



## The Need to Get More Women into Politics:

Women's political participation is a Millennium objective in its own right. Empowering women in the political arena has the potential to change societies. Their involvement in governing bodies at the national and local levels leads to policies and legislation that are focused on women, children and families.

- A growing body of evidence suggests that women in politics have been especially effective advocates for children at all levels, sponsoring legislation and fostering tangible changes in policy outcomes that reflect the rights, priorities, experiences and contributions of women, children and families.

- Though women's parliamentary representation has steadily increased in the past decade, they remain underrepresented in almost all national legislatures – accounting for just under 17 per cent of parliamentarians worldwide. Many of the pernicious effects of gender discrimination, from lower levels of education to prevailing social attitudes that challenge women's competence as decision makers, as well as women's greater work burden, continue to hinder their participation in politics.

- The participation of women in local politics can have an immediate impact on outcomes for women and children, particularly in the distribution of community resources and in promoting provisions for childcare.

- Women's participation in peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction is vital to ensure the safety and protection of children and other vulnerable populations. Yet women's role in most peace processes remains, at best, informal. While governments

and other political actors appear content to encourage engagement between women's groups that often cut across conflict lines, women rarely make it to peace table.

- Despite limited participation in national and local politics and in post-conflict reconstruction, women in politics and government are helping change the political environment. Their influence is not just being felt in stronger legislation for children and women; they are also helping decision-making bodies become more democratic and gender-sensitive.

- Increasing women's participation in politics is vital to promote gender equality, empower women and fulfil children's rights. The remaining formal entry barriers must be dismantled, and women encouraged and supported by political parties to stand for office. Legislative quotas are also gaining increasing recognition as a potentially effective vehicle for bolstering women's representation in local government, and in some countries, at the national level as well. Gender initiatives also need the involvement and support of men, especially male parliamentarians and political leaders. Better data and research are required to fully assess the impact of women legislators on policies related to children.