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INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING INSTITUTE  
FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

## GENDER, GOVERNANCE AND WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

"Beyond the short and medium term goals of achieving more equitable male and female representation in office and leadership, thinking of women's governance should always take us back to the initial goals of women's movements. Beyond the goals of enlarging women's access to power and exercise of leadership is the far more precious goal of undermining the force of gender in politics and thereby rethinking the nature of power itself."<sup>1</sup>

"It is possible to articulate democratic governance and gender equity as long as women gain force and legitimacy in public spaces and enter into debates linking their gender interests with the more general interests of democracy and democratic governance. This will allow, in the process of creating new institutions, the inclusion of a gender analysis that contributes to weakening mechanisms operating in attitudes, institutional norms, and behaviour patterns and subjectivities that categorize women as a subordinate group in the relationship that the State establishes with society or within the relations between the State, the market and the family."<sup>2</sup>

**INSTRAW, September 2005**

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<sup>1</sup> Basu, A. "Gender and Governance: Concepts and Contexts" en *Essays on Gender and Governance: An Introduction*. New Delhi: Human Development Resource Centre, UNDP, 2003. p. 52-53:

<http://hdrc.undp.org.in/pub/books/book-assets/Essays%20on%20Gender%20and%20Governance.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Guzmán, V. *Gobernabilidad democrática y género: una articulación posible*. Documento de trabajo. CEPAL, 2002. p.15: <http://www.eclac.cl/mujer/noticias/noticias/9/10639/vguzman.pdf>.

Original citation: "Es posible articular la gobernabilidad democrática y la equidad de género siempre y cuando las mujeres ganen fuerza y legitimidad en los espacios públicos e ingresen en los debates articulando sus intereses de género con los intereses más generales de la democracia y la gobernabilidad democrática. Esto permitirá que, en los procesos de creación de nuevas instituciones, se incluya un análisis de género que contribuya a debilitar los mecanismos que operan a nivel de las mentalidades, de las normas institucionales, de los patrones de comportamiento y de subjetividades, que constituyen a las mujeres como un grupo subordinado en las relaciones que el Estado establece con la sociedad o en las relaciones que se establecen entre Estado, mercado y familia."

# I. Background

Gender equity and equality; citizenship, women's political participation and activism; and good governance are omnipresent concepts in the agendas for development, democracy and the fight against poverty. Because of their defining nature, they influence theoretical and practical work. A clear understanding of their meaning and implications is essential for a sustainable and gender-sensitive human development agenda. In this regard, INSTRAW contributes to the present debate with conceptual and programmatic tools that can enrich present and/or future initiatives.

## A. Gender equality and women's empowerment: towards full citizenship

Although the terms of women's equality, empowerment and citizenship are used in a generalized manner in the development agenda, not all actors grant them the same meaning and scope. INSTRAW considers it fundamental to clarify these terms and to redefine them, as has been doing the women's and feminist movement, in order to recover its emancipating political force for the women, and society as a whole. As the philosopher Celia Amorós points out, to conceptualize is to politicize and redefinition is a recurrent weapon of the oppressed.<sup>3</sup>

**Gender equality and women's empowerment as development objectives and strategies:** In the mid 1980s, the theorists and feminist activists present in the international development agencies proposed and adopted a new approach, the GID approach (Gender in Development), as a response to the questioning of the development cooperation approaches and strategies of the moment by women of the South.<sup>4</sup> This new approach recognizes the importance of gender inequities and inequalities in addition to other unequal power relations (race, class, age, sexual orientation, disability, North/South relations, etc.). It is about a new people-centered development model, sustainable and egalitarian who demands a redistribution of power at all levels and in all sectors. Thus the GID approach adopts women's empowerment, understood as increase in *power for*, *power with* and *power from* (in contrast to *power over*), as a development strategy and objective.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Amorós, C. *Mujeres y poder*. Speech at the Debate Forum: Beijing + 10. Madrid, March 5th 2005: [http://www.soyempresaria.com/aplicacion/AF.php?accion=pag\\_blanca&clave\\_f=palcong&id\\_pagBla=19](http://www.soyempresaria.com/aplicacion/AF.php?accion=pag_blanca&clave_f=palcong&id_pagBla=19) [in Spanish]

<sup>4</sup> In 1985, during the International NGO Forum in Nairobi. (an event held parallel to the Third World Conference on Women), the group DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era) constituted by a group of women feminists from the South, stated: "We want a world where inequality based on class, gender and race is absent from every country and from the relationships among countries; where basic needs become basic rights and where poverty and all forms of violence are eliminated. Where each person has the opportunity to develop his or her full potentialities and creativity and where the feminine values of educating and taking care of others and values of solidarity, characterize human relations.. (...) We want a world where the massive resources now used in the production of the means of destruction will be diverted to areas where they will help to relieve oppression both inside and outside the home; a world where all institutions are open to participatory democratic processes, where women share in determining priorities and making decisions. (...) Only by narrowing the links between development, equality and peace will we be able to show that these 'inalienable rights' of the poor are intertwined with the transformation of the institutions that subordinate women. All this can be obtained by generating power by and for women." (From material in Dawn's website: <http://www.dawn.org.fj>, and from Sen, G. y Grown, C. "Development, crises and alternative vision" in *Monthly Review Press*. New Haven, NY: 1987 cited by Jane I. Parpart, M. Patricia Connelly y V. Eudine Barriteau (ed.). *Theoretical perspectives on gender and development*, chapter 3. Canada: IDRC, 2000: [http://www.idrc.ca/fr/ev-27444-201-1-DO\\_TOPIC.html](http://www.idrc.ca/fr/ev-27444-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html)

<sup>5</sup> For more information, please consult: *CIDA's Policy on Gender Equality. 1999* ([http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/INET/IMAGES.NSF/vLUIimages/Policy/\\$file/GENDER-E-nophotos.pdf](http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/INET/IMAGES.NSF/vLUIimages/Policy/$file/GENDER-E-nophotos.pdf)); BRIDGE. *Gender and Empowerment: Definitions, Approaches and Implications for Policy*. Brighton: Institute for Development Studies, 1997 (<http://www.ids.ac.uk/bridge/Reports/re40c.pdf>) and Kabeer, N. "Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment." in *Discussing Women's Empowerment: Theory and Practice*. Stockholm: Sida Studies No. 3, 2001.

It is understood that empowerment, due to its transformative nature, seeks not only an improvement of women's situation through the fulfilment of their practical interests; but also an improvement in their position in gender relations through the fulfilment of their strategic interests.<sup>6</sup>

The GID approach is what both inspired and framed the Beijing Declaration and the later Platform for Action (PfA) of 1995 as well as the subsequent international commitments in this area.<sup>7</sup> Among the traditional actors of the human development agenda, a key document for the paradigm shift was UNDP's Human Development Report of 1995 that recognized gender inequality as one of the most persistent inequalities and that sustained that women's empowerment should be a substantial part of the sustainable human development paradigm.<sup>8</sup> Later, in 2000, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)<sup>9</sup> included Goal #3 that makes explicit the goal of gender equality and women's empowerment.

At the moment, gender equality and women's empowerment are recognized to be key stones in the fight against poverty, achievement of sustainable human development and, therefore, good governance.

**Women's full and active citizenship:** One of the central demands of the women's movement and the feminist movement has been and continues to be women's exercise of their full and active citizenship, which they consider was denied to them as a result of not being recognized as equals at the moment of the definition and construction of citizenship in the XVIII century. Since then, the women's movement and the feminist movement have denounced this exclusion calling for an extended and effective citizenship for women. At first, between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, the feminist movement demanded the right to vote along with other civic, civil, and political rights; later, the second wave of feminism of the 1960s and 1970s continued to demand the expansion of women's citizenship and a redefinition of the private sphere in which women are isolated and from which they were excluded from having rights and, consequently, from full exercise of citizenship.

Since the time that women suffragists demanded the right to vote, women's citizenship has acquired more content since it has increasingly gained legal grounds with more rights (economic, political, cultural, social, civil). Nevertheless, this *de jure* citizenship does not correspond to *de facto* full citizenship. According to philosopher Alicia Mirayes, "women live an incomplete, defective and inactivate citizenship because women do not satisfactorily fulfil any of the four characteristics of a full and active citizenship: the ability to elect, the ability

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<sup>6</sup> Maxine Molyneux's distinction between practical and strategic interests is very useful for understanding women's political participation and to promote gender sensitive governance. The practical gender interests (also known as gender needs) are basic and immediate needs derived from the condition and the material state in which women find themselves: their poverty, their lack of education and training, their excessive work load, their lack of access to modern technology, etc. The strategic interests derive from women's subordinate position and suppose a questioning and transformation of this position and of unequal power relations. See: YOUNG, K. "El potencial transformador en las necesidades prácticas: empoderamiento colectivo y el proceso de planificación" in León, M (comp.) *Poder y empoderamiento de las mujeres*. Santafé de Bogotá: Tercer Mundo/Fac.Ciencias Humanas, 1997. pp. 99-118

<sup>7</sup> For more information, see:

- *Beijing +5: Nuevas Medidas e Iniciativas para Aplicar la Declaración de Beijing y la Plataforma de Acción* (Junio 2000): <http://www.unu.org/temas/mujer/Beijing5/beijing5.htm> [Website in Spanish]
- *Beijing +10: Review and Appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Outcome Document of the Twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly* (March 2005): <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/news.htm>

<sup>8</sup> UNDP. *Human Development Report 1995. Gender and human development*: <http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/1995/en/>

<sup>9</sup> For more information: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

to participate, the distribution of wealth and recognition (autoritas)".<sup>10</sup> And, as shown by data, they do not do it in any of the four dimensions in which citizenship must be present and visible so that it operates substantially: the political level; the economic level; the cultural level of norms and values; and the personal level of the family, the household and relations.<sup>11</sup>

In this regard, the feminist perspective considers that citizenship rights must be expanded so that they are universalized to all women and, at the same time, contemplate new realities and problematiques. It is understood that all the dimensions of human rights are equally important: civil and political rights; social, economic and cultural rights; and, reproductive and sexual rights, which require recognition and respect.<sup>12</sup>

## **B. Women's participation in power and decision-making**

Women's right to participate in power and decision-making was one of the feminist movement's first demands for women at the individual level. Already in 1791, Olympe de Gouges recognized and declared that "woman has the right to mount the scaffold; she must equally have the right to mount the rostrum, provided that her demonstrations do not disturb the legally established public order".<sup>13</sup> Two centuries later, women's right to participate in the processes and instances of social, political, and economic decision making at all levels and in different sectors<sup>14</sup> has been firmly established in diverse international instruments: the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights<sup>15</sup> (1948); the Convention on the Political Rights of Women<sup>16</sup> (1952); the Civil and Political Rights International Pact<sup>17</sup> (1966); and the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women<sup>18</sup> (1979), among others.

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<sup>10</sup> Miyares, A. *Democracia Feminista*. Speech at the Debate Forum: Beijing + 10. Madrid, March 4th 2005: [http://www.soyempresaria.com/aplicacion/AF.php?accion=pag\\_blanca&clave\\_f=palcong&id\\_pagBla=17](http://www.soyempresaria.com/aplicacion/AF.php?accion=pag_blanca&clave_f=palcong&id_pagBla=17) [in Spanish]

<sup>11</sup> KIT /OXFAM GB. *Gender, Citizenship and Governance*. A Global Sourcebook. The Netherlands: 2004. p.19:

[http://www.kit.nl/net/KIT\\_Publicaties\\_output/showfile.aspx?a=tblFiles&b=FileID&c=FileName&d=TheFile&e=445](http://www.kit.nl/net/KIT_Publicaties_output/showfile.aspx?a=tblFiles&b=FileID&c=FileName&d=TheFile&e=445)

<sup>12</sup> Within an extended conception of citizenship, the feminists also demand the recognition of the sexual and reproductive rights of women. See: Maffía, D. "Ciudadanía sexual. Aspectos personales, legales y políticos de los derechos reproductivos como derechos humanos" in *Feminaria*, año XI, número 26/27. Buenos Aires, 2001. pp. 28-30. See as well: 'Campaña por una Convención Interamericana de los Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos' (<http://www.convencion.org.uy>) [Website in Spanish].

<sup>13</sup> Article 10 of the Declaration of the Rights of Women (1791) by Olympe de Gouges:

<http://www.library.csi.cuny.edu/dept/americanstudies/lavender/decwom.html> (Date consulted: 12 September 2005). [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Declaration\\_of\\_the\\_Rights\\_of\\_Woman\\_and\\_the\\_Female\\_Citizen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Declaration_of_the_Rights_of_Woman_and_the_Female_Citizen) [Website in English].

<sup>14</sup> Normally, the distinction is made between three levels (local, national and international or global) and three sectors (public sector, civil society and private sector). This classification, nevertheless, does not contemplate the domestic space where unequal power relations also occur and fundamental decisions are made for people and society as a whole.

<sup>15</sup> *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*: <http://www.unhchr.ch/udhr/lang/eng.htm>

<sup>16</sup> *Convention on the Political Rights of Women*: <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/22.htm>

<sup>17</sup> *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*: [http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a\\_ccpr.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_ccpr.htm)

<sup>18</sup> *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)* <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm>

On 18 March 2005, 180 countries - more than 90% of the Member States of the United Nations- were part of CEDAW and one additional state had signed it, legally committing themselves not to act in violation of its basic principles: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/states.htm> (Date consulted: 12 September 2005).

In 1995, the Beijing Platform for Action (PfA)<sup>19</sup> identified women's full participation in the exercise of power as one of its critical areas of concern, recognizing that it must be incorporated at all levels and decision making as a necessary requisite for the attainment of the goals of equality, development and peace. Since then different resolutions, campaigns and declarations<sup>20</sup> have come to reinforce and/or complete Beijing PfA in this point, turning women's participation in power and decision making into a high-priority issue on the agenda of women and development at the local, national, regional<sup>21</sup> and international levels.<sup>22</sup> In this regard, the Millennium Declaration<sup>23</sup> (September 2000) reaffirms the centrality of women's participation in development and declares, for the first time, the urgent need to promote gender equality and the achievement of women's empowerment as the most effective ways to fight poverty, hunger and diseases and to stimulate truly sustainable development.

Nevertheless, despite formal recognition of women's right to participate on equal footing with men in power and decision making, they continue being unequally represented at all levels and in all sectors. Statistics demonstrate this underrepresentation; and numerous studies try to explain it by pointing out that the prevailing dynamics, times, procedures and "masculine" culture do not favour women mainly because of their domestic responsibilities, which are insufficiently shared or not shared at all.

### **C. The good governance agenda: a sustainable human development agenda**

The good governance agenda arises in the 1990s after the end of the Cold War and with the evidence of the failure of the structural adjustment plans imposed to the countries of the South. The financial institutions and the international donors introduced it for the first time and promoted it among the aid receiving countries as a basic requirement for the achievement of the economic, social and political changes, considered necessary for development. From the Copenhagen World Summit Declaration on Social Development (1995), which recognized that "democracy and transparent and accountable governance and administration in all sectors of society are indispensable foundations for the realization of social and people-centred sustainable development"<sup>24</sup>, good governance and sustainable human development have become indivisible.<sup>25</sup> Likewise, the Copenhagen Declaration recognized women's full participation and equality and equity between women and men as a

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<sup>19</sup> Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women:

<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N96/273/01/PDF/N9627301.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>20</sup> For more information, consult:

- INSTRAW. "Women in Power and Decision-Making: New Challenges" in *Beijing at 10: Putting Policy into Practice*. 2005. pp. 2-3: <http://www.un-instraw.org/en/images/stories/Beijing/womeninpoweranddecisionmaking.pdf>
- 'International Agreements' in this section of INSTRAW's website.
- The "50/50 by 2005: Get the Balance Right!" campaign initiated by the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO): <http://www.wedo.org/campaigns.aspx?mode=5050campaignkit#sp>

<sup>21</sup> See "International Agreements" in this section of INSTRAW's website for the regional treaties adopted on this issue.

<sup>22</sup> One of the subjects selected for the fiftieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) to take place in 2006 is the equitable participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels. (Resolution ECOSOC 2001/4 "Proposals for a multi-year programme of work for the Commission on the Status of Women for 2002-2006."):

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/resolution20014.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> Millennium Declaration: <http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> Report of the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995). Fourth paragraph: <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/conf166/aconf166-9.htm>

<sup>25</sup> The United Nations Millennium Declaration of 2000 refers to good governance. See Chapter V of the Millennium Declaration: <http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>

priority and a fundamental element of economic and social development.<sup>26</sup> Thus, and fundamentally with the thrust of Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing<sup>27</sup> (1995) , gender inequality has become a central concern in the human sustainable development discourse, and consequently also of the discourse on good governance.

Good governance is a normative concept with different meanings and aims depending on who promotes it, and it is conditioned by the actors' principles, mandates and priorities and by their conceptions of development; democracy, equity equality; empowerment and human rights; among others. Nevertheless, there are other central aspects of good governance shared by all actors. On the one hand, good governance seeks to generate transparency and responsibility on the part of the public administration towards the citizens whom it is supposed to be serving. On the other hand, democratizing state structures and strengthening citizen participation are considered to be fundamental to the promotion of better governance. A third central aspect of the good governance agenda has been the promotion of government decentralization which implies greater management of social resources at the local level and it is understood that it stimulates the participation of the populations and favours governments' transparency as it brings them closer to the populations that they serve.

Likewise, the present concept of good governance recognize multiple actors in different sectors and at different levels; in addition to the public sector, one finds civil society and the private sector at the local, national, and international level. Among the key actors are governments; civil society organizations; women's movement and the feminist movement; private companies; and political parties, among others. In addition, financial agencies, donors and institutions have become fundamental actors to consider when the setting approaches and priorities in the governance agenda at all the levels.

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<sup>26</sup> *Report of the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995)*. Seventh paragraph: <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/conf166/aconf166-9.htm>

<sup>27</sup> *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 4-15 September 1995)*: <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N96/273/01/PDF/N9627301.pdf?OpenElement>

## II. Framework

INSTRAW considers that integrating a gender perspective into governance and the current decentralization processes is fundamental for obtaining an equitable and inclusive human sustainable development. At the same time, it is necessary to have a greater and transformative presence of women in decision-making positions along with a strong women's and feminist movement that favour the recognition of women's rights, their empowerment and the exercise of their full citizenship.

### A. Women's political participation: broadening spaces and strategies

At present, worldwide data on women's representation in the processes and positions of power and decision making in the public sector, the private sector, and civil society demonstrates that, despite efforts, initiatives and operational strategies, resistance for the advance of the women in positions, professions, spaces and fields traditionally dominated by men still persists.

Public Sector<sup>28</sup>: In April of 2005, the worldwide average of women in parliaments reached the highest level, with 15.9% representation in the Upper and Lower Chamber combined.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, this number is very far from the 30% considered as the minimum percentage necessary to ensure a "critical mass"<sup>30</sup> of women who can influence the decision making process and the priorities of politics. Women's representation in positions of executive authority is even lower. At present, only nine (9) women occupy the position of Head of State in the world<sup>31</sup>, representing 4.71% of the total Heads of State.<sup>32</sup> As for women who occupy ministerial positions, current attention is centered more on the type of portfolios that they lead more than on their numbers. , Although women continue to be concentrated in social area portfolios, their presence in areas considered to be more strategic and that were once exclusively masculine domains, is increasing. In November of 2003, twenty (20) women had been appointed ministers of foreign relations, nine (9) of defense and security, and nineteen (19) of finances.<sup>33</sup>

In the local public sector, the presence of women in decision-making positions is higher than at national level. According to a survey conducted by United Cities and Local Governments

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<sup>28</sup> The public sector includes the different subsectors from the general government (fundamentally the departments of the central, state and local government as well as the social security funds that they control) and the public corporations, i.e., those subject to the control of the government departments. *UNDP/UNECE 2004*: <http://www.unece.org/stats/gender/web/glossary/p.htm>

<sup>29</sup> International Parliamentary Union: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>. (Date consulted: September 13th 2005)

<sup>30</sup> The term "critical mass" referring to women in positions of decision making was applied for the first time in Norway in the 1980s to explain the impact of the increasing presence of women in positions of decision making; in terms of changes in legislations, approval of specific laws (abortion, gender violence, etc.), measures to reconcile personal and work responsibilities, subsidies for caring activities, specific budgetary allocations for gender equality, etc. (UNRISD. "Women in public office: A rising tide" en *Gender Equality: Striving for Justice in an Unequal World*. 2005. p.147: [http://www.unrisd.org/unrisd/website/document.nsf/\(httpAuxPages\)/12F166540C09D163C1256FB1004C0156?OpenDocument&panel=additional](http://www.unrisd.org/unrisd/website/document.nsf/(httpAuxPages)/12F166540C09D163C1256FB1004C0156?OpenDocument&panel=additional))

<sup>31</sup> Source: <http://geocities.com/capitolHill/Lobby/4642/#section1> (Date consulted: 13 September 2005)

<sup>32</sup> This percentage has been obtained considering a quantity of 191 Member States to the United Nations as of 24 February 2005: <http://www.un.org/Overview/unmember.html> (Date consulted: 13 September 2005)

<sup>33</sup> ILO. *Breaking through the Glass Ceiling - Women in Management*. Geneva: 2004. p.26: <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/gender/docs/RES/292/F267981337/Breaking%20Glass%20PDF%20English.pdf>

in 2003<sup>34</sup>, women occupied 9% of the positions of mayor in 60 countries of the world and 20.9% of the positions on town councils in 67 countries.

There have also been advances in women's representation in decision-making positions in the judicial system. Nevertheless, women continue to be concentrated as judges and encounter difficulties in ascending to the highest instances of judicial power, such as Supreme Courts or Constitutional Courts. At the international level, the International Criminal Court (ICC) is recognized as a model institution that has established mechanisms and procedures to favour balanced representation of men and women.<sup>35</sup> Thus, by mid 2005, seven (7) of the eighteen (18) judges of the ICC were women.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, a great under-representation of women still persists within the international justice organizations. At the moment, there is only one (1) woman among the fifteen (15) judges members of the International Court of Justice.<sup>37</sup>

Private Sector<sup>38</sup> and Civil Society<sup>39</sup>: In these sectors of political action, women's low representation in decision-making positions also is confirmed by the numbers which also occur in the State's public sector. Although in general the data on women in decision-making positions in both sectors is scarce and in many cases confusing, in general, it indicates that women are present as a majority or with considerable representation in many spaces (Non-governmental Organizations, political parties, community groups, companies of the services sector, communication media, etc.), but occupy the lowest positions and are alarmingly absent from higher level positions. In 2001, a study of the International Federation of Journalists<sup>40</sup> demonstrated women's under-representation in decision-making positions in communication mass media, emphasizing that although women represent more than one-third of journalists on active-duty worldwide, the percentage of women editors, chiefs of departments or media owners does not even reach 1%.<sup>41</sup>

**Women's access to positions of power and decision-making:** Despite persistent under-representation, women's access to power and decision-making positions has improved during the last century and has been accomplished through the implementation of different strategies and measures. On the one hand, there has been substantial work aimed at raising awareness on women's right to participate on an equal footing with men in all social, economic, political, and cultural issues. At the same time there has been substantial progress in the recognition of women as citizens with full rights and mechanisms and

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<sup>34</sup> United Cities and Local Government: <http://www.cities-localgovernments.org/uclg/index.asp?pag=wldmstatistics.asp&type=&L=EN&pon=1&IDpag=124> (Date consulted: September 12th 2005)

<sup>35</sup> This has been in large part due to the pressure exerted by women's organizations and concretely by the Women's for Caucus Gender Justice, created in 1997, which monitored the entire process of establishing the Court (mechanisms, structures, personnel, etc.). For more information, consult: <http://www.iccwomen.org/>

<sup>36</sup> International Criminal Court: <http://www.icc-cpi.int/chambers/judges.html> (Date consulted: 12 September 2005)

<sup>37</sup> International Court of Justice: <http://www.icj-cij.org/icjwww/igeneralinformation/icjgnnot.html> (Date consulted: 12 September 2005)

<sup>38</sup> The private sector includes private companies and the market's informal sector. (UNDP. *Governance for sustainable human development. A UNDP Policy document*. 1997: <http://magnet.undp.org/policy/summary.htm>)

<sup>39</sup> Civil society includes individuals and organizations such as trade unions, women's organizations or citizens' movements, that exist outside of the state or private sector, and which have the potential to provide alternative views, policies and actions to those promoted by the government or private firms. (Oneworldaction: <http://owa.netxtra.net/indepth/project.jsp?project=206>)

<sup>40</sup> International Federation of Journalists, *Equality and Quality: Setting Standards for Women in Journalism*, 2001: <http://www.ifj.org/pdfs/ws.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> INSTRAW, "Women and the Media: New Challenges" in *Beijing at 10: Putting Policy into Practice*, 2005, pg.5: <http://www.un-instraw.org/en/images/stories/Beijing/womenandthemedial.pdf>. To obtain more information on women in the media, see the complete report.

procedures have been implemented to facilitate women's political participation and their access to positions of power (equality laws, affirmative actions such as quotas<sup>42</sup> and the reservation of seats, reforms to the electoral systems<sup>43</sup>, measures to reconcile the personal and professional life, etc.). Advances in this area have been significant, but there are new challenges to face today.

Women's participation in positions of power and decision making is a complex process that implies the analysis of several factors, among them: national and local electoral systems that guarantee or limit democratic participation, particularly of traditionally-marginalized groups and sectors, political parties and their mechanisms for citizenship representation; women's forms and levels of organization, and their incidence in the spaces of political agreement, gender relations and culture that hinder or facilitate women's participation in decision-making positions (at the institutional and household level); and resistance to the recognition of women as peers and stereotypes linked to the gendered cultural construction of the political parties and male members of local organizations', who continue to reinforce the lack of credibility in women's performance and leadership in the political world and the absence of resources and financial support to women's campaigns.

A 2004 study by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) on electoral systems and female representation in Latin America<sup>44</sup> recognizes that the obstacles that limit women's political participation at the national level, and which also apply to the local level are: the lack of citizenship support for women candidates; the lack of recognition and legitimacy to the participation of women in the public power sphere; the lack of economic resources available to women to run for office; fewer opportunities for women to organize themselves because of the multiple functions they fulfil in the productive, reproductive, and community sphere; women's inexperience and lack of knowledge of political practices and speech giving capacities; the demands under which they find themselves when occupying a public position and have to demonstrate that they are exceptional; the weak influence of women's organizations and movement in political parties; the schedules of meetings and the dynamics of public management, which is not often convenient for women; their discredited political image; and finally, the lack of understanding on the part of men and women of gender issues.

**Consolidation of women in positions of power and decision-making:** In addition to assuring women's access to decision-making positions, it is also necessary that their

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<sup>42</sup> Although some quota systems were established in the 1950s, most of them began the mid 1990s. These are understood to be progressive mechanisms towards the achievement of parity. Different types exist: constitutional quotas for national parliaments, laws of electoral quotas for national parliaments, political parties quotas for electoral candidates, and constitutional or legislative quotas at the local level, including the provincial, district, local or state levels. For more information, see: Krook, M. Reforming Representation: The Diffusion of Candidate Gender Quotas Worldwide. Columbia University, 2004: [http://www.columbia.edu/~mlk22/isa\\_proceeding\\_14671.pdf](http://www.columbia.edu/~mlk22/isa_proceeding_14671.pdf); Parlamento Europeo. Cuotas y acción positiva para aumentar la participación femenina en la vida política. 1997: [http://www.europarl.eu.int/workingpapers/femm/w10/4\\_es.htm](http://www.europarl.eu.int/workingpapers/femm/w10/4_es.htm); IDEA/Stockholm University. Global Database of Quotas for Women: [http://www.quotaproject.org/papers\\_SU.htm](http://www.quotaproject.org/papers_SU.htm)

<sup>43</sup> There are three basic types of electoral systems: Plurality-majority, Proportional Representation and Semi-proportional Representation. The proportional representation seems to be the most favourable system for women. But there are other factors to consider, such as the type of system of proportional representation, the political climate and the culture of gender. For more information, see Bareiro, L., López, O., Soto, C. y Soto, L. Sistemas electorales y representación femenina en América Latina. Paraguay: CEPAL, 2004: <http://www.eclac.cl/publicaciones/UnidadMujer/7/LCL2077/lcl2077e.pdf> [in Spanish]; Htun, M. N. El liderazgo de las mujeres en América Latina: Retos y tendencias. BID/Diálogo Interamericano/WLAC, Agosto 2000: [http://www.iadb.org/sds/prolead/publication/publication\\_7\\_2810\\_s.htm](http://www.iadb.org/sds/prolead/publication/publication_7_2810_s.htm) [in Spanish]; CLD. Electoral Systems: Attaining Gender Balance in Political Representation. 2000: <http://www.cld.org/waw6.htm>

<sup>44</sup> Bareiro, L., López, O., Soto, C. y Soto, L. *Sistemas electorales y representación femenina en América Latina*. Paraguay: CEPAL, 2004: <http://www.eclac.cl/publicaciones/UnidadMujer/7/LCL2077/lcl2077e.pdf> [in Spanish].

permanence in these positions be assured. Various factors explain women's lack of consolidation in positions of power and their difficult progression towards the highest levels. Women are still not considered to be legitimate political agents, and thus their presence is not considered essential for democracy and they are seen as interchangeable elements whereas men are seen as essential. At the same time, there persists the cultural construction of the public/private dichotomy that makes men and women accept as "normal" women's presence in the family scope and men's presence in the public sphere. Likewise, the norms, ways and times of public political action "force out" many women as they are adapted to men's necessities and characteristics.

Another forthcoming and fundamental challenge is the real impact of an increase in women's participation in decision-making positions. Some studies have noted the positive impact of their presence insofar as favouring changes in institutional structures and processes and in the governance discourse. Increased awareness on women's issues and interests towards decreasing corruption have been confirmed. In addition, the creation of departments or specialized institutions and legislative reform have been favoured in order to incorporate gender issues as well as the adoption of specific laws. Nevertheless, the studies on this respect are still very incipient and lack suitable methodological tools. Thus, it becomes necessary to deepen the knowledge on this aspect of the impact to reorient strategies and actions from the results of the studies and analysis.<sup>45</sup>

**Women's and the feminist movements:** The political and civic participation of women develops in very diverse realms. An extended conception of political participation, that goes beyond the state, allows us to visualize women participating inside and outside of the traditional formal spaces of political exercise/action, political parties and unions, among others. In this regard, women have developed and continue to develop most of their political action in informal political structures, such as Non-Governmental Organizations and the social movements. Moreover, if we understand political action to be all activity where power relations are expressed and managed, then political action cross cuts all spheres of life and also includes women's daily "day to day" political participation."<sup>46</sup>

In an analysis of governance, gender equality, and women's participation in decision-making positions, it is necessary to consider and to analyze the women's and feminist movements. This analysis entails the recognition that women's political action also and mainly takes place outside the traditional formal spheres and that the groups, associations and movements of women and feminists are key actors in the good governance agenda. It is through activism in these spaces that "women's voice is built up", that women identify and articulate their interests and promote a women's agenda<sup>47</sup> with the state and the political representatives. It is in these spaces where many future elected women begin and acquire the capacities and discourses for their political action.

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<sup>45</sup> First, the notion of "impact" and what it constitutes must be examined; since there are different points of view on the matter. There are those who affirm that only a critical mass can exert influence on issues, debates and perceptions. Others allege that a change must be generated in order to cause an impact. Perhaps, the approach of the discussion should shift to the degree in which the change is shown, if indeed change exists. (INSTRAW. "Women in Power and Decision-Making: New Challenges" in Beijing at 10: Putting Policy into Practice. 2005. pg 21: <http://www.un-instraw.org/en/images/stories/Beijing/womeninpoweranddecisionmaking.pdf>).

<sup>46</sup> Kabir, F. *Political participation of Women in South Asia*, DAWN, 2003.p.1: <http://www.dawn.org.fj/publications/docs/prstkabir2003.doc>

<sup>47</sup> It is important to note that as subordinated group, women can have interests in common, but, like men, they have numerous facets in their identities that can lead them to different political agendas. In many cases, identities other than those of gender are the center of political mobilization. On this issue, see: Craske, N. *Women and politics in Latin America*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1999.

When speaking of a women's agenda, some reservations must be maintained with regards to "the interests of women". Women do not share homogeneous social needs (practical needs) or homogeneous political interests (strategic needs). From the mid 1980s, voices surged within the women's and feminist movements warning of the existence of differences between women. Thus, women from different social classes, ages, surroundings, cultures, religions, and sexual orientation rejected the single reference pattern of the classic feminist currents, of the western, white, and middle-class woman. But beyond the recognition and reevaluation of the differences, emphasis is placed on the visibility of the multiple discriminations, exclusions and oppressions to which women are exposed to by their multiple identities (based on their age, class, cultural or religious group, national origin, sexual orientation...). The GID approach allows a visualization of women's diversities but, most of all, it allows a visualization of existing inequalities among them so that they may be overcome.<sup>48</sup> Recognizing this supposes beginning to face the differences and inequalities that occur between women themselves. And from there on, the attainment of pacts among them, necessary for the equitable and egalitarian integration of women in power.

## **B. Good governance and gender**

Current definitions of good governance, with their different approaches, recognize the different sectors (public, civil society and private sector), levels (local, national and international) and spheres (economic, political and social, among others).<sup>49</sup> A gender perspective in governance must entail all of these in order to make visible the multiple forms in which unequal power relations are expressed in each one and to take the appropriate measures. This plurality of focus observed in the governance agenda is replicated at the local level where initiatives also respond to different approaches and visions and not all of them incorporate a gender perspective in their vision and action.

In this regard, as Niraja Gopal Jayal indicates, it is necessary to work in several directions<sup>50</sup>:

1. Redefine the governance concept so as to make it gender sensitive and ensure that it includes the private, domestic spheres (of the family):

Traditional governance approaches continue to perpetuate the historical separation between the public and the private spheres that has kept women confined to the domestic reproductive space and men outside, in the space of public activity. This separation has perpetuated women's exclusion from the traditional sectors of governance in addition to not recognizing the private or domestic sphere, where there are unequal power relations, as a space that must be regulated by public action<sup>51</sup>. A new governance concept that is gender

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<sup>48</sup> The process of empowerment must be contextualized at each step, since women experience their subordination in a different way than men. Therefore, there is not a unique and universal model for attaining women's empowerment, as long as it does not involve the transformation of unequal power relations.

<sup>49</sup> Note that, as numerous feminists have already noted, these definitions of governance leave out the domestic sphere and thus maintain the public-private dichotomy that has excluded women from public action and that has made their contributions from other realms invisible.

<sup>50</sup> Jayal, N.G., "Locating Gender in the Governance Discourse" en *Essays on Gender and Governance: An Introduction*. New Delhi: Human Development Resource Centre, UNDP, 2003:

<http://hdrc.undp.org.in/pub/books/book-assets/Essays%20on%20Gender%20and%20Governance.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> "This distinction has remained on the basis of a complex system of prohibitions that until recently were part of the positive right. Liberalism defended and shaped in laws the separation of these two realms and considered that the power of the state had to end at the door of the homes, where the 'pater familias' 'reigned'" (Bareiro, L., López, O., Soto, C. y Soto, L. *Sistemas electorales y representación femenina en América Latina*. Paraguay: CEPAL, 2004. p.16: <http://www.eclac.cl/publicaciones/UnidadMujer/7/LCL2077/lcl2077e.pdf> [in Spanish]).

sensitive must reformulate its most basic assumptions in order to include spheres and issues previously invisible or avoided. In this regard, subjects that have remained outside the governance agenda because they are considered private, must enter and form part of the political discussion. This is the case of reproductive work that is mainly assured by women; violence against the women; sexual and reproductive rights; etc.

2. Incorporate a gender perspective to the proposals and strategies of the good governance agenda so that women's needs and interests are visible and addressed.

This supposes, among other things, working to assure the equality between men and women in decision making, access and control over resources and in the enjoyment of the benefits from development; respect for women and men's human rights through the establishment of mechanisms, structures and policies; the empowerment of women through the extension of their options and capabilities; the recognition of women as legitimate political actors with full citizenship rights; the responsibility towards the rights of women, specially the most excluded, etc.

3. Promote women's access to power and decision making and their permanence in these positions.

As shown by data, women continue to be underrepresented at all levels and in all sectors. In addition, their permanence in the positions of power or decision-making is much more ephemeral than the one of men. However, beyond the numbers, women's presence in the different sectors and levels in terms of their quality and impact in the decision-making positions and processes need to be analyzed. No uniform criteria exist today for valuing and analyzing this aspect.

The concept of political participation must be redefined with the goal of making visible other forms and spaces of men and women's political action. At the same time, it is indispensable that women organize themselves and mobilize in order to demand their rights and to extend and an effective citizenship; and that good governance, with all its sectors and at all levels, generates a development to ensure the recognition of women's human rights and the exercise of their full citizenship.

And all of this must be made from an extended vision of the project to integrate a gender perspective into governance so that it addresses the different forms in which women are unequal, disadvantaged, oppressed and exploited in different scopes and spheres (public and private), and empowers them in all these spheres.

### **C. The transformative policy proposal: nexus between women's participation in positions of decision making and gender-sensitive governance**

Within the framework of good governance, many women especially from the South<sup>52</sup>, propose a transformative policy. This centers on and emphasizes gender equality and women's empowerment, but goes further as it proposes the transformation of the present institutions, processes and political values. It supposes a redefinition of democracy, the state, policy, citizenship, its principles and values so that they favour women and men's full exercise of their citizenship and that of all the traditionally excluded groups, as follows:<sup>53</sup>

1. Transform the representative institutions through women's access and consolidation in decision making positions, assuring a real impact on gender inequalities.
2. Transform the political agenda with the incorporation of women's needs, interests, visions and proposals.
3. Transform the institutions in all sectors and at all levels so that they become participative, inclusive, and transparent spaces.
4. Transform the processes of governance through open forums, transparent and participative processes, the incorporation of a vision from the bottom up, the recognition of diversity and advocacy for inclusion, and its effective materialization.

In order to obtain these transformations, INSTRAW considers that the different actors from the governance agenda must favour the dialogue between them and establish alliances in the short, medium, and long term. This transformative proposal must lead to a new thinking and action from theory to practice. In order to achieve this, INSTRAW hopes to work at four levels: deepening and extending knowledge; favouring the interchange of ideas and the articulation of actors; capacity building; and promoting the adoption of appropriate public policies.

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<sup>52</sup> See the Center for Asia Pacific Women In Politics's website where there are different documents on the subject: <http://www.capwip.org/aboutcapwip/about.html>

<sup>53</sup> Rounaq Vahan. *The practice of transformative politics*. CAPWIP 2003: <http://www.capwip.org/resources/rounaq/rounaq.htm>

### **III. Future lines of work for INSTRAW**

#### **1. Research**

- Promote research that fosters the nexus between theory and practice.
- Develop studies on the multiple exclusions of women as political agents and on ways to overcome them.
- Develop studies in different socio-cultural contexts in order to deepen the knowledge of:
  - o women's political and civic participation at the local level: revision, documentation and analysis of the experiences
  - o political participation of women belonging to traditionally-excluded or marginalized groups (young women, migrants, women with disabilities...)
  - o the real impact of increased numbers of women in positions of power and decision making
  - o women's participation in the private sector and in civil society
  - o adequate mechanisms and policies for the promotion of governance with a gender perspective and women's participation and political leadership at all levels.
  - o the participation and political leadership of indigenous women
  - o access to and use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) as a tool for women's political empowerment.
- Develop methodologies, indicators and criteria suitable for the evaluation of the impact of women's presence in positions of decision-making and the introduction of a gender sensitive governance.

#### **2. Capacity building**

- Develop guidelines, materials and training processes to integrate the gender perspective aimed at personnel from the institutions of the public sector, the private sector and civil society (including the design of policies and budgets)
- Develop guidelines, materials and training processes aimed at women leaders to strengthen their performance in decision-making positions. Emphasis will be placed on the access and use of ICTs and in the training of young women from minority groups
- Develop guidelines, materials and training processes to strengthen women's activism particularly in regards to political action, the state's accountability and the defence of women's rights and interests. Emphasis will be placed on the access and use of ICTs and in the training of young women from minority groups

### **3. Information dissemination**

- Collect and disseminate good practices on engendering governance, with emphasis on the experiences of the countries of the South.
- Collect and disseminate information, statistics and analysis on women's participation in different sectors and at different levels of governance, especially on women in the private sector, in civil society at the local level, paying special attention to women from traditionally-excluded or marginalized groups (indigenous, young, migrants, religious minorities, etc.).
- Promote the creation of forums to interchange ideas and experiences, and to consolidate partnerships.

### **4. Lobbying and public policy**

- Promote feedback from the research findings on the local, regional and global policies.
- Promote the design and adoption of local, regional and global policies that favour women's political participation and governance with a gender perspective