



serving overseas Americans
and the international community since 1931

Human Rights Task Force Political Empowerment for Women

Political empowerment is one of the most important steps we can take toward solving discrimination against women. The progress we are making is encouraging; many women are overcoming barriers to take their place in political and economic positions of leadership. Here are just a few:

Michelle Bachelet, Former Head of UN Women and current President of Chile

Mary Barra, General Motors CEO

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia

Janet L. Yellen, Chairwoman of the US Federal Reserve

Nancy Gibbs, TIME's Managing Editor

Joyce Banda, President of Malawi

Rwanda - 50% of members of Parliament are women - the highest percentage in the world

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to take part in the government of his or her country. The Beijing Platform for Action emphasizes the goal of equal participation by women and men in political decision-making. It is widely accepted that the improvement of women's political status is essential for the achievement of transparent, accountable government and sustainable development. While we are making progress in this direction in some arenas, in others we are not.

Last year, women were 17% of attendees at the World Economic Forum's conference at Davos, Switzerland, where global leaders shape policy that affects the world. This year women made up only 15% of attendees. Managing Director Adrian Monck said the organization would prefer that its meetings were more evenly distributed by gender, but its hands are tied by the imperative to bring together the world's most powerful and influential people.

We need to move from rhetoric and promises to verifiable action in our advocacy for women's political empowerment. Women should have full and meaningful participation throughout all phases of policy-making, budgeting, implementation, and evaluation; at all levels in public and private decision-making, particularly in decision-making in conflict and post-conflict settings.

Even though Syrian women have been trying for months to gain a seat at the negotiating table, meeting with the UN Mediator, presenting to the UN Security Council, and negotiating with leaders of the US and Russia, Syrian Peace Talks began without women represented.

Increasing the number of women in public office will help to ensure that essential public services like health and education benefit all women, men, girls and boys. Women in public office will improve judicial systems so that they guarantee equal legal protection to women and men. Women in public office would help to reduce all forms of violence, particularly against women and children. Women in public office will promote the ratification of women's international and regional instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

To learn more about women's political empowerment: The International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics is an excellent website sponsored by UN Women and UNDP. At <http://iknowpolitics.org/en> you will find an interactive network of women in politics sharing experiences, resources, and advice and collaborating on issues of interest.

Be inspired by a powerful YouTube video:

Women in politics in Africa <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DCIXif1T9dA>

Reach out to young people to help change the future: FAWCO contributes to girls' education and awareness-raising on women's right to participate in public affairs by promoting the Eleanor Roosevelt Worldwide Leadership Program for girls at Val-Kil New York. <http://www.ervk.org/>

For more information or to inquire about joining the Political Empowerment for Women Committee of the Human Rights Task Force, please contact Erica Higbie at politicalempowerment@fawco.org