

# Women in Political Office; LA and the Caribbean

Frameworks for Enhancing  
Participation

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# Women in Political Office

- Democracy and Development for the Well Being of All, Remain at Risk as Long as Women Continue to be Marginal to Political Decision Making at the Highest Levels.

# Women in Politics

- Once Legal Frameworks are Put in Place to Redress the Historical Barriers, Women Step Forward to Serve at the Highest Levels of Political Office.

# Women in Politics

- Since Beijing, Latin America has made Great Progress in Establishing Quota Regulations and Several LA countries have Achieved the 30 percent Critical Mass of Women in Political Leadership
- Only Guyana in the Caribbean has Established Quotas and has Achieved the 30% level.

# Women in Politics

- Legislative Frameworks Establishing Quotas are Central to Women's Equal Participation.
- The Full Exercise of Women's Rights to Representation will only be Achieved When Political Parties, Parliaments and Governing Bodies Adapt their Rules, Ethics and Behaviours to Ensure the Equitable Treatment of Women.

# Women in Politics

- The OAS has an Important Role to Play in Supporting the Region in Achieving the Full Enjoyment of Democracy

# Women in Politics

- **The Global Profile**
- In 2012 Thirty Two Countries Met the 30% Critical Mass Target of Women in Political Decision Making.
- Almost Half are European Led by the Nordic Countries

# Women in Politics

- African countries which have Emerged from Wars and Implemented Electoral and Political Party Practices, Made up the Next Highest Proportion.
- Latin America Countries with Formal Frameworks Made up the Next Significant Segment of those



# Women in Politics

- Quota or Parity Legislation is a Key
- The Increased Representation of Women is Not the Result of Incremental Progress

# Women in Politics

- In the United States and Canada, the average in the Lower House is 19% and upper house 25.4%
- For Latin America, the average in the Lower House is 20.2% and Upper House 20.4%.
- In the Caribbean women hold just 12.9% of Seats in the Lower House and 26.7% in the Upper House.

# Women in Politics

- Quotas have played a central role in the positive LA achievements.
- In countries with Quotas, Women hold 22.4% of Elected Seats in the Lower House, While in those Without Quotas, the Percentage drops to 15.5%

# Women in Politics

- Costa Rica with 38.6%, Argentina with 38.5% and Ecuador with 32.3% have all incorporated quota or parity laws into their legislation.
- Before the quotas, women's representation in the lower chamber in Argentina was 6%, Costa Rica 14% and Ecuador 4%

# Women in Politics

- **OAS Member Countries with Quota/Parity Laws ;Lower/Upper Houses**
- Argentina30%;30%
- Bolivia;50%50%
- Brazil30%No quota
- Costa Rica50%N/A
- Ecuador50%N/A
- Guyana30%N/A
- Honduras30%N/A
- Mexico40%40%
- Panama30%N/A
- Paraguay20%20%
- Peru30%N/A-
- Dominican Republic33%No quota
- Uruguay33%33%

# Women in Politics

- The Caribbean Led the Way in the Region with Two Women Assuming Prime Ministerial Positions in 1980.
- Derailed by the Myth of Male Marginalisation, They have Not Capitalized on that Legacy by Introducing Quotas
- They Once Again have Two Sitting Women Prime Ministers after 30 years, but are far behind globally

# Women in Politics

- The Caribbean now Ranks at the Bottom of the Global Community along with the Arab states in Women in Political Office.
- Caribbean Women Outperform Men in the Educational Arena Including Tertiary Level Institutions Yet remain

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# Women in Politics

- If the Caribbean is to Sustain its Social, Political Cultural and Economic Gains, the Region Must Fully Involve its Best and Brightest at the Highest Levels of Governance.
- This Implies Urgent Consideration and Implementation of Legislation to Ensure at Least 30% Elected Female Candidates to the Highest Levels of Political Office.



# Women in Politics

- Incremental Progress is Fragile
- The Caribbean Countries that Indicated Progress over the Last Two Electoral Cycles are Equally Likely to Regress
- Grenada and Suriname, which Achieved over 25% Female Elected Candidates in the Previous Cycle Both Suffered Significant Reversals in the 2007-2012 Electoral Cycle

# Women in Politics

- **Lessons learned from OAS pilots**
- **The Guyana and Peru OAS EOM Incorporated a Pilot of the Methodology for the Observation of Gender Participation in the Electoral Process.**
- The Results Show that Guyana has Made Significant Progress in the Promotion of Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in the Political process, as Guyana is the Only Country in the Caribbean Region with a Gender Quota.

# Women in Politics

- It Recommended that Formal Efforts be Made to Promote Training Programs for Female Candidates, Support Awareness on Women's Issues, and Support Legislation to Proactively Promote Gender Equality in all Spheres of Life in Guyana
- The Case of Peru Indicates that Laws Need to be Harmonised for Quotas to be Fully Effective. It also Reveals that, an Additional Incentive for Financing Female Candidates is Especially Important to Promote Women's Political Participation  
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# Women In Politics

- CONCLUSION
- The Implementation of Quotas to Meet the Target of at Least 30% Female Elected Representatives Must be Made a Regional Policy Priority.
- The Myth of the Marginalised Caribbean Male must be replaced by Policy based on Facts of Higher Female Poverty Levels and Under-Representation in Political Office

# Women in Politics

- Full Integration of Women and Gender Balance Will only be Achieved, When the Party and Political Decision Making Institutions Rules, Culture and Mores become more Human Centred and Equitable
- The OAS has an Important Role to Play in Providing Leadership and support to the region in building on good practices and lessons learned in this regard in the rest of the region