

# 30<sup>TH</sup> COMMONWEALTH WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS (CWP) BUSINESS STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

Room C4.5  
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## CWP Research Report – Pathways into Politics for Women

### (I) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper provides the CWP Membership with an overview of the CWP's Research Report on Pathways into Politics for Women. This report forms part of an activity that was approved by the CWP Steering Committee under the CWP Work Plan for 2024. A draft has been annexed to this paper.

### (II) BACKGROUND

In alignment with the activities agreed under the CWP Work Plan for 2024, on 13 May 2024, the CPA Headquarters Secretariat, via the Commonwealth Parliamentary Research Service (CPRS), invited Branches to contribute to the CWP Network's efforts to produce a document titled '*Promoting women's participation in politics and Parliament*' which aims to gather information and resources for women who are interested in politics, wish to run, who are running and/or who have been elected.

This project is pursuant to Objective 4 of the 2024 CWP Work Plan which aims to develop the CPA/CWP's role in supporting women to access information or programmes by "*exploring programmes and information currently available for women to support their political participation in politics*".

Branches were given until 28 June 2024 to submit the relevant information to support the research project. Branches were invited to answer the following questions:

- 1) What kind of programmes, workshops, training sessions, and events are offered by various organisations to support women in their political journey, from international to local levels?

- 2) Is there funding and campaign support accessible for women candidates, provided by international organisations, governments, political parties, or local charities and groups?
- 3) Are there any available resources, research materials, manuals, or guides focusing on women's pathways to politics, their political participation, as well as funding and campaigning efforts?

Following the deadline, the CPA Headquarters Secretariat received responses from only 20 parliaments from 7 Regions to the CPRS inquiry. A draft of this report has been annexed to this paper (*see below*).

In an effort to create a more comprehensive report, the CPA Headquarters proposes to continue work on this research project to produce a more in-depth and detailed document. It is anticipated that the research report will highlight case studies that will build on the Steering Committee's original areas of interest:

- Activities undertaken within jurisdictions to support women getting into politics at all levels;
- Funding and campaign support for women who wish to run;
- Production and availability of research, reports, and resources that focus on pathways into politics.

The CPA Headquarters Secretariat will continue to work on this project and invites Branches to provide information that can be included in the final report.

It is anticipated that this project will be completed and launched in March 2025 to mark International Women's Day.

# Promoting Women's Participation in Politics and Parliament:

Information and Resources  
shared by the Commonwealth  
Women Parliamentarians (CWP)  
Network 2024

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## Introduction

Many countries are implementing measures to increase women's participation in politics, particularly in parliament. These measures include reserving seats for women, establishing quotas within political parties, creating women's political networks, and enacting electoral reforms.

Several factors influence women's political participation, but access to financial resources—both direct and indirect—plays a crucial role in their decision to run for office. Support can come from various sources, including civil society organisations, political parties, and academic institutions.

Support mechanisms can take different forms, such as training programmes, mentorship opportunities, campaign funding, and networking events. Each type of support addresses specific challenges women face in politics, such as skill development, confidence-building, and resource mobilisation. Additionally, the availability of online resources is improving these support mechanisms, making them more accessible to those currently in office or aspiring to run.

In support of the production of this document, CPA Branches were asked to respond to the following research questions:

1. What kind of programmes, workshops, training sessions, and events are offered by various organisations to support women in their political journey, from international to local levels?
2. Is there funding and campaign support accessible for women candidates, provided by international organisations, governments, political parties, or local charities and groups?
3. Are there any available resources, research materials, manuals, or guides focusing on women's pathways to politics, their political participation, as well as funding and campaigning efforts?

The document is organised to first provide an overview of key global organisations and notable online resources. It then presents the information and resources gathered from various regions during the initial research process.





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## **Global Organisations**

- The Inter-Parliamentary Union has been tracking and empowering women parliamentarians for decades, convinced of the link between strong democracies and gender equality. Their work focuses on three main objectives: increasing the number of women in parliament through well-designed quotas and parliamentary caucuses; supporting women in parliament; and transforming parliaments into gender-sensitive institutions that deliver on women's rights.
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) works with governments worldwide to combat discriminatory legislation and policies and improve gender equality outcomes in policymaking by creating structures and strategic plans to enhance women's political participation and gender equality. UNDP has facilitated the creation of such systems in many countries, recognising their essential role in empowering women as parliamentary representatives, supporting the emergence of gender-sensitive parliaments, and adopting gender-sensitive policy and legislative frameworks.
- National Democratic Institute (NDI) works to support women to overcome the barriers to their equal and active political participation.
- UN Women, under their Women's Leadership and Political Participation programme provide training for women political candidates to help build their capacities and offer voter and civic education and sensitisation campaigns on gender equality. They back gender equality advocates in calling on political parties, governments and others to do their part in empowering women. Other initiatives encourage young men and women to engage in advocacy around making gender equality measures central to public policymaking.
- The Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) works to strengthen democratic processes in different countries and regions, focusing on governance, representation, and women's political empowerment. WFD's work considers the social, cultural, economic, and political factors that stop women from fully participating in politics and governance. WFD works with political parties, men and key stakeholders who have an impact on women's opportunities to take part in politics and public life. They also offer services just for women allow emerging leaders to further develop their skills in a supportive environment.

# Promoting Women's Participation in Politics and Parliament: Information and Resources shared by the CWP Network



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## Online Resources

Electoral financing to advance women's political participation: United Nations Development Programme UNDP. Available at: <https://www.undp.org/publications/electoral-financing-advance-womens-political-participation>.

Empowering women for stronger political parties: United Nations Development Programme UNDP. (2012) Available at: <https://www.undp.org/publications/empowering-women-stronger-political-parties>.

Five ways women parliamentarians can get ahead in politics. (2022) Available at: <https://www.ipu.org/news/news-in-brief/2022-09/five-ways-women-parliamentarians-can-get-ahead-in-politics>.

Four ways to get more women into Parliament, Pursuit. (2023) Available at: <https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/four-ways-to-get-more-women-into-parliament>.  
Gender and elections (no date) Available at: <https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ge/>.

IPU and OHCHR emphasize role of parliaments in eliminating ... (2023) Available at: <https://www.ipu.org/news/news-in-brief/2023-06/ipu-and-ohchr-emphasize-role-parliaments-in-eliminating-discrimination-against-women>.

Learning from each other: Creating more gender-sensitive parliaments to strengthen democracies, International IDEA. (2023) Available at: <https://www.idea.int/news/learning-each-other-creating-more-gender-sensitive-parliaments-strengthen-democracies>.

Parliaments play a crucial role in women's equal right to participate. (2023) Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2023/06/parliaments-play-crucial-role-womens-equal-right-participate>.

Women's political careers: Where do leaders come from? (2021) Available at: [https://www.wfd.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/WFD\\_March-2021\\_Womens-political-careers-Where-do-leaders-come-from.pdf](https://www.wfd.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/WFD_March-2021_Womens-political-careers-Where-do-leaders-come-from.pdf).

Women's Political Participation & Representation Training Manual, Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates Commission. (2021) Available at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sEddjCivL2wOYMHrOTE0A6yt55VlphQB/view>.



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## CWP Africa Region

- Women in Political Participation (WPP) is funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and implemented by International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), it aims to advance gender equality in politics and governance.
- The Community Advocacy and Awareness (CRAWN) Trust
- The African Women's Development Fund funds various women's organizations and movements in Africa and the Middle East (AWDF)
- The African Women's Development and Communications Network is a Pan-African Feminist and membership-based network. Working to ensure that the voices of African women are amplified, and their needs and aspirations are prioritized in key policy dialogues and outcomes.

### Ghana

- Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF) is a pan-African organization with a strong presence in Ghana, aiming to increase women's leadership in politics through legal advocacy, training programs, and promoting gender equality in decision-making.

### Kenya

- Kenya Women Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA) brings together Kenyan female parliamentarians to champion women's leadership in Kenya. They focus on capacity-building for female politicians, pushing for legislative reforms, and mentoring younger women to enter politics.
- Women's Democracy Network (WDN) is part of a global network and focuses on empowering Kenyan women to engage in politics. They offer leadership training, electoral support, and advocacy on political reforms to ensure that women are better represented in decision-making bodies.

### Rwanda

- Though not strictly a political organization, the National Women's Council (NWC) plays a vital role in promoting women's leadership at the local and national levels in Rwanda. They mobilize and train women to participate in leadership and influence policy from the grassroots to the parliamentary level.

### Malawi

- The Women's Political Participation Network (WPPN) works to advance women's participation in politics and decision-making positions in Malawi. They engage with women candidates, civil society, and political parties to build capacity and create policies that favor women's leadership.



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## **Nigeria**

- Young Women in Politics (YWP) is a grassroots movement aimed at equipping young Nigerian women with the knowledge and skills to enter politics. Through leadership training, workshops, and peer networks, they support women's candidacy and promote gender equality in decision-making.
- The Girl's Power Initiative (GPI) is a feminist, youth development, non profit organisation established to intervene in the socialisation of girls for the realisation of a future where women are visible and valued actors in Nigeria. Their aim is to promote the rights of children especially girls and mobilize them for development and participation through Research, Education, and Action-oriented programmes.

## **Sierra Leone**

- The Elections and Women Empowerment Programme is an initiative by Search for Common Ground that focuses on training for women and youth in Sierra Leone to participate in elections and political leadership. It empowers female candidates by providing media platforms and community dialogue to challenge stereotypes about women in politics.

## **Uganda**

- Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE) is a leading Ugandan organization working to enhance women's participation in leadership and governance. They offer training, advocacy, and mentorship to encourage women to run for office and influence policy. They also conduct civic education on women's rights and political representation.

## **Zimbabwe**

- The Women in Politics Support Unit (WIPSU) is a local NGO dedicated to promoting women's political participation in Zimbabwe. They work closely with women in local government, parliament, and political parties to build capacity, advocate for gender-sensitive policies, and provide a platform for women's voices in political spaces.



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## **CWP Asia Region**

### **Pakistan**

- The Women’s Development Foundation of Pakistan (WDFP)
- Shirkat Gah – Women’s Resource Centre
- Aurat Publication and Service Foundation (AF)
- Women’s Action Forum Lahore (WAF)
- Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT) are involved in providing resources, research materials, manuals, and guides that focus on women's pathways to politics, their political participation, as well as funding and campaigning efforts.



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## CWP Australia Region

- Women for Election Australia (WFE) run educational non-partisan, online and in-person political campaign workshops to help women get elected
- Pathways to Politics Program for Women is a national, proudly non-partisan initiative that aims to change the face of politics by equipping women with the skills, knowledge, confidence and networks they need to run for elected office and thrive as political leaders.
- Politics in Colour run regular online workshops and conversions that address the challenges and barriers facing people from under-served communities and assist diverse Australians considering a career in politics. They also run face-to-face training, coaching, mentoring and support for diverse communities and people, customised training, coaching and mentoring by former politicians who can provide advice and support to candidates and incumbents.
- She Runs is a non-for-profit organisation focused on supporting women's political, economic, and civic participation
- EMILY's List is a national organisation that supports women on their campaign and election journeys to Australian parliaments. The organisation is founded upon feminist principles and supports candidates through mentoring, training, and campaigning.
- Julia Gillard internship: 2019 report by Stephanie Milione, A Truly Representative Democracy, explores the challenges and opportunities women candidates face and how both ELA and the Australian Labor Party can best support women in the future.
- Global Institute for Women's Leadership (GIWL) Australian National University (ANU) was established as GIWL's first international base in 2018, with a focus on advancing gender equality across the Asia-Pacific region. GIWL brings together rigorous research, practice and advocacy to better understand and address the causes of workplace gender inequality and the lack of gender diversity in leadership positions across sectors and countries.
- Ruth McGowan, Get elected; A step-by-step campaign guide to winning public office – local, state, federal, (2nd Edition)



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## British Isles and Mediterranean (BIM) Region

### Cyprus

- The Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies ([MIGS](#)), established in 2000 by a group of gender researchers, activists and academics, conducts workshops on gender equality and women's rights, focusing on building capacities for political participation. It campaigns for women's equal representation in parliament, organises stakeholder discussions for women on company boards and undertakes various research projects within this scope.
- The Cyprus Federation of Business and Professional Women ([BPW Cyprus](#)) also arranges conferences featuring international speakers and notable political and business figures from Cyprus, regularly including topics on women in decision-making centres. In March 2024, it co-organised the Women Leaders' Forum 2024 with IMH (organisation operating in the knowledge and information economy), where insights were shared on building, sustaining and driving innovation and inclusion in business.
- On the executive level, the Republic of Cyprus, through the initiative of the Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality, has developed the first National Action Plan (2021-2025) for the implementation of UN Resolution 1325, aiming to promote the full participation of women in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and peacekeeping negotiations. It supports female candidates in elections through training and mentoring programmes and empowers women to equally pursue decision-making positions both in Cyprus and internationally.

### Isle of Man

- '[Women in Manx Politics](#)' is an ongoing research project conducted by academics from University College Isle of Man, Oxford Brookes University, and Edge Hill University. The project explores the accessibility of politics to Manx women, barriers to their participation in politics in both the past and present, and the patriarchal history of Tynwald.

### Jersey

- [Vote.je](#) is a resource that is available that includes information and resources on voting in Jersey and how to run for election.
- Plan to Stand Campaign to encourage Islanders to take action early and prepare to stand for election to the States Assembly in the 2026 elections.

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## Scotland

- Elect Her offer a number of programmes, workshops, training sessions, and events to support and guide women through their political journey. They are multiparty, supporting all parties and none, and as such work across the political spectrum providing resources, help and community to any women wanting to get involved politically. They work across the three nations of Britain, with some specific resources focused on devolved political participation in Scotland and Wales.
- Glitch is an award-winning UK charity committed to ending online abuse by educating people on how they can engage positively, respectfully and justly in all digital spaces.

## United Kingdom

- The Go, Run, Lead Programme is a series of three seminars for women and gender non-binary students and staff interested in running for elected office or making a career in campaign politics based at Royal Holloway, University of London.
- Women2Win seeks to Inspire, encourage, and support Conservative women who want to take up public office in the UK.
- The Conservative Women's Organisation (CWO) provides training, mentoring and speaking opportunities to support women who wish to become involved at all levels of public life or in their local communities.
- The Jo Cox Women in Leadership Programme is a personal and political development programme for passionate and experienced women members of UK Labour who are ready to lead.
- The How to be a Parliamentary Candidate residential course is run by the Labour Women's Network UK and provides expert training and advice from trainers who have real world experience of the process and how to campaign within all election scenarios.
- Centenary Action fight for an equal and representative democracy where women are directly involved in the decisions that affect their lives.
- The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Women in Parliament brings together MPs and peers to discuss and campaign for increasing the number of women in Parliament in all parts and, and to support women in Parliament and those standing for public office.
- The Fawcett Society is the UK's leading charity campaigning for gender equality and women's rights.



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## Canada Region

- Equal Voice is a Canada wide charity dedicated to improving gender representation in Canadian politics. They specifically have two Alberta Chapters, one in Calgary, and one in the Northern Alberta region. They offer grants and current research for women in politics.
- The Canadian Federation of Municipalities currently has a three-year program (2021-2024), Canadian Women in Local Leadership (CanWILL), dedicated to empowering women in politics.
- The She Can Campaign is a program offered by the Government of the Northwest Territories (NWT). It seeks to increase women's representation in political leadership at all levels of government across the NWT.
- Women's Participation in Leadership is an international assistance project funded by the Government of Canada and offered in partnership with UN Women. This project aims to increase women's participation and leadership in political institutions and decision-making across political and civic spaces in Lebanon, embracing diversity. It includes training, coaching, and networking support to women leaders in parliament, municipal councils, syndicates, and universities.
- The GFPD is a club aimed at aspiring candidates, political staff, elected and former elected women, and activists from various political parties. It brings women together to exchange ideas, in complete confidentiality, on the practice of politics.
- The Government of the Northwest Territories, in cooperation with several NGOs created a "made in the North" campaign school for women. The program is designed to help women overcome the challenges and barriers they face when considering running for elected office. Campaign School workshops have been delivered in NWT communities since 2007 by the GNWT, the Native Women's Association of the NWT and the Status of Women Council of the NWT.
- The NWT Rebate Program supports candidates by offering a rebate for their personal monetary contributions to their campaign. All personal monetary contributions that the candidate makes to their own campaign, up to a maximum of \$6,000, is eligible for a 50% rebate, up to a maximum of \$3,000.
- The Judy LaMarsh Fund raises money for Liberal Party women candidates and help them get elected to parliament, through fundraising events, direct mailing and the Internet. The Liberal Party also provides subsidies for women candidates, including childcare expenses and travel costs.



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## Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic (CAA) Region

### Trinidad and Tobago

- The Young Women Empowered to Serve (YES!) Leadership Programme, developed by the Women Parliamentarians of Trinidad and Tobago (WPTT) and hosted in partnership with the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, is designed to inspire and equip young women between the ages of 18-30, for active roles in Parliament and other political decision-making spaces. The Programme is a pragmatic blend of professional development, mentorship and networking in which young women are exposed to the Legislative process, Diplomacy and Protocol, Leadership, Advocacy and the intersection between Gender and Sustainable Development. The apex of the YES! Leadership Programme is a parliamentary debate allowing participants to utilise the skills they have learnt.
- The Young Women in Leadership (YWIL) initiative is implemented across the Caribbean. The Caribbean Women in Leadership (CIWiL) and ParlAmericas, in partnership with the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, hosted the first-ever YWiL Conference in Trinidad and Tobago in 2020. The programme is designed to support young women leaders in building knowledge, skills, and networks necessary for their work as current and future change makers.
- CIWiL and the CIWiL Trinidad and Tobago National Chapter host free Candidate Training Workshops for prospective women candidates, their teams, and women interested in leadership. These training workshops have been offered virtually and in-person on several occasions, ahead of Trinidad Local Government Elections and Tobago House of Assembly Elections.
- The CEDAW Committee of Trinidad and Tobago (CCoTT), a non-government organisation focused on Advocacy, Education, and Public Awareness on and for the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), published its Concluding Observations of the CEDAW Committee for Trinidad and Tobago. Amongst their recommendations was the need for legislative provisions on to accelerate women's full and equal participation in elected and appointed bodies.



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## India Region

- The Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs through National Youth Parliament Scheme organizes several workshops, seminars, and educational campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of women's participation in politics. Through these events the benefits of diverse representation and the need to overcome barriers that discourage women from entering politics are also highlighted.
- Model United Nations (MUN) provides students a platform to role-play as delegates to various UN committees and simulate UN committees to discuss and debate global issues. It serves as a platform for students including girls/ women to enhance their understanding of international affairs, diplomacy, negotiation, and public speaking skills. It also fosters critical thinking, teamwork, leadership, and diplomacy skills among students.
- The Parliamentary Research and Training Institute for Democracies (PRIDE) conducts research and analysis on various aspects of women's participation in politics, including barriers to entry, trends in representation, and the impact of gender-sensitive policies. It also organizes training programs, workshops, and seminars aimed at building the capacity of women interested in politics.
- The Election Commission of India conducts electoral training programs for women candidates, electoral officers, and political party workers.
- The political parties in the country have established women's wings (like All India Mahila Congress, BJP Mahila Morcha) which promote women candidates for contesting elections. Local charities & Groups like SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association), Pradan (Professional Assistance for Development Action) provides leadership training and support for women, including those interested in political participation.





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## Pacific Region

- The Pacific Women's Political Empowerment Research Group conduct research and engage in development practice that will support increased political representation of women in the Pacific region, particularly focusing on PNG, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands.
- The Pacific Women's Parliamentary Partnerships (PacWIP) site has been designed as a tool to promote women in politics, including women candidates.

### Fiji

- The International Republican Institute (ISI) offer training sessions for women to participate in local Government elections in Fiji funded by USAID.
- Women in Politics Forum co-hosted by Soqosoqo Vaka-Marama Femlink Pacific and Fiji Women Rights Movement

### Kiribati

- Women's Practice Parliament (Mock Parliament)

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