Women in Power:
beyond access to influence
in a post-2015 world

VSO at a glance

VSO is different to most organisations that fight poverty. We fight poverty through the lasting power of volunteering. We send doctors, midwives, teachers and other skilled professionals to work with communities worldwide, sharing knowledge and expertise to save lives and create positive change. Most importantly, this change continues long after the volunteers have returned home, and local people are empowered to lift themselves out of poverty. At VSO, we believe in finding lasting, sustainable solutions to fight poverty. We can only do this by working together.

VSO works with and supports partner organisations at every level of society, from government organisations at a national level to health and education facilities at a local level. In 2012/13 we supported 725 partners across our six development goal areas of education, health, HIV and AIDS, secure livelihoods, participation and governance, and disability. This was achieved through a range of interventions including international volunteers, national volunteers, youth volunteers, small grants and international study tours.

Concepts and definitions according to VSO:

Gender equality means that men and women have equal opportunities to realise their individual potential – both to contribute to their country's economic and social development and to benefit equally from their participation in society.[1] In a situation of gender equality, women, men, girls and boys have equal access to power, knowledge, and resources, as well as equal rights, opportunities, and responsibilities. When gender equality is achieved, the interests and needs of women and men are weighted equally, as both sexes are valued equally. Gender equality fundamentally means that one sex is not habitually privileged over the other, and that rights and opportunities are not determined at birth.

This necessitates a respect for human rights and an undertaking to address gender-based power differentials related to people's access to and control over resources, and their participation in institutions of community, civil society, state and business.[2]

Participation and influence refers to **meaningful** or **effective participation** of women in public and political life. It goes beyond considering if women are represented numerically to assess the extent to which they are able to be actively involved and influence decision-making processes through their participation. Women's participation and influence is closely linked to the concept of **empowerment**.

Political and public life refers to "the exercise of political power, in particular the exercise of legislative, judicial, executive and administrative powers. The term covers all aspects of public administration and the formulation and implementation of policy at the international, national, regional and local levels. The concept also includes many aspects of civil society, including public boards and local councils and the activities of organisations such as political parties, trade unions, professional or industry associations, women's organisations, community-based organisations and other organisations concerned with political and public life."[3]

Gender mainstreaming is the process of assessing and taking into account the implications for women and men of any planned action – including legislation, policies or programmes – at all levels and in all spheres. The concept is understood as strategies that put gender issues at the centre of broad policy and programme decisions, institutional structures and resource allocation.

Contents

Executive summary

The subject of this report is one of the deepest and most persistent fault lines of poverty and inequality in the world today: the lack of power that women have to influence decision making compared to men. Evidence shows that we are still far from solving the problem.[4]

For example, in relation to formal political representation figures show that:

Only **one in five** parliamentarians is a woman.[5]

13 Only **13 of 193** heads of government are women.[6]

17% Women's influence in high-level decision-making roles within the political sphere is even lower, with women holding just 17% of ministerial positions around the world.[7]

20% At local government level, women account for only **20%** of elected councillors; and they hold mayoral positions in only **10** of the world's 195 capital cities.[8]

2134 Based on current trends in representation, women will not be equally represented in parliaments until 2065, and will not make up half the world's leaders until **2134**.[9]

The international process under way to develop a post-2015 development framework provides an opportunity to address this deeply rooted and persistent inequality in our society; an inequality that is not only a violation of women's rights, but also a barrier to the eradication of poverty. To be successful the framework needs to take into account the obstacles to gender equality; how and why these are being perpetuated; and evidence of measures that have proved successful in addressing them.

This report will set out VSO's thinking regarding women's equal participation and influence in public and political life, and why it considers these issues to have intrinsic and instrumental importance. It will assess the situation as it is now to demonstrate existing gaps in power, and will briefly outline those barriers to and enablers of participation and influence that VSO has identified from its own experience of working in 33 countries over 55 years. The report will conclude by setting out how the post-2015 framework could integrate these priorities within a goal, target and indicator structure.

Why women's participation and influence matters

The effects of gender imbalance amongst decision-makers go beyond headline statistics. The lack of power and influence wielded by women in public and political life is undermining progress towards a world where poverty is eradicated and men and women are able to build sustainable and secure futures for themselves and their families.[10] This situation can be seen as both a result of, and a contributor to, perpetual gender inequality. In a world where women make up almost two-thirds of the 1.4 billion people living in extreme poverty, it is neither just nor practical for their voices to go unheard at the highest levels of decision-making in our societies.[11]

Barriers to and enablers of participation and influence

A senior female politician in Cameroon told VSO that "the men will expect your seat if [they] arrive late (to political meetings)".[12] This experience sums up one of the greatest barriers faced by women as they seek to participate in and influence public and political life: a strong patriarchal culture and gendered social norms. These are perpetuated by the way that political systems work and the gendered division of labour that still applies in most societies. They are further reinforced by factors such as the lower educational attainment levels expected of girls in the majority of countries, the existence of violence against women and inadequate health care provision for women. However, the experience of VSO and others working in this field suggests that emphasising the work of women-focused organisations, cultivating support for women's participation and influencing amongst men and the wider community, and promoting the concept of active citizenship, are crucial enablers for women to exert more influence in public and political life.

The goal, targets and indicators needed to increase participation and influence

VSO acknowledges that simply incorporating the issue of women's participation and influence in public and political life in a post-2015 development framework will not transform beliefs, practices and policies immediately. However its inclusion can serve as a catalyst in fostering the political will and resources needed to achieve women's empowerment and gender equality.

Much has already been learnt from the experience of the existing Millennium Development Goal (MDG) framework; through a stand-alone goal on gender equality and women's empowerment, this has succeeded both in drawing attention to these issues and stimulating a degree of action. However the post-2015 framework must address weaknesses identified in the current MDG approach, and go further, if it is to deliver truly transformative and sustainable shifts in the balance of power between women and men. To that end VSO is calling for:
- a stand-alone goal on gender equality and women's empowerment
- a concrete target for women's participation and influence, which goes beyond representation to address the quality of involvement and influence that women are able to have within decision-making forums at all levels
- a set of indicators that measure women's participation and influence both quantitatively and qualitatively, so women's own experiences and any changes in social norms and attitude are captured.

VSO has carried out a comprehensive review of current measurement frameworks that exist in the field of political participation and influence, and reviewed lessons learnt from its programme work relevant to the theme of women's participation. Thus informed, VSO suggests that the post-2015 framework can best tackle the discriminatory social norms that lie at the heart of inequality, and promote meaningful and sustainable shifts in the balance of power between women and men, if designed according to the following guidelines:

Goal	To empower women and girls and achieve gender equality
Target	Eliminate discrimination against, and increase the participation and influence of, women at all levels of public and political life
Indicators	1. Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament, local government and traditional governance structures compared to men; proportion of those seats held at a leadership, ministerial or cabinet level; and proportion of seats occupied by women from low income households and marginalised groups 2. Perception amongst female politicians of the level of impact they have on decisions making at the various levels of government. 3. Public attitudes towards women as leaders in public and political life. 4. Number of women's rights organisations working on gender equality and women's empowerment in a country; and these organisations' perception of progress made regarding women's ability to adopt leadership positions in public and political life.

Integration and data collection

Whilst a stand-alone gender goal is needed, it is also important to ensure that measures of women's empowerment are mainstreamed across all the goals and targets contained in the post-2015 framework. This is in recognition of the fact that gender inequality spans all dimensions of poverty, and that the opportunities available to women to participate meaningfully in political and public life, and their capacity to do so, are affected by a wide range of issues, including education, healthcare and livelihoods.

Last but not least, the implementation of the framework must integrate data collection in such a way as to respond effectively to women's needs. This in itself requires resources, political commitment, and recognition that the individual/body collecting information, and the means of collection, has the potential to perpetuate or modify power structures within our societies.

Introduction

Around the world women and girls suffer disproportionately from poverty. They account for almost two-thirds of the world's poorest people.[13] Women make up 60% of the world's 572 million working poor.[14]

Poverty amongst women is, in part, caused by gender inequality.[15] One of the major factors contributing to this long-standing imbalance is a lack of decision-making power women hold in both the public and private sphere.

While much work has been, and is being, done to address gender inequality in political representation through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other international and national policies, progress has been too slow, narrow in scope and uneven. Advances in equality have yet to translate into genuine and sustained improvements in the lives of women. This is to the detriment not only of women themselves, but also their families, the communities in which they live and society as a whole.[16] In effect, gender inequality in power and influence remains a barrier to development and the eradication of poverty.[17]

The international processes under way to develop a post-2015 development framework, which will replace the existing MDGs, provide a significant opportunity to mobilise the political support and partnerships that are needed to address this long-standing inequality of power effectively.

This report is intended to inform the current debate about what the future development agenda should look like and which goals, targets and indicators should be prioritised. While there is a degree of consensus that gender equality should "be a centrepiece of the post-2015 agenda",[18] opinions are divided on how this should be achieved. Here we will suggest how women's participation and influence in public and political life might be incorporated into the post-2015 framework in a way that stimulates meaningful action and progress, reflects the needs of women living in poverty and encourages lasting changes in attitudes, social norms and opportunities for women. In preparing this report, VSO has drawn on the experience its volunteers, partner organisations and programme work, as well as detailed research commissioned in association with Womankind and Saferworld.[19]

Chapter 1
Why women's participation and influence is critical

> "Women's political participation is fundamental to democracy and essential to the achievement of sustainable development and peace."
>
> **United Nations and UN Women, 2011**

VSO believes that ensuring women have equal participation in and influence over the decisions that affect their countries, societies and lives is intrinsically and instrumentally important because:

- Women make up half of the world's population: they are not a minority group.
- Women perform two-thirds of the world's work and produce 50% of all food, but earn only 10% of world income and own only 1% of world property.[20]
- Women are estimated to account for almost two-thirds of the 1.4 billion people globally who live in extreme poverty.[21]

It is both a fundamental human right and a necessity if we are to make meaningful and sustainable progress towards a world where everyone has the ability to live free of poverty and with choice and control over their lives.

It is a matter of justice

Human development is about more than access to income and basic resources. It is also about having opportunities and choices to fulfil our aspirations and take control of our own lives. The ability to have a say in decisions that affect us is an important factor in this. We are at our most vulnerable when we are unable to shape new polices or push back against existing policies and behaviours that harm us, and at our most frustrated when people with power and influence do not listen to our ideas and insights about how things could change for the better.[22]

This is why international conventions and agreements devote critical attention to this cause. The right of women to participate in political and public life is clearly set out in the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW),[23] and reaffirmed by the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA)[24] – not to mention multiple statements by the Commission on the Status of Women.[25] (See Appendix One for further details.)

It leads to more efficient, effective and responsive decisions being made

Governance cannot be effective or responsive if it neither understands the differing needs of women and men nor draws on the experiences and resources that they each bring when deciding on public spending, policy and legislation priorities. Women need to be present in decision-making in order to ensure that their specific needs and interests are promoted and defended. A survey of women politicians, carried out by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), involving 187 women from 65 countries, showed that 89% of these women believed they had a special responsibility to represent the needs and interests of women.[26]

Village council leadership in India

In India, studies of women in **panchayats** (village councils) report that the inclusion of women officials in these bodies has made them more responsive to community demands for infrastructure, improved implementation of various government programmes, and made women citizens more likely to take advantage of state services and demand their rights.[27]

An evaluation study of 265 panchayats in West Bengal and Rajasthan found that where leadership roles were reserved for women, the type of public goods provided were more likely to respond to women's priorities. For example, the number of drinking water projects in areas with female-led councils was 62% than in those with male-led councils,[28] reflecting the relatively high priority given by women to their need for access to clean water.

It promotes longer term gender equality

Governance institutions can reinforce gender inequalities, or they can challenge them. Ensuring that women play an equal role in shaping the decisions, rules and structures that influence their lives is likely to lead to long-term, sustainable changes. If, for example, women have an equal voice in developing legal frameworks, it is likely they will ensure that the laws do not discriminate against women and that international, gender-focused commitments such as CEDAW are honoured.

It helps to transform social norms and practices

Giving women a higher profile as decision-makers in governance can also contribute to a transformation in attitudes towards women in households and communities, and provide positive role models for both girls and boys. The increased representation of women in governance institutions has been shown to increase numbers of women voters, thereby strengthening active citizenship.

Research from India, for instance, found that after being introduced to the concept of reserving a certain number of places for women, voters updated their opinion on the effectiveness of female leaders in general; and the second generation of female leaders were as popular as male leaders. Similarly, a study of temporary gender quotas in municipalities in Italy indicated progress towards the elimination of negative stereotypes of women.[29]

Of equal importance is the fact that women help to support each other. Regina Mundi, the most senior female politician in the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (North West Cameroon), says: "You are strong when you have many other strong women behind you."[30]

It leads to more effective and equitable resource allocation

Political and public decision-making bodies determine how public resources are allocated and whether services take account of women's needs. Gender equality in leadership will ensure a greater recognition of women's as well as men's needs and situations, and is likely to result in better and more equal allocation of public financial resources and more targeted delivery of services such as water, education and health services.[31] Given that in 2012 women in sub-Saharan Africa spent an average of 200 million hours per day collecting water, water allocation policies and decisions can have an immense impact on their lives.[32]

VSO volunteer Michelle Hain's experience is that "issues that are a high priority for women are often not a high priority for men. Water is a very good example of that because women are the ones that are carrying the water from long distances. Women are the ones that are dealing with sick children if the water is contaminated in some way. Men are aware of the problem but it's not taking up their day. They're not the ones carrying the water [...]. So having more women inside the council can change the priorities inside the council and [...] influence the order that problems are addressed."[33]

Cameroon
VSO volunteer Michelle Hain and the Community Initiative for Sustainable Development

VSO volunteer Michelle Hain has been working with the Community Initiative for Sustainable Development (COMINSUD) as an Organisational Development Advisor in Bamenda, North West Cameroon. In collaboration with her partner, she has been devising and delivering training programmes and events that help women understand and stand for local government elections.

Women in Cameroon are severely under-represented in politics. Even in the politically active North West region, women account for only 5% of the region's parliamentarians and for 16% of municipal councillors. In Michelle's experience, it is perceived that the women are shying away from politics with men often telling her 'We want to include the women, but where are the women?'.

Another problem Michelle has seen highlighted is that women who marry outside of their village don't belong anywhere when it comes to politics. These women are rejected by their husband's community when they want to stand because they "don't belong", even though they have lived there for decades, raised children there and will be buried there. Equally, the community they left many years ago will not accept them as candidates. This situation is uniquely encountered by women.

In response to these issues, COMINSUD and Michelle have developed a number of projects and training programmes to engage women. Through the project Campaigning for More Women in Councils in the NWR, UN Women

Cameroon and the British High Commission in Yaoundé sponsored 450 women to participate in an intensive programme of training seminars with supporting follow-up visits. Manuals, workbooks and guides to understanding the electoral code were written to underpin the training. This training focused on women uniting within parties and acting strategically. There were examples of lobbying local party hierarchies to get more women on lists; defending other women on lists by not allowing their names to be replaced; and even assisting with the costs of preparing candidates' applications.

This project has run for two consecutive International Women's Days in order to publicise women's under-representation through the wearing of a yellow ribbon. This campaign reached all 34 council areas in the North West region and encouraged women to demand that political parties respect voluntary quotas on candidate lists.

Local initiatives, training programmes and campaigns such as these can overcome many of the cited barriers by significantly increasing the confidence and capacity of women in political parties. Cameroon is preparing itself for parliamentary and municipal council elections on 30 September 2013, and the proportion of women candidates is expected to increase significantly. The training has helped many women stand in party selection processes for the first time; and many of those who failed to be selected for the upcoming elections are determined to work towards being selected in 2018.[34]

Chapter 2
The world we live in

Despite numerous international declarations promoting the equal right of people to participate in public and political affairs, women continue to be marginalised within decision-making institutions and processes across the world, from local to international level. This is illustrated by statistics on women's representation in formal politics.

International

- In the highest ranks of the UN system, only 29.5% of staff are women.[35]
- The UN has a goal of reaching a 50/50 gender balance of staff across the organisation. Latest statistics show that based on the current average annual increment, parity will not be achieved until 2034.[36]

National parliaments

- Only 20.9% of national parliamentarians are female, indicating slow growth from 11.6% in 1995.[37]
- There are currently 8 women serving as heads of state and 13 serving heads of government.[38]
- Women account for less than 10% of parliamentarians in 37 states.[39]
- Only 17% of the world's government ministers are women. The majority of these ministerial roles are responsible for social sectors such as education and health.[40]

Local government

- Only 10 of the world's 195 capital cities are led by women; that's 5.1%.[41]
- Women account for only 20% of councillors worldwide.[42]
- In the UK alone, women will have to wait 150 years to gain equal representation in local government.[43]

Traditional

- Traditional governance institutions play an important role at the community level in many developing countries. In Sierra Leone, for example, an estimated 85% of the population falls under the jurisdiction of customary law (as defined in the constitution).[44] In many countries, local and traditional governance structures (such as village development committees) and positions of power (including those held by religious and traditional leaders, local politicians and village elders) are still male-dominated. However the picture is changing in some parts of the world. As a result of grassroots activism in China's rural Shaanxi province, for example, the number of women elected as village heads tripled in the period 2003–2009.[45]

Critical mass and parity

It has been argued that **critical mass** makes women more effective in public forums. This is the point at which women move from being nominal to effective participants. Globally, the figure of 30% has gained popularity and forms the basis for legislating or lobbying for gender quotas in diverse institutions, from parliaments to village councils. Research cited by CEDAW indicates that if women's participation reaches 30–35%, there is a real impact on the content of decisions. Accordingly, CEDAW recommends that in every public forum where issues of public life are decided upon, neither sex should constitute less than 40%.[46]

- To date only 35 countries, including 9 in Africa, have attained the 30% benchmark of women in parliament.[47] Out of these 35 countries, 29 (or 83%) have applied some form of quota relating to women's political participation.[48]
- Based on the current rate of progress, women will not make up a critical mass at the heads of government level until 2078. Worse still it will take 120.6 years to reach a point where they make up 50% of the worlds political leaders.
- At this rate of change, women will not make up 50% of parliamentarians in single or lower houses until 2065.

The gap between rhetoric and reality

Looking beyond headline statistics to the implementation of gender equality policies and practices highlights further gaps between vision and reality. Whilst quotas, declarations and international agreements are useful, the implementation of these often falls short (frequently due to a lack of political support). VSO has been monitoring progress in several countries in which we operate as well as working in partnership with communities to address this insistent problem.

The **Bangladeshi** constitution states that "all citizens are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection by the law". However, in practice, state legislation and institutions frequently disregard women's rights, and laws aimed at eliminating discrimination against women are not enforced.[50]

In **Zambia**, the government has committed to 50:50 parliamentary representation by 2015. However, during the election in October 2011, representation by women fell from 15% to 11.3% (18 out of 157).[51] Although the National Gender Policy was developed in 2000, it has not been implemented systematically, and UK AID and Irish Aid have described the period between 2000 and 2010 as a "lost decade" in terms of the advancement of women in Zambia.[52]

In **Rwanda**, land laws give equal rights to men and women to own land; a law to deal with gender-based violence has been established; and a policy is in place to promote girls' education, especially in science and primary education. However, owing to limited capacity, implementation of these laws remains weak, and knowledge and awareness of them at grassroots level is limited.[49]

Chapter 3
Barriers to and enablers of meaningful participation and influence for women

Barriers to participation and influence

> " Getting nominated to run on a political party's ticket is the first struggle in a highly patriarchal system. Then once you are nominated, convincing the public that you are capable of more than raising children and cooking dinner, is the next step. All the way through a female candidate can expect people to question your motives and your commitment to your family."
>
> **VSO Jitolee, 2011, 13** (quote from Veronica Oakeshott)

In VSO's experience of working in partnership with women in 90 countries over 55 years, a number of barriers serve to perpetuate women's exclusion from political and public life. The most obvious of which are: patriarchal societies and gendered social norms; political institutions and the political system itself; and gendered division of labour. These are, of course, reinforced by and interconnected with the lower educational attainment levels for girls in most of the world, continued violence against women and issues around maternal and sexual and reproductive health rights.

Patriarchal culture and social norms

In many countries in which VSO operates, strong patriarchal cultures exist incorporating social norms and practices that continue to subordinate girls and women in private life and exclude them from participation in public life.[53]

> "Women in Papua New Guinea are disadvantaged in numerous ways relative to men and women in other parts of the world [...]. Traditional gender dynamics reinforce expectations of male dominance and control."
>
> **VSO, 2012b.**

One example is the existence of dual legal systems, where customary law can undermine the rights and freedoms provided for women under constitutional law and international agreements. For example, in Zambia, the constitution protects women against discrimination under Article 11; however this is negated by Article 23(4), which allows supplication of customary law in matters of personal law.[54]

Social norms, in the form of views on the appropriateness of a women's place in the public arena, are still widely held and act as a formidable obstacle for women seeking participation or influence. In Northern Ghana for example, tradition dictates that women must not sit with men at community meetings but sit behind them.[55]

In such situations, women who engage in political activity often find it hard to be accepted within their constituencies, including by female voters. A VSO volunteer working with the Kenyan Women Parliamentary Association from 2011 to 2012 observed that "women who go to the polling post are as unlikely to vote for a female candidate as male voters" because of the candidate's gender.[56]

Evidence of a cultural and religious bias against women taking on leadership roles is still significant. In Nigeria, political scientist Damilola Taiye Agbalajobihas called this the "virility deficiency", where Nigerian society believes men to "possess superior strength, self-reliance and the qualities needed to 'tussle in political endeavour'".[57] Interviews with female leaders in Ghana illustrates that religion is often used to justify the lack of women occupying leadership positions. One respondent said: "In the initial stages it was the religion that they used against me. That was why I lost in '98 and 2002. They said a Muslim woman is not supposed to lead a community. So they are not going to vote for me."[58]

Meanwhile, VSO offices in Cameroon, Kenya, Malawi and Zambia have highlighted the following key obstacles to achieving greater participation by women in the political process: bullying and intimidation by the media, reported to cultivate negative and sexist attitudes; fear of social stigma and sexual harassment; and resistance by male family members. Sexual harassment is also often cited as a challenge by women entering political and public life.

Political and electoral systems

Political and governance institutions are rarely built to suit the practical and physical needs of women. Working arrangements are usually inflexible, making it difficult for women to balance work with the additional caring responsibilities they are often expected to take on. Institutional systems can also lack transparency and accountability:

"In Nepal, the big decisions that affect women's lives are made when women are not present. They occur in informal settings, where men arrange meetings and don't invite women. This means that in formal settings these decisions are implemented and women can't see how the decision was reached. On top of this, the women who are actually present at the table will be known to the male leaders – they are placed there and tend to be women that the men think will do what they want."[59]

In Sierra Leone, women candidates have reported that political parties often remove women from candidate lists at the last minute, replacing them with male candidates who are considered more likely to win the seat.[60] In addition, the way elections are organised and run, especially in the selection of candidates, presents women with particular problems, whether this is getting selected for a constituency-based election or appearing on a party list of candidates. Women often do not have the economic and social capital necessary to mobilise political support. They may not have sufficient money – or access to a network with money – to pay for a political campaign and personal security during elections. Marriam Mutua, from Zambia's Chipata District Farmers Association, says that women often lack the ability to pay for transport to go to political meetings.[61] As their level of education is often lower than that of male candidates, they may also lack the confidence and knowledge they need to give public talks or promote their views.[62]

Gendered division of labour

Amongst the fundamental barriers to women's participation in political and public life are the responsibilities and obligations they hold in the private sphere. Women's multiple roles as wives, mothers, daughters, community carers and income-generators severely limit the time and capacity they have for community participation and mobilisation.

Women living in poverty carry the overwhelming burden of domestic responsibilities, including water and firewood collection, cleaning, cooking and caring. This work is unpaid and time consuming. For poor women, participating in public decision-making beyond their immediate needs for survival may seem like an impossible extra burden. Research on the Filipino fisher folk movement shows that women are loath to take on leadership roles because of their acceptance of the gendered division of labour. They do not want to add to their already substantial burden in the home and cite lack of time and money as deciding factors.[63]

This double burden often remains a challenge when women are elected to government office. For some, the strain of trying to reconcile work with their responsibilities in the home affects their career progression and may even lead them to resign from their government post.[64]

A lack of control over whether, or when, to have children also makes it difficult for women to plan their participation in leadership contests or elections, or to develop into leadership positions within their economic sector. This underlines how important reproductive rights are in enabling women to participate and lead.[65]

Finally, women's health and education prospects play a major role in their ability and confidence to put themselves forward for roles in political and public life.

Enablers and facilitators of participation and influence

"There may be a quota for representation, but there isn't one for participation and influence."
VSO volunteer working with the Ministry for the Protection of Women, Burkina Faso

Quotas, reserved seats and international agreements

Quotas, reserved seats and international agreements are all helping to stimulate slow but crucial change to the numbers of women participating in political and public life. Quotas, for example, have been proven to have a positive effect on increasing women's involvement in politics. In 22 of the 48 countries where elections were held in 2012, the use of either legislated or voluntary quotas (usually in combination with a proportional representation system) were largely responsible for the above-average increase witnessed in the number of women members of parliament. Where quotas have been legislated, women took 24% of parliamentary seats; with voluntary quotas, they occupied 22% of seats. Where no quotas were used, women took only 12% of seats, well below the global average.[66]

However, direct interventions focused on the introduction of quotas or other measures to increase women's representation in national parliaments are not enough. Increased numbers do not automatically translate into increased influence: having a seat at the table does not guarantee that a woman will have the opportunity to speak, or that she will be listened to. As one VSO volunteer in Bangladesh commented in relation to quotas, "This gives them (women) access to the meetings but does not give them a right to speak or make decisions [...] but at least they are in the door."

Secondly, women who seek and gain public office as a result of quotas do not necessarily support a women's rights agenda or represent the poorest or most marginalised women in society. Quotas are not necessarily an indicator of a government's or parliament's commitment to gender equality, women's empowerment or democratisation. Indeed, they can be used as tools to serve a less progressive political agenda, for example where parties select electoral candidates whom they know will tow the party line or act as proxies

for their husbands or fathers.[67] This challenge was captured succinctly during our interview with the leader of a VSO partner women's organisation in Nepal: "Women who are actually present at the table will all be known to the male leaders –they are placed there and tend to be women that the men think will do what they want. They are only there to fill the quota and give a veneer of participation."

Furthermore, those women likely to benefit from affirmative action policies are usually the urban elite and educated professionals who have the resources and networks they need to run for office. Women who are most affected by poverty are least likely to run, and it cannot be assumed that their interests will be represented by those that do. Experiences in Costa Rica illustrate this point. Women parliamentarians opposed legislation that would restrict domestic workers to eight-hour working days, arguing that they themselves would not be able to work in politics if domestic workers did not work long hours.[68]

In short, representation alone is not enough. As we have seen, conventional ideas that women's place is in the private or domestic sphere, lack of time and money required to support participation, and a lack of support structures, all contribute to the exclusion of women from formal participation in political and public life. Overcoming these barriers requires a change in attitudes and behaviours from the ground up, as much as from the top down.

There are many ways in which this is happening.

Women's rights organisations

A wide range of research shows that women's rights organisations play an important role not only in mobilising women as voters and candidates, but also in helping them to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence, networks and supportive relationships necessary to exercise political agency at an individual level.[71] In the face of patriarchal societies and male dominance within political and public institutions, these networks can provide support systems for women, helping to foster a sense of strength in numbers and decrease activists' feelings of marginalisation and isolation.

Nepal
VSO volunteer Cath Nixon and Women's Empowerment Action Forum (WEAF) working with village district committees (VDCs)

Nepali women don't tend to participate in decision-making because they assume they will not be listened to. From a young age, girls are often forced to drop out of school for marriage, and thus have less confidence to speak out in comparison to their better educated husbands. Once married, they must seek their new family's permission to continue their education or get a job. Often, there is not enough money to support a wife's education, or there is too much work to be done around the home. Furthermore, much of the existing work is agriculture-based and time-consuming, and women therefore have little time and energy to dedicate to local politics.

The 2007 Interim Constitution of Nepal mandated a 33% quota for women across all boards including VDCs. Additionally, 10% of the VDC budget is meant to be allocated to women and girls. However, both policies are being flouted. Women's participation and representation in the three local government bodies is extremely low. Out of 3,915 VDC secretary posts, only 81 are occupied by women. The VDC secretary plays a key decision-making role in the village as mandated by the 1999 local governance law of Nepal, implementing approved plans and projects of the VDC, and acting as VDC administrator.[69] There has been no local election in Nepal since 2002. In the absence of locally elected officials, the VDC secretary's role has become even more important. Meanwhile in Goganpani, Baraha and Seri, where Cath and VSO partner organisation WEAF are working, the 10% budget is being incorrectly directed to developing roads.

WEAF recognised that such decisions were not even being contested by the women who sit on these committees. As a result, Cath and her partners have been working to help the women raise their voices through leadership training sessions; this has encouraged them to speak with a collective voice, and to feel that they have something important to say. Since the training, women in one village have asked for some of their budget allocation to go towards stretchers to support women in labour, and issues such as domestic violence and alcohol abuse have also been added to the agenda. Similar initiatives are now in place in Bindabasini and Chauratha VDCs as well.

Another aspect of Cath's work has been working with her partners to inform men in leadership positions about national statistics and research that show how increasing women's participation can be good for the community. In some cases, men were not even aware of the 33% quota rule. Cath has found that men in leadership positions feel ashamed when they learn about the research, and have been incentivised to get women actively participating in politics.

In addition, Cath has seen evidence that including more women on VDCs ensures that they are able to claim their rights, whilst sending out the message to women at community level that politics isn't just for men. Convincing everyone that women have valuable contributions to make is vital to challenging the deeply engrained social norms within the community.[70]

These findings echo VSO's own experience.

- In Malawi, VSO has promoted the formation of women's committees within Milk Bulking Groups to combat women's low participation in, and influence over, rural institutions' decisions on service design, service delivery and resource allocations. The committees have raised awareness of the prominent role that women play in dairy farming and have provided role models for other women in the community. These women have gone on to form their own committees to engage more effectively with local government structures.[72]
- VSO partner, The Women's League of Burma, has been hosting political forums as part of its No Women No Peace campaign. This supports women in better understanding their rights and how to claim them, and in developing their political networks with local women's groups and political organisations.

Findings on women's participation in Sierra Leone suggest that whilst the political parties there continue to be male dominated, civil society is offering opportunities for women to develop as local leaders and learn political skills.[73]

Women's organisations can strengthen women's capacity to influence by adopting politically oriented mentoring programmes. This strategy is one of the most frequently used, and has contributed substantially to levels of political involvement amongst women. This form of mentoring provides women with role models, gives them space to address issues of public voice and confidence, and helps them take on increasingly public roles. The most effective political mentoring programmes involve the provision of ongoing conversation and advice, as women are coached to seize opportunities to take on greater responsibility, become politically active and make decisions about political strategies.[74]

Tackling discriminatory attitudes and perceptions

One way of getting women and men to reconsider their gendered perceptions about what makes a good leader is through promoting positive role models and implementing targeted gender equality awareness campaigns, targeted at all parts of society.

Indonesia
VSO Indonesia

In 2010–11, an external gender audit was carried out by VSO Indonesia with 18 partner organisations, including non-government organisations (NGOs), district-level government and credit unions. This audit found deeply held cultural and religious beliefs that were proving to be a barriers to these organisations' ability to address gender equality.

On the back of this audit, **VSO Indonesia** delivered gender sensitivity training to its partners, focusing on culture and religion. Partners had the chance to speak out about gender equality from their personal perspective and to reflect on their own ingrained attitudes towards gender relations. The training with Muslim partners was facilitated by a high-level university lecturer, a woman experienced in interpreting the Koran from a gender perspective with an emphasis on how the script could support gender mainstreaming. A similar workshop was held with Christian partner organisations.

Indonesian government policy and legislation regarding gender equality is advanced; VSO has an international volunteer supporting gender mainstreaming within the Ministry of Gender itself. However, existing governmental approaches do not touch on culture or religion. It is therefore important that the legislation is implemented at community level in order to encourage people to reflect on their attitudes towards gender norms and women's subordination.[75]

Cultivating support and encouraging active citizenship

> "Women are central to development. Women care about their children, their husbands and their communities."
>
> **Njong Donatus Fonyuy, (male) Mayor of Kumbo District, VSO interview, May 2013**

Women's participation in political life will not be truly effective without gaining support and commitment to equality from men. VSO volunteers and staff continually state that efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment remain inefficient if programme and advocacy activities only involve girls and women. They have identified the need to engage with those who hold decision-making capacity within existing social, economic and political structures, for example heads of households, traditional and religious leaders, and political leaders, these being men in the majority of cases.

This is the central idea of VSO's theory of change. We argue that only by bringing people together and allowing them to share learning can we bring about long-term changes in attitudes and behaviours. Amina Ouedraogo from VSO

Burkina Faso says: "Education for men is needed to effect any changes. This is perhaps the most important aspect of gender work; that men must be involved at all stages in order for anything to change".[76]

In Sierra Leone, a women's organisation called the 50/50 Group not only provides gender training to male politicians and leaders, but seeks to identify male champions in positions of authority, who will speak out in support of women's right to political leadership and participation. Such champions are crucial in changing other men's attitudes, as well as in encouraging those men who support equal participation to speak out.[77]

Strengthening women's role within the family and community, especially amongst poorer communities, has the power to be truly transformative. If poor and marginalised people (the majority of whom are women) become aware of their rights, and active and engaged in their own communities, they can transform their social and economic development. An active citizen approach focuses on raising women's awareness of their exclusion, supporting women's groups and NGOs, and creates spaces for interaction between citizens and institutions.[78] VSO programmes have supported and promoted the concept and practice of women and men as equal and active citizens, all of whom have a right to be heard and take part in decision-making and leadership with regard to the affairs and interests of their community.

©VSO/Simon Rawles

Tanzania
VSO volunteer Louise Jenkins and KBH's Habiba Hasheem

Tanzania is rewriting its national constitution at the end of 2013, giving people across the country the opportunity to input into the rewriting of the core governing principles of the nation. VSO volunteers are working with local feminists to ensure women from all socio-economic backgrounds have the chance to be heard by decision-makers at the highest level.

Born in a small village in Kagera, Tanzania, 22-year-old Aisha was raised by her grandparents after losing both her parents before reaching the age of five. She recalls a lady who would often visit her rural community looking for girls to work as maids.

But life in the city was quite different from what she imagined. Describing her early experiences in the capital Dar es Salaam, Aisha remembers: "The lady took me to a big house with many small rooms and there were lots of other girls staying there, wearing very skimpy clothes."

After spending a week doing housework, Aisha was taken to buy similar clothes for herself. "I was given one of the rooms like the other girls slept in at night. Then I was called into a room where there were men. The lady who had brought me announced that I was a very new girl and they could take me if they offered a lot of money."

Aisha was raped that night, and for the following three years she was forced to live as a sex worker before managing to escape. "The day I got out was my first night out alone on the streets, and I was raped. I lived on the streets for quite some time." Though she eventually escaped the clutches of the woman who brought her to the city, Aisha feels she has no option but to continue living as a sex worker. Today, she is a member of KBH, a support

group that was formed by fellow sex worker Habiba Hasheem to give a unified voice to women born in poverty forced into a very challenging way of life.

The 28-year-old Habiba started KBH after being invited to a conference where she learned about leadership for marginalised women. "After forming the group I went to the local government authorities to register our group so we can advocate for our rights as commercial sex workers."

With the support of Mary Rusimibi, Tanzania's leading feminists, VSO and UN Women, this group have been establishing their priorities for what they would like to see in the new constitution. "We are not recognised by the law, but we need housing and access to basic healthcare that we are often denied, because we don't have a husband by our side when we visit the doctor – this is an injustice."

"Women should be placed at all levels of leadership, even if there are only a few in a high position, they might be the only ones who think of those who are discriminated against," says Habiba. Even though national politics can often feel far removed from her life and from the lives of other marginalised women, she believes it is important to join forces with women from across the country during the constitutional review process.

VSO volunteer Louise is helping to improve the effectiveness of grassroots women's groups like KBH. She said: "In order to support women and girls to become the leaders of tomorrow, they need to feel empowered to do so and what I'm already seeing is exactly that; from the grassroots level, women are now taking action; they're taking the constitution and they're saying, 'This is what we want.'"

Chapter 4
Using the post-2015 development agenda to address the gender imbalance in participation and influence

> "Women are the fabric of society, they hold society together – they make a major contribution which goes unnoticed. They also have a lot of issues, which should be known at public policy level."
>
> **VSO, 2013** (quote from Mary Rusimbi)

The process under way to define a new global development framework to replace the MDGs is a golden opportunity to address one of the most persistent factors contributing to cycles of poverty and inequality in the world today: the lack of power women have to influence decision-making compared to men. While the framework is not a golden ticket that will immediately transform beliefs, practices and policies, it can help to foster the necessary political will and focus international and national attention on the long-term goal. As with the MDGs, the post-2015 framework will direct development focus and funds for the next 15–20 years, a sufficiently long timeframe to allow real progress to be made.

Building on MDGs

The current MDGs have had two important effects. Firstly, as a set of internationally agreed goals and targets, the framework has prompted coordinated data collection and reporting. This allows us to monitor change and progress in unprecedented ways. Secondly, this reporting and international benchmarking has provided governments and other development stakeholders with incentives to drive change forward.

The MDG framework contains a stand-alone goal on gender equality and women's empowerment (MDG 3), broken down into a single target focused on eliminating gender disparity in education and three accompanying indicators (see Box 1). The inclusion of this goal has been important in establishing gender equality as a critical area of development policy and practice, providing a hook for advocacy work and stimulating investment.[79] It has also increased the monitoring and technical knowledge of gender issues in a development context.

However, the MDG framework has a number of weaknesses from a women's empowerment perspective which must be addressed in the post-2015 framework. MDG 3, with only one target, has been criticised for focusing only on the symptoms of gender inequality rather than its root causes. Its sole target focuses on eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education but fails to consider the many barriers girls may face attending or completing school, and the gendered power relations within schools that may impact the equality of education.[80] There are also no indicators to measure whether the education received has given girls confidence, skills and networks that would give them meaningful choices in life or equip them for further education or work.

Of the three MDG3 indicators, 3.3 on parliamentary representation arguably holds the greatest potential to encourage transformative changes in women's capacities to participate in political and public life.[81] It is limited, however, having no correlative target associated with it to drive political will. The lack of a concrete target on increasing women's participation and influence in decision-making has translated into a lack of focus on achieving this end. Moreover, an indicator that measures only the proportion of females to males in national parliaments is insufficient. While national representation is important, participation in and influence on decision-making at local levels is equally important. From a poverty reduction perspective, it is often local institutions and decision-making processes that have the most direct impact on women affected by poverty and marginalisation; and participating in these may be easier given their geographical proximity. In addition, whilst it recognises the importance of formal parliamentary politics, MDG3 does not cover women's wider engagement in public life.

Box 1: Current MDG3	
Goal	Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women
Target 3.A	Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015
Indicators	3.1 Ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education 3.2 Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector 3.3 Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament

Perhaps most significantly, indicator 3.3 does not provide any insights into whether those women who are represented are able to participate meaningfully and exert any influence over decisions that are made.[82] As this report has already examined, women's representation in formal institutions does not necessarily increase their influence or aid gender-sensitive policy making. Unless the social and cultural norms that lead to gendered stereotypes and discrimination are tackled, women's representation may continue to be ineffective, tokenistic and even damaging to women's rights.[83]

On the whole, progress under MDG3 has been too slow, narrow in scope and uneven. We must now plan a more transformative post-2015 framework, building on progress and lessons learnt to date.

Post-2015 goal, target and indicators

Assuming that the post-2015 framework will wield similar influence to the MDGs, it is vital that its goals, targets and indicators drive action on the most critical issues and help to measure progress and change against them. As we have seen above, persistent gender inequality is undermining efforts to eradicate poverty across the globe. Given that eradicating poverty is likely to be the main objective of the post-2015 framework, it is vital that women's empowerment and gender equality features prominently amongst the agreed goals, targets and indicators.[84]

To ensure adequate focus on these themes, VSO supports the Gender and Development Network's calls for a twin-track approach which would see a specific standalone goal on gender equality and women's empowerment as well as the mainstreaming or embedding of a gender focus within targets across the framework. It is this dual approach that is most likely to address the structural inequalities that persist for women and girls, while inspiring the necessary political will, resources and national ownership to generate sustainable and effective action on gender equality.[85] This form of approach has also been identified by the UN System Task Force as an option for addressing inequalities in the post-2015 framework.[86]

VSO believes that the design of the post-2015 framework must:
- prioritise women's voices and participation (particularly the most marginalised women)
- reflect the multidimensional nature of gender inequality
- be transformative enough to tackle discriminatory attitudes and social norms at all levels of society
- combine both qualitative and quantitative approaches in measuring inequality so that it captures both statistical changes and the real-life experience of women.

In particular, VSO would like to see the post-2015 framework tackle one of the most egregious and persistent symptoms of gender inequality around the world: the lack of decision-making power that women have compared to men.

The following section sets out concrete suggestions on how to integrate VSO's priorities into the framework. We hope this will allow member states to engage in informed debates and discussion regarding the design of a stand-alone gender goal and a target and indicators on women's participation and influence.

A stand-alone goal on gender equality and women's empowerment

> **Goal:** To empower women and girls and achieve gender equality

It is critical that the post-2015 framework contains a stand-alone goal on gender equality and women's empowerment. Anything less would represent a backwards step for the development agenda and a lack of focus on the world's most vulnerable people.

The inclusion of this goal, on the other hand, would serve as a clear statement of the international community's commitment to upholding women's and girls' human rights and the intrinsic value of gender equality. This impact would be lost if gender equality and women's empowerment were only included within a mainstreamed approach, or combined under a single inequalities goal, as has been proposed by some.

A stand-alone goal on gender equality is needed to ensure appropriate resources are dedicated to achieving this aim. MDG 3 has already played a part in prompting several donor agencies to create new budget lines or earmark gender equality-specific funds.[87] Out of an average total of US$82.1 billion in Overseas Development Assistance, US$23.1 billion focused on support for gender equality and women's empowerment in 2008–9.[88]

In addition, a dedicated gender goal allows space for targets that are needed to tackle those aspects of gender inequality that do not fall easily into other goal areas, but nevertheless lie at the heart of unequal power relations in our society. Women's participation in political and public life is one of these areas.

Finally, a separate gender goal would offer the scope to take into account issues that may be a particular priority for women and girls. The most comprehensive research on priority issues for women was conducted by the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) in 2011. This survey, completed by 1,119 women's organisations from over 140 countries, found that enhancing women's leadership and empowerment was the second-most important priority (after the elimination of gender-based violence). These two issues were similarly identified as the top two thematic focus areas for UN Women in its first strategic plan.[89]

A target on women's participation and influence

> **Target:** Eliminate discrimination against, and increase the participation and influence of, women at all levels of public and political life

Given the level of priority women have given to the need to increase women's leadership and participation, VSO is calling for a specific target focused on increasing the participation and influence of women in political and public life. We strongly believe that, without an increase in both the number of women involved in decision-making and the extent of their involvement, true gender equality and the elimination of poverty will remain unachievable.

The Africa Women's Regional Civil Society Consultation on the Post-2015 Development Framework supports this focus. Specifically, they called for the post-2015 development agenda to "catalyse women's participation, representation and leadership in decision-making across the public and private sector".[90]

Including a target on women's participation and influence would build on the existing MDG framework by adding a correlative transformative target to the existing indicator on the ratio of women to men in parliaments. That said, it is important that any post-2015 target goes beyond the current MDG indicator measure of mere representation in parliament to encompass a wider range of decision-making bodies that have an impact on women's lives, as well as a focus on the level of influence that women have over decision-making in these institutions and settings.

To be successful this target needs to impose clear obligations on states and other actors to transform existing practice, social norms and attitudes where these have a negative impact on women's equality and empowerment in politics and public life. It should be applicable to the full range of decision-making institutions, from community to international level.

Appreciating that the High Level Panel of Eminent Persons (HLP) appointed by the UN Secretary General has recently offered up an initial suggestion for a target of this nature, we suggest certain refinements to ensure that the target is framed in terms of positive outcomes for women and builds on objectives contained in the CEDAW,[91] and reaffirmed by the BPfA.[92] The texts of both are laid out in Appendix One.

Keeping the language of the target broad will ensure it can be applied to the national and local public and political bodies. These should include, at a minimum, local and national political decision-making bodies, but could extend to other public and political organisations that act as amplifiers of voice and influence. The target's scope should be decided in consultation with women and women's rights organisations.

Whilst a target on women's participation and influence will represent a significant improvement on the current MDG framework, VSO recognises that it is difficult to address all the complex aspects of this issue through one concrete target, particularly if the framework is to remain sufficiently simple and coherent to gain political traction. We know, for example, that participation does not automatically result in increased influence. However, this challenge could be addressed in two main ways.

Firstly, **progress against the other targets within the post-2015 framework** should help in assessing whether an enabling environment is being fostered that will help increase women's influence as well as their representation. For example, targets on, inter alia, the quality of education that women receive, eliminating gender-based violence, and access to quality sexual and reproductive health services, will help to build women's capacities to participate effectively in public life. They may also, to a certain extent, help tackle some of the discriminatory norms that lead to tokenistic representation.

The second is through **meaningful indicators**.

Meaningful indicators to illustrate progress

The indicators are extremely important. They give the framework its teeth and provide a measure of progress. They also help to translate the goals and targets into action, shedding light onto how they should be interpreted and the approaches that should or could be used to achieve them. Quality indicators that accompany a target on participation and influence will also provide insights into whether representation is tokenistic and highlight the areas where action is most needed. To do this effectively an indicator must:

• measure transformative change in gender relations either alone or when analysed in conjunction with another indicator
• build on existing obligations and measurements
• be comparable across countries, but allow for local variations where appropriate
• reflect need rather than the availability of data
• combine both objective and subjective (or self-reported) measures.

The current MDG framework does not contain any self-reported indicators. This is a weakness that the post-2015 framework must address. How people feel about their own lives and the opportunities available to them is a critical dimension of poverty. This is particularly true for women's participation and influence. As previous sections of this report have discussed, many of the barriers that women face relate to their own confidence and perception of their role in society, and to the perceptions and behaviour of men. It is therefore critical that the post-2015 framework contains both self-reported and objective indicators for the target on women's representation.

VSO, in partnership with Womankind and Saferworld, commissioned in-depth research into the indicators and proxies currently used to measure women's participation and influence in public and political life.[93] This research examined 26 data-collection and measurement initiatives, including: the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)'s Gender Inequality Index (GII), Social Watch's Gender Equity Index (GEI)and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)'s Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI); regional measurement tools included the African Gender and Development Index (AGDI), African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and the Afrobarometer. Data collection initiatives focused specifically on measuring attitudes and perceptions such as the Gallup World Poll, Pew's Global Attitudes Project and the World Values Survey (WVS); Issue-specific measurement tools included the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI), the Women's Economic Opportunity Index (WEO) and the United Nations Global Indicators on Women, Peace and Security.

Based on this research and our knowledge of the barriers listed earlier in this report, we have suggested a short list of indicators which are feasible, transformative and universally measurable, while allowing for a degree of local variation. A more comprehensive list of indicators that VSO would endorse, together with an explanation on the feasibility, data availability and transformative quality of each indicator, is provided in Appendix Two.

Objective indicator	Self-reported indicator	Qualitative analysis
The numerical participation rate: Number of women politicians in national government. Self-reported indicator	Women MPs' own perspective on their influence: Do they feel they are having an increasing impact on decision-making? Do they feel marginalised?	The relationship between the quantity of women MPs and changes in societies 'attitudes to women as leaders. The link between support for women's organisations, levels of confidence among women MPs, and percieved levels of influence women MPs are having.

Short list of indicators

Indicator	What it measures	Objective or self-reported
Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament and local government and traditional governance structures, compared to men; proportion of those seats held at a leadership, ministerial or cabinet level; and proportion of seats occupied by women from low-income households and marginalised groups.	Participation and level of influence across all levels of formal governance structures and traditional leadership structures where they exist. This could be used as a composite indicator together with an aggregate score of overall perceived gender equality in decision-making within a country.	Objective/ quantitative
Perception amongst female politicians of the level of impact they have on decisions making at the various levels of government.	Measures influence or perceived influence.	Self-reported/ qualitative
Public attitudes towards women as leaders in public and political life.	Measures social norms and changes in attitude within society, which can also be used to show the correlation between social attitudes and women's ability to participate and exert influence.	Qualitative
Number of women's rights organisations working on gender equality and women's empowerment in a country, and their perception of progress in women's ability to enter into leadership positions in public and political life.	The scope of support mechanisms in place that will help women to enter and participate actively in political and public life.	Combines objective and self-reported elements

Below we offer an explanation of data availability and VSOs rational for each indicator.

1. **Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament and local and traditional legislatures compared to men; proportion of those seats held at a leadership, ministerial or cabinet level; and proportion of seats occupied by women from low income households and marginalised groups**

As representation in national legislatures is already an indicator for the MDGs, a target in this area would support continuity between the MDGs and post-2015 framework. It would also build on existing commitments laid out in CEDAW and the BPfA.[94] The BPfA was developed through a consultative, broad-based process that has lent it legitimacy amongst donors, governments and women's organisations and movements.

However, it is important that the post-2015 target goes beyond the current MDG measure of the number of women in national parliament. Here we suggest addressing, at a minimum, representation at community level as well as within local and national legislatures.

In order to move towards an assessment of the level of influence exerted by those engaging in the various levels of political and public life, we suggest introducing a quantitative measure to capture how many of the women represented in parliament, local government or at community level hold ministerial or leadership positions. The framework would need to provide clear definitions of which roles were included, and it would be necessary to carry out an evaluation of comparability. Existing tools for measuring leadership at a local and national level, such as the World Bank Gender Statistics database and the AGDI, could be built on. (Appendix Two provides a detailed list of where this information is already being collected.) Whilst information around traditional or community leadership roles is less readily available, the post-2015 framework should be seen as an opportunity to tackle this information gap. AGDI does use a similar indicator on local governance, and work is being undertaken by UN Women and the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) focusing on local leadership statistics.[95]

Cutting the data to assess the socio-economic status of the women who are participating will make it possible to assess to what extent the most marginalised women, and those most affected by poverty, are being represented in decision-making processes. It is widely acknowledged that just as elite and educated men dominate politics, there is a risk that any increase in women's participation and influence will favour elite and educated women. It is therefore important to ensure that those who are most likely to suffer from extreme poverty have their voices heard in decision-making forums.

2. Female politicians' perceptions of the impact that they have on political decisions, by level of government

For a deeper understanding of whether change is being achieved, the post-2015 framework must contain indicators that measure women's own perceptions of their ability to influence political and public decision-making.

This indicator would provide a self-reported measure of the influence and impact that women politicians feel they are able to have on decision-making processes. It would capture women's own voices when reporting against the target, and allow for a qualitative assessment of change over a 15-year period. This data could be used to identify which factors increase or decrease women's real influence in public and political life, and whether critical mass does in fact lead to greater influence.

In order to make this indicator workable, a ranking system would need to be devised to allow for comparability across countries. The World Economic Forum's Executive Opinion Survey (WEF), which surveys business leaders on a broad range of variables for which hard data sources are scarce or non-existent, could provide a useful model.[96]

The collection of this qualitative data would serve to supplement the more quantitative data collected by the previous indicators and would enable analysis on whether increased numbers translate into increased influence.

3. Public attitudes to women as leaders in public and political life

As highlighted earlier in this report, amongst the major barriers to women's effective participation and influence in public and political life are the social norms and patriarchal culture that dominate many societies. The Chinese dictum "Men rule the outside, women rule the inside" is representative of the social norms that continue to define the role of women in society and their ability to make their mark in what continues to be widely regarded as the male world of politics.

An indicator that measures societies' attitudes is therefore essential to assess the degree of transformative change occurring and any reduction in discrimination towards women relevant to this target. When compared with the two measures above, this indicator could contribute to a more comprehensive picture of women's ability to participate and meaningfully influence public and political life.

Indicators that measure attitudes are becoming more widely accepted. Data collection of this kind is currently undertaken by the Afrobarometer, the Pews Global Attitudes Project and the Worlds Values Survey.[97]

©VSO/Simon Rawles

4. Number of women's rights organisations working on gender equality and women's empowerment in a country, and their perception of progress in women's ability to enter into leadership positions in public and political life.

This indicator would measure proactive support for women's participation and influence. As seen earlier, organisations that focus on women's priorities play a key role in helping women to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence, networks and supportive relationships necessary to become, and remain, involved in political and public decision-making. Worryingly, donor support for women's organisations has declined by over 40% since 2008.[98] Targeted (as opposed to mainstreamed) support continues to make up only a small fraction of overall funding for women's equality and empowerment, standing at only 12% of the total allocated in 2009–10.[99] This indicator would help to identify and encourage support for what represents a very important pathway for women towards participation and influence in political and public life.

At the same time, capturing the views of organisations that promote women's empowerment and gender equality would provide an important self-reported measure of the level of priority accorded to this target (and gender goal) within a given country.

To work effectively, data-collection mechanisms will need to be developed, incorporating firm definitions of the data to be collected and what a 'women's rights organisation' is. The fact that this exercise will be challenging does not justify excluding this measure from the post-2015 framework. VSO's owns experience, highlighted in this report, shows clearly that it is these organisations that help deliver transformative change. Not to measure their impact would be to undermine their value and slow down progress towards long-term gender equality and women's empowerment.

For this reason VSO supports the call by the HLP of Eminent Persons for a 'new global partnership in development which goes beyond the usual players. This recognises the limitations within the MDG process, which has tended to emphasise state-to-state relations and ignore the role of individuals, communities groups, NGOS and other players in achieving development goals.[100]

The success of any post-2015 framework is dependent on partnership and cooperation between people. VSO strongly believes that people are the best agents of change.

Embedding gender equality across the post-2015 framework

Over the past decade it has been recognised that achieving gender equality and women's empowerment requires action at multiple levels and that progress towards the wider goal will be limited without a focus on each of these levels. It is therefore essential that in the final post-2015 development framework gender-focused targets and indicators underpin all goals within the framework with critical attention to issues such as violence against women and girls, economic empowerment, maternal mortality, sexual and reproductive health and rights and political participation.[101]

The GADN, Beyond 2015, and the proposal put forward by the Secretary General's HLP of Eminent Persons, all call for "gender equality to be integrated across all of the goals, both in specific targets and by making sure that targets are measured separately for women and men, or girls and boys."[102] VSO strongly supports this approach.

In our view, mainstreaming needs to happen at the target level, as it is here that there is the best chance of tackling often deep-rooted gender imbalances in relation to access to services, opportunities for participation and the social norms and societal structures that can define women's roles.

We also welcome the HLP's determination that **"targets will only be considered 'achieved' if they are met for all relevant income and social groups"** and that "To ensure equality of opportunity, relevant indicators should be disaggregated with respect to income (especially for the bottom 20%), gender, location, age, people living with disabilities, and relevant social group."[103]

Data collection

> "Data not only measures progress, it inspires it [...]. What gets measured gets done. [...] Nobody wants to end up at the bottom of a list of rankings."
>
> **Secretary Hilary Clinton, 2012**

To date, the assessment of women's empowerment and influence has been hampered by a lack of measurable data. Once again, the post-2015 process provides an opportunity to update existing measurement techniques and develop innovative new approaches to measuring women's participation and influence in public and political life. Too often, women and their priorities are systematically excluded from data collection because women are not involved in shaping data-collection systems. It is not just the selection of indicators that is important, but also who collects the data, where the data come from, the scale at which the data are collected (for example, individual or household level), and how the data are interpreted.

The process of collecting data for the post-2015 framework needs to be participatory and gender sensitive, involving women's organisations and civil society groups from local to international level. This approach will ensure that the women the framework seeks to support are treated as active partners in development, with their experiences of its effectiveness of central importance. By participating in the measurement of framework goals, targets and indicators, women will also able to develop their own understanding of the issues and how they can be tackled. As the UN post-2015 Task Team stated: "Mechanisms should be established for civil society groups to both participate in the setting of priorities, strategies and allocation of resources and in the monitoring of disaggregated goals and targets – including at district and municipal level – and for them to hold governments to account".[104]

Traditionally, most national censuses and large surveys have been designed by male policy-makers and carried out by male enumerators.[105] As such, data collection processes can themselves be gender biased. Engendering data collection may involve reviewing coding and terminologies; delivering gender training for all personnel involved in data collection; recruiting female enumerators; and carrying out data collection in a manner that is sensitive to the different needs of men and women in terms of, for example, privacy, time of day, and work and caring responsibilities.[106] The design of data-collection methods should also involve key stakeholders such as women's rights organisations.

Because the systems to collect the more meaningful data that is needed to assess real progress in these areas are not fully developed, there is a gap in baselines against which to progress can be measure. Again this is something that we are grateful to see reflected in the High Level Panels proposal for a 'data revolution'.[107]

Making data collection responsive to the needs of women will not be cheap or easy; the kinds of data that are needed will require extensive and in-depth research and significant capacity building in data collection at national and local levels. It will also require resources and political commitment. However only when this happens will robust, comparable information on issues which matter to women across the world be produced.

However, if we do not invest in measuring the right things, there is a danger the post-2015 framework will create the opportunity for 'easy wins' for development practitioners without providing any incentive to develop deeper, more nuanced and longer-term strategies for tackling gender inequality.

Conclusions

VSO is advocating for a post-2015 framework that includes a clear and robust target to increase women's participation and influence in political and public life. We call for this target to sit under an overarching goal that addresses gender equality and women's empowerment, and for it to be accompanied by quality indicators that measure not only the number of women participating in the political system, but also the nature of their participation and its impact.

Additionally we believe the success in tackling gender inequality through this framework will rest on whether a focus on it is mainstreamed across the framework as well as brought to particular attention under specific goals and targets. This is the only way that the multi-dimensional nature of empowerment and the different levels and structures within which power imbalances operate can be tackled.

And finally VSO joins the call for a data revolution which focuses on increasing the availability of data on all groups, especially those who are marginalised and inadequately represented within current power structures. At the same time the way in which data is collected, and the nature of data prioritised must ensure that women's needs are reflected. Meaningful progress to support women's equality and empowerment across all dimensions in the post-2015 era will not only require shifts in how we measure change, but also in how we support and fund it.

These challenges are significant, but they must be tackled head on. There is an urgent need for a step change in efforts by the international community to tackle the fundamental injustice and brake on development that women's unequal influence in public life represents. The post-2015 process presents an opportunity for this that we cannot afford to miss.

©VSO/Simon Rawles

Kenya
VSO volunteer Wendy Henry and Sauti Ya Wanawake (Voice of Women)

Sauti Ya Wanawake, Voice of Women, is a platform aimed at increasing the influence of marginalised women and enabling women's communities to participate in political life. Since 2001, an initial group of 50 women has grown into a sizeable movement, with over 6,500 members active in 42 satellite chapters in all six counties of Kenya's Coast region. VSO volunteer, Wendy Henry, is now supporting the organisation to expand and "bring the concerns of the membership to a wider audience."[108]

The society and cultures of the Coast region remain deeply patriarchal. Women and girls at grassroots level face complex and multiple inequalities with regards to the inheritance of property and land, access to schooling, and reproductive health rights. Few women of the Coast have any knowledge of their legal rights, mainly due to illiteracy. Traditionally, women in the region are not expected to take decision-making roles at home or in local politics. Communities are, thus, noticeably divided and governed by strict gender demarcations.

The safe spaces created by Sauti through their **kongomanos** (gatherings) have allowed for the empowerment of grassroots women as decision-makers, leaders and facilitators of change. Women are beginning to penetrate oppressive male-dominated societal structures; some have become chiefs and village elders, others have joined schools committees and boards of trustees, and some are now sitting on peace and land committees. Ensuring this representation of grassroots women within local decision-making bodies is crucial in addressing the root causes of gender inequality and injustices in the Coast region.

With the power balance in Kenyan politics undergoing a shift via devolution to county level, Sauti is playing a key role in ensuring grassroots women understand what this means for them. In June 2013, a four-day training course was facilitated for Chapter and community members, activists and Sauti's social auditors on behalf of Pact Kenya and USAID. Those who attended are now working out how best to maximise the participation and influence of previously marginalised women and give grassroots communities an increased role in governance.

Awareness-raising at community level has led to behavioural and social change. Forums and locally based educational activities are vital opportunities for women to learn about their rights under the law and to sensitise the wider community to Sauti's message. Men are encouraged to see that the issues raised are a shared responsibility that will benefit the family, the community and the nation. Chiefs, village elders, religious leaders and police are welcomed to Sauti's activities, and also represent government commitment – viewed as official power – to the women's work. In a deeply religious country with strongly rooted traditions, involving men and religious leaders is key to slowly changing perceptions and stereotypes about women.

These forums, like much of Sauti's work, allow both men and women to understand the effects of gender inequality and its implications on development, starting in their homes and communities. Men also witness first-hand the very real skills of the women who facilitate Sauti's forums and see the positive benefits brought about by women's increased participation. Bringing about cultural changes is a sensitive process, but using a bottom-up approach to raise awareness, and involving the whole community, addresses the root causes in a non-accusatory and democratic way.[109]

Appendix one

The equal right of all people to participate in public affairs is protected by the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**.

Article 25: Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any of the distinctions mentioned in article 2 and without unreasonable restrictions:

(a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives;
(b) To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors;
(c) To have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country.

International commitment to ensuring that women can participate in public affairs on an equal basis to men is enshrined in the **UN Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979)**. The majority of UN member states have ratified CEDAW, which means they have legal obligations to implement the measures contained within it.

Article 7: States parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right:

(a) to vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;
(b) to participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government
(c) to participate in non-governmental organisations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.

Article 8: States parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure women, on equal terms with men and without discrimination, the opportunity to represent their governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organisations.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action (BPfA, 1995) reaffirms the commitments contained within CEDAW and provides guidance on how its provisions can be implemented.

Strategic Objective G on women in power and decision-making commits signatories to:

1) take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making; and
2) increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.

Appendix two

Indicator	Political and practical feasibility	Data availability	Is it transformative?
Quantitative indicators			
Number of seats held by women in national parliament and local legislatures compared to men; proportion of those seats held at a leadership, ministerial or cabinet level in national and local government.	Definition needs to be clear that it includes national, sub-national, regional and local levels of government. Much of this indicator has gained widespread acceptance and is not therefore likely to be contentious. Much of this indicator is easily comparable across countries. This indicator is already included in a number of international indices, including the MDGs, thereby offering continuity. Definitions will need to be carefully formulated to capture the differing ministerial/senior government positions in parliaments and houses of representatives at a national level and the various ways local government is structured (for example, mayors, heads of governments for a city, town, borough or municipality).	National-level data is already collected on this by Inter-parliamentary Union, the MDGs, UNDP's Gender Gap Index (GGI), Social Watch's Gender Equality Index (GEI), OECD's Social Institutions and Development Index (SIDI), World's Women Reports and the African Gender and Development Index (AGDI). According to the World Bank's Gender Statistics database, 69 out of 81 IDA countries and all OECD countries have data for women's share of government ministerial positions. Local-level data is collected by the ADGI, the Southern African Gender and Development Index (SGDI), the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and European Commission. Currently UN Women and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) have a data collection initiative which may make it more feasible to measure local-level political leadership and allow findings to be used at a global level.	Measuring numbers, this indicator is not transformative in itself and needs to be coupled with other indicators to assess the quality of participation. Measuring the proportion of women in ministerial, cabinet or other senior posts provides an added layer of information to the total number of women in parliament and starts to provide an insight into the scope of women's leadership within these structures. There is increasing recognition that measuring political participation at the local level is a necessary complement to national representation. With a global tendency towards decentralisation, local decision-making often has a more immediate impact on women's daily lives.
Number of male/female traditional rulers	Disparity in traditional systems will be an issue.	Data not readily available although this indicator is used by the AGDI. UCLG/UN Women current joint data collection initiative planned to include traditional governance mechanisms – progress will need checking as this may impact on political support for this indicator.	Traditional governance systems can be a very important element of local decision-making and power structures, and should therefore be included in any measure of local governance as they have major influence over the social norms and attitudes of a society/community. Could be incorporated in national measure above.
Number of women's rights organisations active in a country.	This could be contentious particularly in countries where women's rights organisations are not supported. Also challenges in terms of reaching an agreed definition of what constitutes a women's rights organisation. There is a risk of increased government interference with independent women's rights organisations.	Various online directories are available and further data can be found through international and national women's rights networks, for example, AWID conducted a survey of 1,119 women's rights organisations in 2011. Global Fund for Women has also been developing indicators to measure movements.	It is argued that the strength of the women's movement and its relationship with politicians are stronger determinants of women's participation and influence in public life than the representation of women in national-level government.[110] This is supported by recent research such as the longitudinal study in 70 countries over four decades, which found that the mobilisation of women's rights organisations and movements is more important in tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG) than a nation's income, left-wing political parties, or the representation of women in politics.[111] While there is a certain amount of risk of interference into independent civil society organisations, this also represents one of the few measures of women's activism and highlights the importance of the women's movement in relation to women's influence.

Indicator	Political and practical feasibility	Data availability	Is it transformative?
Proportion of women in economic decision-making positions expressed as a percentage of all such positions in a country.	A comparable definition of economic decision-making positions would need to be developed. This could include the minister and deputy ministers of finance, trade, industry, commerce, and heads of central banks, permanent secretaries of government department or their equivalents.	This indicator is included in the Southern Africa Gender And Development Index. Data should be available through administrative records.	This indicator links with economic empowerment (and possibly Goal 8 in HLP report). Whilst not transformative in itself, it starts to identify the seniority of women in government given that these positions are often some of the most powerful, and those that have the most impact on people's lives.
Proportion of women amongst senior positions in international governance and economic institutions.	A comparable definition of economic decision-making positions would need to be developed.	Council of European Union (EU) measures women's representation in economic decision-making bodies. Currently there is limited information on the representation of women in international institutions. While the UN is improving its reporting, consistency of reporting across all international governance bodies and economic institutions is desirable.	Enables global institutions to be measured in the same way as national institutions. These positions are for the most part unelected and invisible to those who do not know the intricacies of global governance, yet they can and do have major influence over how and where money is spent
Senior positions held by women in trade unions, political parties, employers' associations and civil society organisations CSOs.	Falls outside government control; governments therefore likely to be more reluctant to measure it.	This indicator is used by AGDI, however there are challenges with collection and the definition of entities across country contexts.	Measuring women's participation must extend beyond formal political representation into the areas that influence decision-makers.
Qualitative and self-reporting indicators			
Female politicians' perceptions of the impact that they have on political decisions, by level of government.	Disaggregated by position of politicians, for example, backbench and ministerial level.	Ranking system would need to be devised to allow for comparability across countries. While this data does not exist, the World Economic Forum's Executive Opinion Survey, which surveys business leaders on a broad range of variables for which hard data sources are scarce or non-existent, could serve as a useful model.	This is a self-assessment indicator which would be transformative in identifying exactly how women feel about the level of influence they have once elected. Supplements the more qualitative data being collected by the above indicators and enables analysis on whether numbers translate into influence.
Female senior decision-makers' (global-level) perceptions of the impact they feel they are having on decisions in international institutions.	Work would be required to identify what constitutes senior decision-makers. Data should be disaggregated by institution.	As above	As above
Attitudes towards women as politicians/leaders in public and political life.	Attitudinal indicators are gaining in acceptance and a number of global surveys already collect this data.	Data collected on this by the Afrobarometer, the Pew Global Attitudes Project and the World Values Survey so wide geographical coverage.	Would measure men's attitudes as well as women's, thereby measuring social norms.
Level of satisfaction expressed by men and women regarding national and local government service provision.	While unlikely to be seen as a priority indicator, it provides a good mechanism for men and women at all levels to gauge the effectiveness of service provision and responsiveness.	Data not readily available on this but could be incorporated into household survey data.	This would be a measure of responsive-ness of governance systems to the needs of men and women at all levels of society, including the most marginalised (if data gathering matches intent). Results could be cross-checked against the number of women represented in parliament/ local government to provide a measure of transformative change.
Number of times priority issues for local and national women's rights organisations are raised in parliament by politicians.	Comparability may be challenging given priorities will differ from country to country. This is within governments' control to measure, but feasibility of measurement will be seen as a barrier.	Data collection mechanisms will need to be developed. This data is not currently being collected but it should be available from parliament records.	Potential to be a transformative measure of women's participation and influence.
Resources commanded by women's rights organisations in comparison to other Civil Society Organisations.	Data availability will be seen as an issue. Governments may be less willing to accept this as a measure of women's participation particularly in countries where women's rights organisations are not supported. There may also be challenges reaching an agreed definition of women's rights organisations. Further, this indicator may create a risk of increased government interference with independent women's rights organisations and their resources.	Information on resources is difficult to track. Some work has been done by ADID in this area and Womankind have researched this at a UK level for women's rights organisations internationally.	Funding for Women's rights organisations is a key issue which will impact on the participation and influence of the women's movement. Greater attention is needed to its resourcing and this could help in drawing attention to this issue.

Abbreviations and acronyms

AGDI	African Gender and Development Index
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
AWID	Association for Women's Rights in Development
BPfA	Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
COMINSUD	Community Initiative for Sustainable Development
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
GADN	Gender and Development Network
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GEI	Gender Equity Index
GGI	Gender Gap Index
GII	Gender Inequality Index
HLP	High Level Panel
ICCPR	International Convention on Civil and Political Rights
IDA	International Development Association
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SGDI	Southern African Gender and Development Index
SIGI	Social Institutions and Development Index
UCLG	United Cities and Local Governments
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VDC	Village District Councils
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas
WEAF	Women's Empowerment Action Forum
WEAI	Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index
WEF	World Economic Forum
WEO	Women's Economic Opportunity Index
WEV	Women Extension Volunteers
WVS	World Values Survey

References

1. Gay, C., 2012, 2.
2. VSO, 2011a, 2.
3. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1997
4. United Nations, 2013a.
5. Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2013.
6. UN Women Facts and Figures: Leadership and Political Participation as at July 2013 (figures checked monthly against updates from the United Nations).
7. Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2012.
8. United Cities and Local Governments Women: Standing Committee on Gender Equality, 2013, 3.
9. Projected figure based on the assumption that progress continues at the current rate of change. Calculated using Inter-Parliamentary Union figures.
10. Gender inequalities have been attributed as a barrier to progress on all the MDG areas. See for example: UNIFEM, 2010.
11. United Nations Development Programme, 2011.
12. Emilia Ngoa Kalebong, senior politician from the Social Democratic Front (SDF) of Cameroon, VSO Media Trip, Cameroon, May 2013.
13. United Nations Development Programme, July 2011, 2.
14. International Labour Organization, 2009, 43.
15. Gender and Development Network, 2013, 11.
16. Stokes, R. 2013, 6
17. Gender inequalities have been attributed as a barrier to progress in all the MDG areas. See for example: United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), 2010.
18. United Nations System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, 2012a.
19. VSO, Saferworld and Womankind commissioned a scoping study on approaches, indicators and proxies for women's participation and influence in public life. This study was delivered by consultant Sharon Smee in May 2013.
20. United Nations Development Programme, 2011.
21. UN Women, 2011a.
22. Horner, L. and Stokes, R., 2012.
23. United Nations, 1979.
24. United Nations, 1995.
25. The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global policy-making body on gender equality and the advancement of women. More details can be found at: www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/ [accessed 13 August 2013]
26. Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2000.
27. Chattopadhyay, R. and Duflo, E., 2004, 1440.
28. Duflo, E. And Topalova, P., 2004.
29. Haider, H., 2011, 3.
30. VSO interview, Regina Mundi, Senior female politician for the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) , Cameroon, May 2013.
31. Grown, C. et al., 2005, 105.
32. Deen, T., 2012. 'Women spend 40 billion hours collecting water', Inter Press Service News, 31 August.
33. VSO Volunteer Michelle Hain, Cameroon, interviewed 6 May 2013.
34. VSO Volunteer Michelle Hain, Cameroon, interviewed 6 May 2013.
35. United Nations Secretary-General, 2012.
36. Ibid.
37. Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2013.
38. UN Women Facts and Figures: Leadership and Political Participation as at July 2013 (figures checked monthly against updates from the United Nations).
39. Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2013.
40. Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2012.
41. United Cities and Local Governments Women: Standing Committee on Gender Equality, 2013, 3.
42. Ibid.
43. The Centre for Women and Democracy, 2011.
44. Naz, F., Sam, V. and Shah, R., 2011, 8.
45. Xiaoxian, G., 2010, 871.
46. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 1997.
47. Inter-Parliamentary-Union, 2013.
48. UN Women calculation based on IDEA, Stockholm University and Inter-Parliamentary-Union, Global Data Base of Quotas on Women [online]. Available at: www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm [accessed 13 August 2013]
49. VSO, 2012a, 4.
50. VSO, 2011b, 8, 13.
51. Inter-Parliamentary-Union statistic, 2011. See also: www.parliament.gov.zm/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1710&Itemid=1 [accessed 17 August 2013].
52. Interview with Marriam Mutua: VSO Volunteer, VSO Zambia/Chipata District farmers' Association, 17 October 2012.
53. This has been identified in the following VSO Country Strategies: Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia.
54. United Nations, 2011a.
55. Akapire, A.J. et al., 2011.
56. Evidence provided through Kenyan Women's Parliamentary Association, 2011–12.
57. Agbalajobi, D., 2009, 078.
58. Badoe, Y., 2010.
59. Interview with Cath Nixon (VSO volunteer) and Sunita Chand (board member of Nepal Women's Empowerment Association Forum), 17 October 2012.
60. Hoare, J. and Gell, F., 2009, 10.
61. Interview with Marriam Mutua: VSO Volunteer, VSO Zambia/Chipata District farmers' Association, 17 October 2012.
62. VSO and Kenyan Women Parliamentary Association interview with Johanne Nolin: Burkina Faso Ministry for the Protection of Women, 17 October 2012
63. Urgel, A. and Tanyang, G, 2009.
64. Ofei-Aboagye, E., 2000, 4.
65. Hoare, J. and Gell, F., 2009, 10.
66. United Nations, 2013a.
67. Tadros, M., 2011.
68. Ibid.
69. author unknown, 2013,.
70. VSO Volunteer, Cath Nixon, 31 July 2013.
71. For example, in studies by Mathrani and Periodi (2007) and Sharma and Sudarshan (2010), participants in women's collectives and networks in India report increased influence over decision-making in the household and community; in Dhaka, Bangladesh, women participating in local advocacy networks have reported improved mobility outside the household and influence over community affairs (Banks, 2008); in Kenya (Asaki and Hayes, 2011) and Namibia (Crone, 2010), women have risen through leadership roles in local networks of community caregivers to sit on government decision-making bodies; and in the Niger Delta, women's groups are active in traditional governance and in protests on environmental and social issues (Ikelegbe, 2005).
72. VSO, 2012c.
73. Castillejo, C., 2009.
74. Caizza, A., 2006, 4.
75. VSO Indonesia, 27 June 2013.
76. Interview with VSO Volunteer Amina Ouedraogo: VSO Burkina Faso – Programme Office, 24 October 2012.
77. Hoare, J. and Gell, F., 2009.
78. Adapted from Meer, S., and Sever, C., 2004, 22–30.
79. Kenny, C. and Sumner, A., 2011.
80. Smee, S. and Woodroffe, J., 2013.
81. Kabeer, N., 2005.
82. Buvinic, M. et al., 2009 and Grown, C., Rao Gupta, G., Khan, Z. (2003).
83. Tadros, M., 2011.
84. For further detailed proposals on why and how gender equality should be addressed in the post-2015 framework, including arguments for a stand-alone goal, see: Gender and Development Network, 2013, and Gender and Development Network, 2012.
85. Gender and Development Network, 2013.
86. UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, 2012b.

Bibliography

87. Association for Women's Rights in Development, 2010.

88. United Nations, 2011b.

89. UN Women, 2011b.

90. Africa Women's Regional Civil Society Consultation on the Post-2015 Development Framework in Monrovia, 2012.

91. United Nations, 1979.

92. United Nations, 1995.

93. Smee, S., 2013.

94. The Beijing Platform for Action helped to concretise the ECOSOC -endorsed target of a minimum of 30% representation of women in decision-making positions as an international minimum standard. Many countries have already adopted this into their quota systems and other affirmative action policies. Adopting this target for the post-2015 framework would therefore build on existing human rights commitments and align the framework with many governments' existing policies.

95. Smee, S., 2013.

96. World Economic Forum, 2013.

97. Smee, S., 2013.

98. Alpizar Duran, L., 2012.

99. Ibid.

100. United Nations, 2013b.

101. For further suggestions on what transformative targets look like see the following report: Smee, S. and Woodroffe, J., 2013.

102. United Nations, 2013b, 17.

103. Ibid, 2.

104. United Nations System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, 2012b.

105. Beck, T. and Stelcner, M., 1997.

106. Corner, L., 2003.

107. United Nations, 2013b.

108. Muthiga, V., 2013.

109. Wendy Henry, VSO Volunteer, Case Study, 2 July 2013.

110. Goetz, A-M. and Nyamu, C. 2008.

111. Htun, M. and Weldon, L., 2012.

Africa Women's Regional Civil Society Consultation on the Post-2015 Development Framework in Monrovia, 2012 (Communiqué). Available at: www.femnet.co/index.php/en/press/item/132-communique-womens-consultation-on-the-africa-we-want-post-2015 [accessed 17 August 2013]

Agbalajobi, D., 2009. 'Women's participation and the political process in Nigeria: Problems and prospects', *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, **4**, 2, 75–82.

Akapire, A.J., Awal, A.M., and Fuseini, R., 2011. 'Catch them young: the young female parliament in Northern Ghana', in *Participatory Learning and Action: Young citizens: youth and participatory governance in Africa*, **64**, 113–122. London: International Institute for Environment and Development. Available at: http://pubs.iied.org/pdfs/14607IIED.pdf [accessed 18 August 2013]

Alpizar Duran, L., 2012. *Strengthening financing for gender equality and women's organizations*. Presentation to the UN Commission on the Status of Women, 56th Session, Interactive Expert Panel. Available at: www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw56/panels/panel-4-Alpizar.pdf [accessed 14 August 2013]

Asaki, B. and Hayes, S. 'Leaders, not clients: grassroots women's groups transforming social protection, '*Gender and Development*, **19**, 2, 241–253.

Association for Women's Rights in Development, 2010. *Where Is the Money for Women's Rights? Select 2009 Research Highlights and Trends* [online]. Available at: www.awid.org/Library/Where-is-the-Money-for-Women-s-Rights-Select-2009-Research-Highlights-and-Trends [accessed 17 August 2013]

Authorunknown, 2013. 'Women's wider participation in decision-making' (Dailekh District (Chaurata and Bindabasini Village District Council) project document).Unpublished.

Badoe, Y., 2010. 'Honourable women: sharing the experience of three district assembly women in Ghana' (film). Available online at: www.pathwaysofempowerment.org/research_building_projects.html#Assembly [accessed 13 August 2013]

Banks, N., 2008. 'A tale of two wards: political participation and the urban poor in Dhaka city', *Environment and Urbanization*. **20**, 2, 361–376.

Beck, T. and Stelcner, M., 1997. *Guide to Gender Sensitive Indicators*. Gatineau: Canadian International Development Agency. Available online at: www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/INET/IMAGES.NSF/vLUImages/Policy/$file/WID-GUID-E.pdf [accessed 13 August 2013]

Buvinic, M. et al., 2009. *Equality for Women: Where Do We Stand on Millennium Development Goal 3?* [online].World Bank. Available at: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Resources/EqualityforWomenfinal.pdf [accessed 13 August 2013]

Caiazza, A. 2006. *Called to Speak: Six Strategies That Encourage Women's Political Activism Lessons from Interfaith Community Organizing*. Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research. Available online at: www.iwpr.org/publications/publications-finder [accessed 17 August 2013]

Castillejo, C., 2009. 'Women's participation and political influence in Sierra Leone (Working Paper 83: FRIDE). Available at: www.fride.org/publication/617/women%27s-political-participation-and-influence-in-sierra-leone [accessed 17 August 2013]

Centre for Women and Democracy, 2011. *Representative Democracy? Women in the 2011 Local Government Elections in England*. Leeds: CFWD.

Chattopadhyay, R. and Duflo, E., 2004. 'Women as policy makers: evidence from a randomized policy experiment in India', Econometrica, **72**, 5, 1409–1443.

Clinton, H., 2012. Remarks at Data Conference on 'Evidence and Impact: Closing the Gender Data Gap', Washington DC, 19 July 2012.

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 1997. 'General Recommendation No. 23' on women in political and public life, adopted at the 16th Session. Geneva: CEDAW. UN Doc. A/52/38 available at: www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm.htm#recom23 [accessed 17 August 2013]

Corner, L., 2003. *From Margins to Mainstream: From Gender Statistics to Engendering Statistical Systems*. New York: UNIFEM. Available at: www.unwomen-eseasia.org/projects/eeg/ecogov-apas/EEGKnowledgeBase/EngenderingNSS/Margins2Mainstream.pdf [accessed 17 August 2013]

Crone, T., 2010. *Transforming the National AIDS Response Advancing Women's Leadership and Participation*. New York: UNIFEM and ATHENA.

Deen, T., 2012. 'Women spend 40 billion hours collecting water', *Inter Press Service News*, 31 August.

Duflo, E. And Topalova, P., 2004. *Unappreciated Service: Performance, Perception, and Women Leaders in India* (Faculty Working Paper). Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Department of Economics.

Gay, C., 2012. Leadership, Participation and Justice. Unpublished VSO report.

Gender and Development Network, 2013. *Achieving Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Post-2015 Framework*. London: GADN.

Gender and Development Network, 2012. *Briefing No. 3: Gender equality and the post-2015 framework*. London: GADN.

Goetz, A-M. and Nyamu, C., 2008. 'Voice and Women's Empowerment: Mapping a Research Agenda', *Pathways Working Paper 2*, July. Available at: www.pathwaysofempowerment.org/research_papers.html [accessed 18 August 2013]

Grown, C., Rao Gupta, G. and Khan, Z., 2005. *Taking Action: Achieving gender equality and empowering women*. New York: UNDP (UN Millennium Project, Task Force on Education and Gender Equality). Also available at: www.unmillenniumproject.org/documents/Gender-complete.pdf [accessed 17 August 2013]

Grown, C., Rao Gupta, G., Khan, Z.,2003. *Promises to Keep: Achieving Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women*. Washington, DC: International Center for Research on Women (Background Paper, UN Millennium Project, Task Force on Education and Gender Equality). Available at: www.bvsde.paho.org/bvsacd/milenio/genero2.pdf [accessed 17 August 2013]

Haider, H., 2011. *Helpdesk Research Report: Effects of Political Quotas for Women* [online]. Available at: http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/HDQ757.pdf [accessed 17 August 2013]

Hoare, J. and Gell, F., 2009. *Women's leadership and participation: case studies on learning for action*. Oxford: Oxfam GB.

Horner, L. and Stokes, R., 2012. *Advancing Equality in Women's Participation and Influence in Public Life through the Post-2015 Framework:* Submission to the Global Thematic Consultations 'Addressing Inequalities' [online]. Available at: www.worldwewant2015.org/inequalities [accessed 17 August 2013]

Htun, M. and Weldon, L., 2012. 'The Civic Origins of Progressive Policy Change: Combating Violence against Women in Global Perspective, 1975–2005', *American Political Science Review*, **106**, 3, 548–569. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0003055412000226 [accessed 18 August 2013]

Kabeer, N., 2005. 'Gender equality and women's empowerment: A critical analysis of the third millennium development goal', *Gender & Development*, **13**, 1, 13–24. Available online at: www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13552070512331332273 [accessed 13 August 2013]

Kenny, C. and Sumner, A., 2011. *More Money or More Development? What have the MDGs achieved?* (Working Paper 278). Washington DC: Centre for Global Development. Also available at: www.cgdev.org/publication/more-money-or-more-development-what-have-mdgs-achieved-working-paper-278 [accessed 13 August 2013]

Ikelegbe, A., 2005. 'Engendering Civil Society: Oil, Women Groups and Resource Conflicts in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, **43**, 2, 241–270.

International Labour Organization, 2009. *Global Employment Trends for Women*. Geneva: ILO.

Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2013. *Women in National Parliaments* [online]. Available at: www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm [accessed 17 August 2013]

Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2012. *Women in Politics: 2012* [online]. Available at: www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/wmnmap12_en.pdf [accessed 17 August 2013]

Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2000. *World Survey*. New York: IPU.

Mathrani ,V. and Periodi, V., 2007. 'The Sangha Mané: The Translation of an Internal Need into a Physical Space', *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, **13**, 3, 317–349.

Meer, S. and Sever, C., 2004. *Gender and Citizenship: Overview Report* (part of Cutting Edge Pack on Gender and Citizenship). Brighton: Institute of Development Studies UK, BRIDGE Development-Gender. Available online at: www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/go/bridge-publications/cutting-edge-packs/gender-and-citizenship/ [accessed 17 August 2013]

Muthiga, V., 2013. 'Kenya's election must give women the space to vote and stand as candidates for a true celebration on International Women's Day,' *Huffington Post*, February 2013 [online]. Available at: www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/violet-muthiga/kenyen-election-women-voting_b_2781993.html [accessed 13 August 2013]

Naz, F., Sam, V. and Shah, R., 2011. *Traditional Governance and Women: leadership and representation* (LSE Project). London: VSO International.

Ofei-Aboagye, E., 2000. 'Promoting the Participation of Women in Local Governance and development: The Case of Ghana.' Paper prepared for seminar on "European Support for Democratic Decentralisation and Municipal Development - A Contribution to Local Development and Poverty Reduction", Maastricht, 14–15 June. ECDPM and the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Sen, A., 1999. *Development as Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sharma, D. and Sudarshan, R. 2010. 'Towards a Politics of Collective Empowerment: Learning from Hill Women in Rural Uttarakhand, India', *IDS Bulletin*, **41**, 5, 43–51.

Smee, S., 2013. *Scoping Study on approaches, indicators and proxies for women's participation and influence in public life*. Commissioned by VSO, Safer World and Womankind Worldwide, May. Unpublished report.

Smee, S. and Woodroffe, J., 2013. *Achieving Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Post-2015 Framework*. London: GADN.

Stokes, R., 2013. ' Gender Equality must be the goal: Women's rights must be protected in the post-Millennium Development Goals Framework', *in Fabiana* Summer, 6. Available online at : http://issuu.com/jimbo5/docs/fabianasummersummer13/1

Tadros, M., 2011. *Women Engaging Politically: Beyond Magic Bullets and Motorways* (Pathways Policy Paper). Brighton: Pathways of Women's Empowerment RPC.

United Cities and Local Governments Women: Standing Committee on Gender Equality, 2013. *The Equality Agenda of United Cities and Local Governments*. Barcelona: UCLG. Available online at: www.uclg-cisdp.org/en/equality-agenda-united-cities-and-local-governments-uclg [accessed 17 August 2013]

United Nations, 2013a. *The UN Millennium Development Goals Report 2013*. New York: United Nations; compiled by an inter-agency and expert group on MDG indicators led by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat.

United Nations, 2013b. *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development* (Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda). New York: UN.

United Nations, 2011a. 'Recommendation to Repeal "Discriminatory" Constitutional Provision Recalled', July [online]. Available at: www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2011/wom1869.doc.htm [accessed 13 August 2013]

United Nations, 2011b. *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2011*. New York: United Nations.

United Nations, 2010. *The UN Millennium Development Goals Report 2010*. New York: United Nations.

United Nations, 1995. *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*. Adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, 4–15 September. Available at: www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/ [accessed 13 August 2013]

United Nations, 1979. *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*. Adopted by the General Assembly in New York on 18 December. Available at: www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/ [accessed 13 August 2013]

United Nations and UN Women, 2011. 'Joint Statement on Advancing Women's Political Participation' signed at the 66th Session of the UN General Assembly and UN Women event in New York, 19 September.

United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), 2010. *Gender Justice: Key to Achieving the Millennium Development Goals*. New York: UNIFEM

United Nations Development Programme, 2011. *Gender Equality: Fast Facts*. New York: UNDP.

United Nations Secretary-General, 2012. *Improvement in the status of women in the United Nations System*. Report of the Secretary-General at the 67th General Assembly in New York, September. Available at: www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/documents/ga67.htm [accessed 17 August 2013]

United Nations System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, 2012a. 'Realising the future we want for all' (Report to the Secretary-General). New York: United Nations.

United Nations System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, 2012b. 'Addressing Inequalities: The heart of the post-2015 agenda and the future we want for all' (Thematic Think Piece). Available at: www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/Think%20Pieces/10_inequalities.pdf [accessed 17 August 2013]

UN Women, 2013. 'Facts and Figures: Leadership and Political Participation' [online]. Available at: www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures#notes [accessed 13 August 2013]

UN Women, 2011a. *In Pursuit of Justice: Progress of the World's Women 2011–2012*. New York: UN Women.

UN Women, 2011b. *Partner Consultation on UN Women's First Strategic Plan 2011–2013* [online]. Available at: www.gadnetwork.org.uk/storage/VSOUK%20EA%20UN%20Women%20SP%20Summary_of_Consultations%2011%20April.pdf [accessed 17 August 2013]

Urgel, A. and Tanyang, G, 2009. 'Creating the space to empower women fishers: lessons from the Philippines'. In Hoare, J. and Gell, F. (Eds) *Women's Leadership & Participation, Programme Insights*. Oxford: Oxfam.

VSO, 2013. 'Making marginalised women's heard at the highest level – Tanzania' [online]. Available at www.vso.org.uk/about/stories/making-marginalised-womens-voices-heard-at-the-highest-level-tanzania [accessed 17 August 2013]

VSO, 2012a. *Rwanda Strategy 2012–17*. London: VSO.

VSO, 2012b. *Papua New Guinea Strategy 2012–15*. London: VSO.

VSO, 2012c.'Position on the empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication.' Briefing to the 56th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women at the UN, New York, 27 February–9 March.

VSO, 2011a. *Gender Position Paper*. London: VSO.

VSO, 2011b. *Bangladesh Strategy 2011–15*. London: VSO.

VSO Jitolee, 2011. 'The new Kenyan suffragettes – VSO volunteer campaigns on seats for women in Kenya', *Waliajitolea Kusini*, October – December, 13–15.

World Economic Forum, 2013. *Executive Opinion Survey* [online]. Available at: https://wefsurvey.org/index.php?sid=28226&intro=0 [accessed 13 August 2013]

Xiaoxian, G., 2010. 'From the Heyang Model to the Shaanxi Model: action research on women's participation in village governance', *The China Quarterly*, **204**, December, 870–898.

©VSO/Jenny Matthews

VSO International
100 London Road
Kingston upon Thames
KT2 6QJ
UK

+44 (0)20 8780 7500
www.vsointernational.org

VSO Bahaginan
www.vsobahaginan.org.ph

VSO Ireland
www.vso.ie

VSO Jitolee
www.vsojitolee.org

VSO Netherlands
www.vso.nl

VSO UK
www.vso.org.uk