigns

Even when these opportunities exist, because of their unequal access to capital in the form of land or other resources, women are often unable to leverage the funds necessary to support strong political campaigns. Additionally, their relatively low wages compared to men and the professional barriers to their promotion to high earning positions mean they are less likely to be able to save money for this purpose. Poor and marginalized women are disproportionately affected by this situation, with little hope of entering a political race that is largely defined by financial capacity (Tambiah 2003; Pedwell and Rennons 2007). Technology offers ways to move beyond these financial constraints. The internet and mobile phones can provide cost effective ways to reach thousands of potential voters, both locally and internationally – although of course access can be an issue.

Lack of the capacity needed to participate in government

*“More women are now more courageous to get into politics, or to positions of decision making, because there has been a precedent, and their role models, there are people to look up to. So, it means a new generation is saying: “If so and so can be in, why not me?” The challenge we have so far is now improving the quality of the women that get in there. ‟ (Hon. Sheila Kawamara-Mishambi, Uganda, personal communication)*

A key concern is that in many cases women – particularly those from poor backgrounds – may lack the capacity to be able to fully exploit their positions in government. They may not have confidence or leadership skills, or they may lack basic literacy. This can lead to ridicule and criticism by their male counterparts (Tambiah 2003: 68). In some cases, male relatives of female candidates or representatives may take advantage of this situation to push their own agendas, with the women acting as mouthpieces for their concerns. Capacity-building programs provided by state services or CSOs are beginning to address the problem, but investment in inclusive, gender-sensitive education of a high quality is the only long-term solution.

##### 3.2.3 Gender equality and women’s rights are not often seen as a priority

Even when there is greater representation of women in government this does not automatically result in greater visibility of gender equality or women’s rights issues. Women can find it difficult to bring forward gender issues, such as domestic violence, or women’s specific needs in health and other services. Because of the typically low profile of gender and women’s rights issues in government policy, women in politics may feel isolated in promoting their importance over other issues (Corner 1998: 37; Ashworth 1996: 7; Basu 2003: 25). Rather than struggling to raise the profile of gender equality and women’s rights issues, they may choose or be forced into taking up more mainstream positions or following their party line in order to move forward in their careers (Corner 1998: 38). Women in government are also not always united around the same issues – they may come from very different backgrounds or be serving needs of very different constituencies. This can result in fragmented messages around gender issues, and a lack of collective strength. It can even result in the marginalization of other women (see Dovi 2002, 2007).

***3.3 Gender-sensitive reforms in government: opportunities and barriers***

As noted above, a significant number of governments have initiated reforms aimed at creating greater gender equality in government. The most visible of these are the establishment or strengthening of women’s ministries and gender units, renewed attention to the development of gender action plans and reports under CEDAW, and the introduction of quotas to promote women’s representation in national and local decision-making bodies. Here we critically examine some of these mechanisms, in addition to offering recommendations on how to make them more effective tools for promoting gender equality.

##### 3.3.1 Women as voters

Women now have the right to vote (95 per cent) in all countries, but they often fail to do so for a number of reasons. If they have poor access to education or information, they may not be aware of the importance of voting or they may allow their husbands to choose the candidate they vote for. Due to childcare responsibilities they may not have the time to vote. And because of cultural norms they may be restricted from travelling to and entering polling booths, or unable to have their photos taken for voter registration cards because they are not permitted to show their faces (Evertzen 2001: 12; Tambiah 2003). Consequently, female political candidates lose thousands of potential supporters.

##### 3.3.2 Quota systems: a critical assessment

*“The numbers matter. Because, if you are two in [government], you won’t change anything. Two against 200, what are you? Nothing. You just get sucked in. Before you know it, after five years you are a man in a woman’s skin. So, we need the numbers*. ‟ (Hon. Sheila Kawamara-Mishambi, former MP, Uganda)

Electoral reforms are also being realized in the form of electoral quota systems, which can be applied at **three** different stages of the election process. Quotas may be deployed during the selection process, in the form of a rule that requires a certain percentage of women are represented in the list of candidates to be shortlisted for consideration as electoral candidates. Quotas may come into play at the point of nomination, where parties are required to ensure that up to 50 per cent of candidates to be placed on the ballot are women. A third use of quotas requires that a certain percentage of parliamentary or local council seats are reserved for women. This is becoming the most common form of gender quota assignment.

There is evidence that quota systems have had positive impacts on gender parity in legislative bodies. For example, Rwanda was reached equal numbers of women and men‟. In Latin America 11 countries have adopted quotas that establish minimum levels for women’s participation in elections, and this, in combination with other factors such as social and economic development and democratization, has resulted in a clear rise in women’s political representation in some countries – for example, Brazil. From an average of 9 per cent in 1990, women’s representation in the lower houses of national Parliaments increased to 17 per cent in 2005, while the number of seats held by women in senates rose from 5 per cent to 13 per cent.[[2]](#footnote-2) Conversely, after the quota system expired in Bangladesh, the percentage of female MPs dropped from 10 per cent to 2 per cent (Palmieri and Jabre 2005).

**How effective are quotas in enabling women’s entry into government?**

Despite these encouraging figures, feelings are mixed as to whether or not quotas are an effective way of ensuring gender equality in decision-making processes. There is a general consensus that the quota system is a good start, attracting a “critical mass‟ of female representatives into the state machinery, who can have more of an impact than they would individually (Hamadeh-Banerjee 2000). However, there are worries that quotas will be treated as upper limits, rather than a minimum goal for women’s participation and voice in government. Furthermore, creating opportunities for women candidates may be viewed in instrumentalist terms, as a means to encourage more women to vote and thereby to increase party power, without any intention of making the parties more gender-sensitive or giving women any real authority once they are elected (Al-Jraibi 2000).

Even when quotas result in a significant percentage of female representatives on electoral lists, they are often placed at the bottom of lists, thus reducing their chances of being elected. An effective way to avoid this situation is through the use of “zebra‟ lists, alternating men and women rather than separating them (Beall 2005: 4; Ogunsanya 2004). Another method is through the use of “results-based quotas‟, where women are elected to a pre-determined number of seats via a “women only‟ list, or where the woman with the most votes is elected to the legislature even if she has fewer votes than a male candidate, until the quota is filled (see Larsevd and Taphorn 2007). Evidence suggests that quotas are most successful when they are deployed through a proportional representation[[3]](#footnote-3) system, and protected through one of the methods above, with zebra listing proving a popular solution (Evertzen 2001: 15).

##### 3.3.3 Women’s parties: an effective means to an end?

One way of bypassing the drawbacks of party lists as a channel for getting women into government is to create a party that represents women and gender equality concerns (see case study on Gabriela below). However, according to some commentators, the risk of women’s parties is that they create boundaries around gender issues, rather than encouraging broad change across all political parties and government processes. They also address a narrower range of issues than “mainstream‟ political parties.

Gabriela, the Philippines

Gabriela began as a women’s organization based in the Philippines, which began to build a party constituency and campaign for parliamentary seats in 2000. Support for the party was gained through direct campaigning in rural and urban areas, campaigns run through internet sites such as YouTube, and mobile (or cell) phones, which were able to reach many Philippines nationals living overseas.[[4]](#footnote-4) By the time the party ran for Parliament in 2004 it had more than 100,000 members, and by 2007 it had two seats. Members of Gabriela view the political party as an extension of the women’s movement, enabling the MPs to bring women’s rights and gender equality issues directly into government, rather than having to lobby government officials. The MPs receive ongoing support from their party, and are expected to retain their links with their constituents through consultative processes involving leaders from the women’s movement, poor women, and female lawyers, through which a legislative agenda is developed. Recently a gender-sensitive divorce bill has been drafted in this way, and is currently being debated in Parliament. This is highly significant, given that currently divorce is not legal in the Philippines. The bill also recognizes the existence of abuse in marriage as a reason for divorce, and as a problem that needs to be addressed. (Based on an interview with Christina Palabay, National Secretary General of Gabriela)

##### 3.3.4 National women’s machineries: barriers and opportunities

The need for such national women’s machineries, in the form of women’s ministries or national commissions, in state governance institutions was first identified in 1962 by the UN Commission on the Status of Women and was further endorsed through the World Plan of Action that was launched in 1975 at the start of the UN Decade for Women (Byrne, Laier et al. 1996: 8). By 1985, 90 per cent of countries had established NWMs, and this number increased following the BPfA in 1995.

Women’s machineries usually take the form of either a single ministry or unit with a responsibility for gender and development, or a centralized unit that monitors and influences gender-focused planning across all development sectors. Gender “focal points‟ are employed to facilitate links between NWMs and other government ministries. The most visible output from these processes is the gender in development action plans that NWMs are tasked with producing, which articulate strategies for integrating gender into central planning. There have been some positive impacts resulting from the work of the women’s ministries. For example, the Women in Development Ministry in Uganda launched a nationwide consultative process in the mid-1990s to elicit women’s views on the country’s constitution, as a means to increase women’s influence on national politics (ibid: 73). However, NWMs are often considered inadequate in many ways, lacking real power or resources to be effective, and often remaining isolated from the central administration, with the result that the goal of gender mainstreaming and policy influence is hampered (Mukhpadhyay 2004).

Constraints to the effectiveness of NWMs

The two main barriers to the success of women’s machineries are lack of adequate resources and lack of a clear mandate. Women’s machineries generally receive a tiny budget in comparison to other ministries, and are usually the first to feel the effects of cutbacks, forcing them to adopt “coping strategies‟ such as focusing on one key activity (Byrne, Laier et al. 1996: 16; see also Jad 2006: 12). Because they are so poorly funded, they rarely have enough staff to be able to plan and implement comprehensive plans. Even with adequate funding, many NWMs are not given a clear mandate that sets out their power and roles or their relationship to other decision-making bodies. Additionally, even when women’s machineries implement strategies, poor mechanisms of accountability can lead to policy evaporation (Byrne, Laier et al. 1996: 24; see also Jad 2006: 40).

Commitment towards the machineries themselves is not automatic, even from those working within them, particularly when the initiatives are seen as a condition of aid, and “blue print” agendas for women’s empowerment (Jad 2006: 39) are felt to be imposed, rather than derived from contextualized needs. In addition, frequent or major changes of administration make it difficult for women’s machineries to achieve consistency and continuity. For example, the views of the new Women’s Minister under the recently elected Hamas government in Palestine differ from her predecessor in ways that have yet to be felt across the ministry (ibid: 27).

## 3.4. Towards greater gender-sensitivity in national and decentralized government

Evidence from different countries reveals several common factors that contribute to the establishment of national and local government with a strong commitment to gender equality. These include: an active and united women’s movement; a gender-sensitive social and cultural environment; the desire or potential for change among existing governmental actors; women’s involvement in changing the political status quo; and the support of male government actors. They are explored below, with case study examples of what has worked, where and why.

##### 3.4.1 A positive social and cultural environment is needed for gender-sensitive government

The shift towards more gender-sensitive state institutions and processes often happen in relation to broader social and cultural changes in terms of women’s empowerment and gender equality, which are translated into constitutional changes, as the following example demonstrates.

Finding political will in Rwanda

Rwanda underwent a major shift in gender awareness during and following the genocide of 1994. During the conflict, women were subjected to horrific levels of gender-based violence including rape, sexual assault and breast oblation. They also witnessed terrible acts of cruelty against members of their families and communities, in addition to experiencing displacement and loss of livelihoods. A large number of women also lost their husbands, so assumed the role of household heads and community leaders. Women are still in the demographic majority in Rwanda, comprising 54 per cent of the population. The hardships faced by these women, coupled with the responsibilities they have taken on have contributed to changing the way they see themselves and also the way they are perceived in the public consciousness. A major consequence has been the significant political will show towards the need for gender parity in government and for male delegates who are committed to equal gender power relations. (Powley 2005)

##### 3.4.2 Gender-sensitive assessments of government institutions are needed

Government institutions at local and national levels need to reflect on their own internal practices. They need to look beyond increases in the number of women due to quotas and ask questions about the *quality* of women’s participation. Do women in government have the same opportunities as men, do they have an equal voice in decision-making, and are their opinions respected? Are relationships between women and men respectful and equal? Is the culture of the institution, including the codes of behaviour and the facilities provided, appropriate for women and men? Have institutions adopted a gender mainstreaming approach? If so, are they investing time and resources in the provision of ongoing gender training and assessing the impacts of mainstreaming on gender-awareness and shifts in levels of equality? Assessments are also needed of policymaking processes. To what extent are they responsive to gender issues such as domestic violence and equal rights, and are new gender-sensitive laws backed by adequate resources to ensure their effective implementation? To what extent does public spending reflect the needs of both women and men? Are women’s ministries adequately resourced to support these gender-sensitive policy processes?

##### 3.4.3. For long-term change men within and outside government must be on board

Since men often hold many of the influential positions in government and have the power to instigate changes, it is important that these men understand the gender inequalities that persist within government institutions and in laws and policies, and see how this undermines both women’s rights and the effectiveness of government itself. Obtaining the support of strong male ministerial figures who are willing to champion gender equality concerns is very important, as they can act as role models for other men and women who may fear being ostracized or ridiculed for taking such a stance (Hon. Sheila Kawamara-Mishambi and Patricia Munabi Babiha, personal communication). For example, DFID has “gender champions‟ who are high up in the organization and who are accountable for delivery on gender equality. It is also crucial to provide training in gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting and other awareness-raising activities, particularly for younger men at the start of their careers in government.

##### 3.4.4 Gender-sensitive budgets are needed to ensure greater responsiveness

Gender budgeting means preparing budgets or analyzing them from a gender perspective. Gender-sensitive budgets are viewed by many as an essential strategy towards ensuring resource allocation takes into account the different needs of women and men. They are not a gender-sensitive addition to existing budgets but an integral part of main budgeting processes, based on an initial gender-sensitive analysis that is conducted by gender advocates. Lessons learned from the South African Gender Budget Initiative showed that alliances between parliamentarians and CSOs – who are internal and external to government – were more productive in bringing about successful gender budgeting.

For example: Gender budgeting in the UK for better-value services

*Oxfam UK has produced a CD-Rom to help service delivery and regeneration initiatives in the UK to take gender into account. The CD draws on discussions with people across the UK who are conducting, lobbying for or benefiting from gender budgeting at the local or national level. The aim is to use the results to encourage government use of gender budgeting techniques, which trace the money that a government or organization spends, and find out how women and men experience the impacts of the spending. It is a flexible tool, which can work at any level – from the smallest organization to national government. The inspiration for this CD came from a gender budgeting learning exchange to South Africa and Yemen. The exchange involved sharing experiences of using gender budgeting with other governments and organizations. Participants included those working in or with local and national governments in England, Scotland and Wales, and Oxfam staff. (Adapted from Oxfam‟s summary of the CD A Change in Thinking; Now’s the Time; see Dimitriades, 2009 for more details.)*

##### 3.4.5 Gender-sensitive laws and gender equality goals must be translated into practice

Performance indicators as a means to achieve gender-sensitive local governance

It is clear that the existence of a gender policy does not guarantee its implementation at the local level. One way of translating national goals on gender equality into practice in local governance is by assessing performance through well-chosen indicators, as the Ugandan case study below illustrates. For guidance, UNDP has developed a “User’s guide to gender sensitive basic services delivery: indicators and methods of measurement‟ (UNDP 2008).

Local governance gender performance assessment in Uganda

Uganda has a strong local government system, but, despite the recognition for a strong gender equality policy, outlined in the PRSP, gender was not initially mainstreamed into all actions at the local governance level. In response, a strategic gender performance assessment initiative was developed through the Local Government Development Program. Local government offices are assessed on their commitment to gender equality and mainstreaming by way of a performance assessment framework, part of a broader incentive framework against which their eligibility for funding is measured through indicators. The performance assessment instrument for gender mainstreaming has been very successful, leading to civil-society-led training on gender budgeting for local government officials, training on gender issues for male and female councilors and civil society monitoring of local government expenditure. (Tibamwenda and Kyomukama 2008)

Implementing gender equality legislation through participatory processes

There is massive potential value in participatory processes for enabling more gender-sensitive governance, if time is put into ensuring they are relevant to local conditions, sensitive to local needs and truly inclusive. Initiatives in the Philippines demonstrate how local governance offices have been instrumental in mobilizing local communities and households around gender-based violence issues.

Using decentralized governance processes to tackle gender-based violence in the Philippines

Research shows that gender-based violence is a major problem in the Philippines. In response, new laws were passed that grant the state power to intervene in cases of household violence or abuse against women and children. Yet the power of the legislation lies in the way in which it has been introduced. Recognizing that the effectiveness of these laws is contingent on public awareness of gender-based violence, and „buy-in‟ from local authorities, interlinked participatory processes have been established in different local government units, down to the *barangay (*village) level. In the three years since the project was launched, there has been a notable increase in the number of abuse cases being reported. (Based on information from Maritona Victa Labajo; see the SRC and *In Brief* for a detailed case study.)

##### 3.4.6 A strong women’s movement is vital for enabling gender-sensitive government

Evidence indicates that the close involvement of women’s organizations with female representatives and women’s machineries has proved an important factor in promoting greater gender-sensitivity in governments across different regions. Women’s organizations can contribute to gender-sensitive governance processes in local and national government in many ways.

Lobbying government to promote greater gender-sensitivity

Women’s organizations are pressurizing governance institutions to introduce policies and other measures designed to address gender inequalities and eliminate all forms of gender-based discrimination.

Working within and outside the state in Brazil – the dual strategy of the women’s movement

In Brazil the women’s movement followed a dual strategy in the 1980s. While some pressurized the state into responding to the demands of people at grassroots level, others worked within the state system through platforms like the Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement and local councils. This approach succeeded in promoting women’s issues at a high level. One notable impact was the development of a safe, non-coercive family planning policy that fit with governmental objectives without undermining women’s rights. (Basu 2003: 28)

Supporting women in government

Some organizations work proactively with women in government, either in an advisory role or by providing spaces for women representatives to come together and address gender-focused issues outside the confines of their party concerns (see Pedwell and Perrons 2007: 20).

Working towards a gender-sensitive constitution in Rwanda

In Rwanda, women’s organizations have been heavily involved in advisory processes around the new constitution established in the aftermath of the genocide in 1994. Through an intense consultative process, an umbrella organization called Pro Femmes, comprising representatives from various NGOs, reported their members‟ concerns to members of the Ministry of Gender and Women in Development and the Forum of Women Parliamentarians. The three main groups in this process contributed to a policy paper that set out specific recommendations for making the constitution gender-sensitive and increasing women’s representation in government. This was followed up with a mobilization campaign by Pro Femmes that encouraged women to support the adoption of the new constitution in a country-wide referendum. (Powley 2005: 158)

Playing a watchdog role

CSOs, particularly women’s organizations, are holding national and local government officials to account for the gender-focused national policies to which they have committed, such as CEDAW (see case study on Egypt, Chapter 5) and the BPfA. CSOs can also be instrumental in raising awareness of particular issues and mediating dialogue between citizens and governance officials. They can, for example, demand accountability in contexts where participatory processes around the delivery of services and the provision of rights are compromised by poor or corrupt local governance, whether in rural or urban areas. They are also able to represent people who are marginalized for reasons that include poverty, race and ethnicity (see Pedwell and Perrons 2007: 23).

***Watch-dog role: -*** *a person or a group of people whose job is to check if governments are ignoring peoples right.*

Working on advocacy with indigenous women in Guatemala

Tierra Viva in Guatemala, is an organization that lobbies governance institutions at local and national levels to take women’s rights issues into account at all levels of decision-making. The organization works with local, mostly indigenous women, enabling them to develop advocacy agendas on sexual and reproductive rights and gender-based violence, and to voice their own concerns. (Pedwell and Perrons 2007)

Awareness-raising

Women’s organizations are playing a key role in raising awareness of citizens, and particularly women’s rights to vote and hold governments accountable through various modes of communication, including carefully designed posters and leaflets, radio programs and training sessions at community level (see example of Emang Basadi below). Importantly, men need to be part of these strategies to ensure they do not discourage their wives and daughters from voting independently. The interventions do not stop once female candidates are elected: women’s organizations are strengthening this sense of entitlement by creating links between local groups of women and governance representatives as a way to get their voices heard in policymaking and reform processes.

Political education campaign for women in Botswana

Emang Basadi (Stand Up Women), an NGO in Botswana, launched a Political Education Project a year before elections were held, with the aim of increasing the number of women in local and national governance offices and strengthening political parties‟ commitment to gender equality issues. The NGO held „voter education seminars‟ in political constituencies and also held campaigning workshops to help female candidates get their message across. As a result, women’s representation in Parliament increased from 4 to 11 per cent. (Evertzen 2001: 13)

Capacity building

*“I was the one who was elected. But I was not allowed to go out, never to speak. I have learned to speak, to use the microphone. Now the mike has come into my hand, it will remain with me all my life – nobody can take it away. ‟ (Murawarunissa, India, cited in Mukhopadhyay 2004: 37)*

Women’s organizations and other CSOs are playing a key capacity-building role to develop their leadership skills and confidence to participate in decision-making processes. This both enables women already in office to promote gender equality issues more effectively, and facilitates the entry of more, better-equipped women into positions of influence. It also contributes to building credibility and legitimacy for women in governance. Many of these initiatives aim to include groups who are marginalized because of race, ethnicity, poverty levels, sexuality and so on (see case studies below).

Building the capacity of women councilors in local governance in India

COVA, an NGO in India, works with women councilors from marginalized communities who have been promoted to local governance positions by virtue of the quota system. Most of the women had been expected to play a „puppet‟ role, while their male relatives would use the positions to their own advantage. COVA aimed to build the women’s capacity and establish their legitimacy as political actors through a series of workshops. As a result, the women gained the confidence to take on a more public role by participating more in meetings and demanding the space to do this. (Mukhopadhyay and Meer 2004a: 37)

Training up potential women leaders in Kyrgyzstan

*“We are not that much interested you simply win and sit there as a woman. We also think it would be good if there is a space for you where you can learn, not only to win, but to be a good governor. ‟ (Olga Djanaeva, personal communication, 2008)*

In Kyrgyzstan the quota system states that 30 per cent of political party members must be women and that every fourth person on the party list should be female. This legal requirement means that political parties are eager to enlist strong female candidates who can win votes. Alga, a rural women’s NGO based in Kyrgyzstan, takes the view that women need to exploit these opportunities in order to gain seats in Parliament and, once there, need to be already equipped with the skills and knowledge that will make them excellent politicians able to promote gender equality issues. The organization provides training for potential women leaders on aspects of governance, such as budgets and financial policy, as well as on specifically gender-focused issues such as gender-based violence, and helps them to shape policy positions. It also runs campaigns for female candidates and helps build support for them at local and national levels. In a few years the organization has contributed to getting three women into Parliament.

(Based on an interview with Olga Djanaeva, Alga Rural Women’s NGO, Kyrgyzstan)

##### 3.4.7. CSOs need to examine their own levels of gender-sensitivity

Not all CSOs and women’s organizations are progressive with regard to women’s rights. Some may promote conservative views – for example, supporting laws that deny women the right to abortion or advocating that women should not be part of the public sector. This may be because their decision-makers are largely male, but it can also be due to women’s conservatism. CSOs, therefore, need to examine their own governance practices and understandings of gender, considering whether their attitudes and approaches may in fact be contributing to gender inequalities in governance.

##### 3.4.8 Citizen-focused processes need to be inclusive

As mentioned above on service delivery reforms revealed, participatory processes are not always inclusive. It is, therefore, vital to assess the quality of women’s participation, particularly if they are from very poor backgrounds or are marginalized in other ways – because of their ethnicity, for example. If they are not attending citizen groups, research is needed to understand what is inhibiting them from doing so. It is also important to monitor whether women who *are* attending such groups have opportunities to speak and have the confidence to do so. Understanding the gender dynamics of these processes will enable some of these problems to be addressed. Solutions may include developing more effective participatory tools or adapting existing ones, focusing on capacity building to build confidence of women in public speaking, and providing childcare so that women with dependents can attend meetings.

Key points from Chapter 3

* Government – as a key institution of the state – has a vital role to play in facilitating gender-equitable change, because of its power to endorse gender equality and women’s rights on a national scale through gender-sensitive policy and laws.
* It is, therefore, crucial to ensure there are reforms in all government institutions to ensure they are more responsive, accountable, well-resourced and focused on gender equality in their own practices, in the policies they produce and, in the way, they measure their impacts.
* Quota systems are enabling increasing numbers of women to enter government, but once they are there they are often constrained by many factors, including deep-rooted gender discrimination, a lack of capacity building and leadership training, and inflexibility towards many women’s “double burden‟ of caring for dependents *and* working outside the home.
* Even when women are more involved in local government and in citizen-led processes, this does not guarantee *quality* of participation.
* Strategies are needed that: enable women to enter government; support women in government and build their capacity while they are there; tackle underlying prejudices in institutions; raise the profile of gender issues; and ensure public spending targets meet women’s as well as men’s needs.
* Women’s organizations and gender-focused CSOs are playing a key role in facilitating these processes of capacity building and awareness-raising, but government institutions also need to take on these responsibilities.

As stated in the Introduction, we wish to focus on a broad range of governance institutions, but we chose government as an entry point for considering gender-sensitive governance because this is what many people associate with governance, and because it is where much of the literature lies. The next chapter focuses on global governance, with an emphasis on the UN system and the implications of global trade policy.

# Chapter four: Global governance and gender

*“A gendered analysis of global governance can enhance our understanding of the key concepts and frameworks as well as institutions and strategies of transformation.”* (Rai and Waylen 2008: 17)

Many of the reforms associated with government processes have been motivated, to a large extent, by the growing importance of global frameworks and conventions endorsing human rights and regulating international trade. Given the potential influence of these frameworks in shaping government policy at national and local levels, particularly around gender equality and women’s rights in diverse contexts, it is crucial to approach an understanding of how global processes are governed. This chapter therefore focuses on two spheres of global governance which play an important influencing role in many countries: The United Nations with a focus on its human rights agenda; and trade policy and institutions. The potential for civil society to engage with these international mechanisms and raise awareness of international policy at a local level is also explored. The chapter asks how gender-sensitive decision-making processes at the global level are – not only in terms of whether women are involved but in terms of how far they reflect gender equality concerns. It also traces some of the different impacts of global policy on women and men at the local level. Finally, it explores potential channels for achieving greater equality and participation within global governance practices and for ensuring they lead to positive, gender-sensitive outcomes.

## 5.1. What is global governance?

Global governance is fragmented, hard to trace to individuals or even particular agencies. It has been described as “governance without government‟ (Rosenau 1992), as a contested terrain (Woehl 2008: 67), “peopled by shadowy figures‟ (Rai 2008: 31), and operating in multiple, overlapping sites (Jayal 2003: 96). There is consequently little consensus over the meaning of the term. But, the commonly used definition on many reports is that global governance is the institutions, processes, rules and frameworks through which international policies are determined, coordinated and regulated, a definition endorsed by the Commission of Global Governance (Grugel and Piper 2007: 3). However, it is important to also recognize that international policies are, or should be, the product of negotiations that may include civil society actors, in addition to representatives from national governments and the private sector.

Players and actors in the field of global governance include representatives of national governments and transnational corporations, the global trade and financial institutions of the WTO, World Bank and IMF, the various components of the UN, and regional associations such as the African Union and the EU (Grugel and Piper 2007). Global civil society – including international NGOs with a lobbying function, representatives of global interest groups such as the trade union movement, and international gender-focused groups such as the International Trade and Gender Network (ITGN) – is considered by some to be an integral element of global governance (Jayal 2003). It has grown alongside these institutions, challenging them to demonstrate accountability in their policies and actions.

Global governance processes are not located in one place but are scattered, coming together in different formulations with different actors, depending on the issues being debated or negotiated (Grugel and Piper 2007: 7, quoting Wilkinson and Hughes 2002:21). The direct and indirect impacts of these processes are filtered through state policies, consumed at community, household and individual levels through goods available in supermarkets, and experienced through international measures and laws linked to global security, the environment, human rights and women’s rights. For example, trade arrangements between countries, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement, may mean that poorer countries are able to export their goods to wealthy markets such as those in the US, but the local impacts of these arrangements may be a “flood‟ of cheaper manufactured goods or food products against which local producers – often women – cannot compete. The immediate result can be a loss of livelihoods and increased poverty.

##### 5.1.1 How gender-sensitive is in global governance?

Despite the fluidity of global governance processes, there are clear power relations within and between institutions, with developed countries forming an “inner circle‟ that is endorsed through configurations such as the G8, while poor and marginal people are deprived of a direct voice in these arenas. Power relations within global governance institutions are also highly gendered. Despite some indications of progress on gender equality achieved through the implementation of gender mainstreaming strategies, global governance institutions and processes remain gender- and class-blind, with executive and other decision-making bodies often dominated by men who are already privileged as a result of factors that include social class, family connections and educational background. Furthermore, the international emphasis on macro-economics and neo-liberalism means that the “hard‟ institutions dealing with trade and finance, which tend to be least responsive to the need for gender equality and most prone to internal gender imbalances, often have greatest influence in a global governance hierarchy (Floro and Hoppe 2005).

## 5.2. Gender, global governance and the role of the UN

The UN was established as a global governance mechanism – to achieve international consensus and cooperation on issues of security, law, economic development and social progress, and to provide a platform for dialogue and diplomacy. The UN system provides a global focal point for the setting of international human rights conventions and standards. UN agencies have developed comprehensive legislation, conventions and frameworks relating to the individual rights of men and women who are recognized as being embedded in societies, communities, workplaces and families. It has also established indicators for assessing progress on poverty reduction, embodied in the MDGs

Yet the UN has been criticized for being overly bureaucratic, ineffectual, wasteful of resources and distanced from the realities of poor people. Many feels that the power of UN conventions and frameworks is weakened by poor systems of accountability, and some countries – including the USA – have reacted against the concept of universal rights, seeing certain UN conventions as imposing external standards. The MDGs have also been subjected to skepticism around their ability to tackle the roots of poverty – for example, MDG-3 focuses on measurable aspects of gender equality such as girls’ access to education and increased numbers of women in politics, but it pays less attention to the need to shift social gender norms in order for changes to be long-lasting and meaningful.

##### 5.2.1 The significance of human rights frameworks for gender-sensitive governance

The UN system is grounded in the notion of universal human rights, embodied in the Universal Declarations of Human Rights in 1948 and 1997, which hold that all humans should be regarded equally and accorded certain freedoms, such as the freedom to criticize their governments. Central to the Declaration are the principles of equality, freedom and dignity for all human beings. Since the initiation of the UN, these basic tenets have been translated into conventions and treaties that member countries are expected to ratify and uphold as a legal obligation.

Among international human rights instruments with an explicit focus on gender equality are: CEDAW; the Convention on the Political Rights of Women; the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women; and the Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict. As noted in previous section, governments have a strong role to play in terms of endorsing the UN conventions they have ratified – or committed to upholding (Gruger and Piper 2007; Jayal 2003), but clear plans for implementation are required, that are developed in participatory ways through local governance bodies and citizen networks, and mediated through CSOs. Below we focus on CEDAW, examining its usefulness as a catalyst and accountability mechanism in promoting gender equality in a global context.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

CEDAW defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. States that have ratified the Convention commit themselves to planning and undertaking a series of measures to combat discrimination at all levels of society, including through ensuring equal opportunities in political and public life, and equal access to employment, education and health. The Convention is unique in its affirmation of the reproductive rights of women. It also calls for the modification of cultural and social practices of men and women where these are likely to undermine the goal of gender equality.

CEDAW’s enforcement mechanism is based on a reporting system: countries that have ratified the Convention are required to submit a report on the status of women within a year of ratification, and thereafter to submit a report every four years on their progress in removing obstacles to equality since the first “baseline‟ report (Tang 2000: 8; CEDAW website). The UN CEDAW committee stipulates that CSOs should play a “watchdog‟ role in this process, ensuring governments are not simply reporting on their achievements. This official input from CSO’s is presented in the form of shadow reports, accompanied by informal presentations (see the case study below).

Perhaps the most important step forward is the introduction of the Optional Protocol in 1999, which gives individuals and groups the right to complain to CEDAW about women’s rights abuses, and also allows the CEDAW commission to conduct enquiries into these abuses in countries that have ratified the Convention. Under the Optional Protocol, state parties can be asked to explain and address complaints about serious violations, and investigations can be launched. Although there are as yet no legal enforcement mechanisms from the UN Human Rights Committee, the investigating commission has the power to make the violations public, and „such adverse publicity is potentially very damaging‟ (Tang 2000). CEDAW could, then, potentially be used as an instrument to overcome the limitations of a domestic legal system, but those appealing through CEDAW need to demonstrate they have exhausted all domestic legal channels (ibid.).

**How effective is CEDAW for promoting gender equality?**

*“We have seen a tangible change in women’s status through using CEDAW. We have felt it. We have lived it. So, we advise any NGO anywhere in the world to use this machinery. It’s very important and it can make a lot of difference in women’s lives. ‟* (Dr. Afaf Marei, Director of the Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement, personal communication, November 2008)

There are mixed reviews on the effectiveness of CEDAW as an international instrument, partly because there have been few formal reports on its implementation and impacts on governance at national and local levels. This is not due to a lack of positive impacts, but to the fact that stories of change involving CEDAW have simply not been recorded.[[5]](#footnote-5) The little recorded evidence suggests that CEDAW and the shadow reporting process has contributed to more gender-equitable legislation in some countries, including: changes to a Turkish law which defined adultery on different grounds for men and women; the enactment of an Equal Employment Law in Japan; and the creation of a Committee for Women’s Affairs in the Ukraine (McPhedran et al. 2000).

International pressure to address gender inequalities, expressed through the BPfA and MDG3 and reinforced by women’s rights and gender equality platforms, has led to greater acknowledgement of CEDAW and adherence to the shadow reporting process in many countries, including those of the Middle East. A member of the shadow reporting committee for Egypt noted:

*“For instance, in Saudi Arabia we heard about civil society organizations that are working on women’s rights and enforcing women’s rights, and preparing shadow reports for those countries. Nobody could believe that this could happen in Saudi Arabia, but it happens. Things are changing, things are changing, because there is an international environment which supports that and there is an international machinery which is approved by the country…And the civil society is getting stronger in those countries, more aware of their rights, more aware of their machineries. ‟* (Dr. Afaf Marei, personal communication, 2008)

Although CEDAW has been ratified by 185 countries, a major concern is that it is yet to be ratified by many, including the USA. In fact, because the USA has so far failed to ratify CEDAW, the City and County of San Francisco introduced a regulation to implement CEDAW at the local level. As part of the implementation, the City department must undertake a gender analysis of its budget allocations, service delivery, and employment practices (San Francisco CEDAW Task Force/Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) 2000). Even when governments have ratified CEDAW, there is no guarantee that they are not simply seeking the approval and goodwill of the UN and its member states (Grugel and Piper 2007: 8). A major drawback is the lack of international global governance mechanisms to ensure member states‟ accountability in complying with CEDAW and other international human rights instruments, and implementation is left to the will of states to incorporate the principles into their domestic laws (Tang 2000). This means that, in many cases, governments put reservations on CEDAW articles, citing inconsistencies with statutory law or customary laws, including Sharia.

The CEDAW shadow reporting process

The CEDAW shadow reporting system provides one official vehicle for ensuring governments and other national instruments of governance adhere to their commitment – it can address all aspects of gender equality in a country or take one specific issue, sector or region of the country. This is illustrated well by the UK‟s sixth periodic reporting to CEDAW in 2008:

|  |
| --- |
| **Shadow reporting in the UK**  In 2008, in addition to the official government submission, there were a number of CEDAW shadow reports submitted, including:   * The Women’s National Commission – an advisory non-departmental public body – addressed the country level; * The Women’s Resource Centre focused on the state of the women’s NGO sector; * The Northern Ireland Women’s European Women’s Platform focused on the situation of women in Northern Ireland; * The London School of Economics and the London Metropolitan University submitted the “Violence Against Women in the UK Shadow Thematic Report‟. (Sen and Kelly 2007) |

But the usefulness and transparency of this system is contingent on the capacity and power of civil society actors to expose gender inequalities and other violations of rights, and to publicly demand accountability from their governments. The role of CSOs in mobilizing CEDAW for more gender-sensitive government policy is examined below through the case study of the Egyptian shadow reporting processes.

**Shadow reporting in Egypt**

Although the Egyptian government ratified CEDAW in 1981, little changed until 2000, when strong Egyptian NGOs formed the CEDAW Coalition and the Egyptian National Council for Women (NCW), an organization affiliated to the Egyptian presidency was established. The role of the Egyptian NGO CEDAW Coalition is to facilitate the implementation and enforcement of CEDAW. Established in 1998, the Coalition includes approximately 40 organizations from across Egypt, working on a wide range of issues. It has lobbied government on diverse issues related to CEDAW, and completed its first shadow report in 2001. The Coalition, backed by the

NCW, has been instrumental in enforcing CEDAW as a mechanism to advance women’s rights and gender equality. Coalition members have also played a role inside the NCW as committee members.

There have been several changes to the law, assisted by these accountability mechanisms. For example, women now have the right to pass their nationality to their children, whereas previously only men could do so, and many legal obstacles to divorce that previously faced women have been lifted, as have many of the restrictions on the freedom of women’s movement – for example, women can now apply for passports without having to seek the approval of their husbands. However, despite these advances, barriers remain to the implementation of CEDAW. The Coalition is part of a campaign to promote the adoption of the Optional Protocol and the lifting of reservations.

Based on an interview with Dr. Afaf Marei, Director of the Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement, November 2008

##### 5.2.2. UN reform and gender-sensitive governance

A major criticism levelled at the various agencies of the UN has been their lack of coherence, which has been seen as responsible for impeding the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the UN system and its ability to contribute to international development goals. In response, plans are under way for the most dramatic reform process it has ever seen, involving a major review and reorganization of its mandate, structures, budget, governance and management. There is no guarantee these changes will go ahead, but if they did, they would entail the creation of greater coherence among programs on humanitarian assistance, the environment and sustainable development – including a major review of the UN‟s gender architecture. A consultation process that included representatives from women’s groups and CSOs across the world led to recommendations to unify and consolidate the separate gender-focused agencies of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the Division for the Advancement of Women (UNDAW) and the Office of the Secretary General’s Special Advisor on Gender Issues (OSAGI) into a single organization with greater power and with a new under-secretary who would have higher status than current leadership of the UN gender agencies.

This new governance structure could potentially facilitate a much higher profile for gender issues and women’s rights than is currently the case in UN decision-making processes. Those supporting the changes see them as a means to dramatically increase resources earmarked for gender equality and women’s rights work conducted through the new agency. This increased investment is much needed, given the current gross inadequacy of funds for UN gender-focused agencies and the sidelining of women’s issues and concerns within the UN architecture – for example, UNIFEM‟s budget in 2008 was nearly $100 million (Aruna Rao, personal communication), compared to a proposed budget for the UNDP of around $780 million (UNDP/UNPF 2007). The process is also seen as an opportunity to put gender issues and women’s rights at the center of development, and as a new chapter that will help to revitalize and re-politicize gender mainstreaming processes across the UN system. According to one commentator:

“…*Without a lead entity, gender equality continues to be everybody’s and nobody’s responsibility. Gender mainstreaming will work best only when it co-exists alongside a strong women’s agency that can demonstrate leadership and advocate at the highest levels and hold the system accountable.* ‟ (Rao 2006).

##### 5.2.3. Towards more gender-sensitive governance in the UN

Promoting the UN reform process

The fact that recommendations are in place for gender-sensitive UN reform does not guarantee this will happen. Gender-focused UN institutions, therefore, need to put forward strong, unified demands for change and provide evidence for why changes are needed and how they could be implemented. Gender-focused CSOs should support those within the institutions by lobbying for reform and calling UN officials to account on their commitments to gender equality. Plans for reform need to state that the new entity will be able to set policy on key issues of gender equality and women’s rights, it should have the authority and capacity to ensure accountability on gender mainstreaming throughout the UN system, and it must have a field presence to conduct and shape UN operational activities, to ensure that gender and women’s rights programming are conducted effectively.

Enabling more effective gender mainstreaming for UN organizations

Since the BPfA called for the use of gender mainstreaming as a strategy, this has been adopted – to varying degrees of success – by UN agencies. Gender mainstreaming “fatigue‟, however, within organizations and at policy level often happens because the degree of change required, and the time and resources required to achieve it, has been vastly underestimated (Moser and Moser 2005). Ongoing training is, therefore, essential to increase understanding of the need for gender equality and a mainstreamed approach in the UN and other large, global organizations. Deep analyses of existing institutional culture in these global organizations are also needed in order to assess what needs to change and where this change is needed (see Chapter 6 and the SRC).

Improving accountability mechanisms

Weak accountability mechanisms are partly to blame for the failure of many governments to adhere to gender focused and other human rights agreements. More instruments like the CEDAW Optional Protocol are needed that can be used to „shame‟ governments into honoring their commitments. However, human rights legislation and the associated accountability processes are only useful if people know they exist and feel confident in using them. It is, therefore, also vital to fund the work of CSOs at national and local levels in building the capacity needed to promote shadow reporting, raising awareness of CEDAW and the Optional Protocol as well as other relevant human rights mechanisms, and helping to take cases of rights abuse to the national and global level.

## 5.3 Trade, global governance and gender

Trade policies at the global level, led by organizations such as the WTO, are increasingly influencing economic policy at the national level. These policies are gender-blind, focused on the broad effects at the level of the macro-economy,[[6]](#footnote-6) rather than considering the negative impacts they often have on women (see Section 4.5.2). The decision-making processes through which they are generated are also not gender-equitable. This section establishes some of the positive and negative impacts that policies formulated at a global level have on many women, particularly those in developing countries who may be subsistence farmers, traders, factory workers and workers in „informal‟ industries such as street trading, in addition to being wives and mothers. It argues that transforming the governance of international trade so that it responds to the different needs of women and men could help to mitigate against policy that creates gendered inequalities, and contribute to the realization of gender equality and women’s rights.

##### 5.3.1 The role of the WTO in governance of trade and labor

The WTO is one of the most influential players in the governance of global trade. It was established in 1995 to provide a global „meeting point‟ where trade rules could be established, members could negotiate new or modify existing agreements, and conflicts could be resolved in a „neutral‟ setting. The WTO is not a UN specialized agency, but it has maintained strong relations with the UN and its agencies since its establishment.[[7]](#footnote-7) The WTO is also a vehicle for the promotion of trade liberalization,[[8]](#footnote-8) and membership is contingent on agreeing to follow these principles. Yet these policy interventions have been criticized for their failure to take into account or properly analyses gendered impacts at international, national, household and individual levels (Floro and Hoppe 2005). Some of the gendered implications of trade liberalization and global trade policy are explored below, along with examples of good practice for addressing gender inequalities in the governance of labor at the policy level and in the workplace.

##### 5.3.2 Gendered perspectives on governance of global manufacturing processes

In many countries increased trade and investment as a result of trade liberalization has stimulated economic growth, boosting industry and increasing women’s participation in the labor market (Randriamaro 2005:16). Studies conducted in 2000 revealed that almost 35 per cent of the manufacturing workforce in Latin America and 80 per cent of workers in export industries of South East Asia were women (Sexton, Nair and Kirbat 2004). This situation has many clear benefits for women, enabling them to earn an income and empowering them economically. There is evidence that paid employment can improve women’s autonomy as well as their economic status. There are also indications that it can improve women’s well-being and decision-making power at the household level and within the community, contributing to a shift in power relations (Tzannatos 1992; Fontana, Joekes and Masika 1998; Kabeer 2000). However, this increased financial and social status of women often comes at a price, largely because employment practices are often governed in ways that evade human rights and undermine gender equality.

The drive for investment is undermining women’s rights in labor governance

Multinational companies such as Nike and Microsoft are part of a growing global phenomenon that cuts across national borders. The key characteristic of multinationals is that production of their goods often happens in two or more countries through global “chains of production‟ (see Auret and Barientos 2004; Randriamaro 2005: 16). Often these companies establish factories in Export Processing Zones (EPZs), one or more special areas of a country where some normal [trade barriers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trade_barrier) such as [tariffs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tariff) and [quotas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quota_share) are eliminated. In many cases governments lower labor standards for these EPZs in the hope of attracting new business and [foreign investments.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign_direct_investment) This can mean that minimum wages - often already very low - are not applied, and workers are denied the right to unionize. Because they constitute the largest number of workers in EPZs, Women often suffer disproportionately from these measures designed to boost investment (see Ethical Consumer website 2009).

Women workers are subjected to poor working conditions

Women employed in factories and service industries in developing countries often work long hours, sometimes in cramped, unhealthy and uncomfortable conditions. Female employees‟ rights are often minimal – in many cases unions are actively discouraged – and their employment status is insecure (Auret and Barrientos 2004; Omeria, Esim and Alissa, 2008: 5). Some employers fail to give formal contracts, relying instead on work conducted in the home or in local community centers, where the number of hours worked and the conditions of labor cannot be easily monitored. Even when they are contracted, employers may find excuses to force redundancy on pregnant or sick or older women. Add to these forms of unequal, unjust treatment the fact that women’s wages are significantly lower than men’s, and a clear picture of discrimination on the basis of gender emerges.

The ‘double burden’ of care work and paid work for women is being overlooked

The fact that women are earning an income outside their home does not mean that there is a reduction in their workload within the home. The expectation that women will take on the care of children and elderly relatives in addition to maintaining other aspects of a household, such as cleaning, means that they are faced with a „double burden‟ of work responsibilities. This unpaid labor is not calculated by many governments as part of the national income in the majority of countries (see Hoskins and Rai 2007); nor do states devote resources to the provision of services such as crèches or home help which could help to ease the burden. Global trade policies also fail to recognize women’s double burden, while most employers continue to benefit from women’s labor without taking their caring roles into account (see Esplen 2009a).

##### 5.3.3 Towards more gender-sensitive governance of global trade and labour

Greater respect is needed for labour standards promoting gender equality

Minimum international labour standards on employment practices, conditions of work, rights of workers, maternity leave and other areas have been defined through various conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO).[[9]](#footnote-9) These have been ratified by many countries and provide the basis for country-level codes of practice, such as the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) in the UK, which was formulated through a multi-stakeholder group that included companies, trade unions and NGOs. The ETI base code stipulates that employers provide clean, safe working conditions, treat workers fairly and without discrimination, allow workers to unionise, and do not use any forced labour practices (Auret and Barrientos 2004: 3). The UN Global Compact (see below) provides another means for holding businesses to account on issues of women’s rights and gender equality, and on their commitment to international labour standards

The Global Compact

The Global Compact is a corporate social responsibility framework for businesses that are committed to aligning their operations and strategies with [ten universally accepted principles](http://www.unglobalcompact.org/AboutTheGC/TheTenPrinciples/index.html) in the areas of  [human rights,](http://www.unglobalcompact.org/AboutTheGC/TheTenPrinciples/humanRights.html) [labour,](http://www.unglobalcompact.org/AboutTheGC/TheTenPrinciples/labourStandards.html) [the environment](http://www.unglobalcompact.org/AboutTheGC/TheTenPrinciples/environment.html) and [anti-corruption.](http://www.unglobalcompact.org/AboutTheGC/TheTenPrinciples/anti-corruption.html) It provides a vehicle through which employers‟ responsibilities towards both male and female employees can be assessed. At present, businesses and multinational companies sign up voluntarily to the Compact, but there is scope for the model to become a compulsory international standard that could be applied to trade liberalization processes at macro and micro levels of impact. (UN Global Compact website 2009)

As noted in Chapter 2, even when countries have ratified these international conventions and other agreements, this does not guarantee that they will be realized in practice. For example, many countries in the Middle East and North Africa have ratified Convention number 100 on equal pay for equal value of work. However, because of assumptions about women’s natural traits such as caring, nurturing or capacity for detailed work, certain jobs are considered the natural domain of women and remain poorly paid (Omeria, Esim and Alissa, 2008: 5). Country governments, as well as labour employers therefore have a responsibility to ensure that solid accountability mechanisms, such as workplace assessments, external audits and evaluation reports, are in place.

Employers need to conduct participatory social audits

One way of making international codes of labour practice, including the Global Compact, directly relevant to workers is to include them in participatory social auditing processes. These processes are designed to encourage workers to express their concerns in a „safe space‟. They are particularly effective for enabling women to reflect on their working experiences, since they often have less awareness of their rights and less confidence to voice their complaints. Properly conducted participatory social audits can also raise awareness of socially and culturally embedded notions of gender difference that shape forms of inequality in the workplace (Auret and Barrientos 2004: 7).

Greater policy coherence on gender equality in global trade is needed

There is a clear role for the WTO and IFIs in setting international standards around gender equality in the context of trade. The WTO needs to ensure that gender assessments are conducted prior to the signing of binding agreements, and that the impacts of these agreements are closely monitored by CSOs, trade unions and external auditors. This requires greater coherence between global trade and financial institutions and the human rights frameworks and conventions promoted by UN organizations than is currently the case (Floro and Hoppe 2005). To be sustainable and meaningful, these mechanisms must be underpinned by a strong commitment from national governments to protecting the rights of the women and men who are affected by trade policy, including supporting their right to form unions, exposing abuses of labor standards and bringing cases to human rights courts where necessary.

Greater involvement of citizens and CSOs is needed

More spaces need to be opened up for CSOs and citizens to be involved in consultation around trade policy and to ensure their perspectives inform these processes. Funding is needed to expand and create new initiatives such as the International Gender and Trade Network (IGTN; see the case study below), to promote greater understanding among women and men of the impacts of trade policy on them and of what they can do to hold individuals, organizations and companies to account.

The International Gender and Trade Network

IGTN is a Southern-led network of feminist gender specialists that provide technical information on gender and trade issues to women's groups, NGOs, social movements and governments in order to build South–North cooperation and promote a critical feminist perspective and global action on trade and globalization issues. A key aim of the organization is to influence the development of more just and democratic trade policy. IGTN is organized in seven global regions.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Key points from Chapter 5

* Global governance is fragmented, hard to trace to individuals or even particular agencies. It has been described as „governance without government‟.
* Global governance institutions and processes remain gender- and class-blind, with executive and other decision-making bodies often dominated by men who are already privileged as a result of factors that include social class, family connections and educational background.
* The UN can play a role in holding national and local governments to account on gender equality through human rights instruments such as CEDAW. However, a reformed UN system – with better-resourced gender agencies, greater credibility and stronger accountability mechanisms – is essential if this is to happen.
* Global trade and labour governance by governments and the private sector have positive impacts on women’s opportunities but can also undermine their rights in many ways. Measures such as greater compliance to international labour laws and human rights legislation – by the WTO, governments and employers – is vital to ensure women are not disadvantaged.

**THE END!!**

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. It should be noted that these gains are not evenly distributed. For cultural and other reasons, women‟s representation in some countries is high, while in others – including Guatemala and Honduras – it is much lower. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Proportional Representation (PR) is an electoral system that aims to ensure that the outcome of the election reflects the proportion of support gained by each competing group. It is different from the majoritarian principle, where the party gaining the largest number of seats or votes wins an election (Source: Politics.co.uk: [http://www.politics.co.uk/briefings-guides/issue-briefs/domestic-policy/elections/proportionalrepresentation/proportional-representation-$366642.htm)](http://www.politics.co.uk/briefings-guides/issue-briefs/domestic-policy/elections/proportional-representation/proportional-representation-$366642.htm). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Gabriela campaigners circulated a text back campaign for families of migrant workers. Party supporters living in the Philippines were encouraged to send a text about Gabriela to five or ten people outside the country, who were asked to text another five. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Personal communication from Dorcas Coker-Appiah, Ghana, member of CEDAW committee [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Macro-economics is concerned with the behaviour of the whole economy in a particular country or region. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The WTO–UN relations are governed by the [„Arrangements for Effective Cooperation with other Intergovernmental Organizations](http://docsonline.wto.org/imrd/directdoc.asp?DDFDocuments/t/WT/GC/W10.WPF) [Relations Between the WTO and the United Nations‟](http://docsonline.wto.org/imrd/directdoc.asp?DDFDocuments/t/WT/GC/W10.WPF) (see WTO website 2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Trade liberalisation, or free trade, refers to the reduction of trade barriers, such as import tariffs, as a means to promote international trade and cooperation. Critics of free trade argue that poor countries are at a disadvantage in these trade agreements because of their low production capacity compared to industrial giants such as the USA and EU, whose surpluses are often „dumped‟ in poor countries. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. ILO codes of conduct include a convention to ensure women are granted adequate maternity leave; conventions governing the number of hours worked, hygiene of the workplace, and the minimum age of employees; and conventions that make paid holiday leave a condition of employment. See http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/convdisp1.htm. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See the IGTN website: [http://web.igtn.org/home/.](http://web.igtn.org/home/) [↑](#footnote-ref-10)