PATHWAYS TO INFLUENCE

Promoting the Role of Women's Transformative Leadership to Achieve the SDGs in Asia and the Pacific

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Disclaimer

Preface

The twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, in September 2020, turns the global spotlight on the historic commitments made by world leaders to a comprehensive agenda promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. At the centre of the Beijing Platform of Action is a commitment to equal representation of women in leadership and decision-making roles in all spheres. Indeed, the Beijing Platform of Action states that without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has generated renewed momentum for the advancement of the Beijing outcomes, with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 ("Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls") widely recognized as a requisite for achieving the agenda as a whole. A critical driver for progress is SDG target 5.5 on promoting and strengthening equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

Despite the advancements since 1995, a gap between the visionary commitments of Beijing and the realities of gender disparities in leadership across the Asia-Pacific region remains stark. The representation of women in the region's parliaments, the area where data are the most up to date and reliable, illustrate the disparities that can be found across all facets of society. In 2019, the average representation of women in lower or single houses of parliament in Asia and the Pacific, at 20 per cent, lagged behind the global average of 25 per cent. Women filled only 12 per cent of the 978 ministerial posts across the region. (ESCAP calculations based on IPU data as of September 2019).

Just as important as achieving gender parity (at least) in leadership and decision-making roles is the quality and impact of that leadership. Recognizing the multiple barriers that women face to becoming and remaining influential as leaders in all countries of the region, this report thus focuses on women's transformative leadership. Drawing on original interview perspectives blended with other available research, the report examines the qualities that distinguish transformative women leaders from others as well as critical factors that enable or constrain their emergence. Two qualities of women's transformative leadership that stand out are the empowerment of other women to emerge as leaders and a focus on shifting power imbalances in favour of those who are most left behind. Such leadership is vital to the building of inclusive, equitable and sustainable societies across the region, in line with the 2030 Agenda commitments of "transforming our world".

While celebrating the countless women in Asia and the Pacific who are already providing transformative leadership within their families, communities, workplaces, societies, wider region and beyond, this report highlights four proven pathways for expanding the presence and influence of such leaders:

- Ensuring opportunities for women and girls to develop the individual consciousness and capabilities that will help orient them to participate in society and leadership.

- Ensuring equal and full access to resources and opportunities through education, associational life and economic empowerment.

- Reshaping and leveraging the legal frameworks, formal policies and rules that underlie systems and institutions.

- Transforming discriminatory gender-based social norms that exclude women and girls from leadership positions.

Each pathway provides insights into priority areas for policy development, investment and action by governments, as well as by international, civil society and other organizations in Asia and the Pacific.

In adopting the Regional Road Map for Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, member States of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific committed themselves to placing "gender equality and women's empowerment as a central issue of the regional policy agenda, in order to enhance women's leadership and decision-making in all aspects of society".

As detailed in the findings and recommendations of this report, the region's governments have an essential role in fostering an enabling environment for women's leadership development as a requisite step towards meeting the call of United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres for "wholesale, rapid, and radical change" to achieve gender equality.

This report was prepared under the auspices of the United Nations Asia-Pacific Thematic Working Group for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. The United Nations community in Asia and the Pacific is committed to working with member States and other actors in the region to achieve gender parity in leadership across all spheres and foster the emergence of more transformative women leaders who can help drive the full realization of the SDGs.

Acknowledgements

Transformative women leaders interviewed for the study included Adimaimalaga Tafuna'i (Samoa), Byatshandaa Jargal (Mongolia), Habiba Sarabi (Afghanistan), Helen Hakena (Papua New Guinea: Autonomous Region of Bougainville), Imrana Jalal (Fiji), Jeannie Javelosa (Philippines), Logeswary Ponniah (Sri Lanka), Malika Virdi (India), Manohari Doss (India), Maria Fides Bagasao (Philippines), Nazma Akter (Bangladesh), Pansy Tun Thein (Myanmar), Raushan Sarsembayeva (Kazakhstan), Somsook Boonyabancha (Thailand), Tri Rismaharini (Indonesia), Zhang Haidi (China) and Zolzaya Batkhuyag (Mongolia).

Expert advice on the development of the concept, approach and methodology for the study was provided by participants at an Expert Group Meeting on Women's Transformative Leadership in Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok in November 2016. Present at this meeting were Aurora Boots Geotina-Garcia, Lead Convenor and Chairperson, Philippine Women's Economic Network, Manila; Jacqui True, Professor, Australian Research Council Future Fellow, Director, Monash GPS Centre, Politics and International Relations, School of Social Sciences, Faculty of Arts, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia; Kalpana Giri, SEI Research Fellow, SEI-Asia's Gender, Environment and Development Cluster, Stockholm Environment Institute, Bangkok; Kamolrat Intaratat, Director, The Research Centre of Communication and Development Knowledge Management, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, Nonthaburi, Thailand; Myonghee Kim, Executive Director, Asia Pacific Women's Information Network Center, Sookmyung Women's University, Seoul; Kate Lappin, Regional Coordinator, Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, Chiang Mai, Thailand; Ha Nguyen, SEI Research Associate, SEI-Asia's Gender, Environment and Development Cluster, Stockholm Environment Institute, Bangkok; Nisha Onta, Regional Coordinator for Asia, Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management, Bangkok; Alina Saba, Asia Pacific Advisor for Young Women Feminist Fund, FRIDA and Programme Coordinator, National Indigenous Women Forum, Kathmandu.

Acknowledgement of influential sources

Gender at Work, for their contribution to the understanding of gender dynamics within institutions and the development of the domains of change framework that underpins the analysis of this study. See Aruna Rao, Carol Miller, David Kelleher and Joanne Sandler, *Gender at Work: Theory and Practice for 21st Century Organizations* (London, Routledge, 2015).

Huairou Commission, specifically Sri H. Sofjan, Senior Program Administrator and Strategist, and Maria Fides Bagasao, member of the Executive Committee, for their insightful inputs and advice from grass-roots women's perspectives.

Jacqui True, Professor of Politics and International Relations and an Australian Research Council Future Fellow at Monash University, Australia, for her advice to the research team and contribution to *Women's Political Participation in Asia and the Pacific*, the third in a series of working papers released by the Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum. Jacqui True, Nicole George, Sara Niner and Swati Parashar, Women's Political Participation in Asia and the Pacific (New York, Social Science Research Council, 2014).

Mariz Tadros, for her editing role and analytical insights in her 2014 publication, *Women in Politics: Gender, Power and Development* (London, Zed Books, 2014).

Srilatha Batliwala, Director of Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action, India, for the insights of her influential publication, *Feminist Leadership for Social Transformation: Clearing the Conceptual Cloud* (Delhi, CREA, 2011).

Shawna Wakefield, for the insights in her wide-ranging publication, *Transformative and Feminist Leadership for Women's Rights* (Boston, Oxfam America Research Backgrounder series, 2017).

Contents

Tables, boxes and figures

Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEO	chief executive officer
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
ICRW	International Center for Research on Women
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
NGO	non-government organization
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WHO	World Health Organization
WEF	World Economic Forum

Executive summary

The transformative change embodied in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires transformative leadership.

Despite expanding economic growth across Asia and the Pacific, inequalities of outcomes, opportunities and impacts are still on the rise (ESCAP, 2018b). Pivotal to "transforming our world" in the face of such challenges, as called for by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, are transformative leaders who move beyond business as usual to (i) rebalance power relations to benefit people who are excluded and marginalized; (ii) encourage inclusive, collective and empowering ways of working; (iii) promote human rights and gender equality; and (iv) uphold consistency between values, strategies and outcomes.

Although both women's and men's leadership are critical to achieve this change, this report focuses on women's transformative leadership because women disproportionately bear the brunt of the inequalities and face additional barriers to their emergence as leaders. Evidence of why women's leadership matters is increasingly available and summarized in this report. This demonstrates the difference that women in leadership are making, despite the barriers they encounter across government systems as well as in public administration, business, civil society and a host of other fields.

Transformative women leaders build on, learn from and magnify the impact of other women leaders. Critically, they open the way for more women to emerge as leaders and contribute progress towards eventual gender parity in leadership and decision-making. This is demonstrated by the success and influence of the transformative women leaders featured in this report. The report provides two additions to the literature on women's transformative leadership: (i) original insights from transformative women leaders in the region, which complement existing quantitative data and (ii) a working definition of women's transformative leadership that builds upon other literature and interview responses. The leadership approach highlighted in this report is vital to building inclusive, equitable and sustainable societies aligned with the 2030 Agenda aspirations and commitments.

The full potential of the transformative impact of women's leadership remains unrealized due to societal barriers.

International studies and women's lived experiences all point to the constraints imposed by discriminatory social norms as a fundamental barrier to women emerging as leaders in all spheres of society. Within the region, these include, but are not limited to, violence against women, which affects up to 68 per cent of women (UNDP, 2018); the disproportionate burden of unpaid household and care work for women, who provide up to four times what men do (ILO, 2018c); and the "imposter syndrome,"[1] even for women of high visibility and achievement. This report directly acknowledges these and other barriers and features a sample of transformative leaders who have become highly influential, despite the constraints they have encountered.

Based on interviews with these women and analysis of quantitative evidence, the report identifies pathways that will help create space and opportunities for the emergence and the development of more transformative women leaders in Asia and the Pacific.

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1   "The term 'impostor phenomenon' is used to designate an internal experience of intellectual phoniness that appears to be particularly prevalent and intense among a select sample of high-achieving women…. Despite outstanding academic and professional accomplishments, women who experience the impostor phenomenon persist in believing that they are really not bright and have fooled anyone who thinks otherwise. Numerous achievements, which one might expect to provide ample objective evidence of superior intellectual functioning, do not appear to affect the impostor belief" (Clance and Imes, 1978).

Gender parity in leadership is a critical objective, but progress remains slow.

Despite overwhelming international support for increasing women's participation in leadership, evident through agreements like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, women are not participating as leaders in political, economic and public life at anywhere close to the same rate as men (ESCAP, 2015). In Asia and the Pacific, leadership gender gaps persist across most spheres of society, despite an increased presence of women in national parliaments, business, public administration and civil society organizations.

Even though women's leadership in all fields is equally important, the data most readily and reliably available pertains to parliamentary representation. Although not representative of transformative leadership, women's parliamentary presence is nonetheless an indicator of the status of women in leadership and can inspire emerging leaders in other spaces. Even with the incremental increase of elected women parliamentarians in the region, based on the current annual average rate of change, it is estimated that it will take at least another 20 years to achieve the 30 per cent threshold and 43 more years to reach 50:50 gender parity in parliaments across the region.[2] While data availability is limited, a similar pattern can be seen across the region in most spheres, including business and public administration.

Beyond the numbers, transformative leadership approaches amplify the impact of women in leadership and open new opportunities for others to follow.

As their perspectives and experiences demonstrate (featured throughout the report), women across the region are challenging and transforming the gender-based social norms and barriers that hinder their access to leadership. Despite the many obstacles they have encountered, the women leaders and their associates featured in this report have influenced laws, shaped institutions and shifted social norms to empower other women and advocate for marginalized communities. These diverse undertakings include supporting the establishment of gender quotas in national and local politics, expanding women's access to decision-making spaces, opening opportunities for women's economic empowerment, enhancing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) implementation by addressing the gender impacts of climate change and improving policies relating to family law, gender-based violence, divorce and Dalit rights.

Although gender parity in leadership is important and requires the support of male allies, the goal of this report is to transcend discussion of purely numerical parity to pinpoint ways to maximize and elevate the impact of leaders who are moving beyond business-as-usual leadership.

Research and data gaps hinder policy development that would expand opportunities for women to emerge as transformative leaders.

Using a mixed quantitative and qualitative methodology, this study sought to shed light on the gaps in the quality and availability of data surrounding women's leadership. The report singles out recommended priorities for future research, such as (i) women's leadership outside of government (in education, family life and civil society) and (ii) long-term tracking of the impact of formal changes (such as quotas and electoral system reform). Such research is vital to inform future policies and practical measures of governments, international agencies and partners and local actors to remove the barriers and actively promote leadership opportunities for women.

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2   See Annex II for the methodology

Four strategic pathways stand out as influential in the leadership journeys of transformative women leaders.

1. Ensuring opportunities for women and girls to develop the individual consciousness and capabilities that will help orient them to participate in society and leadership.

• Family environments can be extremely influential in the leadership pathways for women. For some, supportive family environments were a leadership incubator in early life. For others, more challenging households helped them to develop understanding of resilience and discrimination. Families also sometimes provide childcare support and access to professional or political opportunities.

• Positive role models from all spaces influence women's leadership aspirations and approaches. Increasing evidence is available to validate and demonstrate the role model effect.

• Although each leadership journey is unique with its own enablers, challenges, insights and lessons, many leaders in this report had catalytic moments that opened new opportunities for learning, growth and influence, drawing on consciousness and capabilities already developed.

2. Ensuring equal and full access to resources and opportunities through education, associational life and economic empowerment.

• Access to formal or informal education can help open doors to expertise, skills, enhanced confidence and connections. It is essential to remove gender bias within education and ensure equal access to resources at all levels to enable opportunities for girls to emerge as leaders.

• Promoting full and equal rights for women to own, control and access productive resources is an imperative factor for enabling leadership opportunities. This includes ownership and control of land, financial autonomy and inclusion and access to entrepreneurship resources.

• Associational life (for example, membership in unions, student associations, professional associations and faith groups) provides a leadership pathway for many women through apprenticeship opportunities, skill building and networking. Autonomous women's organizations are also crucial leadership incubators.

• Leadership development programmes need to be collectively based and locally grounded. Internationally imported models, while well intentioned, often neglect local processes and contexts.

3. **Reshaping and leveraging the legal frameworks, formal policies and rules that underlie the gender dynamics of societies and institutions.**

- Two evidence-based approaches to encourage women's leadership are (i) temporary special measures, such as gender quotas, for parliamentary and local governance representation and (ii) the protection and expansion of civic space for women's organizations and networks.

- Government can uniquely challenge discriminatory policies through direct means, particularly when done in conjunction with women's organizations and stakeholders. Approaches such as coalition building and gender-based budgeting can promote women's leadership pathways.

4 **Transforming discriminatory gender-based social norms that exclude women and girls from opportunities to emerge and be influential as leaders in all spheres.**

- Norms, both internalized (imposter syndrome) and external (violence and assault), can prevent women from becoming leaders or can adversely affect women later in their leadership journeys. Challenging these norms underlies all other pathways mentioned in this report.

- One strong finding of this study and others is the need for men to be engaged in exposing and changing the gender-based social norms that constrain the rights of and leadership opportunities for women and girls.

A need for transformation: Beijing and beyond

> Absolute poverty and the feminization of poverty, unemployment, the increasing fragility of the environment, continued violence against women and the widespread exclusion of half of humanity from institutions of power and governance underscore the need to continue the search for development, peace and security and for ways of assuring people-centred sustainable development. The participation and leadership of the half of humanity that is female is essential to the success of that search. Therefore, only a new era of international cooperation among governments and peoples based on a spirit of partnership, an equitable, international social and economic environment and a radical transformation of the relationship between women and men to one of full and equal partnership will enable the world to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Beijing Platform for Action, Paragraph 17, adopted by the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China, September 1995

The 1990s brought new attention to women's leadership globally, linked to the Beijing Platform for Action and a growing interest in women's economic empowerment. This attention continued with the Millennium Development Goals,[3] adopted in September 2000, and then the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in September 2015. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 5.5 demands promoting and strengthening equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

Asia and the Pacific needs transformative change to meet these global commitments to women's equality in leadership roles. In partnership with other domestic and international stakeholders, the region's governments have a critical role to ensure that an enabling policy and resource environment exists and provides increased opportunities and space for women leaders to emerge and flourish in all spheres of society.

In 2019, the average representation of women in lower or single houses of parliament in Asia and the Pacific, at 20 per cent, lagged behind the global average of 25 per cent. Women filled only 12 per cent of the 978 ministerial posts across the region.[4] Women are rarely seen at the helm of government, with only six of the 58 ESCAP member States and associate members in Asia and the Pacific having a female Head of State or Government in 2019 (IPU, 2019). Based on the current annual average rate of change, it is estimated to take another 20 years to achieve the 30 per cent threshold and 43 more years to reach 50:50 gender parity in parliaments across the region.[5]

These trends hold for women seeking leadership positions outside of parliament in both the public and private sectors. Of the Group of 20 (G20) countries in Asia and the Pacific, Japan had the lowest score in the Ernst & Young Worldwide Women Public Sector Index – with women only representing 1.8 per cent of public sector leadership positions (Ernst & Young, 2014). While other G20 countries in the region have larger proportions of women as public sector leaders, the situation is still bleak: Indonesia stands at 16.4 per cent; India at 14.8 per cent; China at 9.1 per cent; and the Republic of Korea at 4.8 per cent (Ernst & Young, 2014). In the Pacific, women are generally better represented in public service, particularly in the "feminized" sectors, yet are

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3   See particularly Millennium Development Goal 3: To promote gender equality and empower women.

4   ESCAP 2019 calculations of weighted average based on Inter-Parliamentary Union data.
5   See Annex II for the methodology.

underrepresented in management roles (Haley and Zubrinich, 2009).

In business, women are moving into leadership and senior management roles with varying success and always within the context of gender pay gaps, which continue throughout their leadership journey. The International Labour Organization (ILO) recently reported that the share of women's management positions has increased moderately, from 17.7 per cent in 1991 to 22.5 per cent in 2018 (ILO, 2019b). As top managers, women were overseeing one third of firms in East Asia and the Pacific, compared with one in 10 firms in South Asia (World Bank, 2017). The ILO noted that there has been a "steady and steep upward trend of women filling the ranks at greater speed than men" in the region. However, even with increasing success as managers, women are rarely present in other levels of executive management. In terms of corporate governance, the 2018 analysis of Asian Fortune 100 companies found that men held 96 per cent of the seats in executive committees (20-First, 2018). The Asia-Pacific region has the largest concentration of male-dominated corporate boards in the world, with China, Hong Kong (China), Japan and the Republic of Korea accounting for the majority. In the Republic of Korea, 84 per cent of registered companies have all-male corporate boards (Ellis and Eastman, 2018). In Indonesia, women only hold 12 per cent of seats in boardrooms, followed by Hong Kong (China), at 10 per cent, China, at 9 per cent, Malaysia and Singapore, at 7 per cent (ILO, 2015).

As the evidence reveals, the overall picture of women in leadership in the region is one of slow progress, at best. Nonetheless, even slow progress cannot stop at numerical parity. As a range of international studies have highlighted, an increased presence of women in national parliaments does not necessarily translate into genuine influence or empowerment due to several factors, such as discriminatory social norms, the types of seats occupied (quota or non-quota seats) and lack of access to ministerial and other senior roles.

Therefore, the goal of this report is to move beyond studies of women's numerical representation in leadership to discuss the quality and impact of women's leadership. It is this quality and impact that can make the difference in challenging the

status quo in the region. This report focuses on women's transformative leadership, which is defined in terms of the "transformation" already set forth by the Beijing Platform for Action,[6] the 2030 Agenda and the subsequent Regional Road Map for Implementing the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific.[7] Women's transformative leadership moves beyond business as usual to help realize the potential of the SDGs to bring about systemic change. The region needs transformation, and women's transformative leadership is a key means of achieving this end.

> The quality and impact of women's leadership can make the difference in challenging the status quo in the region.

Methodology and goals of the study

Core to the findings of this report is the original, qualitative data from the case study interviews of 17 women from 14 countries in Asia and the Pacific. These interviewees were nominated on the basis of the following criteria:

- a focus on outcomes that rebalance power relations to benefit people who are excluded and marginalized;

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6   The Beijing Platform for Action, adopted by the world's governments in 1995, represents the most comprehensive international statement on women's participation in leadership and decision-making. It contains two strategic objectives for implementation by the world's governments: Strategic objective G.1: Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making. Strategic objective G.2. Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.
7   Objective 5 of the Regional Road Map for Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP, 2017) asks governments to "place gender equality and women's empowerment as a central issue of the regional policy agenda in order to enhance women's leadership and decision-making in all aspects of society."

- inclusive and empowering ways of working;

- an underlying commitment to human rights and gender equality;

- seeing and acting on the connections between different issues; and

- consistency between values, approaches and outcomes.

The criteria were developed with regional experts and a multi-agency task team established under the auspices of the United Nations Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (Asia and Pacific). The final interviewees were selected in line with the criteria following nominations from the task team as well as regional women's networks, gender experts in different fields and the use of the snowballing technique to expand outreach to potential candidates. Where possible, interviews included associates and colleagues to capture the collective elements of transformative leadership. The chosen interviewees are active as transformative leaders in fields covering disability, economic empowerment, grass-roots community

development, human rights and law, labour rights and trade unions, local governance, peace and security, public health, public sector reform, rural development and livelihoods, urban development and housing, women's empowerment and youth. These interviewees are just a sample of the many who are making a difference in their communities, workplaces and broader societies.

The interviews were transcribed and summarized for full viewing online. Quotes from each interviewee are used to supplement and add depth to the often-limited quantitative analysis that exists. All analysis of the original qualitative data was done by categorical content coding, and the methodology is explained in Annex II.

The quantitative data used in this report were obtained from a wide range of international agency, academic and other sources; the pooling of these sources was necessary, given the significant gaps in the data. The production of this report aimed to bridge the strengths of generalizability (external validity) that comes from quantitative data with the specificity and nuance that comes from qualitative data by using this mixed methodology. As has been argued in a *Human Relations* journal article on leadership: "The introduction of qualitative research methods into the study of leadership may improve this area of research by facilitating the introduction of a wider range of contextual variables into the investigation of leadership styles…. …such variables have the advantage of being grounded in people's experiences and are therefore more accessible to practitioners" (Bryman and others, 1988). In combining the original qualitative work with existing quantitative data,the study set out to provide a more comprehensive understanding of transformative leadership.

The data analysis in this report is displayed through the domains of change model created by the international NGO, Gender at Work (Rao and others, 2015). The framework maps the complexity of factors that enable or constrain women's transformative leadership at the individual, systemic, informal and formal levels. The vertical axis captures change from the individual level to shifts in broader, systemic and institutional structures. The horizontal axis reflects change from the informal sphere to more formal socioeconomic and political domains.

Adimaimalaga Tafunai

Figure 1   The pathways, inspired by Gender at Work's domains of change

Individual

Pathway 1
Growing individual consciousness and capabilities

›   Family environments – leadership incubator for many
›   Role models – influence on leadership aspirations and outcomes
›   Moments of realization that have catalysed leadership journeys

Pathway 2
Accessing resources and opportunities

›   Education – doorway to knowledge, expertise, skills and connections
›   Economic empowerment and links to political leadership
›   Associational life – a vital leadership pathway
›   Leadership development programmes – promoting confidence, skills and networks

Informal

Formal

Pathway 4
Transforming social norms and exclusionary practices

›   Addressing and navigating gender norms – which are at the core of leadership barriers at all levels
›   Engaging with men to challenge and eliminate patriarchal social norms

Pathway 3
Shaping and navigating formal policies, laws and rules

›   Government laws and policies – can be critical enablers of space and opportunities for women
›   Gender-based electoral quotas and civic space – opening and protecting key pathways

Systemic

This report uses the Gender at Work model as a means of describing each of the pathways of transformative women's leadership that were revealed through analysis of the interviews and international literature. These pathways are often co-dependent and are by no means causal on their own; they each shed light on different and unique factors that can answer how to encourage transformative women leaders and at what level the change occurs (individual and formal; informal and systemic). Thus, through the descriptive analysis of these pathways, it is easier to understand (i) the level and nature of interventions necessary to promote women's transformative leadership and (ii) the interactions and interdependence across pathways.

Importantly, each of these pathways are linked closely to the defining elements of transformative leadership discussed in Chapter 3. The pathways consist of various paths to realizing the elements – self, sharing, strategies and structure – and form this report's definition of women's transformative leadership (figure 1).

Table 1 **Transformative women leaders interviewed for the study**

Adimaimalaga Tafuna'i
(Samoa)

Co-founder and Executive Director of Samoa's Women in Business Development
One of the initiators of the Pacific Organic Ethical Trade Community

Byatshandaa Jargal
(Mongolia)

Founder and President of the Mongolian Women Farmers Association

Habiba Sarabi
(Afghanistan)

Deputy Chair of High Peace Council and Senior Adviser on Women to the Chief Executive of Afghanistan
Governor of Bamyan Province (2005–2013), Afghanistan's first women governor

Haidi Zhang
(China)

Chair of China Disabled Persons' Federation since 2008
President of Rehabilitation International

Helen Hakena
(Papua New Guinea: Autonomous Region of Bougainville)

Co-founder and Executive Director of the Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency
A leader among the women of Bougainville who were instrumental in bringing the 1988–1998 civil war to an end

Imrana Jalal
(Fiji)

A Vice-President with the World Bank and Chair (from December 2018) of the Inspection Panel of the World Bank in Washington, D.C.
Commissioner on the International Commission of Jurists, Geneva
Co-founder and current board member of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement

Jeannie Javelosa
(Philippines)

Co-founder of the Philippines retail store and social enterprise ECHOstore Sustainable Lifestyle and ECHOsi Foundation

Prime mover behind the Gender Responsive Economic Actions for the Transformation of Women (GREAT Women) brand within the ASEAN region

Logeswary Ponniah
(Sri Lanka)

Programme Coordinator of the Human Development Organisation

Secretary General, Women Solidarity Front

Malika Virdi
(India)

Women's rights campaigner for more than 35 years

Elected head of the village forest council (*van panchayat*) in northern India for seven years

Manohari Doss
(India)

Co-founder of the Institute for Self-Management, which includes the Women Development Resource Centre and the Tamil Nadu Labourers Union

State-level convener of the Tamil Nadu Social Action Movement, which involves about 1,000 NGOs

Maria Fides Bagasao
(Philippines)

Former Executive Committee member, Huairou Commission, 2014–2017

Former Executive Director, Leaders and Organizers of Community Organizations in Asia

Co-Founder, Former Executive Director, Community Organizers Multiversity, Philippines

Nazma Akter
(Bangladesh)

Founder and President of Sommilito Garment Sramik Federation, a union with more than 70,000 garment workers as members, mainly women

Founder, General Secretary and Executive Director of AWAJ Foundation

Pansy Tun Thein
(Myanmar)

Founding member, former Co-chair and National Adviser, Gender Equality Network, Myanmar
Executive Director of the Local Resource Centre, Myanmar

Raushan Sarsembayeva
(Kazakhstan)

Founder and President of the Association of Business Women of Kazakhstan
Member of the National Commission for Women, Family and Demographic Policy under the President of Kazakhstan

Somsook Boonyabancha
(Thailand)

Chairperson and former Secretary-General of Asian Coalition for Housing Rights
Former Secretary-General of Human Settlement Foundation Thailand and Community Foundation Thailand
Former Director of Community Organizations Development Institute

Tri Rismaharini
(Indonesia)

First elected female mayor of Surabaya, Indonesia's second largest city, and re-elected in 2015
In 2015, named among the world's 50 greatest leaders by US business magazine *Fortune*

Zolzaya Batkhuyag
(Mongolia)

Co-founder and Director of Women for Change
Founder of Professional Women's Leadership Program

The full interview summaries are available online at
https://www.unescap.org/resources/life-journeys-transformative-leaders-interview-summaries-report-pathways-influence

Data availability and quality

The quantitative data used in this report, sourced from outside studies, underscore the number of areas for which data on the region are not available, sufficiently comprehensive, reliable and/or comparable to support analysis of transformative women's leadership. The February 2018 UN Women global report on implementation of the gender-related targets and indicators of the SDGs reinforces the need to address data gaps (UN Women, 2018).

A comprehensive review of the international literature on women's leadership by the United Kingdom-based Overseas Development Institute found that the evidence and theory on leadership and how it relates to advancing gender equality agendas remain "fundamentally under-explored and that trajectories of women's political influence and leadership are mostly still poorly documented" (O'Neil and Domingo, 2016). The Overseas Development Institute assessment also noted that current internationally supported capacity development initiatives for leadership often include little reference to the relevant country context and political economy issues that shape leadership success for women.

The qualitative data used in this report, while a methodological asset to provide depth to the existing research, also have their limitations. The individual interviews per se do not show causal relations, and the factors distilled from analysis of the responses cannot be isolated from each other (a respondent who had both a supportive family and positive role models could not attribute her leadership to strictly one or the other). This type of data analysis shows human complexity in a way quantitative data often cannot capture, but it makes variable isolation more difficult. Additionally, these interviewees were chosen for specific criteria to ensure a diverse and appropriate sample, which inherently introduces selection bias. Thus, while providing critical insights, context and complexity to the analysis of this report, the qualitative data are limited, particularly by the sample size – a consideration for future studies.

Areas for further regional research based on the analysis of relevant studies (and the evident gaps) as well as the interviewees' reflections of their leadership trajectory, include the following:

1. Societal factors most likely to contribute to creating space and opportunities for girls and women to emerge as transformative leaders in all spheres.

2. The role of public policy and administration in encouraging the societal factors.

3. The nature and qualities of informal and formal pathways to women's transformative leadership, how they intersect and the enablers and constraints.

Byatskhandaa Jargal

4 How women translate presence into influence.

5 The links between women's economic empowerment and leadership in all spheres.

6 The links between women's participation in local governance and their leadership at national and international levels.

7 The long-term impacts of temporary special measures, such as quotas and electoral laws, on gender equality.

Organization of the report

A need for transformation: Beijing and beyond

This chapter grounds the report in the global commitments made on women in leadership and decision-making at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, 1995. It briefly provides a cross-sectional overview of women's current leadership status in the region; describes the methodology and analytical framework of the report; and summarizes gaps in current data availability that require further research attention.

Chapter 1 WHY does women's leadership matter?

This chapter examines evidence of the impact of increased numbers of women leaders in multiple fields, observing that this provides an important basis of experience on which transformative women leaders draw and build.

Chapter 2 WHERE did understanding of women's transformative leadership come from?

This chapter traces the literature of transformative leadership from male-centric origins to its converging with feminist insights.

Chapter 3 HOW does this report define women's transformative leadership?

This chapter contributes a definition of women's transformative leadership, based on four elements: self, sharing, strategies and structure. Drawing on the interviews and existing literature, this chapter describes each element in depth to show its importance to transformative leadership in practice.

Chapter 4 Pathway 1 – growing consciousness and capabilities

This chapter examines the individual and informal factors that influence the ideas, understanding and personal capabilities that help to shape women's leadership journeys. These include the influence of families, role models and the moments of realization that opened leadership opportunities.

Chapter 5 Pathway 2 – accessing resources and opportunities

This chapter looks at the individual and formal factors that can facilitate women's leadership journeys. Chief among these are access to formal education, involvement in associational life through a range of organizations and networks, and economic empowerment.

8 The links between women's individual and collective leadership development and practice and how social accountability plays out in this context.

9 The enablers and conditions for male engagement on gender equality.

Chapter 6   Pathway 3 – shaping and leveraging formal policies, laws and rules

This chapter examines the systemic and formal factors that can both enable and constrain women's leadership journeys. Among these factors are the role of governments in policy development, the impact of gender quotas within national and local government settings and the expansion and protection of civic space.

Chapter 7 Pathway 4 – transforming social norms and exclusionary practices

This chapter turns to the systemic and informal factors related to discriminatory gender-based social norms and constraints placed on women's leadership development. As well as looking at the experience of interviewees in engaging with and working to change such norms, the chapter gives attention to the role of men and boys in being effective allies.

Chapter 8   Maximizing the impact of leadership development training

Drawing on other international research, the findings of a regional training mapping and the insights of the interviewed women leaders, this chapter explores women's leadership development lessons and good practices. One case study, based on Cambodia's garment sector, is provided.

Conclusion and recommendations: Wholesale, rapid and radical change

The conclusion responds to the opportunity presented by the urgent call of United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres for "wholesale, rapid and radical change" in promoting gender equality and women in leadership. It additionally highlights the opportunity provided by the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2020 to put the international spotlight on women's leadership and engagement in decision-making. The chapter presents recommendations to ensure that women and girls have full and equal opportunity to emerge and be influential as transformative leaders in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

1

WHY does women's leadership matter?

> Stronger empowerment of women in the democratic process and government is vital. We must have stronger female representation to drive solutions to those issues that are having a dramatic and devastating impact on people, particularly millions of young girls and women. I'm talking about poverty, lack of education, reproductive health, gender equality, pay equity, violence and climate change, to name just some.

Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister of New Zealand, in "New Zealand PM Jacinda Ardern on the need for more women in politics", *Financial Times,* 7 December 2017

Transformative women leaders build on, learn from and magnify the impact of existing women leaders. Critically, they open the way for more women to emerge as leaders and contribute to the progress towards eventual gender parity. This is demonstrated by the success and influence of the transformative women leaders featured in this report.

The current body of literature primarily focuses on the societal benefits derived from a greater *number* of women in leadership roles in different spheres rather than on the issues of quality and approach, which are core to considering transformative leadership. Nonetheless, such research provides evidence of the influence of the increased numbers of women in leadership on which transformative leaders build and which they help to expand during their leadership journeys.

The 2017 *Global Gender Gap Report* of the World Economic Forum (2017a), for example, reported that women's engagement in public life generally has a positive impact on inequality across society at large. The World Bank found that women's leadership results in increased cooperation across party and ethnic lines and that "female parliamentarians are more likely to prioritize social issues, such as child care, equal pay, parental leave and pensions; physical concerns, such as reproductive rights, physical safety and gender-based violence; and development matters, such as poverty reduction and service delivery" (Keye, 2015). This trend was also echoed in the priorities of the interviewees of this study. In Fiji, for example, one interviewee led the development of the groundbreaking Fiji Family law, which has since been emulated throughout the Pacific. In Mongolia and Myanmar, interviewees' trajectories

included influence on the adoption of laws on domestic violence and strategic plans for the advancement of women.

Women's engagement in public life fosters greater credibility in institutions and heightened democratic outcomes.

Female political leadership is particularly influential in health and educational policy and expenditure (Shapiro and Mahajan, 1986). One study, for example, found that women leaders in India were more likely to invest in drinking water facilities in rural India (Beaman and others, 2011). In another study, the number of drinking-water projects in areas with women-led councils was 62 per cent higher than in those with male-led councils (Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004). This care for health and safety is also reflected in the leadership journeys of the interviewees of this study; in Bangladesh, one interviewee focused on improvements to occupational health and safety standards after a garment factory collapse in 2013, while another woman from India advocated for public scrutiny of major development projects that were affecting the environment and freshwater systems. In terms of education, Chen (2009) argued that a 1 per cent increase in the number of

female legislators increases the ratio of educational expenditure to gross domestic product by 0.028 per cent. This is demonstrated by government leaders, like this report's interviewee from China who works to make education accessible to individuals with disabilities.

Women's political participation has been shown to influence the engagement of other women in society (Duflo, 2012). The presence of women in local government, state and national legislatures, in the public sector and in private sector executive positions has increased female voter turnout and political participation, the inclusion of gender-sensitive policy agendas and public service responsiveness to female citizens (Burns, Schlozman and Verba, 2001). An Inter-Parliamentary Union survey (2008) found that women often demonstrate political leadership by working across party lines through

parliamentary women's caucuses – even in the most politically combative environments. They also champion gender equality across a range of issues, including electoral reform. The interviewee from Afghanistan, for example, championed the use of gender quotas, expanding girls' access to education and engaging women in the national peace process. According to the World Economic Forum, women's engagement in public life fosters greater credibility in institutions and heightened democratic outcomes. This makes the work of leaders, such as the report's interviewees, crucial (WEF, 2017a).

Although less documented than women in politics, women in business have been shown to make a positive impact when elevated to leadership positions.

Habiba Sarabi

Rwanda has the largest percentage of women parliamentarians of any country. At 67 per cent in 2018, women's representation well surpassed the 30 per cent quota established in 2003, proving that once women have an opportunity to lead, they are able to compete and win in general elections (Keye, 2015). While it is important to recognize that parliament has much less power over the executive branch in Rwanda than in many other countries (O'Neil and Domingo, 2016), the increase of women parliamentarians was instrumental in the passage of landmark legislation on ending gender violence and discrimination in health sector investments, including significantly increased resourcing for women's and adolescents' sexual and reproductive health. The country has also made concerted efforts to expand economic opportunities for women at all levels. Initiatives include granting property rights to women and facilitating their entry into the workforce – contributing to one of the highest rates of economic growth in Africa (O'Neil and Domingo, 2016). This focus on economic opportunities by women leaders is also reflected in

Zhang Haidi

Asia and the Pacific. Access to land and property rights also has been the focus of interviewees in Fiji, India, the Philippines and Thailand.

Although less documented than women in politics, women in business have been shown to make a positive impact when elevated to leadership positions. One study of Korean businesses concluded: "[H]aving a higher percentage of female *chajangs* [managers] is significantly associated with higher profitability. …a 10 per cent nominal increase in the percentage of female *chajangs* is associated with a 1 per cent nominal increase in [return on assets]. …higher female representation in management is associated with higher profitability regardless of whether the firm is foreign or domestically owned" (Siegel, Pyun and Cheon, 2019). The ILO (2019) described similar patterns at a global level: "Almost three-quarters of those companies that tracked gender diversity in their management reported profit increases of between 5 and 20 per cent, with the majority seeing increases of between 10 and 15 per cent…". The ILO report also pointed out that the beneficial effects of gender diversity begin to accrue when women hold 30 per cent of senior management and leadership positions.

In summary

The reviewed literature highlights the importance and impact of increased numbers of women in leadership. While achieving gender parity (at least) in leadership in all spheres of society is critical from both basic human rights and SDG achievement perspectives, increasing the number and influence of transformative women leaders will enhance the positive impacts of women's leadership – thereby helping to accelerate progress towards the SDGs. In the following chapters, this report shifts attention to the importance of the quality, approach and impact of women's leadership.

2

WHERE did understanding of women's transformative leadership come from?
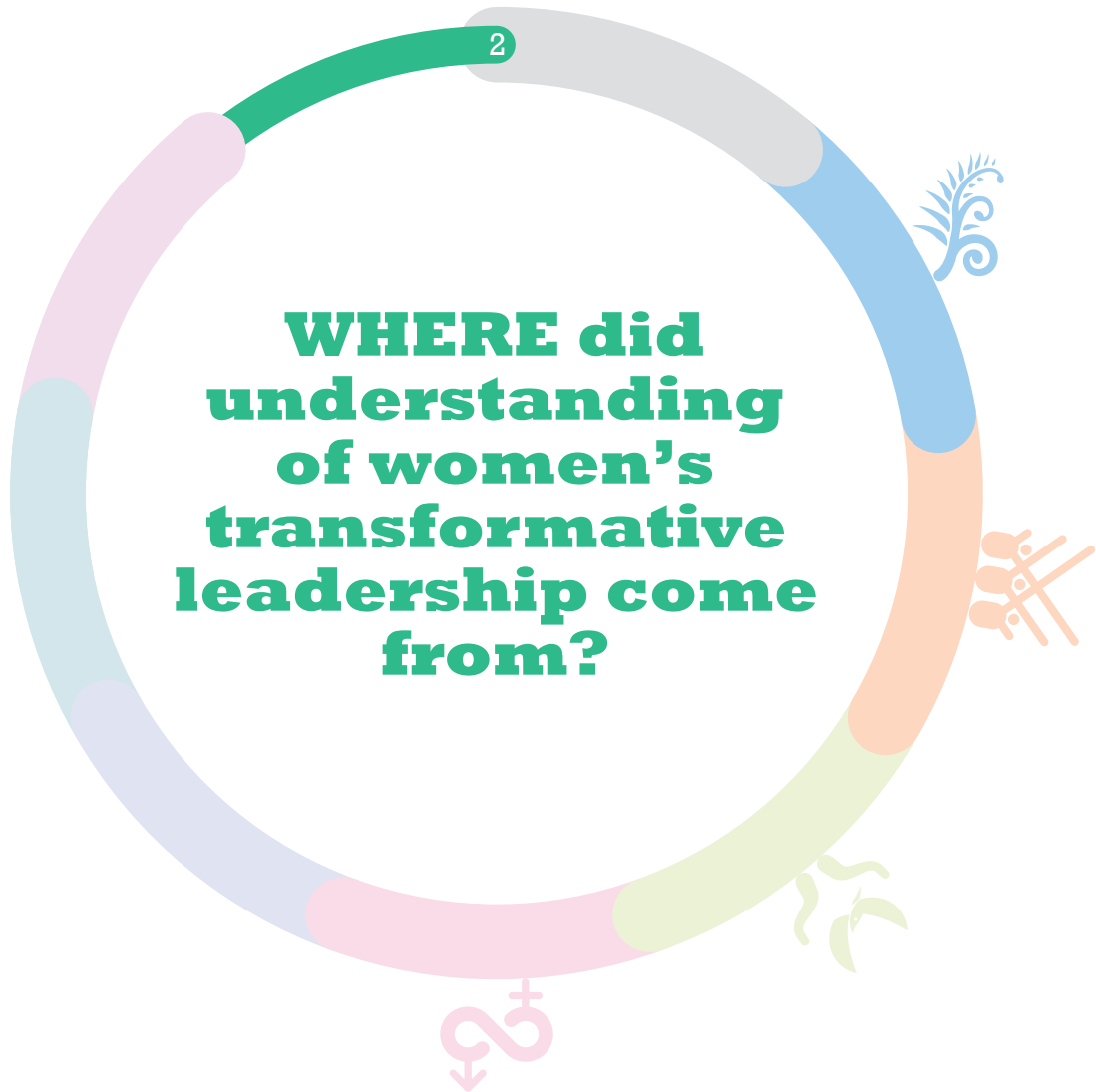
> Leadership theory was shaped within a gendered system. Countless narratives of exceptional, heroic men, whose work and family lives do not meet, dominate the history books. Over time, notions of what makes a good leader have shifted, and there are now more paradigms and practices of leadership in operation at the same time than perhaps ever before.

Shawna Wakefield, *Transformative and Feminist Leadership for Women's Rights,*
London, Oxfam America Research Backgrounder series, 2017

Research on transformative leadership is a relatively new development, linking to a larger body of literature on leadership theory from the 1970s (Hartman, 1999). The scholar James Burns formulated a distinction between transformational (or transformative) and transactional leadership. Burn's research, largely carried out among political leaders and later critiqued as "gender blind" (Wakefield, 2017), identified four main characteristics of transformative leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration, including mentoring (Burns, 1978). By contrast, transactional leadership was characterized by the role of supervision and organizational or group performance, with a primary concern about the status quo and day-to-day progress towards goals.

Issues of leadership and organization in women's liberation movement writings emerged in the 1970s, often linked to the experience of early consciousness-raising groups and other women's forums. This work turned the spotlight to formal hierarchies and organizational styles associated with traditional male leadership roles. Many of the insights on leadership from this era remain relevant today (Hartman, 1999). Following many years of global debate, research and women's advocacy, the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 re-energized attention to women in leadership and decision-making. However, ongoing international attention has largely remained on a narrow set of international targets centred on representation in national parliaments and business.

Further work on transformative leadership emerged from these beginnings, looking more at the incorporation of power dynamics. Later thinking deepened the analysis of power dynamics as an integral component of transformational leadership. Jahan (2000), for example, added a list of defining qualities of transformative leadership, summarized in table 2. Although much of the initial research in this field occurred in northern-hemisphere countries, a 1999 study involving 58 cultures as part of the Global Leadership and Organizational

Table 2 Qualities of transformative leadership

A. Vision and commitment	B. Institutional behaviour
Equality	Participatory
Equity	Egalitarian
Empowerment	Responsive
Human rights	Transparent
Peace	Accountable
Sustainability	Non-corrupt
Shared power, responsibility, well-being	Consensus-oriented
	Empowering

Source: Jahan, 2000.

Helen Hakena

Behavior Effectiveness Research Programme found that specific aspects of charismatic and transformational leadership are strongly and universally endorsed across cultures (Den, Hartog and others, 1999).

Critically, studies on transformative leadership began to converge with those on feminist leadership. Using the literature of transformational leadership and analysis of leadership development work of a range of feminist organizations,[8] Srilatha Batliwala, Senior Adviser, Knowledge Building,

with Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action (CREA) in India articulated a conceptual framework for leadership centred on the notion of "feminist leadership for social transformation". The framework is founded on four essential components, described as the "four Ps": (i) power; (ii) principles and values; (iii) politics and purpose and (iv) practices (Batliwala, 2011).

Using these essential components, Batliwala defined a two-pronged high-level goal for feminist leadership:

- Challenge visible, hidden and invisible power wherever it operates, and especially where it constructs and reinforces women's subordination in both gross and subtle ways or furthers discrimination against women.

- Construct alternative models of power that amplify the visible form to the maximum extent possible, and gradually eliminate invisible and hidden power. In other words, feminist leadership will strive to make the practice of power visible, democratic, legitimate and accountable, at all levels, and in both private and public realms.

These converging understandings and insights of transformative and feminist leadership have increasingly begun to influence mainstream thinking in many countries and institutions, including at the level of the United Nations senior leadership. The eight defining characteristics of United Nations leadership released by the Chief Executives Board in 2017 largely reflect the transformative elements of global leadership thinking and practice.[9] The understandings summarized above underpinned the conceptual framework and selection criteria for interviewees for this report. In turn, the experience of the interviewed women leaders has added further insights into the distinctive qualities, practices and impacts of transformative leadership in the Asia-Pacific region.

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8   Examples included the Center for Women's Global Leadership, Development Alternatives for Women in a New Era, Women's Learning Partnership, Gender at Work, Just Associates, International Women's Rights Action Watch (Asia-Pacific), GROOTS International, MADRE, ADMIRA, Disabled Women's Network Ontario, the Forum of Women's NGOs in Central Asia and Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action.

9   The eight defining characteristics of United Nations leadership are norm-based, principled, inclusive, accountable, multidimensional, transformational, collaborative and self-applied.

In summary

The understandings and practice of transformative leadership that have emerged in recent decades challenge historic norms of leadership as a male and individual preserve. Core to the understandings of transformative leadership is the attention given to both the power dynamics in human society and the collective dimensions of leadership. Particularly critical in this context have been the insights of feminist thinking and practice. The understandings of women's transformative leadership that underpin this report thus direct a central focus on collective approaches and shifting power imbalances in favour of those who are currently "most left behind".

3

HOW does this report define women's transformative leadership?
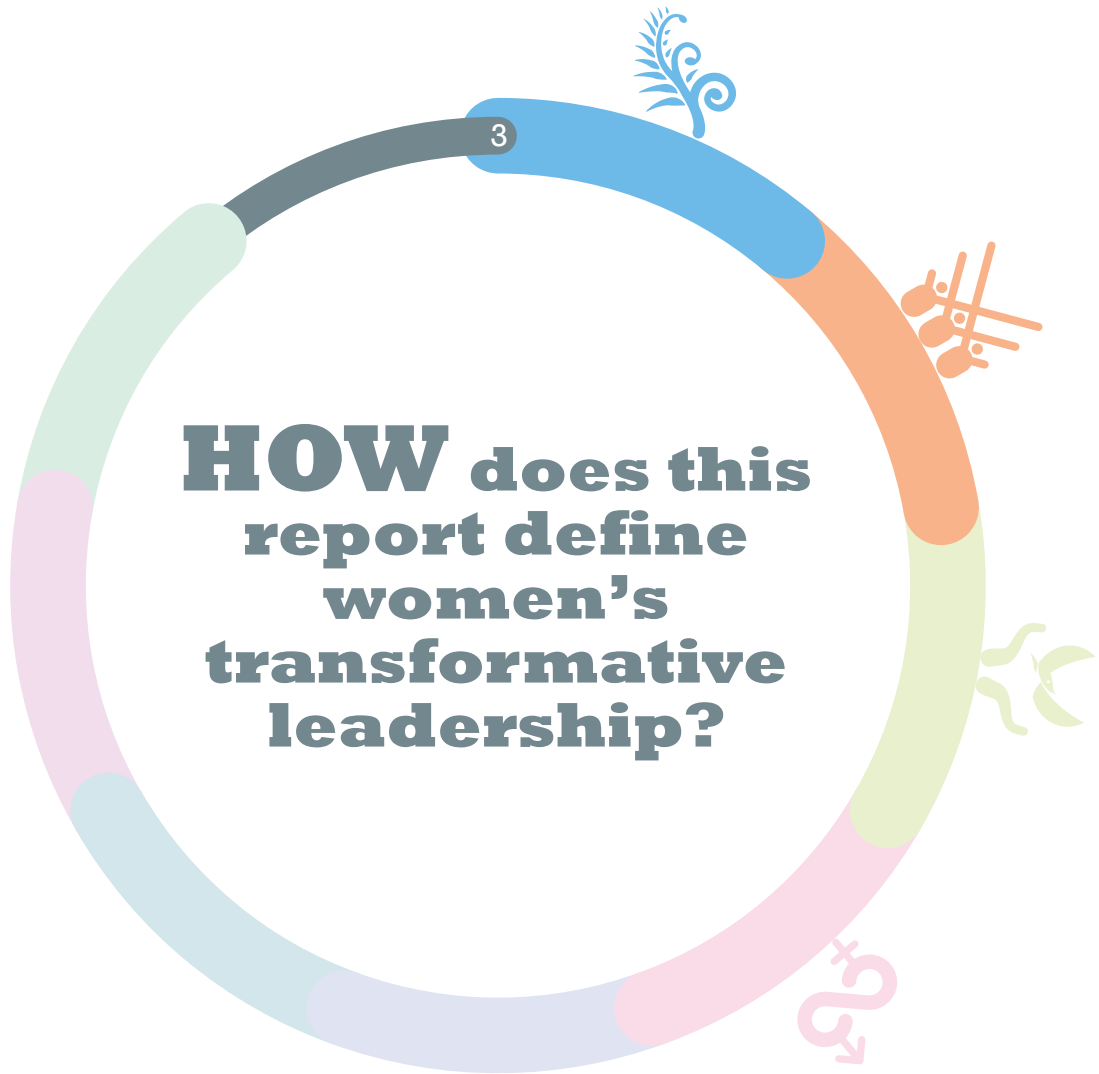
> The challenges that confront us in the twenty-first century will not be met by mere deference to power, reliance on a shaky status quo or operation in old silos. Rather, they demand a model of leadership that is norm-based, principled, inclusive, accountable, multi-elemental, transformational, collaborative and self-applied.

United Nations Chief Executives Board, United Nations System Leadership Framework, New York, 2017

Transformation and the four elements of transformative leadership

Women's transformative leadership is defined in this study as moving beyond business-as-usual leadership to systematically address the root causes that generate and reproduce economic, social, political and environmental issues, power dynamics and inequalities and not merely their symptoms. This definition of transformative is inherently tied to the SDGs and is thus understood as a comprehensive process. Its outcomes include economic and political empowerment of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups; greater gender equality in all spheres; more equal redistribution of income and wealth; active citizenship with greater agency of civil society organizations and social movements; changes in North-South power relations and global governance institutions; empowerment of small enterprises, rural producers and informal workers; and changes in the hierarchies of norms and values that subordinate social and environmental goals to economic objectives (UNRISD, 2016).

Women's transformative leadership is categorized for this report by the following four elements: self, sharing, strategies and structure. These elements were drawn from the literature review and from the responses of the interviewees. This definition is intentionally grounded more in practice than theory, given its roots in the work of transformative women leaders in the field. Shaped by these four elements, this definition focuses on the quality and impact of transformative leadership and can thereby serve as a useful tool for other practitioners. This definition is also closely tied to the four pathways, which are discussed in depth in the following chapters.

Developing the four elements

Importantly, the four elements are co-dependent and mutually reinforcing. They tackle individual and collective dynamics that are necessary for the transformative essence of women's leadership: **Self** discusses the importance of self-awareness, modelling transformative approaches and integrating values and action. **Sharing** focuses on leading together, sharing power and empowering others, inclusive and collective approaches and promoting transparent and open communication. **Strategies** emphasize the need to build on the self and the sharing elements through community-based and collective approaches that promote intersectionality, seek systemic change and a shift in power imbalances, match the ends and means and ensure accountability. **Structure** covers the transformation of normative, legal and institutional structures as well as the creation of new ones and the linking with allied structures. Underlying each of these mutually reinforcing elements is an orientation to understanding and shifting power dynamics in favour of those who are "most left behind" at the individual, collective, institutional, economic, social, political and cultural levels.

SELF: Self-awareness, learning, living the values

While much prior literature largely looked at the static nature of the self and one's own leadership style, there is much evidence to support the notion that leadership styles are fluid and grow with time (Kezar, 2002). Much of this growth has been predicted to occur through practical experience, with researchers estimating that upward of 70 per cent of all leadership development occurs through

informal, experiential means (DeRue and Wellman, 2009). Among the women interviewed in this ESCAP study, *Pansy Tun Thein*, National Adviser to the Gender Equality Network in Myanmar, emphasized in this context that it is important to believe in yourself, be confident, have passion for gender equality, work closely with others, be innovative, look for new ways to reach people and create space and opportunities for others to learn and grow as leaders in their own right.

Women's transformative leadership is moving beyond business-as-usual leadership to address the root causes that generate and reproduce unequal power dynamics.

Other interviews for this study revealed the social nature of the self element. A seminal work on leadership by Denmark (1977) emphasized the importance of this aspect: "By placing the emphasis on the individual…one does not give sufficient attention to the fact that a leader exists, evolves, and functions within some particular group. The group determines leadership – either by conferring it or by accepting the legitimacy of a leader appointed by others or self-chosen. Leadership should not be viewed simply as the qualities or position maintained by an individual but rather as an interactive process between the individual and the characteristics of a given situation…. …leadership is a reciprocal process of social influence." As an example of this, *Adimaimalaga Tafuna'i*, co-founder of Women in Business Development in Samoa, was described as someone who leads by example, combining humility, vision and perseverance. She brings people with her, and they are motivated by feeling that their voice and work are valued, commented one staff member. "She is always reaching out. If she is unsure, she always asks other people's opinions. She is not afraid to be out on a limb and is a role model, especially for younger women,"

said another colleague. Tafuna'i, in staying true to her own qualities, serves as an inspiration for others in her orbit.

Zhang Haidi, Chair of the China Disabled Persons' Federation in China and a leader in the global movement of persons with disabilities, believes that women in leadership can often determine their leadership style based on socialized expectations and norms. She personally found value in qualities typically considered "feminine" or womanly (valuing tenderness, empathy and showing emotion). Although demonstrably "masculine" characteristics might heighten social capital and perceived authority in social settings, Zhang chose a leadership approach that she believes is more unapologetically her own.

Thus, this category of self is more than a set of one-element personal qualities. As the interviews suggest, it is also innately fluid and socially responsive.

SHARING: Empowering others, leading together, inclusivity and openness

One important part of transformative leadership is the emphasis on listening and emphasizing a horizontal (instead of top-down) leadership structure. In a study on leaders emerging from group projects, there was a "strong, positive relationship…between observed listening behavior and observed leadership behavior in small groups. This finding supports the contention that group members who are the strongest listeners are also most likely leading their groups" (Johnson and Bechler, 1998). This was a phenomenon also observed among the interviewees. For instance, *Pansy Tun Thein* acknowledged: "In my current position as a civil society leader, I try my best to be a role model and encourage second-line leaders to improve their leadership skills through trial and error and learning from mistakes. I believe that good followers can be good leaders, that leaders must listen to others and have empathy, and that they must encourage participatory decision-making through consultation and dialogue." *Jeannie Javelosa,* co-founder of ECHOstore and the associated ECHOsi Foundation in the Philippines, said: "Our approach is to listen, to ask

questions, to facilitate connections, to mentor and to create space. It is a great joy to us to see grass-roots indigenous women growing in confidence, courage and creativity and becoming leaders in their own right – all part of a network of sisterhood aided by big-sister-run enterprises."

In a cross-sectional study of 108 senior organizational leaders and 325 of their direct associates, emotional expressivity and communication style were strongly related to what was perceived as visionary leadership (Groves, 2006). The study showed that a leader's ability to share passions and express intention could influence change. *Manohari Doss*, co-founder of the Institute for Self Management in Tamal Nadu, India (including the Women's Development Resource Centre and the Tamil Nadu Labourers Union), added that this emotional expressivity is empowering for the group: "When people start to speak up for rights and have respect for themselves, and women take the necessary steps to solve their own problems, together and individually, this is exciting and rewarding…. Women making their own decisions, supporting other women in trouble rather than putting them down and being able to forecast and manage household budgets is my reward." Doss's own staff described her as embodying transformative

leadership in practice, as one person noted: "We feel backed-up and supported. This leads us to be more creative, courageous and effective."

Sharing, importantly, is not only between women leaders to other women but also between women and society. *Malika Virdi,* a women's rights campaigner in India, underscored this point when she spoke of the need to "break the silence" and open democratic spaces for women so that they have a public identity and are no longer just the "crowd" or the silent numbers but "can lead from the front".

STRATEGIES: Collective and community grounding, changing power dynamics, intersectionality, matching ends and means, accountability

Although it is difficult to pin down specific leadership strategies (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2003), many of the interviewees emphasized the need for community-centric leadership. Research on this for the region is sparse; but Peter Haruna, in his paper on leadership in sub-Saharan Africa, explicated the need for community-based understandings of leadership that can "take into account the contributions of families, communities and networks in forming social capital to facilitate the pursuit of common purposes" (Haruna, 2009). Even though Haruna's work was done in a different region, his notion that "endless lists of characteristics, skills and traits…are not predictors of effectiveness across all situations" holds true for many of the interviewees in this region.

As her leadership profile grew at home and abroad, *Nazma Akter*, founder and President of Sommilito Garment Sramik Federation in Bangladesh, stayed at the grass-roots and factory floor. Noting that many activists in Bangladesh come from wealthy backgrounds and are not well connected to the lives and realities of the majority of the country's population, who are poor, Akter said that staying grounded in her constituency and "encouraging and supporting other women who are just like me is very important." For *Malika Virdi*, the women's rights campaigner in India, this community-centric approach translates to a physical location – the hills of northern India: "The women of the community

Imrana Jalal

are strong and have traditionally worked in collaboration, creating supporting spaces for each other. We women find our strength in our collective identity."

Zolzaya Batkhuyag, co-founder and Director of Women for Change in Mongolia, rallies her multigenerational community together under a shared goal: "The real need is for mutual support across the generations as a reciprocal process. We have a lot to learn from each other. The challenge of transforming social and cultural norms of patriarchal society is beyond the resources of individual women. Only when we are working together in the same directions can we make a real difference. We are working to help transform energies into synergies for change."
Maria Fides Bagasao, community organizer in the Philippines and former member of the Executive Committee of Huairou Commission, highlighted the value of multi-pronged approaches to change which emerge from grass-roots movements to "change the things which matter to their lives and those of their communities."

STRUCTURE: Transformation (normative, legal, institutional), linking and alliance building

"Structure" is a similarly multifaceted category; it simultaneously refers to (i) the creation of new normative, legal and institutional structures; (ii) the transformation of structures that act as barriers to women's leadership; and (iii) the linking of allied structures.

Many of the interviewees in this report dedicated their lives to the creation of new structures; they set up organizations and started movements that filled needs in their communities. *Imrana Jalal*, in Fiji, played a key role in developing both an organizational structure to promote women's rights and a legal structure to transform family relations from a rights-based perspective. She is a co-founder of the highly influential Fiji Women's Rights Movement, which has become an important player within the wider South Pacific. At the same time, with the support of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement, Jalal drafted and helped negotiate the passage of the groundbreaking Fiji Family Law, which gives women unprecedented equality and

now provides a structure for progressive family law development across the South Pacific.

These structures, once created, often spread rapidly in influence. *Raushan Sarsembayeva*, founder and head of the Association of Business Women of Kazakhstan, has seen the organization blossom from a "one-woman show" in 1995 into an influential nationwide structure of 20 national affiliates, with more than 15,000 members and a network of non-government organizations throughout the country. Three core priorities drive the Association's work: protection of entrepreneurs' rights; improving women's leadership knowledge and skills; and increasing support for women entrepreneurs in rural areas.

"Leadership should not be viewed simply as the qualities or position maintained by an individual but rather as... a reciprocal process of social influence."

-Denmark (1977)

The linking of structures is one of the most important elements for women's transformative leadership. For instance, *Logeswary Ponniah*, Programme Coordinator of the Human Development Organisation in Sri Lanka, emphasized developing connections for a transformative shift out of marginalization for Dalit communities in her country and beyond. Such connections have worked at various levels: local to local, local to national and national to international. At the global level, they helped to leverage policy commitments within international structures to support the rights of Dalit communities in Sri Lanka. At the local level, they helped to build sustainable links between the social structures of Tamil women in the tea plantations of central Sri Lanka and those in the devastated

eastern areas of the country in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. This has created an enduring basis for mutual support and sharing of solutions. To reinforce such linkages, Ponniah developed opportunities for women of different communities and faiths to visit each other's places of worship to help build foundations of trust and respect at a personal level.

Habiba Sarabi initiated Mothers of Peace, a national women's network, in Afghanistan. The aim is to develop a counter-structure for peace that covers the whole country by 2020. The work began in three provinces with voluntary "from the heart" campaigning for sustainable peace. "We are working to change the culture of violence to a culture of peace," said Sarabi. "Culturally, people are feeling very violated. We want to change the mindset of people on the ground, where mothers have a vital role to play." Building links between women nationwide is the core element of the approach. "Our strategy is to work bottom-up, community by community, province by province," Sarabi explained.

In summary

The four elements – self, sharing, strategies and structure – provide the foundation for women's transformative leadership. Underlying each is an orientation to understanding and shifting the power dynamics in favour of those who are "most left behind". Each element adds to the understanding of transformative change: **Self** provides the flexibility, resilience and self-awareness needed to analyse difficult problems and adapt to the demands of a particular situation; **sharing** provides the ability to communicate with others, work collectively and create space for more leaders to make a positive impact on their communities; **strategies** focus on collective-based approaches that seek to transform the power dynamics; and **structure** is the creating of an enabling leadership environment that can lead to systemic change. The relevance of these elements is supported by previous literature and by the work that is being done by the transformative leader interviewees.

The pathways, discussed in depth in the following chapters, are a means of developing the defining elements of women's transformative leadership. For example, self can be expressly developed through pathway 1: growing consciousness and capabilities. Sharing is intertwined with pathway 2: accessing resources and opportunities, especially because transformative leaders ensure that resources are available for others in their communities. Structure can be developed through pathway 3: shaping and leveraging laws and policy. Strategies underpin those pathways while also linking directly to pathway 4: shifting norms and discriminatory practices. The strategies most commonly used by transformative leaders aim to address the deeper power dynamics in ways that are responsive to the needs of the context, culture and constituency.

Each pathway and element, distinct in themselves, also connect and intersect in several ways. It is important to emphasize that the pathways are the process and the elements are the result. This report uses the four elements to define women's transformative leadership and conceptualizes the four pathways as the means to create the opportunities and capacities for women to become transformative leaders.

Pathways 1
Growing consciousness and capabilities

4

> **People learn to lead because they care about something.**

Charlotte Bunch, founding director and senior scholar at the
Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey

Drawing from the domains of change that were outlined in the introduction, the four pathways chapters critically analyse the factors that help shape transformative women leaders:

- Pathway 1: growing consciousness and capabilities

- Pathway 2: accessing resources and opportunities

- Pathway 3: shaping and leveraging formal policies, laws and rules

- Pathway 4: transforming social norms and exclusionary practices.

The pathways around which the study is structured do not stand apart but are integrally intertwined and mutually reinforcing. For example, pathway 4 underpins each of the other three pathways. Pathways 1 and 2 are mutually dependent, and pathway 3 is the framework by which the other three are constrained.

The interview conversations were distilled into these pathways, which neatly map elements crucial to the women's leadership journeys. By pairing the qualitative findings of those interviews with existing quantitative data, this report offers a more comprehensive view of leadership development.

Importantly, none of the pathways can be evaluated as a causal force on their own. Leadership journeys are highly individual, and by presenting personal insights from the interviewees, this report seeks to bring out the multifaceted nature of leaders and the unique ways they build on the enabling factors in their lives and navigate the challenges.

The analysis in this chapter aligns with pathway 1 in the four domains of change framework.

This pathway highlights informal and individual elements of the leadership journey, including:

- a growth of awareness and consciousness in the leaders concerning their ability to make an impact;

- understanding the realities of leadership from gender-based perspectives;

- the influence of role models, including within the family;

- critical moments of realization in their development as leaders, such as external crises or strategic initiatives.

The influence of family

The family has the potential to be a significant leadership incubator. A review of international literature by the Overseas Development Institute led to the observation of "a strong relationship between girls' experiences and opportunities in childhood and adolescence and their leader capabilities" (O'Neil and Domingo, 2016). The women leaders with both supportive and challenging home environments in this study often cited their family as being influential in their journeys.

For instance, the women who grew up in supportive environments often cited personal traits, such as open-mindedness and idealism, as arising from their childhood. *Tri Rismaharini*, the Mayor of Surabaya, Indonesia, highlighted the support of her family as vital in her own leadership journey. "My parents are my heroes, especially my mother. They have shaped and taught me to become hard-working, persistent, caring and open-minded, with a strong spirit to learn and stay committed," she said. *Zhang Haidi*, in China, described her family

environment as "full of love and harmony" and said she gained the confidence, inner strength, optimism, idealism and compassion that both drove and defined her leadership approach, shaping her to aspire to be "a meteor, giving its light into the world, despite its transience".

Another Overseas Development Institute study found that "in many settings, women who are politically active and who take on responsibilities outside the home transgress ideas about what women should do. But so often do their parents and partner – whether this is a father who supports his daughter's education or encourages her to speak up or a husband who shares domestic responsibilities" (O'Neil and Domingo, 2016). Thus, family can be a sphere in which men are important allies in ensuring equal opportunities and growth in self-confidence.

Such familial support was integral to the leadership journey of *Helen Hakena*, who was brought up in a chiefly family in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea. From early on, Hakena had opportunities to go to clan meetings and learn about local issues and how they were resolved. As a result, she had greater confidence to speak her mind and discuss issues than others and would exercise leadership among the girls in the clan. "Those early family and clan experiences taught me about collective leadership and moulded what I am today," she acknowledged. "Together, they gave me the strength to work for peace."

Familial support may include spouses and partners and their wider families. A study on women councillors in Bangladesh noted that several of the women councillors who were interviewed also highlighted the support provided by the wider family, such as in-laws (Tadros, 2014). One third of the Bangladeshi women in the study had married into political families that provided useful political connections. Husbands often provided financial as well as moral support, although the reasons for this varied. In a third of cases, the women said that their husbands were interested in advancing their own political interests through their wife, for example, by persuading her to enter politics as a proxy (on the husband's behalf). In other cases, the election of women to office brought prestige to their in-laws within the community (Tadros, 2014). Thus, familial support could aid in women's political careers (albeit with varying motives, some of which did not relate to the advancement of women).

Family support can thus be seen to include a wide spectrum in terms of scope and motivations. In examining the factors involved behind the coming to power of women Heads of State and Government in Asia and the Pacific, scholars specializing in the region have further drawn attention to the influence of what can be termed family-based "hybrid dynasties" (Thompson, 2012). These scholars discuss the importance of considering the family in this context "as a political institution that operates alongside other institutions and sometimes in spite of them; that is, as political actors with agency and strategic intent" (Purdey, 2016).

Family can be a sphere in which men are important allies in ensuring equal opportunities and growth in self-confidence.

Jeannie Javelosa

While not generalizable to the population at large, some interviewees indicated that familial challenges were an important part of their growing up, speaking of how these experiences shaped their personal strength and their understanding of discrimination. *Habiba Sarabi's* early experience of gender-based domestic violence in Afghanistan had a significant influence on her life, exposing her at a young age to both the violence often targeted towards women as well as the importance to champion the rights of women. "[My mother] continued suffering from violence until she passed away. The violence committed against her impacted my life, too…. [But] I was very much influenced by the life of my mother, who I believe turned me into a fighter and a women's rights activist. My mother also had a great interest in my education. She said that if a daughter goes to school, she would at least become literate. She wasn't able to read herself, so asked me to read her the letters that she occasionally received from her brothers."

Imrana Jalal cited the strict upbringing in her strongly religious family in Fiji as an important factor in building resilience on her leadership journey. Her Muslim father became increasingly devout, "constantly curbing our behaviour and trying to raise us more traditionally". Nevertheless, he took seriously his responsibility to ensure that his daughters were educated. "I think that once you [give us] an education, to try and keep us in a straitjacket according to the vision of a nice South Asian girl is impossible. If you grew up a girl in an Indo-Fijian family in the 1960s, then you have an instinctive understanding of what discrimination means."

Role models and the role model effect

There is a dual effect of role models in terms of transformative women's leadership: (i) role models are often powerful influencers on women's leadership journeys, and (ii) they often inspire transformative leaders to become role models themselves later in life. This second point is often called "the role model effect". The Overseas Development Institute's global study on women's leadership highlights the importance of women role models "for both women and men, girls and boys [to normalize] the idea and practice of women holding power" (O'Neil, Plank and

Domingo, 2015). A review by Alexander and Jalalzai (2014) found that "a women's presence in parliaments is shown to positively influence women's political engagement, political interest and participation and that findings hold across samples of culturally and developmentally diverse nations…." *Pansy Tun Thein*, in Myanmar, emphasized the importance of governments and civil society actors in society seizing on the role model effect. Her own organization, the Gender Equality Network, employs the role model effect in its advocacy work by including grass-roots organizers in government meetings so they can then learn from the leaders in the network.

An Indian study in 2012 concluded that "perhaps most importantly … the role model effect reaches beyond the realm of aspiration into the concrete, with real educational and time-use impacts" (Beaman and others, 2012). This study involved thousands of Indian adolescents and their parents in West Bengal who were studied after quotas in 1993 had established gender balance among village leadership. The percentage of elected women leaders rose from less than 5 per cent to more than 40 per cent by 2000. In most Indian states, a further requirement mandates that a third of village councils, chosen via random selection, are to have a woman chief counsellor (*pradhan*) candidate. The study took advantage of the randomized nature of this approach to compare the aspirations of parents for their daughters and sons aged 11–15, as well as the aspirations of adolescents across villages that had both female and male leaders. For parents in villages with a woman leader for two election cycles, the "aspiration gap" for girls and boys closed by 25 per cent, compared with those villages that had never had a women leader. For adolescents, the gap narrowed by 32 per cent. Expectation levels for boys, however, didn't fall when there was an elected women leader, indicating that the reduction in the gap was due to higher aspirations on the part of the girls.

The study also showed that the presence of women leaders altered the education attainment and daily time use. While these variables did not change for the boys in the study, improved outcomes in both areas were observed for the girls. By the second cycle of women leadership, the gender gap in education outcomes was completely erased (and even reversed in some cases), and girls spent less time on household activities (with a decline

of 18 minutes per day on average, compared with villages without female leadership positions being reserved).

Research has shown that "women may be especially boosted by same-gender models because such models set an inspirational example of the achievements to which they can aspire" (Lockwood, 2006). This finding is highlighted by the experience of *Imrana Jalal*, in Fiji, who said that her teachers, when she was studying law in New Zealand, "provided amazing role models to a young, naïve and highly impressionable Pacific islander. They ensured that I felt that there was really nothing that I could not do." For *Zhang Haidi*, in China, who is paralyzed from the chest down, anecdotes of role models were enough to inspire her. Growing up, Zhang's mother spoke of Lin Qiaozhi, a famous female obstetrician and gynaecologist in China. This example influenced Zhang's determination to teach herself acupuncture and medical care at the age of 15 to help people in need in rural areas. This also influenced her own development as a role model for persons with disabilities. All the women leaders interviewed in this study have become role models in their own spheres.

Role models can have a substantive impact on the number of women who engage in leadership roles.

Role models can have a substantive impact on the number of women who engage in leadership roles. For instance, the 2019 review submitted to ESCAP by the Government of Fiji for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action stated: "Women's representation in parliament is now at 20 per cent, following the 2018 general elections, reflecting the highest percentage of women in parliament since Fiji gained independence in 1970 and an increase from 16 per cent in the September 2014 general elections and 11 per cent in the 2006 general elections…. The boost in numbers has been

attributed to the leadership of Fiji's first-ever female Speaker of the House, the late Honourable Jiko Luveni, who was sworn in as Speaker in 2014." Fiji's first-ever mock Women's Parliament that was conducted in August 2016 reinforced the role model effect (Government of Fiji, 2019a). Women in power can both serve as an example and inspiration for women entering the field. Transformative leadership approaches with their orientation towards creating opportunities for others to also emerge as leaders magnify the impact.

Moments of realization: Building on prior experience

Many interviewees indicated that they didn't realize their leadership potential, experience and skills until reaching some critical crossroad or impetus in their lives. Because social norms (discussed in greater depth in pathway 4) do not often encourage women to imagine themselves as leaders, they highlighted critical moments of realization when they realized both a need in their communities and their capability to meet that need. These moments of realization were often later in their career or journey, once they had accrued experience and skills from their workplace, associational involvement, family environment or other aspects of their life.

For some of the women interviewed, this moment of realization stemmed from an everyday instance or interaction. In *Maria Fides Bagasao's* case, a moment that reinforced her commitment to serve women at the grass-roots level occurred while she stood in a queue for water in a community in the Philippines. "Poor women were lining up for water, with their husbands at home waiting to have their bath. A gangster was robbing them in the line. So the women were caught between threats of violence both in the line and at home. Also, I learned about the lives of long-time grass-roots women leaders who, despite marginalization as girls in the family and abuse and violence in various periods in their lives, overcame these and led organizations to fight for their homes [and] communities. This brought home to me the power dynamics and daily experience of patriarchy in the lives of grass-roots women and influenced my role as a community and regional organizer."

Logeswary Ponniah

Jeannie Javelosa recalled a conversation with friends that sparked her to co-found the pioneering Philippines retail store and social enterprise ECHOstore and the ECHOsi Foundation. "Never in my wildest dreams did I, an artist, imagine myself running a retail business, being an advocate for women or engineering the building of an advocacy marketing platform to support women enterprises." With hindsight, she saw that "the journey was really about many women who bought into the vision. Each was so committed in their own respective roles, each trying to bring the partnerships together and see how it could move forward. It has been life changing and inspiring to witness how shared commitment and drive can transform a vision and concept into action and reality."

For other women, the leadership impetus was more of a crisis than a daily interaction. When Cyclone Nargis devastated Myanmar in 2008, *Pansy Tun Thein* was propelled into the centre of the response. "Women were badly affected by the cyclone, especially pregnant women. There were many stories of rape and sexual violence," said Thein. "At the time, I was Assistant Director of

the United Nations Population Fund in Myanmar. A decade of working in this role had empowered me and equipped me with leadership skills, not only in leading the organization but also in taking leadership in advocating for issues of importance, such as reproductive rights of women, women empowerment and gender equality." Building on her Cyclone Nargis experience, Thein went on to an instrumental role in the establishment of Myanmar's Gender Equality Network as a diverse national mechanism advocating for gender equality in all spheres of society.

Opportunities for women and girls develop a sense of leadership empowerment early in life.

Similarly, *Helen Hakena* was devastated by the outbreak in 1998 of civil war in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, throwing her life as a primary school teacher into turmoil. When she was seven months pregnant and suffering from malaria, a group of guerrilla fighters came to her home, threatening her and her children and demanding to see her husband. "I was petrified and soon after gave birth to my fourth son prematurely, on a table in the local bank building with no medical help." Another woman died in child birth alongside her. Her house and village were burned to the ground, and the province was plunged into crisis, with some 20,000 people losing their life and thousands displaced. These events changed the course of her life and sparked the co-founding of the Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency. The NGO grew to become an important vehicle for helping women eventually bring about peace and rebuild their communities.

Conflict provided an impetus for *Habiba Sarabi*, whose leadership journey had its roots in the period of Taliban rule in Afghanistan. She was teaching at a nursing college when the Taliban occupied the college compound. With her three children, Sarabi fled to Peshawar, Pakistan in 1996. "I wanted to make sure that my daughter in the fifth grade could

continue her education." A fervent advocate for girls' education, she started discreetly teaching in refugee camps before returning secretly to Afghanistan to continue teaching under cover. She then set up an organization for mothers and became engaged with political issues. Upon her later open return to Afghanistan in 2001, after the fall of the Taliban, Sarabi's leadership trajectory took her to a ministerial role, followed by a groundbreaking position as Afghanistan's first female governor and a leading role currently in national political life.

While this is not to say that a crisis is required to find a leadership journey, it is important to realize the way that women do not always initially see themselves as leaders before some sort of catalysing experience. This insight points to the need to ensure opportunities for women and girls to develop a sense of leadership empowerment early in life, such that they can imagine themselves as leaders – with or without an external catalyst.

In summary

Growing consciousness and capabilities stem from personal and informal structures that often come from more intimate relations and events. Family, role models and moments of realization can be factors that promote internal reflection, growth and an understanding of purpose.

Supportive families can foster such traits as open-mindedness and idealism, which incubate leadership potential. Some of the interviewees also discussed how a challenging home situation had increased their resilience. Role models, on the other hand, served as mentors and examples that influenced the interviewees' later leadership approaches. Interviewees also demonstrated the role model effect in their life because they served as role models for other young women once rising to a level of prominence. Many women cited their leadership journey as sparked by a moment of realization that mobilized the skills they acquired from other life experiences.

This pathway is intimately connected to the topic of the next chapter on accessing resources and opportunities. Many family circumstances and personal connections often factor into one's ability to tap into various resource pools that encourage women's leadership. It is also important to think about the relative privileges that some women have in these "personal-axis" pathways that can help propel them to more easily grow consciousness and access resources.

Pathways 2
Accessing resources and opportunities

> Resources include not only material resources in the more conventional economic sense, but also the various human and social resources which serve to enhance the ability to exercise choice.

Naila Kabeer, in her 1999 book, *Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment*

The findings in this chapter align with pathway 2 of the domains of change. This pathway highlights formal and individual elements of the leadership journey in each case. Four factors that influenced the leadership journey of the women interviewed for the study are highlighted in this context:

- the role of educational opportunities as a doorway to knowledge, expertise, skills and connections;

- associational life as a space for leadership development, mutual support and network building;

- the relationships between women's economic empowerment and leadership, including in the context of women in business leadership, women's ownership and control of economic assets and women's entrepreneurship; and

- international partnerships that are culturally responsive and locally centred.

Education – A doorway to knowledge, expertise, skills and connections

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2018), the number of girls and women who have gained access to education in the Asia-Pacific region has increased since the turn of the century: "During that time, the number of female out-of-school children, adolescents and youth of primary and secondary school age in the region dropped by 67 million. In 2016, 453 million girls and women were studying from pre-primary to tertiary education in Asia-Pacific." The

UNESCO e-Atlas (2019) depicted the challenges that persist in the region: When disaggregating the data, patterns indicate that girls are increasingly having an easier time accessing primary and secondary education, but young women are still facing challenges attaining tertiary and research-level education. There is also disparity in the fields that women are studying. As illustrated in figure 2 and according to the UNESCO e-Atlas (2019), men are still occupying more spaces in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields; women are still more likely to graduate in fields that have been seen as traditionally "feminine", like education or welfare. Thus, there is still a glass ceiling when it comes to education. This affects the potential emergence and development of women leaders in different fields, despite several positive social benefits of women's greater educational access, including wage increases and reductions in infant mortality and malnutrition (Tembon and Fort, 2008).

Qualitative research by Sperandio (2010) found that an important part of the "hidden curriculum" of formal education can be the "provision of motivation and opportunities to learn to be a leader, including in ways that support greater opportunities for girls. Being given responsibilities in the classroom and sports teams can be an important contributor in this respect." *Helen Hakena*, in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, for example, highlighted the vital leadership experience she gained while at secondary school and teachers training college, including on the sports field. The Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency that she co-founded during the Bougainville civil war prioritizes support for the development of school curriculum in ways that promote gender equality, human rights and opportunities for girls.

Figure 2   Women's and men's tertiary fields of study

WOMEN are more likely to graduate
in the tertiary fields of..

Education   Humanities and the Arts

Business and Law

Social Sciences   Health and Welfare

MEN are more likely to graduate
in the tertiary fields of..

Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction

Information and Communication Technology

Agriculture
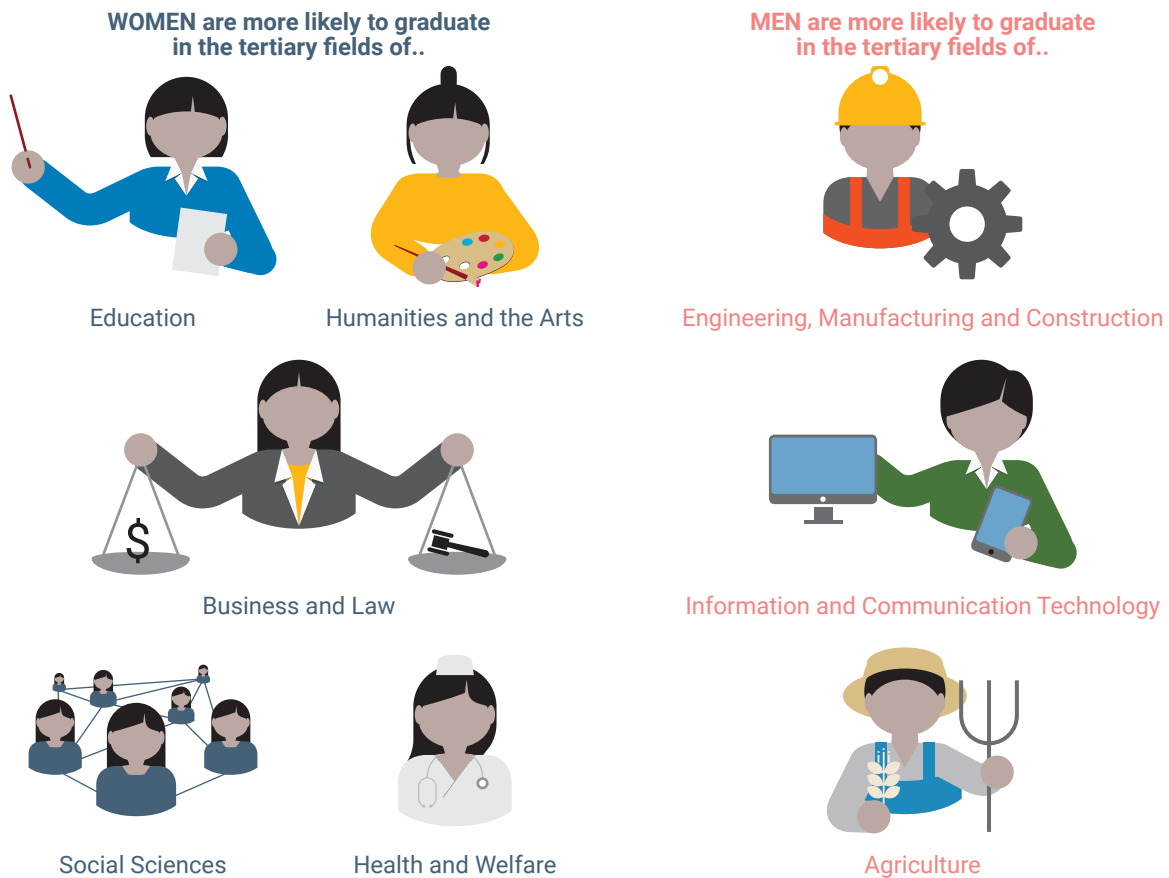
Source: UNESCO, 2019.

A leadership development programme in Bangladesh and India, Women Win, is part of the Leadership for Change programme of the United Kingdom's Department for International Development. Women Win focuses on developing leadership through engagement in sports. An evaluation of the programme concluded that "with increasing international attention being placed on women's leadership, especially with the new Sustainable Development Goals, it is essential to understand that women cannot, and will not, become leaders overnight. We need to start building leadership in girls, especially during their adolescence, when young people often start looking for ways to engage in the public sphere." (Women Win, 2015)

For *Byatshandaa Jargal*, responsibilities external to her education reinforced her determination to be the student that she became. Born into a nomadic herder family in Mongolia's remote

north, her mother died when she was at secondary boarding school. Despite having the responsibility to bring up five younger brothers and sisters, as well as her own four children later, she managed to obtain her master's degree in agronomy and eventually establish the influential Mongolian Women Farmers Association. Jargal's agronomy training has been integral to her influence and impact, strengthening her confidence and providing essential knowledge directly relevant to the urgent needs of nomadic herders and policy processes within the government.

Education does not have to be formal to make a difference. A study by McGivney (1999) highlighted the importance of informal learning that takes place in "dedicated learning environments and noneducational settings". In the study report, McGivney wrote that "informal learning often started people on a continuing learning path by helping them become confident and successful

learners." Unable to attend school due to her disability, *Zhang Haidi*, in China, taught herself to the university level and became fluent in several foreign languages, including English, Japanese and German. She published several novels and essays and became a translator and nationally recognized author. *Logeswary Ponniah*, in Sri Lanka, highlighted the influence on her leadership development of a training programme in Geneva on advocacy and campaigning, particularly with respect to understanding the power of international networking. Ponniah's informal educational experience included a community-based health training at the Asia Health Institute in Japan, which she says enhanced her skills and confidence along with her knowledge in the field.

Associational life and community

"Associational life" is often defined by participation in any social or community group; examples include faith-based groups or advocacy partnerships. This was the most widely cited political learning pathway in the Tadros (2014) multi-country study. Her analysis emphasized the opportunities provided by informal engagement in associational life for emerging women leaders to build relevant skills, demonstrate responsiveness to community demands, become involved in the mobilization of resources and people, gain the support of important allies and build a constituency. This further enhances their bargaining power through political parties, for example, because they bring their own constituencies and networks and are not reliant on the party to initiate them into politics. Reflecting on the experience of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement and civil society organizations across the Pacific, *Imrana Jalal* commented that "many women in the region gain their skills and confidence in leadership from their experience in voluntary organizations of all kinds."

Zolzaya Batkhuyag, in Mongolia, similarly observed that many emerging women leaders in her country start their leadership journey in youth associations and student unions. The fact that such associations are generally male dominated leads many young women to link up with other women and join women's organizations for mutual support.

The literature review carried out by the Overseas Development Institute also concluded that informal institutions and spaces are critical for women to develop as effective leaders (O'Neil, Plank and Domingo, 2015). The review led to the observation that evidence "strongly suggests the importance of informal spaces and norms both to the development of women's political skills and to their effective exercise of these once in leadership positions. Early exposure to political ideas, debate and connections within the family or university are often the foundations of women's 'political entrepreneurship' – as is the opportunity to practise these new skills and build new social capital afforded by membership in, or leadership of, voluntary associations."

Many of the transformative women leaders interviewed for this report were the ones who created such spaces for other women. The associational life spaces they created have become important sources of networking, mutual support, ongoing learning and motivation for other women (box 1). For the interviewees whose focus was on existing institutional settings, major leadership objectives included internal reform to strengthen opportunities for participation by

Malika Virdi

🔴⚪ Box 1   **Organizations created and led by women interviewed for this study**

Habiba Sarabi, Afghanistan: Initiator of Mothers of Peace, a national women's network in three provinces to promote voluntary "from the heart" campaigning for sustainable peace, with the aim of covering the whole country by 2020.

Nazma Akter, Bangladesh: Founder and President of Sommilito Garment Sramik Federation, a union with more than 70,000 garment workers as members, mainly women. She also set up and remains General Secretary and Executive Director of AWAJ Foundation, a grass-roots NGO.

Imrana Jalal, Fiji: Co-founder and current board member of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement. She is also co-founder of the Pacific Regional Rights Resource Team and a former human rights adviser with the organization.

Manohari Doss, India: Co-founder of the Institute for Self Management, with her late husband, Edward Doss. The Institute operates two programmes – the Women Development Resource Centre and the Tamil Nadu Labourers Union.

Raushan Sarsembayeva, Kazakhstan: Founder and President of the Association of Business Women of Kazakhstan, from which has grown the School of Women Entrepreneurship, the Clubs of Women Politicians to expand representational opportunities for women and the School of Women's Leadership.

Byatshandaa Jargal, Mongolia: Founder and President of the Mongolian Women Farmers Association.

Zolzaya Batkhuyag, Mongolia: Co-founder of Young Women for Change, which is now known as Women for Change. She is also founder of the Professional Women's Leadership Program and founder of the Global Youth Anti-Corruption Network.

Pansy Tun Thein, Myanmar: Founding member and former co-chair of Gender Equality Network.

Helen Hakena, Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea: Co-founder and Executive Director of the Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency.

Jeannie Javelosa, Philippines: Co-Founder of ECHOstore Sustainable Lifestyle and ECHOsi Foundation. She is also the prime mover behind the GREAT Women in ASEAN entrepreneurship development initiative.

Adimaimalaga Tafuna'i, Samoa**:** Co-founder and leader of Samoa's Women in Business Development.

Somsook Boonyabancha, Thailand**:** Co-founder and former director of the Community Organizations Development Institute and co-founder of the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights.

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women and other marginalized groups; developing synergies with other actors (in government, civil society and business); and improving the impact in transforming the lives and prospects of people who were marginalized.

Autonomous women's organizations, another important aspect of associational life, often provide an incubator for transformative women leaders to develop and learn about collective leadership strategies. While women's participation in formal organizations and institutions increases women's policy influence (O'Neil, Plank and Domingo, 2015), women's autonomous organizations are more likely to establish transformational policy agendas (Cornwall and Goetz, 2005).

A widely cited example of this dynamic in practice is provided in a major study by Htun and Weldon (2012) of social movements and violence against women policies in 70 countries over four decades. They found that feminist mobilization in civil society, rather than the inclusion of women in government per se, was the deciding factor in policy development on violence against women. Htun and Weldon's paper also discussed how autonomous women's movements have been responsible for institutionalizing feminist ideas

in international norms by catalysing actions of governments and women legislators. In other words, autonomous women's organizations also help to change the informal social norm structures that typically constrain women on their leadership journeys. Commenting on the Htun and Weldon findings, Anne-Marie Goetz, then chief adviser for peace and security for UN Women, remarked that the study "strengthens the argument for building the capacity of women's organizations and ensuring that they have an operating environment that enables them to advance their work" (cited in Wu, 2013).

Other research, including by Oxfam (Green, 2015) and Tadros (ed. 2014), as well as the interviews for this study, underscore that women's leadership in informal and community settings is important for the development of political and leadership skills. This is particularly so in countries where there are restrictions on women's mobility and participation in public life (Cornwall and Goetz, 2005).

Women's networks

Networks of women leaders are an important component of the associational life. The reviewed literature[10] indicates that such networks foster solidarity and collective purpose among women, strengthen social capital and create safe environments to help women confront adverse norms and conditions (O'Neil, Plank and Domingo, 2015). *Pansy Tun Thein* highlighted the vital role of broad networks as a source of inspiration, feedback and learning during the formative period of the Gender Equality Network (GEN) in the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar. "We shared a common vision and commitment, learned together and supported each other," she said.

Women's networks often provide collective leadership on specific issues, including at the regional and global levels. At the forefront of such influence have been transnational feminist networks, defined by Moghadam (2000) as specific "movements and organizations based on a sense of collective identity, shared meanings and common goals" across national borders. The transnational feminist networks that emerged and proved influential in the lead up to the Fourth

World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 tapped into each other in an "almost seamless web, with many points of intersection". They provided "conduits not only of information about differing policy models and gender mainstreaming initiatives at the local and national levels but also – and crucially – of knowledge concerning alternative political strategies and how they may be applied to further promote gender policy change" (True, 2003). *Jeannie Javelosa*, in the Philippines, referred to the excitement of being part of one such network that is promoting women's entrepreneurship and is "gathering its own momentum and reaching far beyond its small beginnings in one country into ASEAN – the continuous learning and knowing that we are making a difference and changing the game for women entrepreneurs."

Nazma Akter, in Bangladesh, emphasized the crucial role of international trade unions and women's networks, such as the Asia-Pacific Forum for Women, Law and Development, based in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The international links bring solidarity and access to knowledge, experience and international leverage, said Akter. For *Maria Fides Bagasao* in the Philippines, international networks can play an important role in supporting local communities to learn about and apply the SDGs: "The SDGs are not well known to community leaders and groups and can be too big to grasp at that level. The strategy of the Huairou Commission[11] is to help them link to everyday issues and local politics – with people engaging not as beneficiaries but as rights holders." The Huairou Commission has localized SDG pilot projects in 16 countries, engaging with grass-roots women's leaders and groups, broader community processes, researchers and local government authorities.

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10 For example: Choeun, Sok and Byrne, 2008; True, 2003; Ahern, Nuti and Masterson, 2000.

11 The Huairou Commission was established following the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. Its name is taken from the venue of the NGO forum organized in parallel with the Beijing Conference. The Commission is active in Asia and the Pacific and has four priority areas of work: (i) strengthening grass-roots women's organizing and leadership; (ii) promoting development through awareness and locally led initiatives; (iii) building constituencies and networks; and (iv) influencing and changing public policy processes.

Culturally responsive international partnerships

With the increasing ease of international communications collaboration, the interviewees for this study acknowledged the contribution of international partnerships to their leadership development. The most successful of these, however, are ones that are culturally sensitive, aware of inherent power dynamics and are grounded in local contexts. Literature on feminist and postmodernist development discussed the importance of this perspective: "The perspective of poor and oppressed women provides a unique and powerful vantage point from which we can examine the effects of development programmes and strategies. The vantage point of poor women thus enables us not only to evaluate the extent to which development strategies benefit or harm the poorest and most oppressed sections of the people, but also to judge their impact on a range of sectors and activities crucial to socioeconomic development and human welfare." (Hirshman, 1999)

These partnerships need to be approached with care. McLeod's study report (2015) on

Manohari Doss

women's leadership development in the Pacific highlighted the potential negative consequences that inappropriate donor support can have for women in their own communities: "Donors wishing to support women's empowerment, often through travel to training and networking events, face challenges in minimizing the potential harm that may arise from such support. When initiatives to empower individual women move at a faster pace than institutional and cultural change, enthusiastic women may return to their workplaces or communities to face increased discrimination and, sometimes, physical violence. This suggests a need to listen to local women's views about how empowerment can be achieved – views that often differ from those of donors."

The Overseas Development Institute specified strategies in this context for successful engagement by international agencies in promoting women's leadership (O'Neil and Domingo, 2016). First among them is the importance of investing in locally based organizations that are best placed to change gender relations in their own environment rather than those that are set up to fit with donor or other external requirements. Support for feminist organizations, where they exist, is critical in this context, according to evidence that indicates they are the drivers of gender equality advocacy and reform.

An International Network of Women Funders report similarly highlighted how women's funds provide crucial support for emerging, innovative and self-led groups that address marginalized and underfunded issues and populations (Wakefield, 2017); raise consciousness of women's rights violations; and influence local philanthropy – all factors crucial to promoting women's leadership. Such groups are close to the wider social movements they support and, as a result, their grant making can be more relevant to local needs and opportunities (Dobson and Scherer, 2016). Transformative leadership practices can also be undermined by donors' funding that is not offered with "care and respect".

These messages were reinforced by *Helen Hakena*, in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea. While highlighting the important support provided over many years by international partners, she noted a growing trend for international NGOs to act as "middlemen", directly managing international funds rather than

resourcing local organizations to do the work: "They now more often set up their own structures and programmes and overlook the work already underway by local NGOs, including in areas like leadership training. They can afford to pay high salaries by local standards and attract staff away from local organizations. We belong here, it is our country – and we look to our international partners to work alongside us in our context, not over us, and to help strengthen local capacity and leadership development initiatives."

Economic empowerment

Many of the interviewees provided observations of the importance of economic empowerment and financial inclusion. *Pansy Tun Thein*, in Myanmar, emphasized that "economic empowerment helps women gain confidence, recognition and power within the household and community at large. With additional leadership skills training, these empowered women can participate in politics at both the local and national levels." Illustrating the impact of such an approach, Thein highlighted the example of a women's group in Kayin State that grew out of a leadership development workshop and initiated a tea plantation livelihoods programme. "They are now so successful that they are exporting their products. This is economic empowerment. Some of these women are now

being groomed to take up political positions by running for local-level elections."

One important economic empowerment indicator is women's business leadership. This falls in line with SDG indicator 5.5.2, which highlights the business leadership aspects (proportion of women in managerial positions). Although the quality of available data in Asia and the Pacific is assessed as only "moderate" by the Asian Development Bank and UN Women (2018), data that are available indicate that the level of women in senior management roles in business across the region is generally low. However, women are accessing leadership roles more quickly in innovative and collective-based structures, such as social enterprises and cooperatives. Research from five countries in the region by ESCAP and the British Council (2017) revealed how social enterprises, a major employer for women, are emerging as a sector in which women are accessing leadership at higher rates than in the for-profit sector.

This is the case in countries with both low and high female representation in the labour force and business management (British Council, 2017). Open membership and the democratic principles of cooperatives have created a more accessible institutional structure for women in terms of membership and leadership, even in countries where women's leadership has been

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Box 2   Growing momentum to increase the number of women in business leadership in the Asia-Pacific region

The governments of Australia, Hong Kong (China), India, Malaysia, Singapore and Pakistan have adopted measures to promote women in management through gender diversity requirements and reporting on corporate governance codes, codes of conduct, voluntary targets and cooperative initiatives. India and Malaysia both passed legislative quotas on the representation of women in decision-making positions in the private sector. Along with its legislative quota, Malaysia introduced training provisions and campaigns for increased women representation on company boards. Measures were also taken to increase diversity on their boards by stock exchanges, including by the Australian Securities Exchange, the Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing, and the Capital Markets Board in Turkey (ILO, 2015).

Such requirement initiatives are complemented by voluntary initiatives that address barriers to women in business. In Australia, the Women on Boards grew from an informal network in 2001 to a registered company with more than 16,000 members and has helped nearly 1,000 women gain seats on corporate boards (ILO, 2015). The 25 Percent Group in New Zealand and the BoardAgender in Singapore, an offshoot of the Singapore Council of Women's Organisations, are forums for senior female managers to facilitate women's career advancement (ILO, 2015). Four chapters of the 30% Club have been set up in the region (in Australia, Hong Kong (China), Malaysia and Turkey); the 30% Club, launched in the United Kingdom in 2010, campaigns to increase the representation of women on the boards of stock exchange-listed companies (30% Club, 2019).

traditionally low in the region, such as India, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Japan (COPAC, 2015). In the insurance industry, the cooperative structures have proven much friendlier to women leaders: There are nine female chief executive officers (CEOs) for every 100 CEOs in mutual and cooperative insurance companies, while there is only one female CEO for every 100 CEOs in traditional insurance business environments.

Another critical economic empowerment indicator is women's access to ownership and control of resources. As UN Women (2018) highlighted, greater gender equality creates more equitable economic growth and assists with development outcomes, such as poverty reduction, food security and the health and well-being of households, communities and countries. Equal access to and control over economic resources also provide women with greater bargaining power within their household and the capacity for economic independence (UN Women, 2018). This economic independence is particularly salient to *Malika Virdi*, in India, who observed that "economic empowerment has meant that women can reclaim their power both within the family and in society at large. Women's labour and caregiving in the home and family is unpaid and therefore not respected or accorded any status. Bringing an income into the family has given women greater say and bargaining power in what happens in the family."

Women's rights and access to land is particularly essential. Current data show that women's overall global share of rural land ownership stands at only 12.8 per cent, reflecting deeply rooted gender disparities (FAO, 2015). When women do own land, their plots are generally smaller and of lower quality than men's and their rights to the land are less secure (FAO, 2015). Study interviewees *Maria Fides Bagasao* in the Philippines, *Imrana Jalal* in Fiji and *Helen Hakena,* in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, emphasizes the fundamental importance of land ownership when it comes to opportunities for women to exercise leadership because it is linked to accessing economic resources and community status. As Jalal said, "If you look across the region, there tends to be more women in national leadership roles in countries where women have higher levels of land ownership or access to decision-making over land use, such as in Samoa or the Autonomous Region of Bougainville

in Papua New Guinea. But this still tends to be restricted to women from chiefly families. There is a need to open up opportunities for all women." She advocates for greater legislative attention to ensuring equal rights for women's resource ownership and sees land and other assets as critical to social status in the community and access to electoral processes.

The final economic indicator here that aids women's leadership journeys is micro and small enterprises. Across the 10 member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), for example, an estimated 61.3 million women entrepreneurs own and operate businesses, overwhelmingly micro in scale, at the local level and within the informal economy (ESCAP, 2018a). Noting that a major constraint for women in political leadership is access to resources, Hakena pointed out that men can be more active in electoral politics because of their greater opportunities to obtain funds. Women find it difficult to get loans from banks, especially if they are from non-chiefly families. Small income-generation projects for women helps give them some greater independence and access to resources. "Women ensure that their family is fed and clothed and look after each other," said Hakena. "Their role benefits the whole clan.
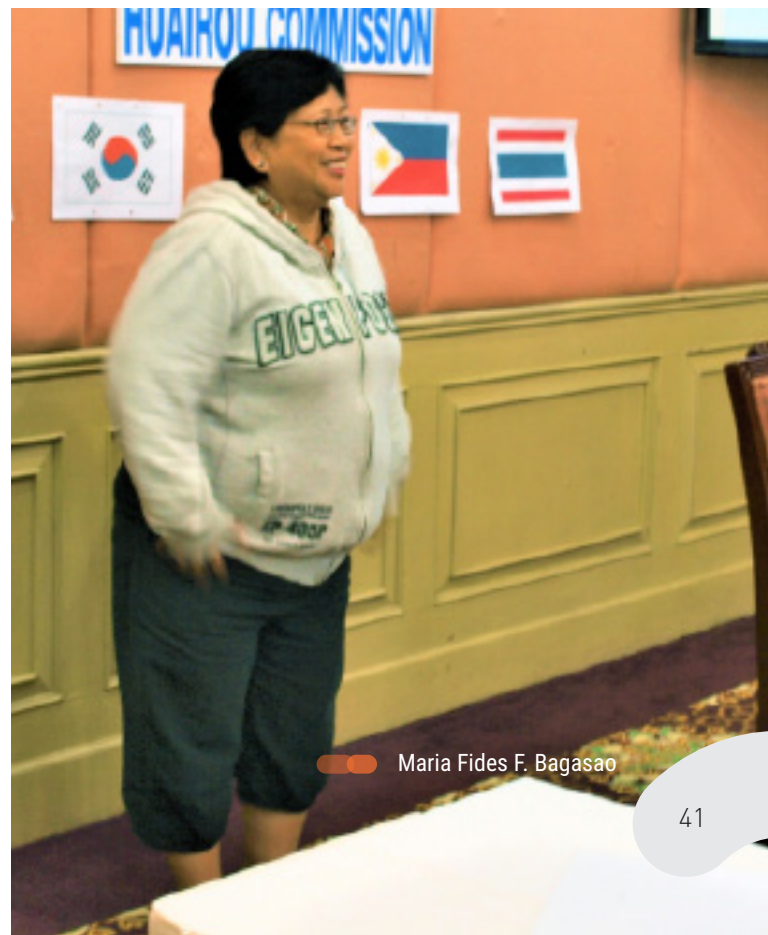
Maria Fides F. Bagasao

Box 3   From micro-entrepreneurship to local leadership

Nepal: Community-based entrepreneurship underpins election of women to local councils

163 micro-entrepreneurs supported by the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Micro-Enterprise Development Programme (MEDEP) successfully contested the first phase of local elections in 2017. Some 74 per cent of those elected were women, and 37 per cent were from the Dalit community.

Then 38 of the newly elected community representatives, mainly women, exchanged their reflections on the experience in a meeting facilitated by UNDP in June 2017. "One of the biggest hurdles for female candidates in Nepal is the difficulty of accessing financial resources," commented one participant. "But MEDEP's backing and the sense it gave us of our own potential was the push we needed to put ourselves out there."

Others highlighted the need to strike a gender balance in local decision-making processes, offering examples of the various challenges they had faced in terms of resource management, family and institutional support and generally discouraging attitudes towards female leadership. "The political system in its entirety is still very much male-dominated," said Khar Maya Bitalu, Deputy Chairperson of the Malika Rural Municipality. "It's difficult for women to forge ahead when doubts are raised about their capabilities at every step."

Despite the obstacles, the elected representatives said they were confident they could implement their respective road maps to uplift their community. All of them reiterated their commitment to engage women in income-generating activities via micro-enterprises – a strategy whose effectiveness they are very familiar with – and hopefully motivate others to aspire to more meaningful roles in local governance.

Kesha Pariyar, one of the elected representatives and former National Chairperson of the National Micro-Entrepreneurs' Federation Nepal, commented: "Women have a big role to play in developing the micro-enterprise sector in the country. As a local-level representative, I will dedicate my time in office to empower every woman in my municipality."

Source: Story provided by UNDP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. For the approximately two decades that it has been active, MEDEP has supported the development of more than 115,000 micro-entrepreneurs, a significant proportion of whom are women and from marginalized and excluded groups.

Cambodia: Integrated economic empowerment and leadership programme sees rise in women's electoral candidacy

The links between economic empowerment and leadership are further demonstrated by the work of the Cambodian NGO Banteay Srei, which supports women leaders in rural communities. Banteay Srei has the community select five to seven volunteer facilitators to coordinate development activities, like income-generation schemes and social support for gender-based violence. The community facilitators receive training from Banteay Srei to build skills necessary to lead rural development.

As part of their long-term leadership strategy, Banteay Srei works with individual women over several years, initially encouraging them to take part in local village affairs voluntarily before later encouraging them into higher positions, such as village chief. If a participant struggles to read and/or write, the organization provides tutoring and educational opportunities. It also educates women's husbands on how a gender balance at home leads to better relationships and improved economic outcomes for their family. This helps to create more opportunity and space for women to participate in village affairs.

Such an initiative impacted local elections in Cambodia in 2017, in which 1,940 women secured a seat as commune chief, deputy chief or commune councillor. But because this figure was about a hundred fewer than in the 2012 elections, in which 2,038 women were elected, it prompted calls (i) for the Government to include gender-equality provisions in election laws and (ii) for political parties to adopt policies that prescribe the number of female candidates.

Source: News Deeply, "Women prepare to take the lead in Cambodia's local elections". Available at www.newsdeeply.com/womenandgirls/… /women-prepare-to-take-the-lead-in-cambodia's local elections (accessed July 2019; Banteay Srei, "Women's empowerment and leadership building: Banteay Srei". Available at banteaysrei.info/programmes/womens-empowerment-and-leadership-building/ (accessed July 2019).

Direct access to resources through economic empowerment activities is very important, including to make sure that children can afford to go on the bus to get to health services and that women have the opportunity to participate in community activities and electoral politics."

Additionally, two women leaders with the Huairou Commission highlighted that women micro-entrepreneurs from their programmes often emerge as informal community leaders. Based on their global experience, including in Asia, they believe that when women micro-entrepreneurs earn their own income, they influence their families and communities (Bagasao and Sofjan, 2017). The two country snapshots in box 3 illustrate the links between the economic empowerment of women and leadership development.

In summary

Accessing resources and opportunities by way of education, associational life, women's networks, international partnerships and economic empowerment is crucial for building communities of like-minded peers, turning ideas and goals into a concrete reality and opening access to leadership skills, experiences and opportunities.

Education, formal and informal, is an essential factor in women's leadership journeys, both for gaining hard skills and for soft skills and social development; many of the women interviewed found their education extended beyond the lessons of the classroom. Associational life often serves as a leadership incubator that allows women to find their footing and purpose in community movements. These connections often then extend to their development as leaders within women's networks and international partnerships, providing links to spread the impact of their work. Economic empowerment provides access to resources and skills as well as community links and profile. These can be invaluable contributors to the leadership journeys of grass-roots women in particular.

This pathway, at the intersection of the personal and the formal, provides the necessary tools to grow collectively and to create opportunities for others, both locally and internationally. It connects to the next pathway on shaping formal policy, laws and rules because many women in formal leadership roles often draw upon their personal resources, as mentioned in this section. Many women in parliamentary roles, for instance, cite the importance of women's networks in providing them opportunities to make changes at the systemic level.

Pathways 3
Shaping and leveraging formal policies, laws, and rules

6

> Laws reflect society's expectations for gender roles. By guaranteeing equal opportunities and protections and by removing legal barriers, governments signal their commitment to achieve and enforce gender equality.

Leave No One Behind: A Call to Action for Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment, **Report of the United Nations Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment, 2016**

The findings in this chapter align with pathway 3 in the domains of change. This pathway highlights the formal or systemic element that enables or constrains the factors for women's transformative leadership, specifically through formal policies, laws and rules. The main points include:

- the potential and limitations of temporary special measures to open up opportunities for women's representation in formal political institutions;

- the importance of protecting and expanding "civic space" for civil society organizations to flourish, which provides a vital incubator for leadership development;

- the potential for and limitations of political parties to be agents of change; and

- the role of women leaders in working to change policies, laws and rules that restrict leadership space and opportunities.

Temporary special measures

Temporary special measures, such as gender quotas, have a mixed overall impact on women's participation but are necessary as a first step to achieving parity. While quotas introduce more women to government, many women do not have the necessary support or resources once they are elected to office in highly gendered environments. Thus, quotas are not a quick fix and other policies are needed to ensure sustained support for women after entering office.

At the positive end of the spectrum, countries like Afghanistan, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, the Kyrgyz Republic, Nepal, Papua New Guinea (Autonomous Region of Bougainville),

Timor-Leste and Vanuatu have seen increases in women's parliamentary and/or local governance representation with the introduction of gender quotas and similar measures (True and others, 2014). In India, the constitutional amendments to reserve one third of all local government (*panchayati raj*) seats helped elect one million women to public positions. Despite various problems faced by women in taking advantage of the constitutional provisions, the reservation of seats for women in local bodies has increased their overall visibility in Indian public life and provided them with greater social legitimacy (Chowdhury, 2013).

In the Pacific, the introduction of reserved seats at the local governance level in Vanuatu and the Papua New Guinea Autonomous Region of Bougainville resulted in greater female representation and participation (Haley and Zubrinich, 2016). One

Nazma Akter

Figure 3 Percentage of women in elected office, by quota type
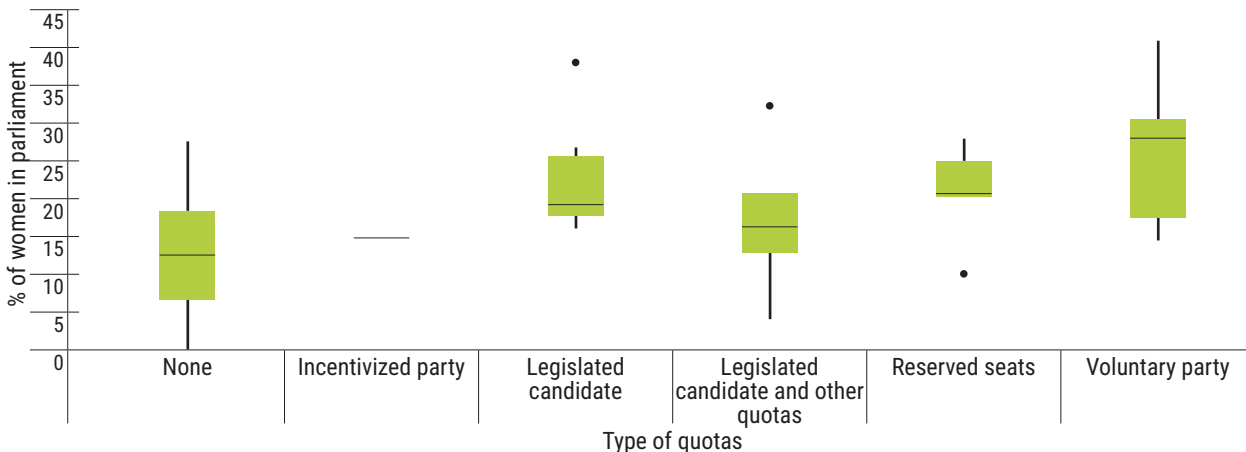
Source: ESCAP calculations based on Inter-Parliamentary Union data and corroborated by IDEA. Available at www.ipu.org/our-impact/gender-equality/
women-in-parliament/ipu-knowledge-hub-women-in-politics (accessed July 2019).
Note: Incentivized party quotas denote that governments provide extra funding or benefits to parties that adopt a party quota. Legislated candidate
quotas denote that governments legally mandate a minimum share of women on candidate lists. Legislated candidate and other quotas denote
that, along with a legislated candidate quota, four other countries in the region have at least one other type of quota in use; because of the small
sample size, each combination was not disaggregated as its own boxplot. Reserved seats denote that governments regulate the number of
women elected to an office. Voluntary party quotas denote that individual political parties choose to set a minimum share of women on candidate
lists (see Annex II for the methodology).

report from the Kyrgyz Republic (Government of Kyrgystan, 2019b) stated: "The use of gender quotas in parliamentarian elections was an undoubtedly effective measure, having increased the representation of women in the parliament from zero in 2005 to 25.5 per cent in 2007. Women's representation in 2015 was 20 per cent." Many people see these numbers gain as an essential first step. *Logeswary Ponniah*, in Sri Lanka, who advocates for gender quotas stressed: "Unless women's own voices are heard and women are in leadership at all levels, we will not see real change…. At the national level, the economic figures for Sri Lanka may be improving. But at the grass-roots level, especially for grass-roots women, life is not changing much yet."

As depicted in the boxplot[12] in figure 3, Asian-Pacific countries with no quotas have a median of women's parliamentary representation that is

lower than the medians of all the quota types. Although there are countries with no quotas that are doing better than some countries with quotas (as represented by the upward extending whisker on the "none" boxplot), on the whole, countries with quotas – no matter the quota type in place – are doing better than those without.

Figure 4 similarly points to the complexity of quotas: Quotas are not a quick fix, but they have the potential to help with women's representation under the right enabling environment. The positive correlation in the graph illustrates that women make up the elected body at high rates when they are put up as candidates, thereby underlining the importance of removing initial barriers to entry. In some countries, the proportion of women to men in elected office exceeds the proportion of women to men candidates. For example, in Tajikistan, women made up slightly more than 10 per cent of candidates in 2015, but they accounted for 19 per cent of the elected body. In other words, quotas that assist with putting more women up for candidacy might be crucial for women's overall representation. That said, there are several countries with no quotas, such as the Lao People's Democratic Republic and New Zealand, that are outperforming other countries in the region that have quotas.

12 A boxplot displays the distribution of data by illustrating the minimum, first quartile, median, third quartile and maximum. Importantly for the analysis of figure 3, the median value is represented by the line through the middle of the "box" portion, and the points outside the "whiskers" are the outliers. The whiskers are the lines extending beyond the box, depicting the range of data from the first to fourth quartiles, with the exception of outliers.

Figure 4   Percentage of women elected officials and women candidates in different quota systems, latest year available
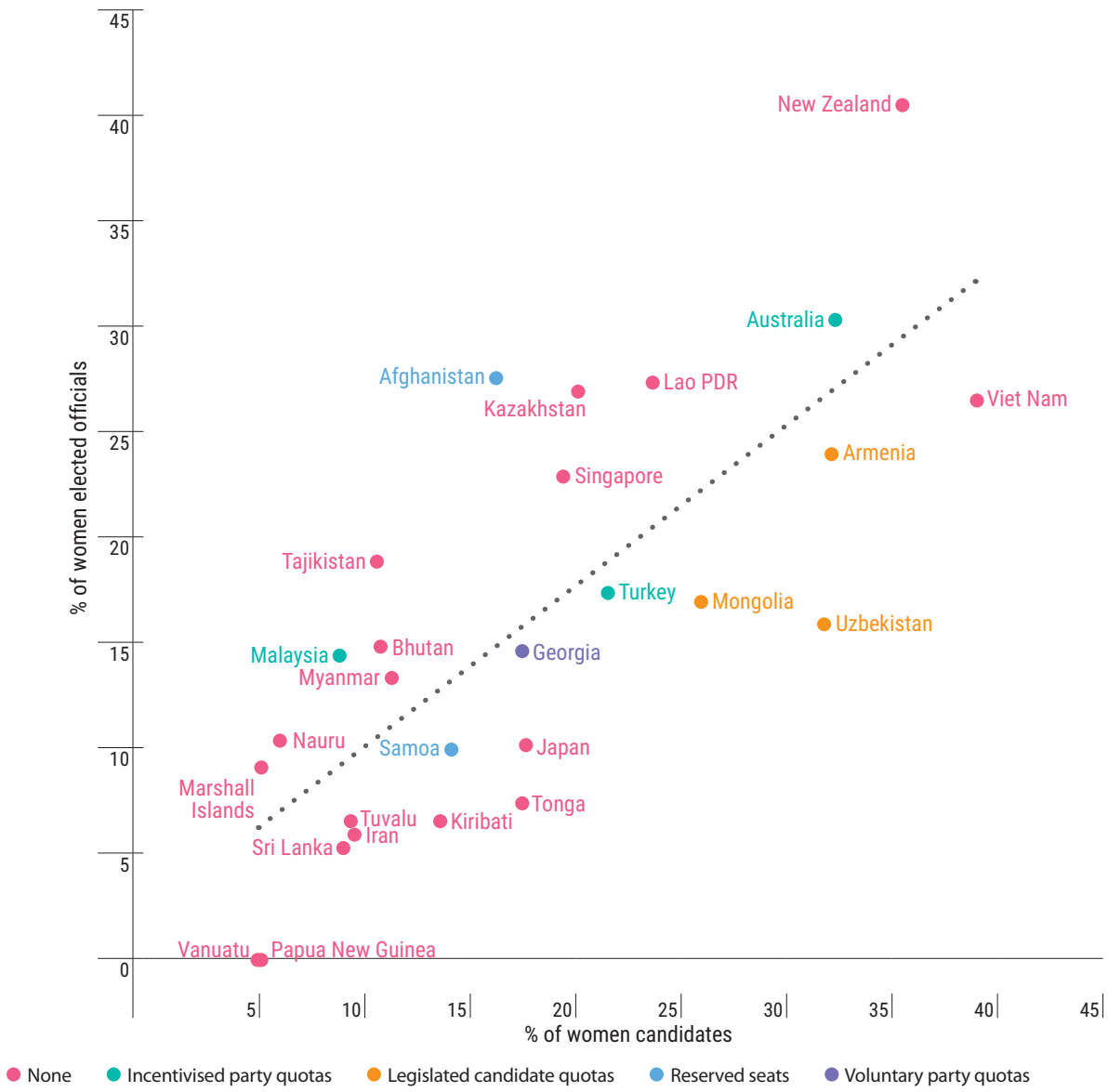
Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union New Parline, latest years available. Available at https://data.ipu.org/home (accessed July 2019).

Figure 4 demonstrates the importance and complexity of creating an environment conducive to women's candidacy paired with a quota system. Quotas are a start towards ensuring women's representation, but other measures are needed to uphold women's sustained presence and influence in government.

The 2017 local elections with a legislated candidate gender quota in Nepal swept women into an unprecedented 40.9 per cent of seats and 91 per cent of deputy chief positions. However, in non-quota wards, women won only 2 per cent of seats, primarily because they were not nominated in the same proportion by the political parties. According to an Australian government and Asia Foundation study of the Nepal elections, a majority of women had some form of professional experience (at 88 per cent) and had been involved in community development or social work (at 89 per cent). Once elected, many women experienced financial and management challenges and a need for training

Box 4 **A women's movement, the electoral system and role models credited for New Zealand's progress to increase the number of women in parliament**

In March 2019, women made up 40.8 per cent of the New Zealand parliament. New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern is the third woman in that role. New Zealand was the first country in the world to give women the vote in national elections, both within the colonial settler and the Māori (indigenous) populations. However, it took until 1919 for women to win the right to stand for parliament, 1933 for the first woman member of parliament to be elected and 1984 for the number of elections to women in parliament to reach double-digit figures (Cook, 2011). At least three factors have had an important role in New Zealand women's greater access to parliamentary seats over time relative to other countries in the region, without the introduction of quotas.

The influence of the women's movement and organizations

A key factor in women's enfranchisement in New Zealand was the nineteenth-century feminist movement, both in New Zealand and worldwide (Cook, 2011). By the end of the 1880s, the right to vote in national elections was the focus of a mass movement, spearheaded by the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Māori (indigenous) women also sought the right to vote for and stand for Te Kotahitanga, the Māori Parliament, and joined with other women in the temperance movement (Cook, 2011). Maori involvement in the suffrage movement was particularly significant for ensuring Maori visibility (Ministry for Women, 2012). Women's campaigning for increased numbers in Parliament has continued to the present day in various forms, taking a vital role in raising public awareness, advocating for changes to male-dominated political party processes and supporting women who have been elected.

Influence of the electoral system

In 1993, after many years of public campaigning and debate, New Zealand voted in a national referendum to change from a "first-past-the-post" electoral system to a "mixed-member proportional representation" system. By allowing for greater parliamentary representation of smaller parties, the parliament saw the number of women rise to 30 per cent for the period following the first proportional representation election in 1996. International research indicates that proportional representation systems have an effect that remains consistent over time – unlike quotas, which have the greatest impact in the year they are implemented (Paxton, Hughes and Painter, 2010).

Influence of role models

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern remarked that she and the country have been "especially blessed" with the number of female leaders and role models. In addition to Ardern, two previous prime ministers were women, and in 2019, women served in the roles of governor-general and chief justice. This reference to the powerful influence of role models reinforces the literature cited in the pathway 1 chapter.

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to gain the necessary expertise in political governance. This picture in Nepal reinforces that the introduction of some quotas is not enough to create systemic change; there are not necessarily enough resources for women to succeed once they are elected into office (DFAT and TAF, 2018).

Other studies echo the assessment that affirmative action measures, such as quotas, do not necessarily make women's voices better heard or increase their chances of obtaining senior leadership positions (O'Neil, Plank and Domingo, 2015). Htun and Jones (2002) reported that "quotas, when they succeed in bringing women into power, do not always grant women the resources they need to use that power effectively". Noting the 30 per cent gender quota in place for women's representation in her national parliament, *Tri Rismaharini*, in Indonesia, reiterated the importance of providing informal opportunities at the family and community levels so that women can develop the essential skills, knowledge and confidence that are important for leadership roles.

A multi-country study carried out as part of a DFID-funded Pathways to Women's Empowerment

programme found that a quota can redress the numerical imbalance in a legislature, but it is not a "magic wand" because its effectiveness is also contingent on the type of quota used, the type of electoral system and local power configurations (Htun and Jones, 2002). Many researchers also indicate that the following elements are necessary for special measures to be effective: an electoral system that is conducive for women candidates, incentives for parties to include women, sanctions against parties for non-compliance, the influence of women's movements within and outside the political space and, most importantly, political will among stakeholders to bring the quotas to fruition (O'Neil, Plank and Domingo, 2015).

Sudarshan and Bisht (2006) made a distinction between political representation and political empowerment. They argued that the more empowered women already are in terms of confidence, gender awareness, exposure, mobility and autonomy, the greater would be the impact of reserved opportunities for women (O'Neil, Plank and Domingo, 2015). Countries that encourage these positive conditions have created pathways to higher female parliamentary representation without quotas. New Zealand stands out in the region for achieving the highest level of women parliamentarians, including three female Heads of Government, unassisted by temporary special measures. This further reinforces the findings of international studies that indicate that, in the absence of other supportive factors, quotas per se do not necessarily ensure substantive representation of gender equality agendas and need to be supported by a wider range of measures (O'Neil, Plank and Domingo, 2015).

Political parties

Political parties are both enablers and barriers to women's entry into parliament (Tadros, 2014). In the Kyrgyz Republic, for example, there is a practice of "'ousting' women from political parties after the elections", which discourages many women from running; however, the country has just passed a special measure to ensure that a woman's terminated seat would be replaced by a woman (Government of Kyrgyzstan, 2019b). In some countries of the region, political parties have adopted voluntary quotas for women's participation in electoral processes; these countries include Australia, the Republic of Korea, the Philippines,

Thailand and Turkey. Parties serve as powerful gatekeepers that have great ability to make change.

According to a report drafted for the former United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, women candidates often have difficulty gaining traction with political parties because they have weaker campaign resources, such as land, assets, knowledge and networks, less experience in public roles and are often disproportionately burdened by caregiving responsibilities (Bari, 2005). *Helen Hakena*, in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, observed that "women in Bougainville are very active at the grass-roots level, in their clans and villages and through the church, but this is not yet reflected in national politics and parties. The higher up in the national hierarchy, the less support there is for women, she said. "We need to be strategic. We can use our clan linkages and our networks of women to reach out and build the profile of women leaders. We need to be working together for the next national elections in five years' time, building on the three reserved seats that we have achieved in the Autonomous Bougainville Government House of Representatives as well as women elected at ward level. The door has been opened a little with the recent local election of one woman in a general constituency seat for the first time."

Despite increased interest from women in Cambodia to be involved in politics, relatively few women are on local councils because male politicians believe that women are less competent and have less chance of success (UNDP, 2014a). Although many women in India and Sri Lanka have campaigned to secure votes for men, they themselves are often not considered as political assets with potential for career advancement (UNDP, 2014a). *Somsook Boonyabancha*, in Thailand, noted that women, although able to engage significantly in urban and rural development at the community level, often face more difficulties in securing space for their participation in more formal political processes. For example, once female community leaders decide to enter local politics, they are obliged to respect the more vertical political structure and working culture, both of which mostly follow male-dominated party policy or district council rules and regulations and decision-making. This limits their scope for

Figure 5   Percentage of women elected to local and national governmental bodies, latest year available
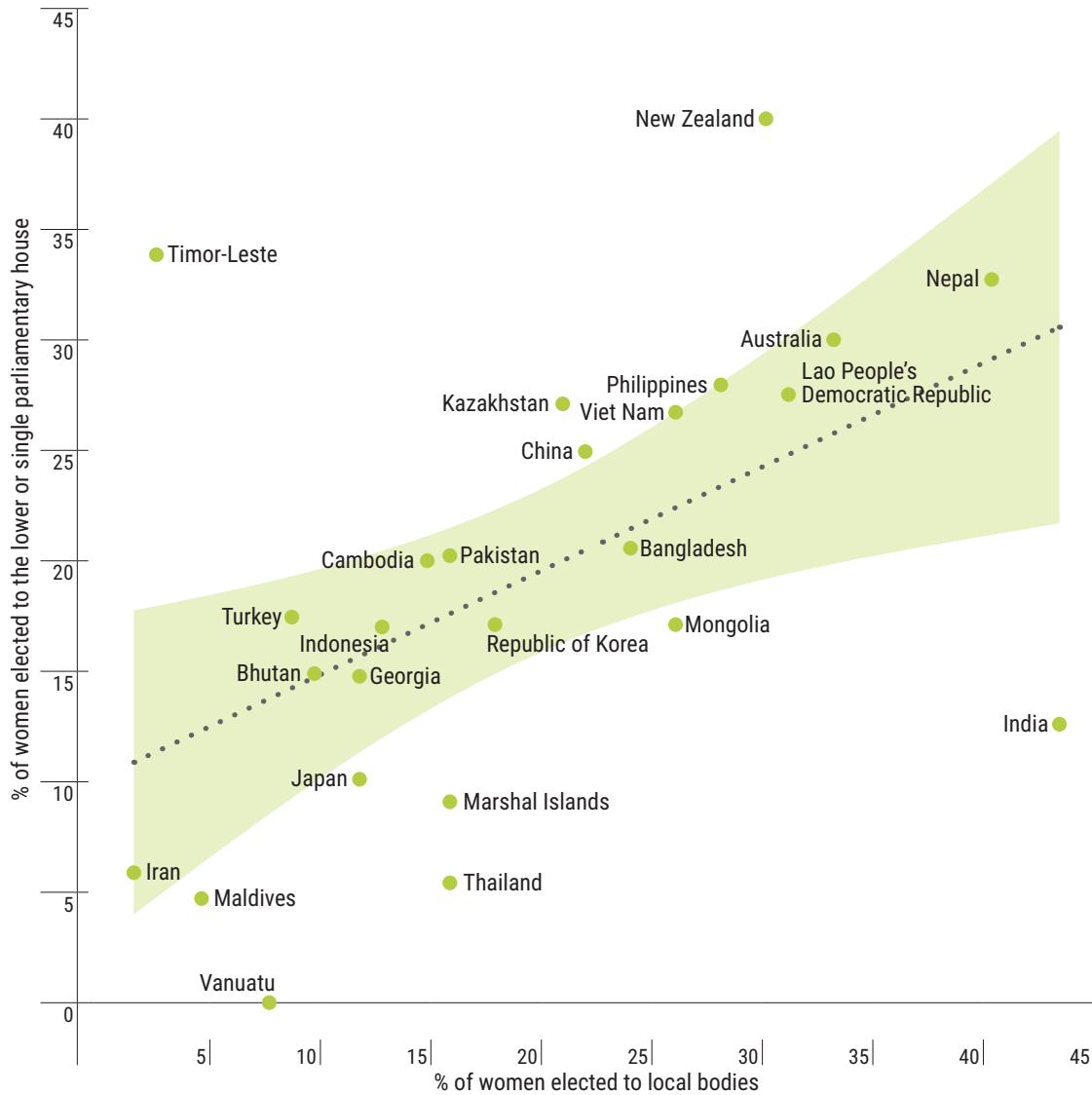
Source: ESCAP calculations based on data from Inter-Parliamentary Union New Parline, latest years available. Available at https://data.ipu.org/home and http://data.unescap.org/sdg/#data/5, respectively (accessed July 2019).

social development action or decisions on budget allocation.

Even though formal barriers, including political parties in many cases, often make it harder for women to enter national politics (more so than local politics), there is a positive relationship between women's representation in local government and national government. As the positive upward trajectory in figure 5 shows, countries that have more women in local government are also more likely to have women elected to the lower or single house of parliament. Local government, without as many of the party barriers, can potentially serve as an alternative leadership incubator for national politics.

Civic space

The United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel of Women's Economic Empowerment

Box 5   **Aware Girls challenge norms to make space for women's leadership in Pakistan**

Aware Girls are at the forefront of efforts to challenge discriminatory gender norms in Pakistan's remote Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, where young women's participation in politics as voters, candidates and political activists is strongly discouraged. Patriarchal political party structures are a major factor, with women being excluded from decision-making positions on the pretext that they lack political skills, resources and influence.

Since 1990, the Aware Girls initiative has been challenging these barriers through a leadership training programme to strengthen the political leadership skills of young women and support their participation in local electoral processes. The participants use peer-to-peer education skills to mobilize other young women at the community level. Annually, 40 to 50 trained young women reach out to more than 3,000 young women through door-to-door political mobilization campaigns, peer education and civic education in schools.

Community dialogues are organized at the district level by the women leaders to engage women and men in examining and challenging the norms and values that hinder women's participation. Under the Young Women's Democracy Network, Aware Girls trainees also engage with policymakers and political parties to advocate for institutional changes that ensure that young women have greater space and opportunities to participate in political, civic and democratic processes.

Aware Girls have also established Citizens Committees at the district level, comprising activists, media outlets and community leaders. These committees have developed a Citizens Charter seeking institutional reforms to ensure women's increased and equitable participation in political processes. As a result, some political parties at the district level have taken steps to establish anti-sexual harassment groups. In 2013 and 2015, Aware Girls conducted the first-ever young women-led local election monitoring activities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. Ten young women trained by Aware Girls successfully contested the 2015 elections, which was a historic step to make substantive change.

Source: Information provided by Strengthening Democracy and Good Governance through Political Empowerment of Young Women in Pakistan, Aware Girls, Peshawar, Pakistan. See www.awaregirls.org.

reinforced the importance of civic spaces in building up women's power, noting that women's equal and full participation in decision-making processes "requires regulations and mechanisms to create space and support for women to build their own collective action and power in strong organizations, collectives and movements" (UN Secretariat, 2017). SDG 16 affirms the commitment of United Nations Member States to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, while SDG 17 (target 1) encourages civil society partnerships. McLeod's research (2015) on women's leadership in civil society in the Pacific points to a "vibrant, largely indigenous literature [that] shows the depth of women's participation in civil society and the relative ease with which they can gain prominence as leaders within the less male-dominated non-state realm." She further observes civil society as a sphere in which "women are increasingly likely to hold leadership positions without the common resistance experienced in other more male-dominated sectors."

Despite the widely cited importance of civil society engagement as an incubator for women's leadership development, international research increasingly indicates that such opportunities are being constrained by shrinking civic space in many countries. Data from the International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law (2016) indicate a trend across many Asian-Pacific countries towards restrictions on the ability of civil society organizations, including women's organizations, to develop, thrive and be effective. Some 24 new laws restricting civil society activity have been introduced in the region since 2015, more than half of all those introduced worldwide. Such trends can also be seen in the growing pressure against human rights defenders in the region (FORUM-ASIA, 2017). Many of those affected are women advocating for issues that reach them intimately at the level of their families and communities. In such circumstances, they may not be able to exercise or develop their leadership freely or be well connected to national, regional or international networks.

As *Imrana Jalal*, in Fiji, further pointed out, while legislative frameworks lay the groundwork to protect women's rights, civic space is vital to ensure their implementation. "The experience of the Fiji Family Law Act shows the impact that effective rights-based legislation can have in transforming the possibilities for achieving justice and ensuring that rights are upheld," she said. "But just as important is the role that NGOs and human rights defenders, like Fiji Women's Rights Movement, play to influence the shape of the law and hold governments and others accountable for its implementation." A multitude of factors contribute to the shrinking of civil society space, Jalal added. These range from religious extremism to governments' stricter control of citizen engagement. Women's organizations have been a particular target of restrictions in some countries, she noted.

In summary

Formal, systemic leadership elements, such as temporary special measures (quotas), infrastructure (electoral system, political parties) and civic space, all contribute to creating opportunities for women to emerge and develop as transformative leaders. These are just a few of the many potential solutions that can assist in creating an enabling environment for women leaders. Interviewees also highlighted the importance of legislation and measures to support women engaging in public life in such ways as lifting the water-collection burden of women and girls as a result of water infrastructure development; removing gender bias from education curricula and occupational choices; embedding international commitments (like CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action and the SDGs) into national legislative and institutional arrangements; ensuring women's economic empowerment and financial inclusion; and the strengthening of data to inform evidence-based policy. While the few strategies outlined in this chapter entail direct actions to address leadership, governments should simultaneously enact policy that promotes gender equality broadly; this, too, creates an enabling environment in which women and girls can develop through the other pathways (such as growing consciousness and accessing resources) to become transformative leaders.

In thinking about women's political leadership, temporary special measures, such as quotas, are important but complex. As the data suggest, quotas are a start, but they are not enough on their own. Various social, economic and political support are needed to make the impacts of quotas last and to ensure that women have the proper resources that meet their unique needs. Political parties, as infrastructural elements within the political system, can serve as a means that either heightens or breaks down the barriers that exist for women entering politics, such as lack of resources and networks.

Having robust, transparent and open formal elements such as these within national political systems at all levels, can help provide the opportunities for women to emerge as leaders and contribute to the transformation of social norms that impede progress towards gender equality. Thus, this pathway is strongly tied to the final pathway on social norms and exclusionary practices: changing the formal elements can alter the informal, and vice versa.

Pathways 4
Transforming social norms and exclusionary practices

> Social norms … are embedded in language, symbols, myths and social custom and in different human institutions, from marriage to markets, to local governance structures…. In this context, leadership for transformation means being willing to take risks by questioning existing ways of working.

Aruna Rao and David Kelleher, from "Leadership for Social Transformation: Some Ideas and Questions on Institutions and Feminist Leadership," in *Gender and Development*, **vol. 8, No. 3, 2000**

> Women are powerful. Society, families and individuals spend a lot of time trying to undermine that power and really the task is to recognize that we all have power and what is the ecosystem that we need to create to exercise that power and thrive and contribute to a world where everyone's human rights are respected.

Mallika Dutt, in "Meet the Woman Extraordinaire – Mallika Dutt," from an interview with Sayfty, Empower Women Against Violence, December 2014

The findings in this chapter align with pathway 4 of the domains of change. This pathway highlights the informal or systemic influence of discriminatory gender norms and exclusionary practices in all societies on women's transformative leadership – and the efforts of women leaders (often with male support) to challenge and change these unconstructive influences. The main points of the chapter:

- prevailing social norms concerning women in leadership;

- constraints on the ability of women and girls to participate freely in all aspects of economic, social and political life in their communities and wider society;

- the ways in which leaders interviewed for this study have challenged and overcome constraints and restrictions; and

- the critical role of men in efforts to transform discriminatory gender norms.

This pathway both underpins and cross-cuts the other three pathways and was the major focus of all the responses from women leaders interviewed for this study as well as most of the international literature on enablers and constraints for women's leadership. In many ways, this is the most challenging pathway to address because it is rooted in historic and complex gender-based power dynamics. Inequalities are themselves produced and reproduced through social norms across myriad spaces and relationships (Chopra and Muller, 2016). Inter alia, gender norms and social relations dictate the types and level of participation of women in political and civic life. Access to education, health and social life are all mediated by gender roles and relations – each in turn having a bearing on women's engagement in leadership roles (Chopra and Muller, 2016).

Gender norms

Data drawn from the World Values Survey (Inglehart and others, 2014) provide insight into the prevalence and impact of gender-based social norms. Respondents from selected Asian-Pacific countries indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed that "men make better political leaders than women" (figure 6), illustrating the deep-seated norms that can make it difficult for women to emerge into leadership roles. Although each country had a different agreement rate (as low as around 15 per cent of all respondents agreed and strongly agreed in New Zealand, while it was more than 50 per cent for the majority of the other countries), men and women responded similarly in each country's context – this illustrates how social

Figure 6   **Percentage of men and women who strongly agree or agree that "on the whole, men make better political leaders than women do"**

% of respondents who "agree" or "strongly agree"

Country or territory

● Total   ● Men   ● Women
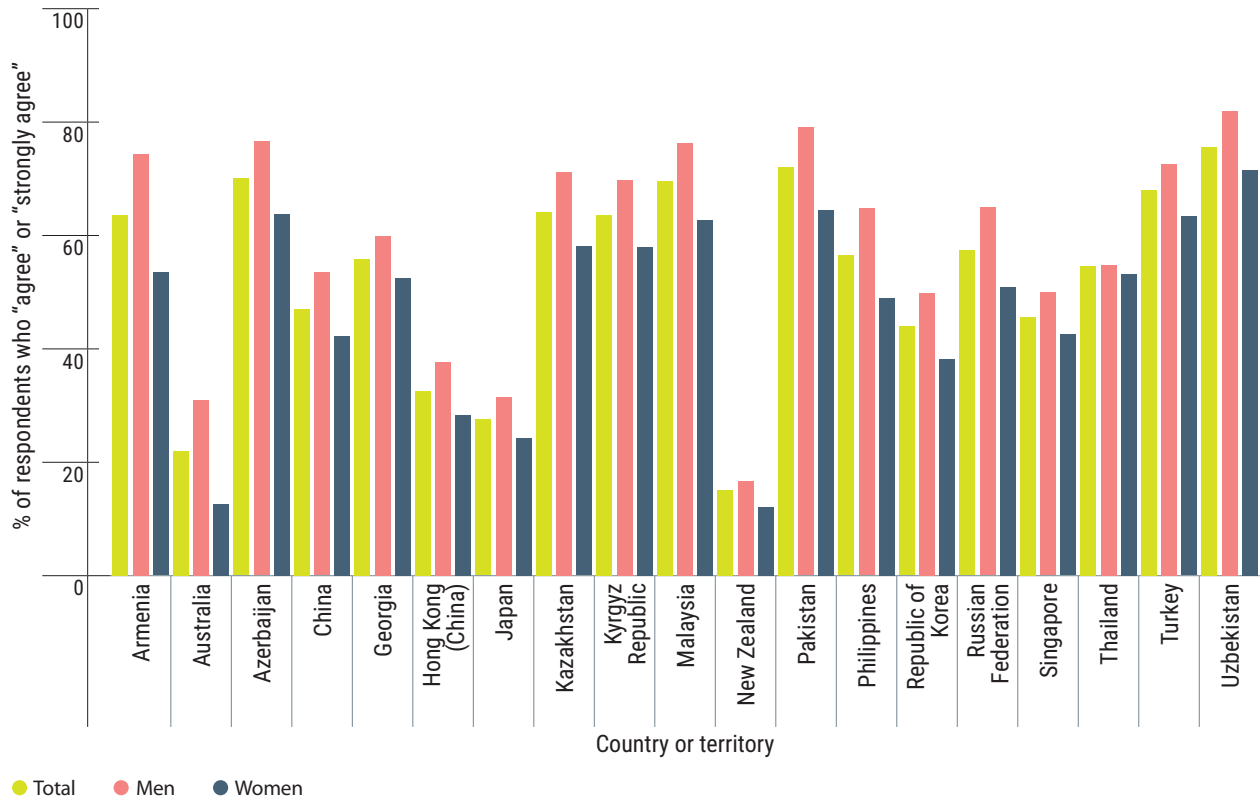
Source: Inglehart and others, 2014. World Values Survey: Round Six – Country-Pooled Datafile Version (2010–2014). Available at http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV6.jsp (accessed July 2019).

norms around a particular issue are internalized by both the sexes. Another World Values Survey question asking about men's business leadership also drew similar responses. Even though women agreed at lower rates about gendered stereotypes and leadership roles for both the business and politics questions, they were often answering at similar rates as men within their country. These social norms about male-dominated leadership and gendered occupations are clearly deeply ingrained throughout the region.

Another norms-based factor that emerged as a leadership determinant in various international studies and in the interviews for this report is time use by women and men. Women in Asia and the Pacific spend, on average, 262 minutes a day on unpaid care work, compared with men, who spend 64 minutes (ILO, 2018a). Each minute spent on these chores is a minute taken away from engagement in other activities that

Pansy Tun Thein

55

Figure 7 — Percentage of men and women who agree that it is perfectly acceptable to have a paid job outside the house, by subregion
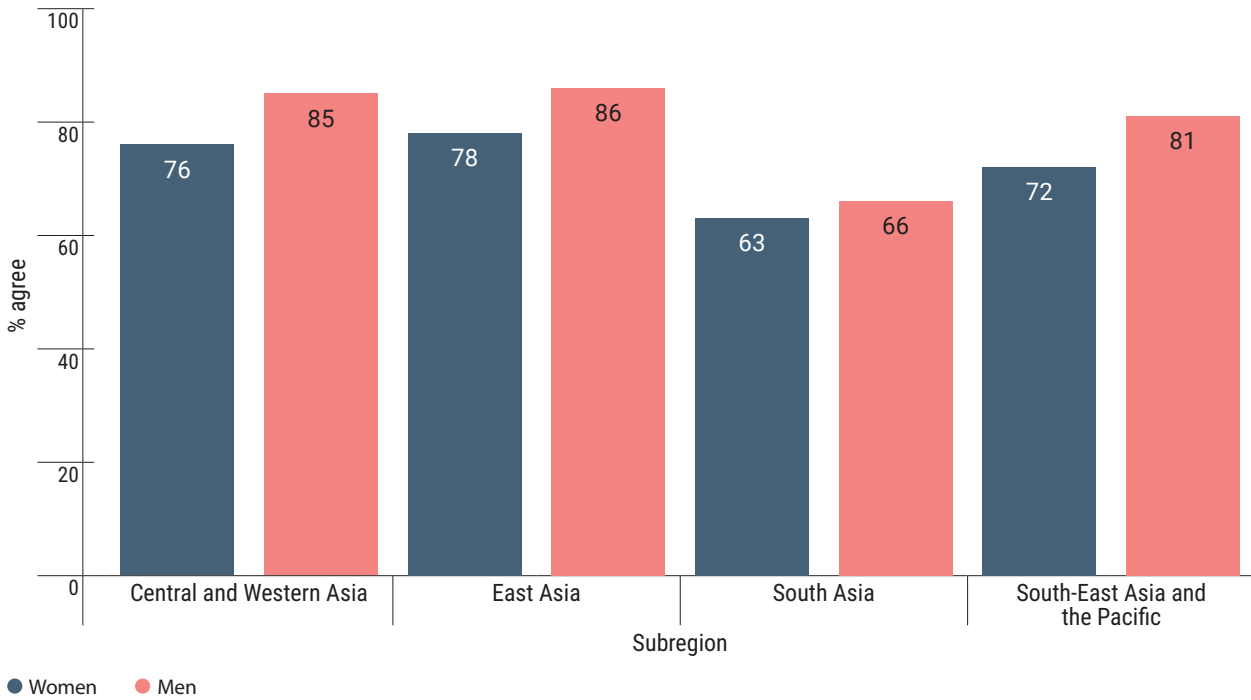
Source: ILO and Gallup, 2017.

can lead to economic, community or leadership opportunities. Care and family responsibilities fall disproportionately on women and girls. The impacts resound across the life cycle, from accessing educational and vocational opportunities to succeed in high-quality jobs to hampering aspirations to work full time or seek promotion and leadership opportunities (ILO, 2018b). Four of the five top barriers to women moving into senior positions cited by executives in a survey by the McKinsey Global Institute (2018) were care related, reinforcing the critical need to address this time and care burden on women.[13] This is amplified by social norms that still persist among many countries across Asia and the Pacific that women should not pursue work outside of the home (figure 7).

Tadros (2014) noted that unpaid care is a core factor that influences women's entry into politics. Typically, women who are active in politics tend to have older children, have means to pay for domestic help or have familial support in taking care of domestic obligations. Unless policies are institutionalized to enable families to deal with care responsibilities, poor young women will be hindered from engaging in political activity by class, age and the norms that they are expected to stay at home. In developing the Mongolian Women Farmers Association, *Byatshandaa Jargal* had to tackle entrenched gender norms that made it difficult for women to embark on a non-traditional path. "There is an old Mongolian saying that 'women belong to the house and men belong to the State,'" Jargal said. "As a result, male members of the household often didn't accept what we were doing in the beginning. But attitudes changed as they saw benefits for the family, including themselves."

Among some communities, norms are even more deeply entrenched. *Manohari Doss*, in India, remarked that "many Dalit and tribal women continue to live in fear, feeling inferior and insecure.

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13 The top barrier was the "anytime, anywhere" performance model, followed by the double burden of family responsibilities and work, the absence of female role models and lack of pro-family public policies and support.

They still do the dirty work and are exploited by higher castes. There is a 'culture of silence'."

Some of the social norms that prevent women from achieving their full potential are not related to what they do but rather what they look like. *Zolzaya Batkhuyag*, in Mongolia, recounted the ways in which Women for Change in her country had triggered the "hidden issues" of social norms that hold women back, particularly through negative self-perceptions and body image, which are reinforced by the commercial-driven stereotypes of how women should behave and look. Through well-received performances of the Vagina Monologues in the Mongolian language, major art exhibitions and My Short Skirt protests, Women for Change has challenged prevailing stereotypes and perceptions. These stereotypes sometimes manifest themselves more outwardly through forms of catcalling and other forms of sexual harassment. Women for Change showed, through a survey among 600 young women, that this is a major and commonly shared issue.

Norms of a different type can be a powerful positive tool to influence a women's leadership approach. Women in some Pacific countries have used their norms and traditions to influence their leadership strategies. For example, the successful informal involvement of women in conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands has been attributed to the connection between peacemaking and gender-based customs, which underlie the communities (McLeod, 2015). In parts of both societies, matrilineal practices have informed such leadership roles, with women historically being mediators in times of conflict. This use of gendered roles to assert women's inclusion in peacebuilding has been criticized by some as reinforcing gender stereotypes, but it has helped to expand space for public engagement by women in society while recognizing that resistance is strongest when women leaders and their organizations move faster than the broader process of societal change.

In some Pacific societies, such as the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, and Samoa, where women can hold chiefly titles and own land, their participation in politics and government is markedly greater than that of women in other parts of the region (Haley and Zubrinich, 2016; Meleisa and others, 2015; Garasu, 2002).

Many Pacific scholars have observed that, while Pacific cultures generally value the complementary socialized roles of women and men (Huffer, 2006), external influences, including colonization and Christian missionary activities, have been factors in the relegation of women to domestic roles and alienating them from political participation across the region (Douglas, 2002).

Habiba Sarabi, in Afghanistan, was the country's first female provincial governor and is a figure in national politics and peacebuilding. She represents a highly strategic approach to taking existing norms into consideration as a positive force for change. A member of the Hazara minority in Afghanistan, Sarabi drew upon her understanding of Hazaragi culture and customs to leverage herself as a leader within the community: "Afghan societies are very traditional. Hence, I respect and leverage those elements of Afghan tradition that don't deprive women of their rights and don't affect them negatively…. I try to back my efforts with those traditions of our societies that are favourable for women. For instance, I have established good relationships with the Imams and religious and tribal leaders using religious texts to substantiate and justify my work for women."

Violence and physical harm

The most stark and persistent reflection of harmful social gender norms is violence against women and girls, including the use and threat of violence against women active in leadership (UN News, 2018). A global survey conducted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union of women in parliament in 2016 revealed that 82 per cent of the respondents had experienced psychological violence, remarks, gestures or images of a sexist or humiliating nature, threats or mobbing. Up to 44 per cent had received threats of death, rape, beatings or abductions during their parliamentary term. One in five female parliamentarians had been slapped, pushed or struck with a projectile that could have harmed them (IPU, 2016). One country report for the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Beijing+25 Review (Bangkok, November 2019) stated: "Double standards, blackmailing and smear campaigns in the media are actively used against women politicians, resulting in their short influence. Because of violence against women during elections and political activities, despite the mandatory 30 per cent gender quota, two

political parties…have no women members at all." (Government of Kyrgyzstan, 2019) A 2012 UN Women study found that such threats and actions against women leaders in politics are also prevalent in the private sphere, with 10–15 per cent of *gram panchayat* (local government) women members in India experiencing domestic violence (ICRW and UN Women, 2012).

These trends among political leaders are reflective of the overall high rates of violence against women in the region. As shown in figure 8, almost 40 per cent of women who were surveyed in the region responded that they had experienced intimate partner violence and an average of almost 25 per cent said they had experienced non-partner violence. Such prevalence of gender-based violence and the resultant lack of safety in public and private spaces for women and girls provide a powerful disincentive to their engagement in public affairs. The data illustrated in figure 8 may well under-represent the extent of violence, given the difficulties of reporting. As shown by the middle column, an average of 45 per cent of respondents in total said that they had never disclosed intimate partner violence before they took the survey.

Acts and threats of violence against women leaders go far beyond the sphere of formal politics in the region and were a recurrent theme in the interviews conducted for this study. *Imrana Jalal* was a primary target of opposition when she helped pass the Fiji Family Law. She was accused by some church leaders of being an "evil force in society" and "trying to destroy the institution of marriage". Her defence of human rights during successive military coups in Fiji also attracted threats of physical violence. In 2006, she was warned in a telephone call (later traced to the vicinity of a military camp) that she would have her "mouth shut forever" if she spoke out about events then embroiling Fiji. Jalal lived in fear for days and slept in different houses. She was prevented from leaving the country and even ended up in a situation in which her employer had to negotiate for her to come and go for work.

For Bangladeshi trade union leader, *Nazma Akter*, the pressure from the beginning has been relentless. When she began to organize for change in her factory, life was hard. "I was out organizing very early in the morning and late at night. Men would harass and abuse me, treating me as a sex worker. I was treated as a 'bad girl' by my

Figure 8 **Survey of women in the region on physical and sexual violence**
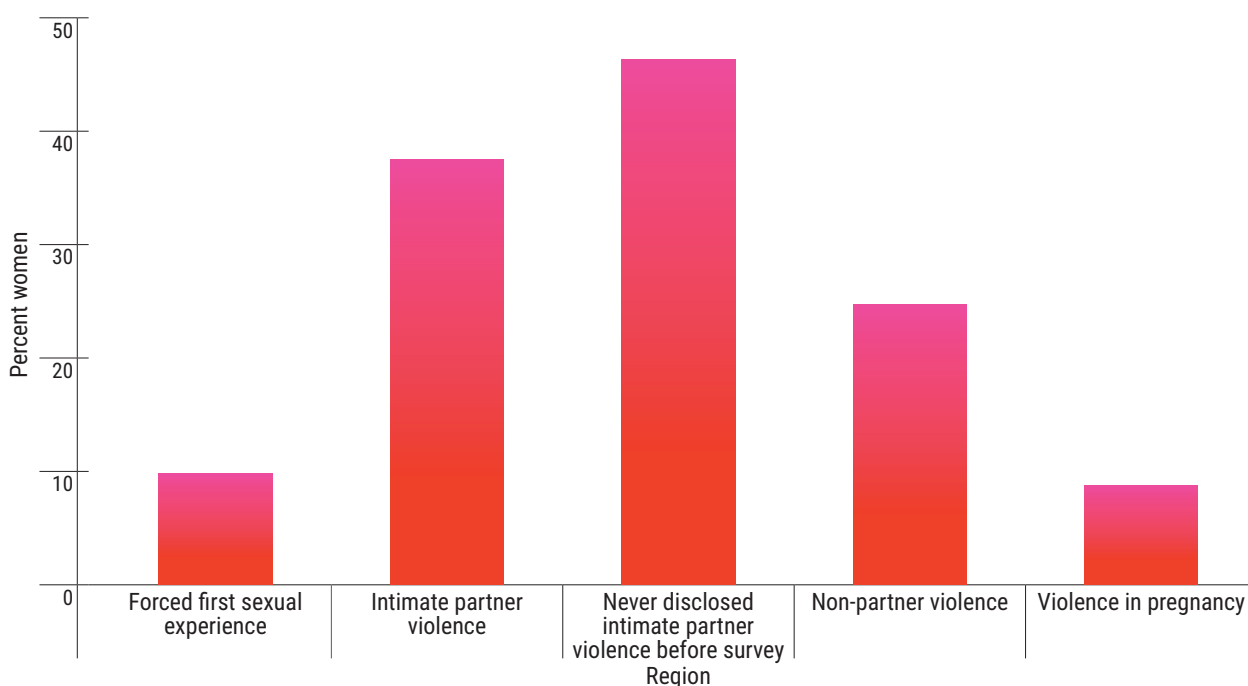
Source: UNFPA, kNOwVAWdata 2019 database. Available at https://asiapacific.unfpa.org/en/knowvawdata (accessed July 2019).

Box 6   **Combating gender-based violence triggered by climate change-related displacement**

New strategies and perspectives are arising in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, to combat the recent upsurge of violence against women that is stemming from displacement due to climate change. Those fleeing their home islands due to rising sea levels often end up living in squatter camps because they lack access to land and housing. And these camps often become unsafe, particularly for women. This growing issue has become an important priority for Helen Hakena and her colleagues in the Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency.

"It is very hard to start again and to earn a livelihood in a different language after being used to a subsistence lifestyle," Hakena explained. "Often, the men leave first to find work. They leave their families behind and find new wives. This is creating a situation where rape and domestic violence are rife. We are working with the local police, the family support centre and legal aides to support the women affected, as well as assisting with small-scale livelihood projects. But we are concerned that this situation is now becoming normalized and won't get the concerted focus by government agencies and others that it needs."

With the support of the Asia-Pacific Women, Law and Development Forum, the Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency has been using a feminist participatory action research methodology to engage affected women in consciousness-raising, create safe spaces for women to share their stories, build collective strength, facilitate community solutions and develop local leadership. The Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency is working with the International Organization for Migration and affected women to map community assets, potential risks and ways forward. "Initially, many were blaming the gods for what is happening – we have been explaining what the real causes are and working with women in the affected communities to look at the practical steps they can take, such as restoring protective mangrove areas and developing alternative livelihoods."

Source: For the full background, refer to online interview summary of Helen Hakena, available at https://www.unescap.org/resources/life-journeys-transformative-leaders-interview-summaries-report-pathways-influence

employers, male workers and even my family and relatives. Neighbours even spread rumours about me in my community. For this reason, my father and uncle didn't want me involved in these activities any longer. When I became known as a leader, I lost my job, had no money and found it hard to get work. Most men don't like outspoken women who fight for women's rights, for an end to violence against women, for equal treatment in the workplace and for dignity and respect. They expect me to be quiet and obedient." At times, Akter's life was at risk. "I was threatened by my boss, police, the local muscle men. I had my phone calls tapped and my movement was restricted," she said. "I have had cases filed against me. I am always under observation constantly by the authorities. Our office has been attacked, and we have been beaten. These are the things that personally I face." The underlying issue behind such threats and resistance to her role is power, she said. "This includes both the power of men over women in society, including within unions, which are dominated by men, and our own collective power as women and workers to have control over our life and future."

Malika Virdi, in India, reflected on the experience of others in highlighting overcoming fear as an important contributor to her leadership journey. "Growing up in Delhi in the 1970s was not easy. The city can be rough for a young woman moving out of her home. It was an everyday struggle just to keep my physical integrity and yet be out there, doing things I wanted to do. Your family fears for you and that fear restricts and controls you. I guess every woman in every family would have had to contend with such issues and either acquiesce or carry a deep anger within." Virdi explained that working for change almost always faces resistance from the established order, and it can often seem that being a part of the women's movement involves going from one fight to another. "But for me," she said, it is the old movement song that sums it up: 'We fight, so that love may live on this earth...'"

Internalized glass ceilings: Imposter syndrome

Not all manifestations of social norms are external. Many women in leadership face an internalized glass ceiling – an intrinsic feeling that one does not belong, which damages self-esteem. In management literature, this is increasingly referred to as "imposter syndrome". After his study on leadership and the imposter syndrome, Pedler (2011) observed that "mainly female participants often felt disenfranchised by the cultural dominance of [the] heroic view of leadership". Clance and Imes (1978) described the syndrome as "a condition where people find it hard to believe that they deserve any credit for what they may have achieved and, whatever their outward appearances, remain internally convinced that they are frauds". *Raushan Sarsembayeva*, in Kazakhstan, explained the dual difficulty of having externally and internally imposed stereotypes. The lack of opportunities, she said, is "aggravated by stereotypes that women cannot be a leader". At the same time, such stereotypes reinforce internal barriers. It is often the "the psychological fear, the thoughts of self-doubt among women – 'can I do this, will I fail?' – that hold women back. Every

woman should overcome fears and self-doubts and not be afraid when they start realizing their ideas. I advise women to take initiative and be active, not to fear to realize their own ideas and to be ready to experiment."

Jeannie Javelosa, in the Philippines, reinforced this insight, noting that she and her core team faced many challenges on the way, not least those created by "our own internal glass ceilings and overcoming our own fears". From the start, "we believed in our vision and were driven by our hearts. But because we didn't start with a traditional straight-line business plan, persuading others in the business and financial community to come along with us, especially male counterparts, was not always easy. But we have shown what can be achieved through our organic feminine approach, and support has continued to grow."

Transforming discriminatory social norms: A task of all genders

A study by Drury and Kaiser (2014) explained the importance of men's involvement in tackling sexism: "Although men are less likely than women to recognize sexism, male allies possess psychological belief systems that allow them to overcome barriers to seeing sexism and thus recognize the unfair treatment of women…relative to women who confront sexism, men who act as allies are evaluated more positively, while their confrontations are taken as more serious and legitimate efforts to combat sexism." While disheartening that men's confrontations were seen as more legitimate, this is an important call to action for men's mobilization. Many interviewees also noted this sentiment. For *Nazma Akter*, in Bangladesh, the support of some men in the union movement and community has been important in her role as a union leader within a predominantly female workforce. "They can provide important links with other men who are working for changes in the lives of poor workers and their communities," she said. "There is a need for collective actions to sensitize male counterparts and create a conducive environment and opportunities for women's participation." *Habiba Sarabi*, in Afghanistan, also highlighted the importance of winning and expanding male allies. "Men are raised to be kings in our society, so this can be a challenge. We have to be patient and strategic

Raushan Sarsembayeva

and think about how to remove obstacles in ways that bring people with us."

One implication of women's activism can be male resistance. A 2010 qualitative study on male anti-violence strategies concluded that those that allow men to "see themselves reflected in anti-violence movements and help men make personal, emotional connections to the issue of violence" are most effective (Casey, 2010). The importance of engaging with men was reinforced for *Adimaimalaga Tafuna'i*, in Samoa, when speaking about how male resistance became a factor in the work of Women in Business Development to support village women earning independent incomes through mat production. Their work was seen as a threat by some male family members, and there were increased cases of domestic violence. When the value of what women were doing became clear because of the Women in Business Development's engagement with men in the community, male behaviour changed. *Zolzaya Batkhuyag*, in Mongolia, explained that supporting men to work with other men is a focus of Women for Change, including through "men for change" workshops that encourage young men to reflect on masculinity in Mongolian society and see gender equality not as a women's issue but as something that benefits everybody. Batkhuyag noted that the "real man" image that is still prevalent is a harmful stereotype that makes changing behaviours more difficult.

Engaging with men, particularly the young combatants who took up arms during Bougainville's civil war remains a priority for *Helen Hakena* and her colleagues in the Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency. Male advocates and counsellors are recruited, trained and sent back to their home villages to support people still traumatized by the conflict. When challenged by local men about the organization's focus on women in the conflict and since, a male advocate answered, "The leadership of these women is for everybody, not just women and girls." Hakena realized early in their campaign that involving men was vital to bringing about peace. "We began mobilization programmes for ex-combatants, helping them rehabilitate and lay down arms by making them aware of the impact of small arms and violence against women and providing counselling services. Former guerrillas are now working with us and talking to communities about the impact of violence on women. Our masculinity programmes encourage men and boys to change their behaviour and attitudes."

In summary

This final pathway, at the nexus of the informal and the systemic, underpins the other three pathways. Social norms often dictate the spaces and communities within which individuals find themselves; they shape the ways that gender is perceived, the way women are raised and resourced and the ways that laws are created.

As was shown in this section, discriminatory gender norms are often both hidden and pervasive, putting deeply rooted barriers in the way of women and girls emerging and developing as leaders. In one of their most external manifestations, social norms underlie violence against women and the backlash effect that arises from women trying to change the status quo. In one of their most internal manifestations, social norms often underlie feelings of internalized self-doubt or inferiority; these feelings often contribute to the imposter syndrome, even for women who have risen to high levels of prominence and influence. Because of the pervasive influence of discriminatory gender-based social norms, it is a task of all genders to tackle and unpack the stereotypes and other barriers that constrain women from accessing the same leadership opportunities.

This pathway must be at the centre of any strategies for substantive change, but it also presents many of the greatest challenges. All the pathways must work in synergy towards unravelling and transforming detrimental social norms and practices.

8

Maximizing the impact of leadership development training

> We live at a time when there are growing numbers of often disparate initiatives, all over the world and across many sectors, to build women's leadership capacities. What is much needed by women's leadership efforts globally is an underpinning and information base to bring together theory, practice and innovation in women's transformative leadership development.

Joanne Sandler, Senior Associate, Gender at Work and trainer in UN Women programme on transformative leadership

While none of the women interviewed for this study highlighted leadership development programmes as a factor in their own development, the majority are actively engaged in promoting training for others (especially young women), including through the organizations they have founded or co-founded. The ongoing commitment to creating opportunities for others' leadership is an element of transformative leadership.

This chapter focuses on leadership development programmes as a vehicle for promoting transformative women's leadership. In particular, it highlights good practices in the region and provides a case study of an initiative that has found success to date in utilizing many of these good practices. The goal is to show bright-spot findings – ones that provide a basis for enhanced impact by leadership training programmes across the region.

Regional training mapping highlights lessons and good practices

The ESCAP initial mapping of women's leadership training initiatives for this study revealed a diverse array of programmes and activities. These initiatives were run by governments, the United Nations, international agencies, bilateral official development assistance agencies, international and local NGOs, businesses, foundations, academic institutions and specialist providers (refer to Annex IV for a listing of training providers covered by the mapping). However, evaluations and other material revealed by the mapping also raised several concerns about the quality, sustainability and impact of these initiatives. In short, there should be more attention to:

- ensuring local ownership of programmes to ground them in the local context and better meet the long-term organizational needs;

- working with partners to articulate the theory of change[14] behind leadership development;

- trusting local participants to know what they need and have the capacity to absorb;

- supporting women in the spaces where they are already leaders;

- growing the pool of women leaders at the grass-roots level;

- valuing and supporting the role of informal associational engagement as a leadership pathway;

- facilitating appropriate links for emerging leaders in informal settings with leadership opportunities in formal (including electoral) settings;

- using appropriate approaches to foster leadership development, including peer-to-peer interaction, mentoring and coaching;

- developing capabilities to understand power dynamics and patterns of exclusion in any situation;

- promoting collective rather than individualized approaches (linking leadership development initiatives to communities and families);

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14 Such as framing the leadership development programme behind the following questions: What is the training seeking to change? How? Why?

- coordinating with other international agencies and partners to enhance shared learnings and impact.

Importantly, there also must be greater attention on programme evaluation and the dissemination of the findings. The benefits of such evaluations span well beyond the specific organization and their stakeholders; many other organizations piloting or using similar programmes could improve their own impact by using the feedback data of other organizations. Wider dissemination via online publications or conferences would be invaluable in improving programme quality overall.

Case study: Showcasing transformative leadership development in practice

Female Leadership Programme for female participants in joint worker and management committees[15] in garment export factories in Phnom Penh, Cambodia[16]

Implementing agency: Better Factories Cambodia programme, ILO, in partnership with UN Women, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Case study background

The case study serves as an example of women's transformative leadership development that addresses many of the issues highlighted in this report. The programme is a core component of the Better Factories Cambodia's strategy for engagement in the garment export sector, which is the country's largest source of formal employment and export earner. The workforce was approximately 650,000 in 2018, of whom 85 per

cent are women. The training methodology was adapted in shortened form from the UN Women's Cambodia Youth Leadership Academy, which advised on the programme design and trained the programme trainers and facilitators.

Importantly, the Better Factories longstanding programme in Cambodia's garment sector promotes the creation of bipartite (employer and worker) committees in an increasing number of garment export factories (more than 160 in March 2019). These provide a platform for increased cooperation in identifying and addressing problems in the workplace. However, experience indicates that, in practice, the impact of gender norms, power dynamics and other factors inhibit the voice and participation of female participants. The Female Leadership Programme was specifically established to strengthen women's leadership, voice and representation within the committees. At the time of the focus group discussion and interviews which provide an important part of this case study, 21 factories and 84 participants had taken part in the programme.

The programme is structured around two in-depth training workshops. The first is a two-day foundation workshop that introduces gender analysis; explores power as it affects individual lives and as a resource that women can draw on; and develops skills in problem analysis. By the end of the workshop, each factory group agrees on what steps they will take to apply their learning and tackle an issue in their workplace. This workshop focuses on developing individual self-awareness, strengthening confidence and skills and laying foundations for ongoing peer support and solidarity. A follow-up one-day workshop four to six weeks later provides an opportunity for sharing and reflection on the actions taken after the first training. Inter alia, it supports individual and collective problem solving to strengthen future action and collaboration.

Lessons from participant feedback

Six participants from Phnom Penh garment factories joined a focus group as part of this study to share the learning they had gained from the training to date, as well as the impacts on their life at work and at home. Several themes stood out:

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15 Known as Performance Improvement Consultative Committees and established formally under the Better Factories Cambodia programme in the country's garment export sector.

16 A full description of the case study, including focus group outcomes and interviews with ILO and UN Women trainers and programme staff, can be accessed on https://www.unescap.org/resources/life-journeys-transformative-leaders-interview-summaries-report-pathways-influence.

A safe and trusting environment opens the way for collective learning and support.

"When I first opened the door to go into the training, I saw only women in the room. I thought, I can finally talk about issues as a woman in a safe place – about my husband, men in general, all the things I had been keeping inside myself for so many years."

A sense of self-worth provides a foundation of effective leadership.

"Before the training, I saw myself as a girl with low education and no value to others. After the training, I came to see myself as a person with value. I realize now that I can make a difference. I can help make change. I can communicate. I can add value at work and at home. I have found my confidence. I know who I am and can become a better person and leader."

Core skills, such as listening, power analysis, problem solving, constructive feedback and communication, can be learned and really make a difference.

"I learned to listen and give constructive feedback. I also used to be aggressive, not listen and get into 'lose-lose' situations. I now understand that mutual respect and listening are important to be a good leader."

Leadership and change don't stop at the factory door.

"My personal life is now quite different after the training. My husband never helped with any household chores. I did everything on my own as well as working full time to earn money for my family. The training helped me to understand this as a gender issue – not as the job I was born to in life. As a result, I gained confidence to discuss these issues with my husband and eventually persuaded him to do the laundry at home. He came to see that I have a paid job, and we need to share the work at home. This helps me be active as a leader in my workplace."

Leadership includes valuing others and appreciating diversity.

"The training helped me understand that workers have different histories and backgrounds and make different decisions in their lives. It is important to respect and value this."

Part of transformative leadership is opening opportunities for others.

"I have shared the training with the line supervisors I am responsible for and, through them, with the workers on the line. I want to share what I have learned with others who have never had the same opportunity. That way we can all benefit and be leaders together."

Success factors for leadership training

The participants in the Cambodia case study and the transformative women leaders who were interviewed highlighted many of the same foundational factors that make leadership development trainings successful. The following covers a few of the main corroborated findings.

For the Cambodia case study participants, the women-only environment, which was a new experience, created a safe environment for open discussion and learning. This sense was highlighted also by a study carried out by the Gender, Peace and Security Programme Studies at Monash University in Australia. Initial findings indicate that young women are often overlooked in programmes and research and have developed distinctive leadership styles. Young women interviewed by the study further prioritized peer leadership approaches in which they support one another to be leaders and believe that the success of one benefits the others. In this sense, leadership is a shared journey that can be most effective when spaces are created in which young women can support each other, share knowledge and experiences and discuss collective approaches to addressing issues they face (Lee-Koo and Pruitt, 2017). *Zolzaya Batkhuyag* emphasized the value of collective women's leadership development when she explained, "The platform we have created through Women for Change in Mongolia allows women to come together to express themselves and support each other in whichever areas they are active and interested. It is a space where young women especially can learn and practise leadership together. Constant reflection and evaluation is an important part of our culture."

For case study participants and interviewees, the grounding of training in their everyday cultural experience was another important success factor. For organizers like *Pansy Tun Thein*, in Myanmar, leadership development programmes must make "use of local trainers, local languages and the involvement of potential women leaders from all walks of life so that they can serve as leaders at all levels." *Imrana Jalal*, in Fiji, similarly observed that "in the Pacific context, it is vital to respect cultural forms and protocols while influencing the substance to retain respect and avoid being

Box 7   YWCA women's leadership programme links community focus with regional networking and learning

The Mobilising Young Women's Leadership and Advocacy in Asia and the Pacific Project brings together a strong local community focus across 10 countries with the sharing of lessons and good practices via a network of peer educators at the regional level. Led and facilitated by the Pacific Young Women's Leadership Alliance, in partnership with the YWCA, the initiative spans Bangladesh, Fiji, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

Initially piloted by the YWCA Solomon Islands in 2010 as a four-day leadership workshop for young women aged 15–30 years, the initiative has since evolved into a peer educator-run programme in which participants become peer educators and lead workshops in their own communities. Its core purpose is to empower young women to be leaders, decision-makers and change agents, responding to the issues affecting their lives and communities as well as contributing at every level – local, national, regional and global – towards young women's engagement in the sustainable development agenda. The specific objectives of the project in this context are to ensure that young women:

- are knowledgeable and skilled in leading positive change in their communities by sharing information with their peers in the areas of human rights, sexual and reproductive health and rights, violence against women and girls and gender;

- become the driving force in influencing women's rights policies, leading change, setting national priorities for young women's leadership and realizing human rights in the context of shared, transformative intergenerational leadership; and

- create and sustain new partnerships, networks and coalitions at the community, national, regional and global levels to lead the representation of issues affecting young women's rights in sexual and reproductive health and rights and violence against women and girls.

The initiative specifically focuses on young women's leadership: They are at a time of transition in their lives, and are increasingly vulnerable to pervasive gender-based discrimination, violence and prejudice as they begin sexual relationships; engage in employment, study and productive activity; and marry and/or have children.

Being grounded in the local context is key to success

Through the training and mentoring of peer coordinators who work with young women in their own communities and have extensive engagement with community leaders, the initiative is strongly grounded in a locally owned approach and highly contextualized to each location. While drawing on many strong community role models within the YWCA network, the initiative also provides access to a global network of powerful women leaders who can support young women in their leadership development and advocacy efforts.

The YWCA's long history of international training of young women has repeatedly shown that this early investment will see young women move into positions of power and influence later in life across all sectors and institutions. To date, the Asia-Pacific initiative has developed the capacities of more than 500 young women leaders to claim their rights and hold others to account on issues affecting their lives and communities.

Source: Information provided by Juli Dugdale, World YWCA (see http://www.worldywca.org/ for more information).

isolated in the community". Change must come from the context of the community.

The Cambodian case study participants also discussed the importance of understanding gender and power dynamics – lessons that apply as deeply to personal life as they do to the workplace. This issue was also highlighted by the Huairou Commission, which drew on its extensive worldwide experience of leadership development to emphasize the importance of grass-roots collective organizing as a means of empowerment and promoting leadership which is inclusive, transparent and accountable to the community. Key to the Commission's approach is the valuing of local knowledge and empowering local women to engage on "their own terms" with the "power holders" in local and national government as well as other spheres" (Bagasao and Sofjan, 2017). Likewise, the regional training mapping and international literature review indicated that, while international partner or donor support is a major factor in many leadership development initiatives, the often short-term and one-off nature of such support can undermine the continuity, effectiveness, relevance and impact of interventions. It can also impose power from outside of the community that demotes local ownership and programme agency.

Particularly when thinking about external stakeholders and potential power differentials, it is important to consider programme longevity. The participants in the Cambodian leadership training case study appreciated the ability to apply their learning through practical step-by-step change over time in the workplace based on collective action plans, mutual support and follow-up feedback and analysis. The importance of continuity and reinforcement of leadership development was reinforced by *Pansy Tun Thein*, in Myanmar, who observed that leadership development is a long-term process. "It works better if the participants have an opportunity to practise what they have learned. This is best done through the provision of iterative trainings. Trainings without ongoing practice could bring about negative results." Thein's response also underscores one of the strengths of the Better Factories Cambodia programme: the collective mutual learning approach (the trainers were also openly learning from the experience and adapting their approaches to make a mutual learning environment). The iterative trainings allow for collective approaches,

whereby both the facilitators and the participants provide feedback over time to strengthen mutual learning and development. This also sheds light on the importance of having quality trainings for the facilitators to enhance their responsiveness to the needs of the group.

The case study participants also reinforced the importance of a sense of community and broader networks through mutual support arrangements within and across factories, including by setting up social media groups. The networking connection between local and international is particularly important for *Nazma Akter*, in Bangladesh, whose leadership development for women has stayed at the grass-roots and factory floor, where the issues are sharpest, even as her own leadership influence and profile grew at home and abroad. Her organizations, Sommilito Garment Sramik Federation and the AWAJ Foundation, have centred on the development of grass-roots women leaders: "We provide support and training through on-the-job support, mentoring, the use of role-plays, giving responsibility in the workplace and the community and providing access to informal education. This begins with small groups and expands, small, step by step, linking with bigger movements in Bangladesh and internationally."

Finally, some interviewees highlighted the importance of early access to leadership opportunities for young women and girls, especially those who are beginning to engage in broader social and public processes. This can take place in formal educational settings as well as in the context of informal opportunities, such as sports, community groups and faith-based groups. *Raushan Sarsembayeva*, in Kazakhstan, discussed lessons she learned while leading a youth programme with the Association of Business Women of Kazakhstan: "Young people are the most active part of society, reacting quickly to any changes in life and effectively perceiving the most advanced technologies. We can therefore say that young people have much more potential and ability than other age groups. Involving them in leadership will help in the formation of a more developed and competitive generation to come."

The Cambodia case study participants and trainers discussed how they wanted more longitudinal training. The importance of continuity and extended development was highlighted by *Zhang Haidi*. Before she became the chairwoman of the China

Box 8   Myanmar Women's Leadership Programme develops pool of community leaders

Implemented jointly in 2015–2016 by Myanmar's Gender Equality Network and the Centre for Creative Leadership, the Women's Leadership Programme was underpinned by a vision of transformative leadership and drew on the network's diverse membership. A core of 16 trainers reached some 670 people nationwide through more than 28 workshops, almost half outside of Yangon and in several languages. The participants were mainly women leaders of local NGOs, civil society and community-based organizations at the village level, but they also included leaders of political parties and women in business.

Careful preparation was a critical element in the programme's success. This included a national NGO-led study of the status and challenges of women's leadership in Myanmar; the selection of organizations and trainers to participate, based on their ability to reach out at the community level; and a comprehensive eight-day training of trainers.

The training curriculum and trainer toolkit were based on a research model that spanned self-empowerment, developing capacity to develop others, self-clarity, authenticity, agency, making connections and mentoring. The programme resources included core Centre for Creative Leadership content in such areas as social identity, leadership personas, mindset, mental models, emotional intelligence, feedback, influence and coaching skills. With the Gender Equality Network input and advice, all were tailored to the Myanmar context, including its diverse cultures and languages.

During follow-up sessions, the core community of trainers strengthened their mutual support relations and shared lessons, ideas and innovations. In many cases, they partnered to leverage resources and networks to deliver ongoing training and mentoring. The approaches of the first round of trainings were modified for use with young people, persons with disabilities and villagers without previous experience. The training tools and experience were further adapted for use in specific areas, such as violence against women, accountability and community management.

Source: Interview with Pansy Tun Thein, National Adviser to GEN and Executive Director of the Local Resource Centre in Yangon, June 2017; Gender Equality Network and Centre for Creative Leadership, *Developing women who lead change: A train-the-trainer methodology to foster women's leadership development in Myanmar* (Yangon, 2015).

Disabled Persons' Federation, Zhang had already shown her leadership qualities as a health worker in the countryside. Leadership is not something you are born with, she said. "It needs time to form and cultivate, building continuously even on small experiences, such as encouraging rural patients to take their medicine." Zhang's leadership approach has continued to develop over more than 30 years of engagement with the rights of persons with disabilities, at home and abroad.

In summary

Approached in the right way, leadership development programmes can provide an important vehicle for promoting transformative women's leadership. Leadership development success factors highlighted from experience across the region can be summed up by five "c" words: **clarity** – of purpose, approach and outcomes; **context** – grounded in local ownership, culture and priorities; **continuity** – developing leadership over time; **community** – growing the pool of grass-roots leaders; and **collective** – leading together, mutual support and harnessing combined talents and skills. International organizations and government as well as non-government organizations, are vital for the support they give through women's leadership development programmes across Asia and the Pacific. The application in practice of these five elements will be critical to the success of their engagement.

Conclusion and recommendations: Wholesale, rapid and radical change

> ❝ We need to redouble our efforts to protect and promote women's rights, dignity and leadership. We must not give ground that has been won over decades, and we must push for wholesale, rapid and radical change. ❞

António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General in his message for International Women's Day, 7 March 2019

The twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 provides a timely opportunity to revisit progress made on its commitment to eliminating gender disparities in leadership and decision-making. Unless global commitments to gender equality in leadership and decision-making are achieved, progress in achieving the Beijing Platform in its entirety will be held back.

Although women are challenging boundaries in all spheres of society across Asia and the Pacific, there is still much progress to be made on women's leadership. Such factors as rapid urbanization, growing affluence, higher female education levels and lower birth rates have enabled more women to access the labour market (albeit in the context of persistent gender pay gaps and occupational gender stereo-typing). As a result, more women are entering the workforce better qualified than ever before. These trends are reinforced by an increasing acceptance of women's economic empowerment across Asia and the Pacific. At the same time, there has been incremental, although highly uneven, growth across the region in the number of women in formal politics, public administration and senior business roles. Myriad factors still constrain leadership opportunities for women, despite developments and gradually shifting attitudes. These factors span family, community and society more broadly, in both informal and formal spheres. Because conventional development factors, such as gross domestic product, education and labour force participation are not necessarily predictors for women's participation in leadership, the picture is complicated.

This report pushes beyond the representation of women in leadership positions per se and evaluates the importance of quality and impact, focusing on the importance of women's transformative leadership. In this context, the study found that:

- Achieving the transformative change embodied in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires transformative leadership by women and men.

- The full potential of women's transformative leadership remains unrealized due to the barriers that women face in emerging as leaders in their communities and wider societies. Many of these barriers stem from systemic discrimination and social norms.

- Achieving gender parity in leadership in all spheres demands intensified attention, but overall progress remains slow, even where temporary special measures have been introduced.

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- Beyond the numbers, transformative leadership approaches amplify the impact of women in leadership and open new opportunities for community engagement.

- Independent women's organizing is a factor in driving transformative change. Associational life and women's networks are important incubators for the development of transformative women leaders.

- Research and data gaps hinder the development of policy and measures to expand opportunities for women to emerge as transformative leaders. More attention should be placed on collecting and disseminating new qualitative and quantitative findings.

- Four core elements of women's transformative leadership can be drawn from the experiences of the transformative women leader interviewees and existing literature: self, sharing, strategies and structure. Each of these embodies an orientation to understanding and shifting power dynamics in favour of those who are "most left behind" at the individual, collective, institutional, economic, social, political and cultural levels.

- Four strategic pathways stand out as influential in the leadership journeys of transformative women leaders; the pathways arise directly from the four quadrants of the domains of change framework, which this study used to examine women's transformative leadership. The four pathways are:

  - Ensuring opportunities for women and girls to develop the individual consciousness and capabilities that will help orient them to participate in society and leadership.

  - Ensuring equal and full access to resources and opportunities through education, associational life and economic empowerment.

  - Reshaping and leveraging the legal frameworks, formal policies and rules that underlie the gender dynamics of societies and institutions globally, nationally and locally.

  - Transforming discriminatory gender-based social norms that exclude women and girls from opportunities to emerge and be influential as leaders in all spheres.

As highlighted by the interviewees for this study, the role of United Nations Member States in ensuring that an enabling environment exists for the promotion, emergence and development of women's leadership in all spheres of society is critical. Several priority areas for government action stood out from the interviewees' responses. These included policies and measures to eliminate gender bias in education and develop girls' leadership skills; ensure the availability of quality and affordable childcare services; promote gender-responsive budgeting; eliminate violence against women and girls; develop safe and women-friendly infrastructure and transportation systems; promote women's economic empowerment and financial inclusion; increase labour market participation; expand opportunities for participation in political life at all levels and promote gender equality champions and role models, including through appointments to senior government positions.

In the context of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2020 and drawing on the urgent call of António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General, for "wholesale, rapid and radical change", this study aimed to contribute to the diverse public and private efforts across Asia and the Pacific to ensure that women and girls have full and equal opportunity to emerge and be influential as transformative leaders in the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

Summary of recommendations

To build on and add momentum to existing commitments by United Nations Member States, the following recommendations, where relevant, reflect:

- resolutions of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (60 and 61);

- resolutions from the Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Beijing+20 Review 17–20 November 2014, Bangkok;

● the ESCAP Regional Road Map for Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific; and

● recommendations of the United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment (2016–2017).

●

Ensure opportunities for women and girls to develop the individual consciousness and capabilities that help shape their orientation to participation in society and leadership.

For governments…

1 Enact and promote family-friendly policies, legislation, regulations and measures, including the provision of quality, accessible and affordable childcare services and elder care services that enable the balancing of family and work obligations, access to decent work for all and gender equality in meeting unpaid care and household responsibilities.

For governments…

2 Ratify and implement the ILO Convention on Workers with Family Responsibilities, 1981 (No. 156), its accompanying Recommendation No. 165, and the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183) to support women and men workers with family responsibilities to exercise their right to engage, participate and advance in employment without discrimination.

For governments and other actors…

3 Enact and promote parenting programmes and universal early childhood development programmes that can help shift gender roles and relations within families and create an enabling environment for women and girls to grow.

For governments and other actors…

4 Promote and reinforce positive role modelling of women leaders at the regional, national and community levels across all sectors, accompanied by leadership and mentorship programmes for women in all spheres, including economic, social and public life, media, education and in the context of elections and political parties.

●

Ensure equal and full access to resources and opportunities through formal education, economic empowerment and participation in associational life in society.

For governments…

5 Institute policy and regulatory measures to ensure (i) full and equal rights for women to ownership and control of land and other productive resources; (ii) financial autonomy and inclusion; (iii) and access to an enabling environment and resources for entrepreneurship development.

For governments and other actors…

6 Eliminate gender bias in education and training curricula and approaches, including through

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i.   gender-sensitive policies and programmes;

ii. gender balanced promotion of occupational options (including science and technology);

iii. the modelling of gender-balanced behaviours, leadership and management within educational institutions;

iv. the promotion of role models, mentors and champions for girls in all areas;

v.   ensuring opportunities for girls to participate in extracurricular activity; and

vi. addressing harmful traditional practices and issues of risk and vulnerability wherever necessary; and,

vii. providing leadership training opportunities, learning and mentoring for girls.

For governments and other actors…

7 Establish, promote and support measures, including gender quotas, to increase the number of women in business leadership roles at all levels, including in senior management roles and through positions on corporate boards and associations.

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Reshape and leverage the legal frameworks, formal policies and rules that underlie the gender dynamics of societies and institutions globally, nationally and locally.

For governments…

8 Take measures to ensure women's full, equal and effective participation in all fields and leadership at all levels of decision-making in public, social, economic and political life and in all aspects of implementation and monitoring of the SDGs, including through:

i.   temporary special measures as appropriate at the national and subnational levels, such as mandatory and/or voluntary electoral and political party quotas;

ii. effective implementation of gender-responsive budgeting as a proven tool for ensuring that gender equality is at the centre of government decision-making and services; and

iii. introduction of policies, programmes and services in critical areas, such as education, health, employment, pay equity, migration, disability, quality childcare, elder care and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

For governments and other actors…

9 Ensure the protection and expansion of civic space, within which civil society organizations – from women's groups to trade unions – can be effective as advocates and facilitators of public engagement as well as incubators of women's leadership. Encourage and support women's leadership in civil society organizations at all levels, including trade unions and workers' organizations. Protect the rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining for women workers, including informal and migrant workers, through ratification and implementation of the ILO Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98) the ILO Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), the ILO Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) and the new ILO Convention, 2019 (No. 190) and Recommendation (No. 206) concerning the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work.

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Transform discriminatory gender-based social norms that exclude women and girls from opportunities to emerge and be influential as leaders in all spheres.

For governments and other actors…

10 Address the constraining impacts of gender-based social norms on women's leadership opportunities and pathways by pursuing

measures in partnership with women's organizations and networks to:

i.   implement international commitments under CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the SDGs (particularly SDG 5.5) and other relevant instruments to ensuring full, equal and effective participation by women in leadership and decision-making roles in all sectors and at all levels of society;

ii.   address all discriminatory manifestations of such social norms, including in the following areas: (a) access to quality and inclusive education and training; (b) access to and control of productive assets; (c) labour market policies and practices; (d) gender-based violence and trafficking, including violence against women in leadership roles in any sphere; (e) the unequal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work; (f) discriminatory gender stereotypes; and (g) sexual and reproductive health and rights, including early and child marriage;

iii.   raise public awareness and understanding of the impact of such norms, including through public education, education curricula and promoting female and male role models; and

iv.   promote engagement of men and boys in regional, national and community dialogue and initiatives to counter discriminatory norms and stereotypes and support women's leadership in all spheres and levels of society.

●
Strengthen the impact of women's leadership programmes.

For governments and other actors…

11 Promote approaches to women's leadership development in all areas (social, economic and political) that emphasize:

i.   local ownership, being grounded in the local context and frameworks,

and strengthening long-term core organizational and training capacities;

ii.   articulating the theory of change behind leadership development approaches;

iii.   trusting local partners and participants to know what they need and that they have capacity to absorb;

iv.   supporting women in the community and organizational contexts where they already have a leadership role;

v.   growing the pool of women leaders at the grass-roots and community level;

vi.   valuing and supporting the role of informal associational engagement as a leadership pathway;

vii.   facilitating appropriate links for emerging leaders in informal settings with leadership opportunities in formal (including electoral) processes and institutions;

viii. using appropriate approaches to foster leadership development, including peer-to-peer interaction, mentoring, sponsoring and coaching;

ix.   developing skills for analysis of power dynamics as a core capability and part of continuous learning;

x.   promoting collective rather than individualized approaches, including linking leadership development initiatives to communities and families;

xi.   encourage current leaders (women and men) to maximize the influence of their roles to support emerging women leaders;

xii.   strengthening coordination with other international agencies and partners to enhance synergies, shared learnings and impact; and

xiii. delinking leadership development from electoral cycles to enable deeper and longer-term learning.

Address data gaps and prioritize ongoing research.

For governments, national statistics offices and other actors…

12 Collaboratively prioritize the application of resources and attention to addressing data gaps in Asia and the Pacific in the following areas:

i. female and male time-use patterns;

ii. women's ownership of land and other productive resources;

iii. women's decision-making at all levels of political, economic and public life, starting from the family level;

iv. the specific impacts over time of temporary special measures in national and subnational formal political arenas;

v. the status of women's leadership in specific areas, including local governance in all its diverse forms, the business sector, civil society (including trade unions), science, technology and customary society.

For governments, national statistics offices and other actors…

13 Collaboratively prioritize the application of resources and quantitative and qualitative research efforts in the following areas:

i. the factors in society that are likely to contribute most to ensuring the space and opportunities for girls and women to emerge and be influential as transformative leaders in all spheres;

ii. the role of public policy, administration and implementation in opening and protecting such space and opportunities;

iii. the nature and qualities of informal and formal pathways to women's transformative leadership, how they intersect and the enablers and constraints;

iv. the capabilities that women require to meaningfully engage and translate presence into influence;

v. the links between women's economic empowerment (including ownership of assets) and increased voice, decision-making and leadership in all spheres, including links between women leaders in labour institutions and the progressive closing of gender gaps in the world of work;

vi. the links between women's participation in local governance and leadership at the national and international levels in all spheres;

vii. the long-term impacts on gender equality of quotas and electoral laws and systems;

viii. the links between women's individual and collective leadership development and practice, and how social accountability plays out in this context; and

ix. the enablers and conditions that influence male engagement on gender equality.

Zolzaya Batkhuyag

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Annex I

Details of current and past achievements and roles of women leaders that feature in the report *"Pathways to Influence: Promoting the Role of Women's Transformative Leadership to Achieve the SDGs in Asia and the Pacific"*

Name	Current and past achievements
Adimaimalaga Tafuna'i (Samoa) "Every setback is an opportunity."	Co-founder and Executive Director of Samoa's Women in Business Development in 1991 and has led the organization for more than 20 years. Recipient of the global award for economic empowerment from Vital Voices Global Partnership in 2012, presented at the Kennedy Centre in Washington, D.C. Member of the Order of Samoa, December 2014. One of the initiators of the Pacific Organic Ethical Trade Community and has assisted other Pacific organizations in becoming organically certified and negotiated their inclusion in world markets. Former Chair of the Pacific Island Association of Non-Governmental Organizations. Civil society representative at the World Economic Forum in 2014–2017.
Byatshandaa Jargal (Mongolia) "There are always lessons in your experience that can make you stronger."	Founder and President of the Mongolian Women Farmers Association, a volunteer-led NGO. Recipient of the Women's World Summit Foundation Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life, in 2003, for combating malnutrition. Nominated for the 2005 Nobel Peace Prize as part of the 1,000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize project. Holds a Master of Science in Agronomy from the University in Hovt, Mongolia.
Habiba Sarabi (Afghanistan) "We are working to change the culture of violence to a culture of peace."	One of the Deputy Chairpersons of the Afghan High Peace Council. Adviser on Women's Affairs and Youth to Afghanistan Government Chief Executive Officer. Afghanistan's first woman provincial governor from 2005 to 2013. Former Minister of Women's Affairs. Former General Manager of the Afghan Institute of Learning in Peshawar. Former Vice-President of Humanitarian Assistance for the Women and Children of Afghanistan. Named Time magazine's Hero of the Environment in 2008. Recipient of the Ramon Magsaysay Award in 2013 in recognition of services and good governance (considered Asia's Nobel Prize).

Name	Current and past achievements
Haidi Zhang (China) "Even if the wings are broken, the heart is soaring."	Chair of China Disabled Persons' Federation since 2008.
	President of Rehabilitation International, an almost century-old NGO that empowers people with disabilities and provides sustainable solutions towards achieving a more inclusive society.
	Executive President of Beijing Organizing Committee of the 2022 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.
	Member of the Standing Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.
	Member of the National Committee of the Chinese Writers' Association.
	Asia-Pacific Disability Rights Champions Award in 2012.
	Honorary Doctorate, York University, UK in 2013.
	Honorary Doctorate, University of Massachusetts, Boston, USA in 2015.
	Nationally renowned role model and author.
Helen Hakena (Papua New Guinea: Autonomous Region of Bougainville) "What keeps me going now is how our women continue to struggle for peace and security in their homes as well as in our country."	Co-founder and Executive Director of the Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, established to help restore peace to the civil war-torn island after a 10-year civil war (1988–1998).
	Recipient of the Millennium Peace Prize Award for Leitana Nehan Women's Development Agency on 8 March 2001.
	Runner-up for the 2004 Pacific Human Rights Award.
	One of the 1,000 women nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005.
	Trained as a school teacher at Kabaleo Teachers' College, Bougainville and worked as a primary school teacher for 15 years
Imrana Jalal (Fiji) "It is vital to respect cultural forms and protocols while influencing the substance…"	Selected as one of the Pacific's 70 inspiring women by the Pacific Community.
	Chair (from December 2018) of the Inspection Panel of the World Bank and a Vice-President at the World Bank in Washington, D.C.
	Former principal gender specialist at the Asian Development Bank in Manila.
	Commissioner on the Geneva-based International Commission of Jurists since 2006.
	Co-founder and current Executive Board member of the Fiji Women's Rights Movement.
	Former Commissioner on the Fiji Human Rights Commission, which she co-established.
	Fiji Law Reform Commissioner and architect of Fiji's Family Law Act.
	Co-founder and former human rights adviser to the Pacific Regional Rights Resource Team.
	Holds a Bachelor of Laws and a Master of Laws from the University of Auckland in New Zealand and a Master of Arts in Gender Studies from the University of Sydney, Australia.

Name	Current and past achievements
Jeannie Javelosa (Philippines) "Doing what we are truly meant to do in our lives."	Co-founder of the pioneering and multi-awarded Philippines retail store and social enterprise ECHOstore Sustainable Lifestyle and ECHOsi Foundation (ECHO means Environment, Community, Hope, Organization). Prime motivator behind the GREAT Women brand, an advocacy-driven marketing platform that supports women's economic empowerment through a regional supply chain within the ASEAN region. Founding President, now Chair of the Business and Professional Women Network Makati, Manila. Co-founder and Board member of the 20-year award-winning agency, EON Group, recognized by the 2014 Sabre Awards Asia Pacific as the South-East Asia Consultancy of the Year. Recipient of GoNegosyo Outstanding Women Entrepreneur, in 2018 (Enabler category), Manila. 2018 Outstanding ASEAN Women Entrepreneur, given by the ASEAN Women Entrepreneur Network in Bangkok. Award-winning artist and printmaker, with 20 solo exhibitions to her name. Recipient of the Manila Critics Award for coffee table books; the most recent book is entitled The Feminine Rising: The Awakening of GREAT Women, published by the EON Foundation. Women Beyond Borders: The Beginning of GREAT Women in ASEAN was published by USAYS in 2017. Holds a Masters of Fine Arts from the University of Pennsylvania, USA.
Logeswary Ponniah (Sri Lanka) "There is nothing that women can't do, especially when they support each other."	Programme Coordinator of the Human Development Organization, an NGO that works with poor and marginalized communities in the plantations and rural areas of Sri Lanka, with programmes on the rights, livelihoods and participation in society of Dalit communities, including through building capabilities for self-reliance and self-management. Secretary General of Women Solidarity Front. Steering committee member of the Asian Rural Women's Coalition. Member the national platform of Mother and Daughter Sri Lanka. Member of the Asia Dalit Rights Forum. Director and Board member of the Asia Team of the International Alliance Against All Forms of Racial Discrimination.
Malika Virdi (India) "A leader is like a wave that rises when its time comes and subsides to make way for the next."	Women's rights campaigner for more than 35 years on dowry extortion, violence against women and girls, forced sterilization of women, sexual and reproductive health and rights, access to non-formal education, access to sustainable livelihoods, the impacts of hydroelectric dam development on women's interests and opportunities to participate in decision-making and leadership at all levels. Elected head of her village forest council (van panchayat) for seven years (2003–2010) and re-elected in January 2018 for another five-year term. One of 1,000 women nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005. Holds a Master of Arts in Social Sciences and Master of Philosophy from Delhi University.

Name	Current and past achievements
Manohari Doss (India) "When people start to speak up for rights and have respect for themselves…this is exciting and rewarding."	Co-founder of the Institute for Self Management with her late husband, Edward Doss, in 1982. The Institute includes the Women Development Resource Centre and the Tamil Nadu Labourers Union. Both programmes work with Tamil Nadu Dalit (untouchable) and hill tribe (indigenous) women and their families. Active member of Tamil Nadu regional women's alliances at the national level. Recipient of a Laureate prize from the Women's World Summit Foundation in Geneva, in 2000. Subject of a 2004 documentary on the work of the Women Development Resource Centre. State-level convener of the Tamil Nadu Social Action Movement, which involves about 1,000 NGOs. Holds a Bachelor of Science in Social Work from Gandhigram Rural Institute in Gandhigram, India.
Maria Fides Bagasao (Philippines) "Learn from, trust and value the knowledge and capacities of those who are excluded."	Grass-roots community organizer in the Philippines since the late 1970s, supporting rural and urban poor communities to develop independent people's organizations and coalitions as well as serving as a trainer for young community organizers. Served since 2010 in the Coordinating Council of the global Huairou Commission. Served as Executive Committee member of the Huairou Commission, 2014–2017. Currently adviser for the Huairou Commission Asia Regional Coordinating Council. Co-founder and former Board member of Asian NGO Center. Served as Executive Board member for Urban Poor Associates. Served as Executive of the Leaders and Organizers of Community Organizations in Asia, based in Seoul, Republic of Korea and Quezon City, Philippines. Co-founder and former Executive Director of Community Organizers Multiversity, a capacity-building institution for training organizers to support the establishment of independent people's organizations. Named 2005 Outstanding Citizen of the Philippines Province of Nueva Ecija for Community Organizing. Holds a Master of Arts in Sociology and a Bachelor of Science in Social Work from the University of the Philippines, Diliman. Recipient of fellowships for certificate courses from the Asian Institute of Management, in 1995, and Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, in 2007.

Name	Current and past achievements
Nazma Akter (Bangladesh) "Nothing can stop my work to achieve my dream of a safe workplace and equal opportunities for all…"	Founder and President of Sommilito Garments Sramik Federation, a union with more than 70,000 garment workers as members, mainly women. Co-chair of the IndustriALL Global Union women's committee for the Asia-Pacific region. Founder, General Secretary and Executive Director of AWAJ Foundation, a grass-roots NGO delivering training on Bangladeshi labour laws, personal health, hygiene and occupational health and safety to thousands of female garment workers in Dhaka and Chittagong. Attended the fourth Annual Summit of Global Female Leaders. Attended the fourth Annual Summit of Global Female Leaders.
Pansy Tun Thein (Myanmar) "We shared a common vision and commitment, learned together and supported each other."	Founding member and former Co-Chair of the Gender Equality Network. Currently National Adviser to the Gender Equality Network and executive director of the Local Resource Centre. Formerly Assistant Representative of the United Nations Population Fund Myanmar, from 2000 to 2012. Holds a Master in Public Health from Walden University, USA; a Graduate Diploma in Library Science from the University of North Carolina, USA; and a Bachelor of Science in Social Work from the University of the Philippines.
Raushan Sarsembayeva (Kazakhstan) "I advise women to take initiative and be active, not to fear to realize their own ideas."	Founder and President of the Association of Business Women of Kazakhstan. Member of the National Commission for Women, Family and Demographic Policy under the President of Kazakhstan. Holds a Doctorate of Sociology from Narxoz University in Kazakhstan. Author of some 100 analytical works on gender issues.
Somsook Boonyabancha (Thailand) "We need to create new political spaces and empower women with the finances and knowledge that can allow them to take more ownership over the processes that influence their lives."	Chairperson and former Secretary-General of the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights, which promotes urban community-driven upgrading and development that is bringing about changes to more than 200 cities in 15 countries in Asia and the Pacific. Former Director of the Community Organizations Development Institute, which pioneered a national community upgrading Baan Mankong Collective Housing Program. The initiative has been internationally recognized for transforming how the issue of urban development is addressed, shifting away from an ad hoc welfare approach to a more structural issue. Former Secretary-General of the Human Settlement Foundation, Thailand. Chair of the Sub-Commission on Security Housing and former adviser of the Crown Property Bureau. Holds a Bachelor of Architecture from Faculty of Architecture at Chulalongkorn University, Thailand and a Master of Housing and Urbanization from the School of Architecture of the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Name	Current and past achievements
Tri Rismaharini (Indonesia) Politics should be about providing welfare and the tools for fair treatment in society."	Elected first female mayor of Surabaya, Indonesia's second-largest city. Re-elected in 2015. Former head of Surabaya Program Controlling Division and Surabaya Landscape and Cleanliness Department. In 2015, named among the world's 50 greatest leaders by US business magazine Fortune. Nominated for the 2014 World Mayor Prize. Recipient of Women Leader Award by Globe Asia in 2012. One of 10 Inspiring Women Award 2013 recipients from Forbes Indonesia. Recipient of the 2013 Kalpataru Award, a national award for preserving the environment. Holds a Bachelor of Arts in Architecture and a Master of Arts in Urban Development Management from Sepuluh Nopember Institute of Technology in Surabaya and a doctoral degree from the Institut Teknologi Sepuluh.
Zolzaya Batkhuyag (Mongolia) "We need women leaders with quality and impact, not just the numbers in seats."	Co-founder and Director of Women for Change. Founder of Professional Women's Leadership Programme. Founder of Global Youth Anti-Corruption Network. Former General Manager at Open Academy Law and Policy Institute. Former information manager, MONFEMNET/National Network of Mongolian Women's NGOs. Former public relations and communications manager with Hands Up for Your Rights youth campaign for human rights. Fellow at Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era. Asia Foundation Development Fellow in 2015. Fellow at Siegel Institute, Kennesaw State University in Georgia, USA. Fellow at Community Solutions and IREX Programme.

The interview summaries and additional case studies are also available online at https://www.unescap.org/resources/life-journeystransformative-leaders-interview-summaries-report-pathways-influence

Annex II

Research approaches and methodology

The study employed a mixed-method approach that combined qualitative and quantitative research, with the following main components:

- analysis of available primary and secondary quantitative and qualitative data;

- review of relevant international literature;

- development of case studies based on semi-structured interviews with selected women leaders and (where possible) with associates;

- informant interviews; and

- mapping of training providers and programmes in the Asia-Pacific region.

The basic methodology for the study and criteria for selection of case studies were developed at a regional Expert Consultation on Women's Transformative Leadership Study[17] in Bangkok, Thailand, on 29 November 2016. Case study themes and interviewees were identified through a multi-agency task team established under the auspices of the United Nations Asia-Pacific Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, with supplementary advice from individual gender experts. Nominations of interviewees were provided by the task team, regional women's networks, gender experts in different fields and the use of the "snowballing" technique to reach out to a wider range of prospective candidates. The task team reviewed and endorsed the selection of interviewees, themes and questions to be pursued. See Annex III for the criteria used for case study and country selection and core questions used in interviews with selected women transformative leaders.

Core research principles and approaches

The following principles and approaches underpinned the study:

Feminist research principles: Drawing on the documented practice and self-reflections of a range of feminist scholars, Ackerly and True (2011) distilled four theoretical practices as core elements that define and constitute a feminist theoretical method. These are sceptical scrutiny (critical attention to the research design and contexts, including the institutions, constructs, systemic conditions and actors involved and how these might include or exclude certain actors and perspectives); inclusionary enquiry (requiring the self-conscious examination of personal and disciplinary assumptions for the representative or exclusionary potential of research choices that are made); awareness of "deliberative moments", when a critical decision is taken that determines the research agenda to be pursued and what or who is included or excluded as a result); and the conceptualization of "the field as collective" (there are myriad mutually influencing actors whose contributions will be reflected in any findings).

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17 Participants at this meeting were **Ma. Aurora Boots Geotina-Garcia**, Lead Convenor and Chairperson, Philippine Women's Economic Network, Philippines; **Jacqui True**, Professor, Australian Research Council Future Fellow, Director, Monash GPS Centre, Politics & International Relations, School of Social Sciences, Faculty of Arts, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia; **Kalpana Giri**, SEI Research Fellow, SEI-Asia's Gender, Environment and Development Cluster, Stockholm Environment Institute, Bangkok, Thailand; **Kamolrat Intaratat**, Director, The Research Centre of Communication and Development Knowledge Management, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, Nonthaburi, Thailand; **Myonghee Kim**, Executive Director, Asia Pacific Women's Information Network Center, Sookmyung Women's University, Seoul, Republic of Korea; **Kate Lappin**, Regional Coordinator, Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, Chiang Mai, Thailand; **Ha Nguyen,** SEI Research Associate, SEI-Asia's Gender, Environment and Development Cluster, Stockholm Environment Institute, Bangkok, Thailand; **Nisha Onta**, Regional Coordinator for Asia, Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management, Bangkok, Thailand; **Alina Saba,** Asia Pacific Advisor for Young Women Feminist Fund, FRIDA and Programme Co-ordinator, National Indigenous Women Forum, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Grounded theory approach, entailing an open-ended interactive process of co-constructing narrative accounts with the selected research participants. The basis of grounded theory is the elaboration of conclusions and theory during the actual process of research through a continuous interplay between analysis, qualitative feedback and data collection rather than starting out with a set position and seeking to prove it.

Narrative methods of analysis: The engagement with the selected research participants was based on co-constructed narratives, rather than simple question and answer approaches. Discourse analysis was used to discern shared issues and power relations in textual and verbal interactions and framing theory helped to position feedback within the analytical frameworks.

Projection of annual growth rate of proportion of women in lower houses of parliament for ESCAP subregions

The projection of the proportion of women's representation in parliament was based on the annual average rate of change over the past 20 years from 1998 to 2018. The annual rate of change was calculated using the following formula.

$$= ((b/a)/(y/x))^{\wedge}(1/20)-1$$

a is the total number of seats in parliament in 2018

b is the total number of women elected to parliament in 2018

x is the total number of seats in parliament in 1998

y is the total number of seats in parliament in 2018

The projection was made using the economic rule of 70 to identify how many years it would take for the proportion of women's representation in parliament to double.

Figure 3: Percentage of women in elected office, by quota type[18]

The data were sourced from the IPU New Parline (open data source) and corroborated by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) country pages. The spreadsheet was made by manually collecting the percentage of women elected to the single or lower house of parliament in the most recent election (accessed in July 2019). It is important to point out that not all elections might be from the same year. The spreadsheet also contains the most updated quotas at the time of publication based on IPU and IDEA data. To aggregate some of the data, the category "Legislated candidate and other quotas" was created.

The dots outside of the ends of the whiskers demarcate outliers. The boxplot, otherwise, is in standard form that represents the data in quintiles.

Figure 4: Percentage of women elected officials and women candidates in different quota systems[19]

This data was sourced from the IPU New Parline (open data source), accessed in July 2019. This spreadsheet was made manually collecting the percentage of candidates that were women and the percentage of women elected into office from the most recent lower house or single house election. It is important to point out that not all the points on the graph are from the same year; they are merely the most recent update from the election.

All United Nations Members States that were not from the region or did not have data for the gender candidacy breakdown were dropped from the analysis. This introduced a sampling issue because it could be that the countries missing from this graph would have changed the positive trend seen in the graph. This shows, again, the urgency for dedicating more resources to data collection in this field.

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18   The .R files and tidy data used to make this graph are available by request.
19   Ibid.

The graph plots the percentage of women candidates against the percentage of women elected officials. The dots and text on the scatterplot are coloured according to whether the country had introduced any quotas (party, reserved and/ or legislative) and added a linear regression line based on the Y~X coefficients.

This is a simple graph demarcating correlation that cannot be used to infer causation.

Figure 5: Percentage of women elected to local and national governmental bodies[20]

This data was sourced from the SDG indicator database and IPU New Parline (open data source) in June 2019. The Inter-Parliamentary Union data that shows women's parliamentary representation was collected and checked manually from each individual country's data. All countries that did not have data in either the local government or national parliament datasets were dropped.

It is important to point out that every country except Japan had their local government data collected for 2018; Japan had its data from 2017. When possible, the parliament percentage was matched to the year of the local governmental data (which was 2018 for all countries except Japan). When this was not possible (the last parliamentary election was during another year), the parliamentary data from the year closest to the local data was used. The years are demarcated as such in the comma-separated values file used to make the graph.

The national government data was taken from the lower or single house.

The graph also includes a simple lm regression (Y~X) and includes error bars as calculated and produced by the code in R.

Figure 6: Percentage of men and women who "strongly agree or agree" that "on the whole, men make better political leaders than women do"

This bar graph can be reproduced using the World Values Survey Wave 6 data, gathered on their Online Data Analysis tool. The bar graph merely shows the percentage of men, women and all respondents for each country who were surveyed from the ESCAP region.

Clearly, not all countries are represented in the survey, and this introduces selection bias; the trends in the bar graph are not necessarily generalizable for the region at large.

Figure 7: Percentage of men and women who agree that it is perfectly acceptable to have a paid job outside the house, by subregion[21]

This bar graph simply represented the counts provided by the dashboard from the IPU and Gallup 2017 survey. The data could not be disaggregated between South-East Asia and the Pacific and the countries of Western and Central Asia because of the weighting system used in IPU and Gallup's analysis.

While the dashboard allows for individual country disaggregation, the new subregions would have to be weighted via population sizes. The weighting system as explained by Gallup is as follows:

"Gallup weights each country data set to geographic and demographic aged 15 and older population estimates for a nationally representative sample of the country. Country data sets are further weighted by aged 15 and older population estimates to create estimates for sub-regions, regions, development groups and the world."

Because this is not a publicly available or standard weighting system, the regional groupings as provided by the IPU and Gallup dashboard report are the ones used in the figure, although they do not align with the ESCAP regional groupings (South-East Asia and the Pacific would typically be disaggregated in ESCAP reports).

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20 Ibid.
21 The .R files and tidy data used to make this graph are available by request.

Figure 8: Survey of women in the region on physical and sexual violence[22]

The data were sourced in June 2019 from the kNOwVAW database of United Nations Population Fund Asia Pacific. Importantly, this data is taken from surveys, so the numbers listed are likely lower than true values because of reporting chilling. Additionally, it is important to point out that each data indicator from the bar graph has different countries with available data, and these countries are not representative of the region as a whole. All questions and their breakdowns are provided at https://asiapacific.unfpa.org/en/knowvawdata.

For the intimate partner violence question, the data used was for "women who have experienced physical and/or sexual violence". For non-partner violence, the data were not aggregated for women who had experienced physical and sexual violence as with the intimate partner violence question, so the "women who have experienced physical violence question (which was the default on the data indicator mapping) was used. The first (default) question for "women who had never disclosed intimate partner violence before the survey" was used for the "help seeking after violence" indicator. The other two indicators "violence against pregnant women" and "first sexual experience was forced" had only one option or question attached.

The mean of each of the responses for each of these questions was calculated in Excel before putting it into a joint file. This was then run through the code in R to make simple bar graphs.

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22 Ibid.

Annex III

Criteria for selection of case studies and core questions used in interviews

The following criteria were identified for the selection of the case studies by the Expert Group Meeting (with weightings subsequently added for assessment purposes). Nominations of potential case studies were sought and received from throughout the region.

Essential and desirable criteria for selection of case studies

Essential criteria

- Women's transformative leadership that empowers and includes others

- Links to implementation of transformative aspects of the SDGs

- Transformative change through the achievement of outcomes that involve a shift in power relations and empowerment of the participants

- Commitment to human rights, including gender equality and women's empowerment (even if this is not the primary focus of the case study)

- Relevance to transformative change and transformative leadership initiatives and experience in other countries

- A combination of collective and individual leadership roles and approaches, and their interrelationship

- Links with other issues and related initiatives, such that the leadership and activity fosters intersectionality

- Demonstration of innovation in women's leadership practice

- **Desirable criteria: Preference given to case studies that:**

- Contribute to strengthening links between two or more pillars of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental)

- Are directly of a transnational or multi-country nature

- Are active at the "cutting edge", including where the challenges and resistance are most complex and intense.

Selection of countries

The minimum geographic requirement for the study was the selection of case studies in at least one country per ESCAP subregion, with at least three of the selected case studies being based in least developed countries. The ESCAP subregions are: East and North-East Asia, Central and North-Central Asia, Pacific, South-East Asia, and South and South-West Asia.

Core questions used in interviews with selected transformative women leaders

Introduction: Purpose of the project

To learn about:

The experience of women's transformative leadership in Asia and the Pacific and its contribution (both current and potential) to the achievement of the SDGs.

What qualities and approaches make women's transformative leadership special and important?

The various factors that encourage and nurture women to emerge as transformative leaders - and the challenges and barriers which women need to overcome.

What actions governments, international agencies, civil society organizations and other organizations can take to (i) address the challenges and (ii) improve the enabling environment for women's transformative leadership to emerge, develop and be influential.

Questions and discussion points

Background story

1. What is your **current role** within your organization / network /activity / initiative?

2. Can you share **your story** of how you came to be in the role you are now?

    For example:

    -   *previous leadership roles and experience*

    -   *role in the initiation/development of the organization / network /activity / initiative*

    -   *early steps into leadership role(s)*

    -   *how your role within has changed over the years.*

3. How would you describe your **leadership approach?**

Achievements

4. Can you describe some of the **achievements** you have been part of in your current role?

5. Can you share some examples of **your contribution to** these achievements?

6. How do you see these achievements contributing to the achievement of the global **Sustainable Development Goals?**

Enabling factors

7. Looking back, what were the factors that **encouraged / supported** you to take on the leadership role that you have?

    For example:

    -   *family background and influence*

    -   *educational background and opportunities*

- *opportunities which arose to take on a leadership role*

- *influence of role models at different times of life – female and male*

- *influence and support of wider networks and collective processes*

- *leadership training opportunities.*

8. Which factors were most important among these, and why? (*also see question 12 on leadership training*)

Challenges and barriers

9. Looking back, what were the **challenges or barriers** that you had to overcome to take on your current role?

10. Can you share some examples of how you **overcame** these challenges?

Culture and women's leadership

11. From your experience, how important are **cultural factors** in the development and role of women in leadership in your country?

12. How do cultural factors influence the **style** of leadership for women and for men?

Economic empowerment and leadership

There is a strong emphasis in many countries today on the economic empowerment of women.

13. Do you see links between the **economic empowerment of women** and **women becoming leaders** in different fields – including local and national politics? Please elaborate

Leadership training

14. (If relevant): There is a lot of emphasis today on **leadership training for women.** Following up your earlier reference, can you elaborate on your training experience?

    For example:

    - *the training (s) you took part in (provider, type, duration, when)*

    - *what you learned from the training and how you have used it*

    - *what lessons you took out of the experience about what works and what doesn't for leadership training*

    - *what you think is needed for women's leadership training in your country (by whom, for whom,*

    - *how important is it that such learning begins early – at school*

Special qualities of transformative leadership

15. Looking back at your experience, what you see as the **special qualities** that make leadership "transformative"?

Creating future opportunities for the emergence and development of transformative women leaders

16. Based on your own experience, what could your **government** could do through their policies, programmes and budget decisions to:

    - help reduce the barriers facing women emerging as leaders at all levels of society?

- create opportunities and space for women to emerge as leaders?

- encourage, nurture and support women leaders?

17. What **other organizations**, institutions or programmes do you see as having an important role in these areas?

18. What further contributions could they make to promoting transformative women's leadership?

19. Does your own organization, network, activity or initiative have a role in promoting transformative women's leadership? Can you provide some examples and lessons?

Overall lessons

20. Looking back on your experience, what **lessons and advice** would you offer from your experience to emerging women leaders today?

Final message

21. Finally – is there any **main message** you would particularly like to see come through this study, based on:

- your leadership experience and lessons?

- what you think needs to be done to create opportunities for more women to emerge and develop as transformative leaders?

Annex IV

Listing of women's leadership development programmes and activities examined by regional mapping

Leadership development trainings evaluated for regional mapping

Name of programme	Name of provider	Purpose of programme	Target groups
Following are selected programmes that are multi-country in nature and active in Asia and the Pacific. Alongside these are country-level programmes run by international governmental and non-government organizations, local NGOs and other providers.			
4th Leadership Institute in Women's Economic Social and Cultural Rights	Programme on Women's Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	Strengthen collective leadership in "the Global South" by (i) promoting women's economic, social and cultural rights movements in the region and (ii) developing a core of female leaders to advance women's rights from the local to global level.	Women community leaders
Fifth Asia Women Leaders Program	Asian Development Bank	Provides leadership capacity development to senior women government officials by strengthening their knowledge, skills, networks and confidence.	25 senior women government officials, mostly from ministries of pertaining to economics, planning, finance and infrastructure (transport, energy, urban planning, environment, water) of 17 countries in Asia and the Pacific
Women's Leadership Experience (and others tailored to Asia and the Pacific)	Center for Creative Leadership	Aids women in developing their own leadership style, building strategic networks and navigating complex relationships. Uses a gender-specific format to allow for a more supportive environment to address the unique issues women face.	International women leaders with upper-management and leadership experience, including those from Asia
Changing Faces Women's Leadership seminar. 2019 theme: Women as Innovators and Entrepreneurs	East-West Center	Addresses the challenges confronting working women entrepreneurs in the Asia Pacific. Aims to enhance the entrepreneurial capacity and leadership skills of women through training exercises; expand the social capital of participants and establish a community of women leaders; create regional awareness; empower the next generation of women leaders.	Female business owners and social entrepreneurs who have demonstrated leadership and ability to affect change and influence others in their communities Targets Innovative entrepreneurs, business managers, government and industry policymakers and civil society leaders with at least seven years of work experience

Name of programme	Name of provider	Purpose of programme	Target groups
Asia Pacific Leadership Program	East-West Center	Cultivates leaders who are motivated and capable of creating positive impact in the Asia-Pacific region as self-reflective, resilient agents. Uses experiential, place-based learning with a focus on equity.	25 fellows a year who have at least five years of professional experience and come from a diverse set of backgrounds (science, business, development, politics, government, civil society, medicine, religious orders, art, finance, academia or research)
Advanced Leadership Program	East-West Center	Allows professionals to "reflect upon personal and organizational achievement while developing plans for the future". Provides networks, seminars, flexible schedules, and self-designed space.	8–12 participants from diverse backgrounds and sectors with at least 12–15 years of professional experience for leaders who would like to "reflect upon, refocus, and re-energize their professional and/or organizational development"
Leading to Choices: A Multimedia Curriculum for Leadership Learning	Women's Learning Partnership	Offers multimedia training designed to empower women to participate as leaders in decision-making processes. Provides interactive, scenario-based activities and examples of how to create participatory and democratic learning environments, how to implement successful advocacy campaigns and how to develop messages for target audiences.	International women leaders, including those from Asia
World Young Women's Christian Association (World YWCA)	Mobilising Young Women's Leadership and Advocacy in Asia and the Pacific	Prepares young women to contribute at every level – global, regional and national – towards influencing the post-2015 development agenda and holding governments accountable for ensuring their rights are upheld and respected.	Young women and adolescent girls
Leadership Support Process: various at country and multi-country levels	Huairou Commission	Supports leadership capacity building and support model for grass-root women by helping them develop as effective advocates for themselves and their communities.	Grassroots women
Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development	Australian Aid (Australian government)	Helps to build the capacity of Pacific women parliament members, parliamentary staff and the institutions in which they work to better address gender inequalities.	Rural women, women parliamentarians, women candidates and civil society organizations
Women's Leadership in Small and Medium Enterprises (WLSME)	The World Bank	This initiative aims to promote a better understanding of the key determinants of successful women-led small and medium-sized in developing countries, in terms of both entry and profitability.	Women in business

Name of programme	Name of provider	Purpose of programme	Target groups
Center for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics Institute for Gender, Governance and Leadership	Center for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics	Training on Gender Responsive, Transformative Leadership and Politics within the framework of Building Transformative Communities in the ASEAN region.	Trainers, facilitators and resource persons in various organizations
APEC Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)	Advances the economic integration of women in the APEC region for the benefit of all members and coordinates gender activities across other APEC working groups.	Women in business
Advanced Leadership Programme	International Labour Organization	Enables trade union leaders and office bearers to understand the significance of labour rights and standards towards the protection of their rights. Equips participants with the skills and attitudes required to manage the trade union; empowers them with effective communication and negotiation skills; enhances their leadership capabilities to promote and main stream gender equality.	Women in trade unions
APRU Asia-Pacific Women in Leadership Program	Association of Pacific Rim Universities	Shares knowledge and promotes the cultivation of women leaders in academic sectors. Establishes an inter-university network to promote gender equality, aim to build a platform where different information and strategies can be shared.	Women leaders in academia
Building Young Women's Leadership through Sports	Women Win	Focuses on building the leadership skills of adolescent girls and young women using a sport and life skills approach.	Adolescent girls and young women
Women's Action for Voice and Empowerment	International Women's Development Agency	Supports 18 women's rights organizations in five countries with resources, skills and networks needed to amplify their voice and create a positive environment for women's leadership. Brings women's organizations and the public together to challenge widespread imbalances of power that negatively affect women and their rights.	Women in politics, and women with potential for political or civil leadership
Feminist Leadership, Movement Building, and Rights Institute—South Asia	Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action	Designed for women working in South Asian non-government organizations to help the women build their conceptual understanding of gender, feminism, human rights and movement building in the South Asian context.	Women in South Asian non-government organizations

Name of programme	Name of provider	Purpose of programme	Target groups
New Voices, New Leaders: A South-South Learning and Exchange Programme for Activists from South and Southeast Asia	Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action	Strengthens inter-generational leadership capacities and establishes a vibrant South-South network of activists and organizations from South and Southeast Asian countries. Provides a learning opportunity for women leaders about ongoing programmes, strategies and interventions in the region to address gender equality and violence against women.	Young and marginalised women and grass-roots organizations
Toolkit for Building Transformative Feminist Leadership	Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action	Helps individuals and organizations dedicated to advancing a feminist social change agenda, that believes that all development and social justice must be rooted in gender and social equality.	Feminist organizations engaged in promoting social change, gender equality and women's rights, especially those led and staffed largely by women
Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women (FLOW)	Global Fund for Women	Aims to improve the position of women and girls in developing countries; creates opportunities for women and girls and fosters an enabling environment in which women's rights are better protected at both local and national levels.	Women and girls
South Asia Young Women's Leadership Mentoring Initiative	Global Fund for Women	Aims to create a resilient cohort of young women leaders who can carry the women's movement forward in South Asia.	Young women
Young Women and Leadership Institutes	Association for Women's Rights in Development	Allows young women from the region to understand the range of issues that other young women face in that particular region; encourages participants to see the diversity of issues and also find common areas where they can direct their collective energies.	Young women from the region
Women in Power	Asia-Pacific Forum for Women, Law and Development	Provides feminist political training to women leaders, supports the formation of women's political agenda using "womanifestoes", supports progressive women parliamentarians and facilitates engagement with women's rights movements.	Women parliamentarians and women leaders (particularly from marginalized and grass-roots constituencies)

Pathways to Influence: Promoting the Role of Women's Transformative Leadership to Achieve the SDGs in Asia and the Pacific

A key driver for progress is Sustainable Development Goal target 5.5 on promoting and strengthening equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life. Women leaders are making an impact across Asia Pacific. Women's presence in local, state and national levels of government has influenced higher female voter turnout, increased gender sensitive policies and a stronger focus on improving social, health and safety services. In business, evidence is emerging to show that a higher proportion of women managers is significantly associated with an increase in profit. Nevertheless, leadership also remains out of reach for too many women across Asia and the Pacific.

ESCAP, under the auspices of the UN Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women, prepared this report on critical enablers for women's leadership with a focus on its transformative impact on the societies. The report "Pathways to Influence: Promoting the Role of Women's Transformative Leadership to Achieve the SDGs in Asia and the Pacific" highlights four key pathways to women's transformative leadership, including growing consciousness and capabilities; accessing resources and opportunities; shaping and leveraging formal policies, laws and rules; and transforming social norms and exclusionary practices. The report draws on research and data, as well as the journeys of 17 women leaders from 14 countries across the region to identify key factors that have enabled women leaders to inspire change in their diverse areas, including disability; economic empowerment; grassroots community development; human rights and law; labour rights and trade unions; local governance; peace and security; public health; public sector reform; rural development and livelihoods; urban development and housing; women's empowerment and youth.

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