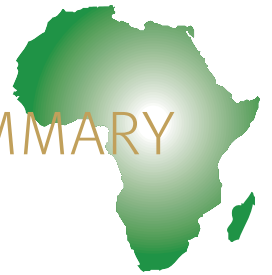As the clock ticks down to 2030, the deadline for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), African countries are still far from achieving women's "equal and effective" participation in political decision-making. According to the first *Women's Political Participation (WPP) Africa Barometer* *2021*, women constitute 24% of the 12,113 parliamentarians in Africa - 25% in the lower houses, and 20% in the upper houses of parliament. While local government is often hailed as a training ground for women in politics, women constitute a mere 21% of councilors in the 19 countries for which complete data could be obtained.

Table I: Women's Political Participation in Africa key indicators 2021

	Horn	East	Southern	Central	North	West	Africa	Notes
% women in lower houses of parliament	33%	33%	28%	19%	24%	16%	25%	1
% women in upper houses of parliament	30%	29%	29%	20%	11%	12%	20%	2
% women in parliament overall	33%	32%	28%	19%	21%	16%	24%	3
% women in local gvt	N/A	35%	20%	27%	3%	2%	21%	4
% women in political party leadership	17%	15%	14%	7%	0%	11%	12%	5
% women in Election Monitoring Bodies	21%	45%	40%	20%	25%	24%	28%	6
% women Speakers	0%	33%	35%	18%	0%	16%	21%	7
% women mayors of capital cities	20%	0%	19%	43%	0%	20%	19%	8
% women in top executive positions	10%	12%	9%	7%	0%	7%	7%	9
% women in cabinet	23%	32%	26%	20%	13%	19%	22%	10

1. Data compiled from IPU website February 2021. See Annex 7
2. 25 African countries have an upper chamber. Data compiled from IPU website February 2021. See Annex 7.
3. Combined upper and lower chamber, or lower only where there is no upper chamber. See Annex 7.
4. Data only available for 19 African countries. For all sources refer to Annex 8.
5. Top three officials in ruling and opposition party in each country. Data from party websites see Annex 12.
6. Electoral commissioners in the 41 countries where these exist. Data from Election Management Body websites see Annex 13.
7. Speakers and heads of upper and lower chambers; data from parliament websites. See Annex 14.
8. Data compiled from wesites of capital cities. See Annex 15.
9. Presidents, deputy presidents, prime ministers and deputy prime ministers. See Annex 16.
10. Data compiled from government websites. See Annex 17.

Figure 1: WPP in Africa at a glance
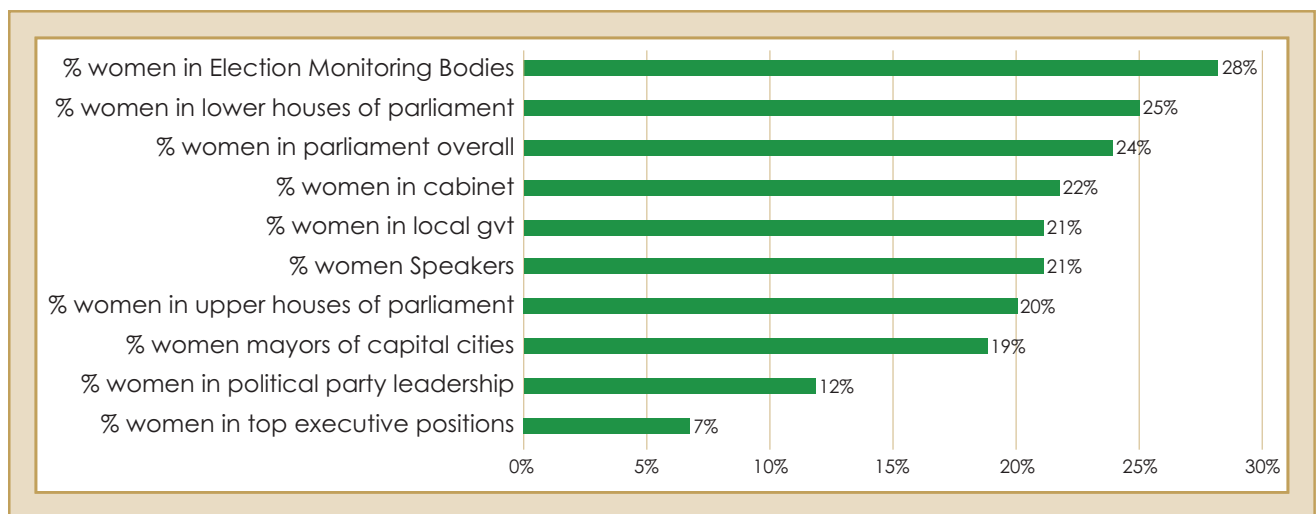
Source: Gender Links 2021.

Out of the ten indicators measured in the Barometer, African women are best represented in Election Management Bodies (28%), still well below 50%. Women are missing in cabinet (22%) and glaringly absent from top decision-making positions. African women constitute a mere 12% of the top six party functionaries in ruling and opposition parties and 7% of women in top political executive positions (presidents, vice presidents, prime ministers and deputy prime ministers) across the continent.

The Barometer forms part of the International IDEA-led consortium: Enhancing the Inclusion of Women in Political Participation in Africa[1]. Launched on 8 March (International Women's Day) the Barometer aims to imbue the African continent, especially legislators and policy-makers, with a ready resource through which they are able to assess progress over time in WPP; the underlying reasons, and evidence-based arguments to enhance advocacy campaigns.

Context

The Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) reports that since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 (twenty years ago), women's representation in parliament has increased by ten percentage points, from 15% to 25%. At this rate it would take fifty years (until 2070) to achieve gender parity. SDG 5.5 commits government to achieving "full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political life" women by 2030[2].

Table II: WPP in Africa in the global context

Region	Sub-region	Lower chamber and unicameral	Upper chamber	All chambers
Americas		**32%**	**33%**	**32%**
	Caribbean	41%	32%	40%
	North America	36%	42%	37%
	Central America	28%	36%	29%
	South America	26%	27%	26%
Europe		**31%**	**30%**	**30%**
	Nordic countries	45%	0%	45%
	Western Europe	35%	32%	34%
	Southern Europe	28%	37%	31%
	Central and Eastern Europe	25%	19%	24%
Global	**All regions**	**26%**	**25%**	**26%**
Africa		**25%**	**20%**	**24%**
	Horn	33%	30%	33%
	East Africa	33%	29%	32%
	Southern Africa	28%	29%	29%
	Central Africa	19%	20%	19%
	North Africa	24%	11%	21%
	West Africa	16%	12%	16%
Asia		**21%**	**17%**	**20%**
	Central Asia	26%	22%	25%
	East Asia	22%	23%	22%
	South East Asia	21%	13%	20%
	South Asia	17%	19%	18%
Pacific		**18%**	**45%**	**21%**
	Australia and New Zealand	39%	51%	42%
	Pacific Islands	6%	8%	6%
Middle East		**17%**	**13%**	**16%**

*Source: IPU, January, 2021, adapted by GL to reflect Africa as a whole (including North Africa).*

1   The six other organisations in the consortium are FAWE, FEMNET, Gender Links, IFAN Gender Laboratory, PADARE, and WLSA
2   Thttps://sdg-tracker.org/gender-equality

As reflected in Table II, the overall global averages mask important regional and sub-regional differences. For example, women's representation in parliament in the Americas stands at 32% (40% in the Caribbean) and in Europe at 30% (45% in the Nordic countries). With 25% women in the lower houses and 24% overall, Africa is just slightly below the global average. But there are also significant regional differences, ranging from 33% in the Horn of Africa to 16% in West Africa.

Indeed, in terms of IPU ranking, women's representation in parliament in Africa ranges from best performer Rwanda (with 61% women in parliament - see Annex 4) to Nigeria, at number 180 in the global ranking, with 6% women in parliament. Making use of a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, including sixty case studies from 40 of Africa's 54 countries, the Barometer contains a wealth of analysis and insights to help make sense of this complex tapestry.

Progress over time

Figure II: Women in Parliament (LH) in Africa over time
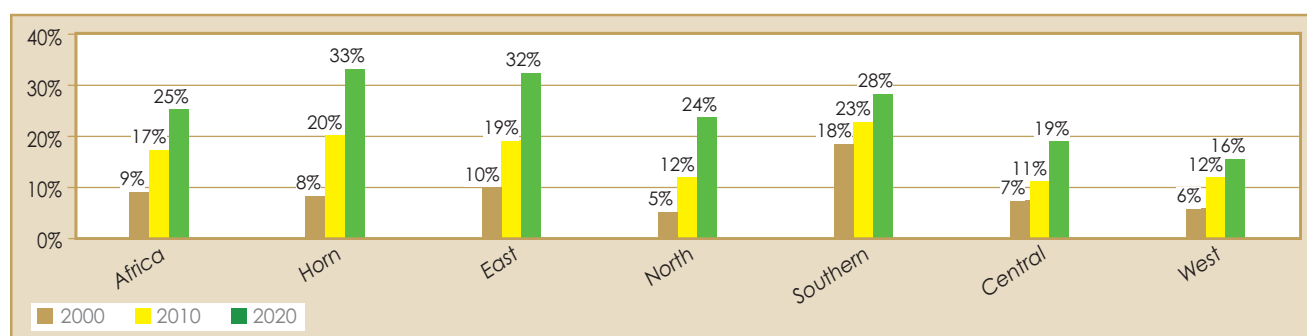
Figure II shows that there has been some progress over the last two decades in WPP in Africa. The figures are derived from the detailed country data in Annex 9. Women's representation in the lower houses of parliament (common to all African countries) has risen from 9% in 2000 to 25% in 2020, a sixteen percentage point increase. The most marked increase has been in the post-

conflict Horn of Africa countries (from 8% to 33%) and in East Africa (where Rwanda is located) from 10% to 32%. Southern Africa is third in line. Here the increase has been more measured over time, rising from 18% to 28%. Women's representation in the lower houses is lowest, and increases have been slowest in central and west Africa.

Local and national

Figure III: Women's representation in parliament and local government in Africa
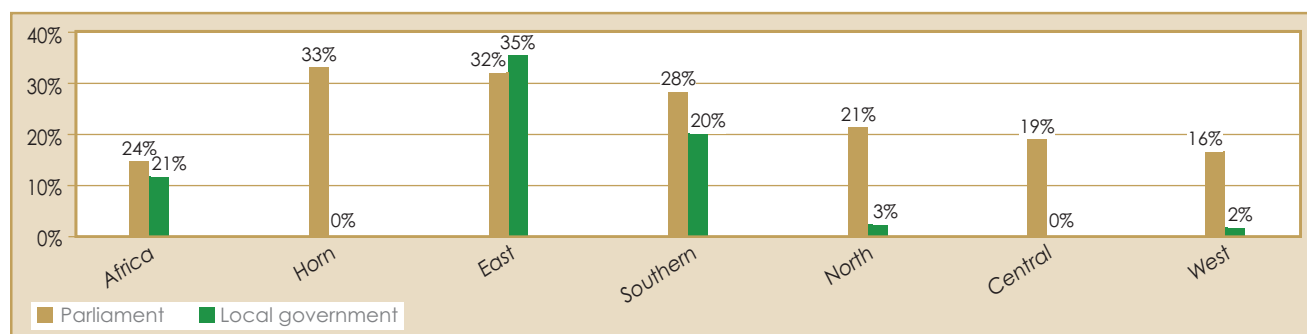
Barriers to WPP

> **"** I am a village chief which means my every day work revolves around people in the community. I was elected to represent chiefs in the council. Most people, especially men, were not happy because I am a woman and a chief. I didn't give up. Instead I pushed harder to represent voiceless women. **"**
>
> *Masekoati Masupha, Senekane council. Berea district, Lesotho.*

The Barometer explores both the long term structural causes of women's exclusion from political decision-making as well more immediate barriers. Across Africa patriarchy, social, cultural and religious influences have resulted in women being rendered second class citizens. The worth of a woman is measured based on the role she plays as a wife and mother. There are many proverbs to discourage women's public appearance in decision-making. Culturally, there is a belief that women are supposed to be led but not to lead. Traditional attitudes towards gender equality influence women's advancement in political participation. The burden of household chores and inequitable access to higher education also limit women's ability to enjoy the opportunities and benefits of citizenship as men on an equal footing in the political sphere. Lack of economic resources is one of the biggest obstacles to women's participation in politics. Political parties are themselves deeply patriarchal, male-dominated entities that have been slow to transform.

WPP in the shadow of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic creates the risk that women and men may not be able to participate in electoral processes effectively, including voter registration, candidate nomination, voter education, electoral campaigning and voting, especially for people already infected or in quarantine.

In 2020, 18 African countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Namibia, Niger, Seychelles, Tanzania and Togo) held elections despite the pandemic. Four countries (Ethiopia, Senegal, Somalia, and Sudan) postponed elections. Some 26 elections are scheduled to take place in 2021 amid a second wave of the pandemic that is hitting the continent far more severely than the first.

To date, Electoral Management Bodies (EMS) have established several measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including provision of masks and sanitiser at polling stations but compliance with health protocols remains a concern.

Online campaigning works better in countries with good Internet infrastructure, for example in Ghana most campaigning took place on social media, while in Mali most political parties and candidates did not have adequate resources to switch to online campaigning. This could account for the higher voter turnout in Ghana (79% compared to 69% in previous elections). In Mali the voter turnout decreased to 36% from 43% in the previous elections. However, as described in Chapter three, women in Mali turned out in their numbers to protest against the non-observance of electoral quotas for women. Never before has the slogan "Making IT work for gender justice" come into its own more than during this time.

Electoral systems and quotas

Table III: Electoral systems and quotas - Parliament (LH)

Electoral system	PR	Mixed	FPTP	Total
No of countries	18	10	23	**54**
Voluntary party	40%	N/A	28%	34%
Constitutional/legislated	26%	25%	25%	25%
None	17%	23%	16%	16%
Total	**30%**	**25%**	**22%**	**25%**

Source: Compiled by GL with data from WPP Africa Barometer.

Table IV: Electoral systems and quotas - local government

Electoral system	PR	Mixed	FPTP	Total
No of countries	5	5	9	**19**
Voluntary party	32%	41%	15%	36%
Constitutional/legislated	49%	27%	32%	31%
None	17%	7%	12%	8%
Total	**34%**	**19%**	**24%**	**21%**

Source: Compiled by GL with data from WPP Africa Barometer.

Table III and Table IV summarises the analysis of data in the Barometer by electoral system and quota for the lower houses of parliament that are common to 51 African countries (excluding the three countries in transition). The data shows that while African women constitute 25% of lower and upper houses of parliament, this varies from 30% in the 18 countries with the Proportional Representation (PR) system, to 25% in the 10 countries with mixed PR and First Past the Post (FPTP) systems to 22% in the 23 countries with a FPTP system. The pattern is very similar in local government. Overall women constitute 21% of councilors; 34% in the PR countries; 19% in countries

Quotas or temporary special measures also play a decisive role. In parliament, the highest representation of women is in countries with a PR system and voluntary party quotas (40%). Examples include South Africa, Namibia and Mozambique. In local government, the highest proportion of women is in countries with the PR and constitutional or legislated quotas (49%). An example is Namibia.

The lowest representation of women is FPTP countries with no quota (16%). Examples include Nigeria and Botswana. Overall, women constitute 34% of MPs in countries with voluntary party quotas - nine percentage points higher than countries with Constitutional or legislated quotas, and eighteen percentage points higher than FPTP countries with no quotas. The same is true at the local level. Women constitute 36% of councilors in countries with voluntary party quotas - 28 percentage points higher than countries with no quotas and 24 percentage points higher than FPTP countries with no quotas. The findings on voluntary party quotas make a strong case for political party ownership and championing of gender parity principles.

Barriers to WPP

In political parties, when a women succeeds in affirming herself, there is a huge mobilisation against her.

Ouafa Hajji, founder president of Jossour Forum of Moroccan Women and champion of the petition "Parity Now", has served three terms in parliament.

This chapter of the Barometer explores the role of political parties in achieving gender balance. Male dominance of top leadership is a feature in every country, even those that have achieved 40% or higher of women's participation in parliament and or local government. In many cases national constitutional or legislated quotas are not reflected in party constitutions. However, an increasing number of parties are updating their statutes either voluntarily or in line with national obligations. This chapter explores the change needed within political parties, including women's wings and structures, to drive the march to equality.

Electoral management and laws

This chapter covers the role of election laws and management in facilitating (or inhibiting) WPP. It includes a discussion of the model gender-aware electoral law being developed by Women in Law Southern Africa (WLSA), one of the Enhancing the Inclusion of Women in Political Participation in Africa[3] partners.

> " After I was freed from jail, I really wanted to stay away from politics. I did not want to relive the bad experiences that I had gone through. Then, I realised that politics is not a straight line. It comes with difficulties and obstacles like many things in life. And that we had to continue the fight if we wanted to build our country." "

Assita Ouattara, Member of New Alliance of Faso (NAFA Burkina Faso.

Security is a key consideration in election management. Violence marred over half the elections held in Africa in 2020. Women politicians cite fears of violence as a major deterrent to running for office and to their effective participation. These fears are not only over physical and sexual violence. In politics, they open an important discussion about possibly the most insidious form of violence against women: verbal, emotional and psychological abuse. Sadly, because misogyny is so normalised in many of our societies much of this violence goes unnoticed, unreported, and unsanctioned. This section of the Barometer identifies the many forms and guises of Violence Against Women in Politics (VAWIP), the effect of this, as well as short, medium and long term solutions.

Forty one African countries have Electoral Management Bodies (EMB) established by statute to administer electoral laws. These are usually overseen by independent commissioners with experience in running elections. As many of these structures are relatively recent, they reflect a better gender balance than many other political structures (28% overall, ranging from 20% in Central Africa to 40% in Southern Africa). The chapter provides examples of countries in which EMB's have developed gender policies and are using their space to enhance gender equality through electoral processes. This includes gender aware voter education; registration; financing and the running of elections.

Role of the media, including social media

The make or break role of the media comes under sharp focus in the Barometer. The extent to which women's views and voices are reflected in media content - as candidates, election managers, experts, spokespersons and citizens - is a powerful indicator of voice. Every five years since the Beijing Conference in 1995 the Global Media Monitoring Project has conducted media monitoring showing that across the globe women constitute less than a quarter of news sources.

In Southern Africa the Gender and Media Progress Study (GMPS) provides a wealth of more in-depth data on WPP.

This chapter features a case study of media monitoring conducted before, during and after the October 2020 Tanzania elections, in which women constituted a mere 18% of news sources in the political topic category. The chapter also highlights women's experiences with the mainstream media - positive and negative - as it draws out win-win strategies that respect the watchdog role of the media while empowering

[3] TThe six other organisations in the consortium are FAWE, FEMNET, Gender Links, IFAN Gender Laboratory, PADARE, and WLSA

women in politics to use this to their benefit. Women's experiences with social media also feature prominently. This opportunity to harness new technologies is laced with many potential personal dangers that have led to some women politicians closing all their social media accounts altogether. The chapter explores how women can best "ride the tiger" of social media.

Civil society

Running through each chapter, but brought into focus in this chapter is the critical role of civil society, especially Women's Rights Organisations (WRO) in advancing WPP. This role extends from lobbying and advocacy for electoral quotas and reform of electoral systems to voter education, training of candidates, gender audits of elections, support for and strategic alliances with women politicians' once in office. An interesting new phenomenon in Africa are the "women's observatories" established during elections. But what happens, and needs to happen, in between elections if the WPP narrative is to change? Case

studies include work with men by the growing number of men-for-change organisations seeking to transform the underlying attitudes and behaviors that undermine WPP.

Effective participation: The Barometer draws on Thenjiwe Mtintso's access-participation and transformation framework. This posits that for women to make a difference they must be present in sufficient numbers and be able to participate effectively. This is a pre-requisite for the change needed in policies, laws, practices and service delivery to bring about gender equality. A proxy indicator for effective participation is the extent to which women hold leadership positions in cabinet and in parliament (as speakers and in portfolio committees) and in which areas. The data shows that women are still well below parity in all these areas, and tend to be concentrated in "traditional" portfolios, for example those dealing directly with women's affairs and the social sectors. Many more indicators need to be devised for measuring women's effective participation. This chapter opens the door to further exploration of the "beyond numbers" discussion in Africa.

Conclusions and recommendations

The Barometer concludes that with just two elections to go in most African countries before 2030, policy makers and civil society will need to join hands in a concerted campaign to achieve SDG 5.5 by this deadline. Key measures include country specific electoral reforms and temporary special measures; gender aware electoral laws and processes; gender training for the media and media training for women politicians; levelling the playing field on many fronts; effective support for WPP by political parties and civil society.

The Barometer makes a strong case for much greater attention to be paid to local government that up to now has remained the poor cousin of WPP discourse despite the immense importance of this sphere of politics for women's equal and effective participation. It also highlights the importance of cross-generation engagement: nurturing a new cadre of young women leaders. Future recommendations include disaggregating political participation data by sex and age, to ensure that Africa harnesses the demographic dividend of its youthful population.