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WHAT WORKS FOR WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP

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DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ET	Evaluation team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evidence review presents existing research on why the gender gap in political participation and leadership persists and opportunities for the United States Agency for International Development to undertake programming that addresses it. The research team surveyed more than 220 articles and books using rigorous and replicable methodologies, the vast majority of which were written within the last 20 years, with some of the most credible evidence emerging within the last 5–10 years. The evidence shows that the gender gap in political participation and leadership is a function of individual resources, social norms, and institutions. These factors interact to create a social system that inhibits women's political authority in complex ways.

CONSTRAINTS TO WPPL: INDIVIDUAL RESOURCES

The most commonly cited explanation for women's varying levels of political participation is rooted in gender inequalities in access to the resources generated in the process of economic development. Resource-based explanations focus on the way money, education, and time shape political engagement. In analyzing the existing evidence base, the ET identified **four key resources that may shape individual women's political participation and leadership (WPPL): information and knowledge of political systems, income and labor market participation, free time and domestic responsibilities, and social capital and networks**.

Information and knowledge of political systems: Previous literature argues that knowledge of and information about how politics works and how to engage in political systems are critical drivers of political participation. To address these concerns, **capacity-building programs** have been deployed to fill the gaps in women's political knowledge and skills. These programs use targeted short-term informational interventions with the assumption that by providing key political skills, they can overcome some of the entrenched knowledge gaps due to unequal access to schooling, inequalities in networks, and less access to economic opportunities. There is evidence that these programs can work, but only if they are designed to address coinciding constraints on WPPL, such as restrictive norms and inequalities in social capital, if such programs activate or exacerbate gender-biased norms. Without simultaneous norm-targeted interventions, interventions may in fact worsen gender gaps in political participation. **Understanding the mechanisms and conditions of women's empowerment would enable more effective and sustainable program design**.

Income and labor market participation: While economic development and growth may be positively correlated with women's political participation in some developing regions, the available evidence suggests that **income-generating programs that fail to address and include gender norm change do not meaningfully change women's political participation.** The key constraint to these programs being effective appears to be gender-biased social norms. This suggests that norm-based constraints are more binding for WPPL than resource-based constraints, and highlights the importance of building norm-based interventions into resource-based interventions.

Free time and domestic responsibilities: Although it has been suggested that women do not participate in politics simply because they do not have sufficient free time to do so given the many demands placed on their time for household duties, the evaluation team's (ET's) search of the literature revealed no programs that evaluated the impact of interventions aimed at addressing time poverty on WPPL.

Social capital and networks: Social capital theorists have long attributed variance in political behavior and broader political outcomes to the level and structure of social capital and networks. The most common forms of women's groups for which the link with WPPL has been rigorously studied are groups organized

for economic purposes, such as microcredit, which have been shown to substantially boost women citizens' political participation. While women do not opt into these groups with the intention of gaining access to politics, and groups were not organized to explicitly target increasing political participation, the groups provide women with social capital, and social capital among women leads to political participation. Social capital is also very important for women political leaders because it allows them access to mentors. **Social capital among women appears to be one of the most critical resources for women in navigating political participation and leadership**.

CONSTRAINTS TO WPPL: SOCIAL AND CULTURAL NORMS

Patriarchy and gender-biased social norms have been shown to shape and constrain women's political behavior. The literature on the impact of social norms on women's status in society has focused on the role of social norms, attitudes, and beliefs in perpetuating women's relegation to the private and domestic spheres and the elevation and naturalization of men as public sphere actors and leaders. In this review of what has been studied to produce evidence, the ET has identified three evidence-based domains where norm-based constraints operate: individual attitudes and beliefs, household relations, and community norms and cultural institutions.

Individual attitudes and beliefs: For individual women, the internalization of patriarchal norms (norms of male dominance) and stereotypes about women's political participation contribute to **low beliefs of self-efficacy in political domains, limited aspirations around political participation, and disinclination to participate in politics and vote for women candidates.** Research from around the globe has shown that **as women gain more and more representation in political office, the aspirations of other women grow and individuals positively update their beliefs about women's capacity for political success**. This work highlights the usefulness of **role models** (social referents signaling the acceptability of WPPL), corrections of misperceived beliefs, school-based trainings on gender equality, and radio programs on gender equality.

Household constraints: ***Women's autonomy from the household, or the ability to act and exert agency independent of the household, is a very important driver of their political participation***. Other research has found that **men serve as gatekeepers to women's political participation and are a critical node for interventions aimed at increasing WPPL.** Promising interventions include vote mobilization campaigns focused on the value of women's participation, delayed marriage, women's groups, and gender sensitization discussion groups.

Community and cultural norms: Patriarchal cultural norms and patrilineage are one of the most deeply rooted drivers of women's subordination, through the way that it structures both access to resources and coordination around political participation. Moreover, even once women are able to participate in political spaces, they often face substantial barriers to being heard and having their needs met. These barriers are likely to inhibit women's participation in the first place, as women may see little benefit in engaging in politics if it is unlikely to respond to their demands, in addition to the violent and non-violent sanctions they may face for political participation. Changes to inheritance laws may foster norm change and subsequently WPPL, although such legal changes may have unintended consequences that exacerbate gender inequalities. As noted elsewhere, women's groups and other activities that build social capital can help women to gain access and representation in community institutions. These activities may generate backlash to efforts to empower women and must provide women with tools to navigate and stand against that response.

CONSTRAINTS TO WPPL: INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Institutional accounts of political behavior suggest that political institutions and organizations set the rules for how norms and inequalities of male dominance are translated into political power. Moving beyond the individual and the community as the units of analysis, institutional determinants focus instead on organizational and super-structures that create conditions for the continued dearth of women's leadership in politics, while also opening space for more large-scale transformation of WPPL.

Improving representation in political parties: Women remain underrepresented in party infrastructure around the world. This creates a multitude of problems that both upset the party's own election prospects while also weakening representation overall. Overall, there is a lack of research on interventions to address institutional constraints to WPPL. What research there is suggests that party recruitment practices, absent a gender-conscious design, may not be successful in addressing women's underrepresentation as political candidates.

Legal protections: Other institutional constraints include the underrepresentation of women as political candidates and the underrepresentation of women in political party positions. Research has shown that **enabling women to get elected improves democratic outcomes.** There is evidence to suggest that the status quo is actively inhibiting qualified women from entering politics and **gender quotas and proportional representation systems can help break entrenched power structures and enable qualified women to rise in office.**

DISCUSSION

The bulk of evidence discussed here suggests that there is significantly more research addressing resources as a constraint to WPPL, with considerably less research on norms and political institutions, where rigorous evidence-gathering can be particularly fruitful. However, the ET also found gaps in the evidence on all three factors and suggests important questions for future research to expand the evidence base on what works in WPPL programming.

1. INTRODUCTION

Across the globe, women remain underrepresented in political spaces: female citizens are 3.5 percent less likely to vote and 10 percent less likely to participate in politics in between elections than men (World Values Surveys Waves 5 and 6) and still only 26 percent of parliamentarians are women (as of data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union for November 2022). Why does a gender gap in political participation and leadership persist and what can the United States Agency for International Development do about it? Existing answers focus on three key areas of constraints to WPPL: individual resources, social norms, and institutions. Individual accounts focus on the role of resources—time, money, and civic skills—in explaining political behavior. Social or cultural accounts highlight the role of norms, attitudes, and beliefs in perpetuating the subversion of women to domestic responsibilities and the elevation of men as political actors. Institutional accounts identify the ways that political institutions confer power and access to some in the population and constrain others.

The gender gap in political participation and leadership is undoubtedly a function of all three of these constraints—resources, norms, and institutions—which interact to create a social system that inhibits women's political authority. While it is important to acknowledge the complexity of this social problem, improvements in WPPL have been linked to particular interventions targeting specific factors. In fact, recent decades have seen the expansion of specific programs and interventions aimed at addressing these persistent gender-based political inequities. A review of the efficacy of these programs and interventions is, therefore, timely. This review aims to provide an understanding of what has and has not worked in improving WPPL through targeted programming.

2. SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The focus of this review is on WPPL. This includes political participation, or any form of public action that seeks to influence political decision-making, including formal forms of political participation involving direct engagement with political institutions, like voting and claims-making, and informal forms of participation seeking to indirectly influence political institutions, like protesting. It also includes political leadership, which is the direct representation of women in positions of political authority.[1]

Few research studies to date have measured or evaluated all aspects of WPPL, instead focusing on the one or two most relevant dimensions. Particular operationalizations of WPPL described in this review include electoral and non-electoral political participation, political interest and discussion, political candidacy and representation, and political influence.

To understand what has and has not worked to improve WPPL, the focus of this review is on evaluating the evidence on the efficacy of external interventions[2] in gaining traction on gender inequities in political participation and leadership. This review of recent literature identifies areas in which each of the three core theoretical dimensions have progressed over the last few decades, paying particular attention to

[1] This reviews conceptualizes political participation as any form of public that seeks to directly engage the state. This includes formal forms of political participation, like voting and claims-making, alongside informal forms of participation that make demands on the state, like protesting. While the focus of this work is on political participation and leadership, other work of the United States Agency for International Development focuses on broader definitions of public engagement and civic action, including labor unions, reporting and journalism, defense of human rights, etc.

[2] An external intervention is defined as any programming with an intention of changing an outcome that does not arise organically from the community of participants themselves.

work that brings rigor to establishing an evidence base from which subsequent work and programming can springboard.

To ensure this review achieves its goal of generating evidence around actionable programs targeting WPPL, the review is focused and limited to studies 1) with clear theories of change, 2) that are focused on external intervention, and 3) that utilize rigorous and replicable methodologies. First, this review focuses on interventions rooted in theories of change, both to note constraints to WPPL and highlight what has worked to improve WPPL outcomes in the past. Second, a focus on interventions is also a departure from previous reviews of this kind in that the approach here centers on actions implemented with women by actors either external or internal to the political landscape and the degree to which they are likely to be effective.

Third, this review is limited to work deemed rigorous by scientific standards, particularly standards of evidence associated with the causal evaluation of external interventions. The standards for drawing valid and reliable conclusions of whether a program/intervention works for a specific outcome are more stringent than those applied to simply mapping the problem or understanding what attributes might correlate with the outcome of interest. Given the stringency of these standards and the need for sufficiently large study sizes to draw valid conclusions, the vast majority of the studies summarized utilize quantitative research methodologies, though this report does include qualitative methodologies insofar as they meet the aforementioned criteria.

The focus on rigorous evidence serves two purposes. It ensures that the results described herein are subject to standards for scientific research and, therefore, have internal validity. It also provides clear limits on inclusion in the review, which is helpful when setting parameters given the proliferation of studies that link various individual, societal, and institutional attributes to gender inequalities in political participation and leadership. Our focus on what has been proven to work implies the need to evaluate causality—the role of a particular attribute (intervention) on WPPL. Defining the scope of this review to studies that meet this standard of evidence provides clear inclusion criteria and highlights where such evidence remains severely lacking. A particular benefit of this inclusion criteria is that it clearly delineates areas where there is an availability of rigorous evidence on WPPL from areas where further rigorous work is needed. This should serve as an important input into future policy design and activism.

This focus precludes a lot of important work that aims to describe the fundamental causes of gender gaps in WPPL around the world, as well as work and anecdotal evidence generated directly by activists, implementers, and other stakeholders on these gaps (see Kabeer 2020 for a larger discussion). Some research is excluded because the nature of inquiry is fundamentally at odds with an interventionist approach, such as the mapping of historical processes and structural transformation (see, for example, work by Htun and Weldon) and the documentation of legislative processes (see, for example, work by Bjarnegård). Additionally, this report excludes substantial research produced by activist and implementing organizations that has provided meaningful insights into the barriers to and strategies for change for WPPL through individualized case studies that examine a small number of cases. However, in its focus on interventions that *scientifically* generate evidence on successful strategies to improve the seemingly intractable gender gaps in politics around the world, this evidence review identifies particular success stories and areas where evidence is weak but promising in order to document the most robust evidence on what works for WPPL.

Abiding by these criteria, the ET identified and selected intervention-focused research studies and evaluations that addressed one or more of the theorized constraints impeding WPPL: individual resources, social norms, and political institutions. In total, the ET surveyed more than 220 articles and books, the vast majority of which were written within the last 20 years, with some of the most credible evidence

emerging within the last 5–10 years. This review includes all evaluations done using rigorous empirical methods, namely randomized and natural experiments. Where such evidence is lacking, which is in many domains, the ET supplements its analysis with studies that acknowledge scientific methods but draw on observational correlations from public opinion surveys and qualitative assessments of programs, highlighting the methods used for evaluation and the limitations of these studies.

The ET reviews this literature in the remaining section, broadly placing the literature in theoretically and policy-relevant frames and identifying opportunities and challenges for both future research and programming. The ET also pays attention to the locations from which evidence emerges and points to the challenge of relying too much on evidence only from data-rich environments or places where social structures are already quite permissive. The team summarizes the state of the rigorous evidence along three axes of constraint for WPPL: individual resources, norms, and political institutions. Each section highlights the state of the most robust knowledge as well as open questions where there is a dearth of rigorous evidence. In addition to showing where the bulk of current evidence exists, namely, resources, the lengths of these sections also indicate there is considerably less research on norms and political institutions, both areas where rigorous evidence-gathering can be particularly fruitful. The ET concludes by offering a broad discussion of common themes across these three axes and what this teaches about how to increase WPPL.

3. CONSTRAINTS TO WPPL: INDIVIDUAL RESOURCES

3.1. OVERVIEW AND FRAMEWORK

The most commonly cited explanation for women's varying levels of political participation is rooted in gender inequalities in access to the resources generated in the process of economic development. Drawing largely on evidence from high-income democracies, such theories assume that economic prosperity will yield political inclusion, and it is the gendered lag in access to such economic prosperity that perpetuates women's exclusion.

First, resource-based explanations focus on the way money, education, and time shape political engagement. Therefore, the gender gap in political participation is argued to be the result of a gender gap in resources. To a greater degree than men, women have not accumulated the political and non-political resources necessary to reduce the costs of political participation. Gender gaps in resources stem from gendered patterns of access to social and economic institutions. On average, women have less education, lower labor force participation, lower wages, and less free time than men. Each of these factors is associated with less political participation and a lower likelihood of political leadership. The link between resources and political participation is direct, as many forms of participation directly require resources to engage, and indirect, as participation in social and economic institutions like schools and the labor market inculcate civic skills useful for political participation. This argument implies that, as resources equalize, so does political participation.

In analyzing the existing evidence base, the ET identified **four key resources that may shape individual women's participation and leadership in politics: information and knowledge of political systems, income and labor market participation, free time and domestic responsibilities, and social capital and networks**. This review describes the theoretical value of each of these resources and why they might increase WPPL, then discusses interventions that have been deployed to ameliorate the negative consequences of the lack of those resources.

It is important to highlight, however, that most research on individual resource constraints has focused on capacity-building across all types of countries. As a result, very few on-the-ground interventions have

sought to address inequalities in individual resources with the explicit aim of increasing WPPL. While there is a large evidence base on interventions to increase women's labor market participation, for example, few have looked at how such interventions shape subsequent political behavior. This review focuses only on those interventions that explicitly measure WPPL as a key outcome. The ET suggests that future evaluations of interventions aimed at directly improving individual women's resources expand the scope of their evaluation to include an assessment of effects on political participation and leadership.

3.2 INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE OF POLITICAL SYSTEMS

Problem: Limited knowledge of political systems and limited skills.
Studied solutions: Knowledge and capacity-building programs.

Previous literature argues that knowledge of and information about how politics works and how to engage in political systems are critical drivers of political participation. Without information about how to navigate political systems, including formal political institutions and informal sites of political exchange and deliberation, political participation is challenging. Essentially, knowledge of political processes and information about current events can lower the costs of political participation. Similarly, civic skills, or the communications and organizational skills useful to political action, have been argued to importantly condition individuals' capacity for political participation and leadership, such as by facilitating interaction with formal political institutions (Brady et al, 1995). Low levels of political information and civic skills are particularly challenging for those seeking political leadership positions, which require navigating complex bureaucratic and party institutions (Afridi et al, 2017). Yet, **historical inequalities in access to education have been shown to lead to a gender gap in political information and knowledge** (Burns et al, 2004; Lizotte and Sidman, 2009). For example, Dim and Asomah (2019) study the correlates of women's political participation using data from the Afrobarometer and find that education is one of the strongest predictors of women's political participation in Nigeria.

To address these concerns, **capacity-building programs** have been deployed to fill the gaps in women's political knowledge and skills. These programs use targeted short-term informational interventions with the assumption that by providing key political skills, they can overcome some of the entrenched knowledge gaps due to unequal access to schooling, inequalities in networks, and less access to economic opportunities. One such program, implemented in Mali using a randomized experiment, provided information and training on local government capacity and responsibility and delivered information to men and women about how local politicians were performing. In an evaluation of this program, Gottlieb (2016a) found that participants had greater knowledge of politics—particularly of their political representatives—following participation in the program, but that when women and men were provided **with political information in a context of gender-biased social norms, rather than that knowledge equalizing the gender gap in political behavior, women participated less in politics** than they had before (Gottlieb 2016b). In this intervention, men and women jointly participated in a three-day civics course. While both men and women showed increased knowledge of politics following the course, only men's participation in political events increased and women's instead decreased. Drawing on qualitative evidence from male and female participants, Gottlieb finds that women recognized that their participation in the civics course was a deviation from the prevailing social norm where women relegated all political participation to men, with one woman stating that "an educated woman will forget that she is inferior to men and could even fail to obey her husband" (Gottlieb 2016b, 103). In some cases, the paper notes that women faced sanctions and threats from within the household if they were to follow the course material and participate in politics. Gottlieb (2016b, 104) argues that this is indicative of the "resource paradox," where simply providing information can have negative consequences in societies with conservative norms. However, as the paper notes, gender norms in Mali are amongst the worst in Africa and almost no women in the study sample participated in politics prior to the intervention.

Similar capacity-building programs delivered to groups of only women have proven to be more effective at increasing women's political participation in a quasi-experimental evaluation in India (Prillaman 2022).[3] In this gender-transformative intervention, women who were already members of women-only credit collectives participated in a capacity-building program focused on civics education and gender empowerment delivered in several multi-day sessions over a two-year period. Women who participated in this program, as compared to women who were members of similar credit collectives in villages that did not receive this program, were substantially more likely to participate in politics, including attending village meetings and contacting local elected representatives. Importantly, the study shows that this program increased women's knowledge of political rights and entitlements and also strengthened bonds of solidarity and collective action among women's group members, but did not change women's reported attitudes toward gender equality. In combination, this suggests that such a program improved women's political participation by filling information gaps and by building social capital but may not have immediately transformed community gender norms.

The studies by Prillaman (2022) in India and by Gottlieb (2016b) in Mali are difficult to compare as the intervention in India was delivered over two years and the Mali program lasted only three days. It is difficult to disentangle whether the success of the Indian intervention was because of the information provided in the capacity-building program or the social capital generated as a result of sustained participation. There are some important additional differences. First, it could be that gender norms in India were less restrictive than those in Mali. However, the study shows that restrictions on women in India were akin to those in Mali, suggesting that the overall normative environment is unlikely to be the core driver of the difference. That said, the women who participated in the program in India were those who had previously been able to join credit collectives and so the program's efficacy may have been in part because these women had some baseline level of empowerment to build upon. Second, unlike in the Malian program that included mixed groups of both men and women, the Indian program included only women. As a result, men had less information about the content of the trainings. Including only women may have also helped foster the development of social capital among women. In fact, as Prillaman (2022) finds, women who participated in the Indian program did experience backlash from men in their households and in their communities in the form of threats and violence, but they leveraged the social capital they generated through the dialogue during the program to help them to navigate and combat this backlash. This highlights a third potential distinction: the Indian capacity-building program had a longer intervention period.

Capacity-building programs have been even more widely deployed to help women political leaders gain the knowledge and information they need to successfully perform their responsibilities, particularly given lower levels of experience in political spaces. These capacity-building programs typically involve multiple components such as training, mentorship, networking, and broader community outreach that make it difficult to attribute outcomes directly to the provision of information. In the ET's review of the literature, the team did not find an experimental evaluation of a capacity-building program delivered to women political leaders. Most evaluations of these capacity-building programs have been programmatic and qualitative in nature and further evidence is needed to confirm the scientific merit of the findings from these programs. That said, capacity-building programs, when designed with an appreciation of prevailing norms, show promise toward making progress in helping women to navigate positions of political leadership.

Programs implemented by several organizations in Pakistan, Indonesia, Sudan, and South Sudan, evaluated using small-scale qualitative evidence without clear comparison groups, appeared to improve women parliamentarians' ability to perform their responsibilities and enable women parliamentarians to advocate and advance their agendas, including policies focused on women's issues (Khan and Hussein, 2014; Howell,

[3] Qualitative evaluations have revealed similar outcomes in Sierra Leone (Conteh, 2019), South Sudan (Venturi et al, 2021), and Sri Lanka with adolescent girls (Maddumage, 2021).

2012; Chikoore and Abu-Hasabo, 2015; Catalla and Kong, 2009). These programs were not designed to address barriers to entry, but rather the ability of women to lead once they are in office. That said, one such program implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Pakistan found that the **capacity-building program was only successful for women leaders who had sufficient pre-existing civic skills and ties to influential political elites**—instead, many women seemed no better able at navigating political systems after the program (Khan and Zia, 2004). Similar to the citizen program in Mali, this program in Pakistan lasted three days. Khan and Zia (2004) highlight that some women, particularly those who were illiterate or only semi-literate, did not remember the information they had received and other women felt abandoned following the conclusion of the program. Subsequent sections discuss how the development of women's networks can facilitate the production of pre-conditions to success, such as civic skills and ties.

Knowledge and capacity-building programs have been deployed to help both women citizens and women political leaders learn about the political process and correct gender inequities in access to political information. For female citizens, evidence suggests that the efficacy of these programs varies substantially based on how they are designed and implemented. There is evidence that these programs can work, but only if they are designed to address coinciding constraints on WPPL, such as restrictive norms and inequalities in social capital, if such programs activate or exacerbate gender-biased norms. Without simultaneous norm-targeted interventions, interventions may in fact worsen gender gaps in political participation. For women who have already overcome barriers to becoming a formal/elected leader, more evidence is needed to understand whether, how, and under what conditions these programs work to empower women elected representatives. Especially given the widespread deployment of such capacity-building programs, rigorous evidence is critically needed to determine both whether these programs achieve their intended goals and whether they, like some citizen-focused capacity-building programs, have unintended consequences that might even exacerbate problems. Important in this evidence generation would be an intentional focus on disentangling the component pieces of capacity-building and understanding when/how they combine to effectively improve WPPL. **Understanding the mechanisms and conditions of women's empowerment would enable more effective and sustainable program design**.

3.3 INCOME AND LABOR MARKET PARTICIPATION

Problem: Inequalities in economic resources and labor force participation.
Studied solutions: Microcredit programs, community-driven development programs, and unconditional cash transfer programs.

In addition to needing information to participate in politics, political participation—and particularly political leadership—may require economic resources. Studying the U.S., Schlozman et al (1994) argue that inequalities in financial resources and control over those financial resources play an important role in women's political participation, even more so than that of free time and education. They argue that the relationship between income and political participation is driven by two factors: access to money and greater control of household finances. Ultimately, the argument is that access to some base amount of income is critical for individuals to be able to turn their attention to politics and engage in political spaces. For women, this is more acute as income buys both access to politics and freedom from the household. This highlights how the theoretical link between economic resources and political participation is rooted in both access to resources and control, at both the household and community levels, over existing economic resources. These arguments, however, have largely emerged from evidence from advanced, industrialized democracies.

Inequalities in both labor force participation and wage earnings persist in much of the developing world, leading women to earn less on average than men in most societies. Do these economic inequalities

perpetuate political inequalities? The answer is largely no. Desposato and Norrander (2009) use the Latinobarómetro public opinion survey to look at the national-level correlation between economic development and women's political participation in Latin America and find no correlation.[4] Few studies have been able to provide robust evidence on the direct impact of economic transfers on political participation, with the closest being a focus on financial inclusion interventions. Prillaman (2021) analyzes a natural experiment in the roll-out of **a microcredit program in India targeted at women and shows that while the program significantly increased women's political participation, it was not because it had meaningful impacts on women's livelihoods and income**. In fact, the program appeared to have virtually no impact on women's economic resources. Instead, this program shifted women's political participation by providing access to networks of other women (see section 3.5 below for more information). That said, analyzing data from the Afrobarometer public opinion survey, Isaksson et al (2014) do find a positive correlation between individual economic resource endowments and employment with women's political participation, though they highlight that this explains only a very small share of the gender gap in political participation. It is difficult from a non-causal study to identify whether it is economic resources per se that are positively related to political participation, or the myriad of non-economic characteristics that correlate with economic resources. In fact, Isaksson et al (2004) find that norms and political networks have much stronger and more predictive correlations with WPPL.

Another intervention aimed at increasing women's access to and control over financial resources is that of **community-driven development programs**. Some of these programs, which transfer cash and other economic resources to community groups, addressed political participation directly by requiring women's participation as a condition of the transfer. Others did so indirectly, theorizing that increasing women's financial power alone would stimulate greater political engagement and leadership by women. The literature shows that community-driven development programs that addressed political participation directly had mixed levels of success, but those relying on economic resource transfer alone did not have an impact on women's political engagement. As with capacity-building programs, this suggests that such programs are unlikely to achieve their intended goals if they only target economic constraints to WPPL and instead likely need to address other coincident constraints on WPPL, most notably restrictive gender norms and attitudes.

Studying the randomized rollout of a community-driven development program that mandated women's representation in 500 villages in Afghanistan, Beath et al (2013) find that the program did increase women's political participation, specifically the existence of women's councils and the identification of women political leaders in the village. The program increased women's income-generating activities but did not fundamentally alter their status in household decision-making. It also shifted attitudes about whether women should participate in politics, suggesting some changes in normative beliefs, though it did not change more general attitudes around women's role in society. It is impossible to know from this study whether this program yielded improvements in women's political leadership because of women's greater economic activities or shifts in attitudes about the acceptability of women's work. A similar randomized program in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) finds only very weak evidence that participation in community-driven development programs increases women's political participation and similarly finds no effect on general attitudes around the role of women or women's role in household decision-making (van der Windt, 2018). Beardon and Otero (2013) also report mixed qualitative impacts on women's political participation from a large-scale rollout of an Oxfam program that built political quotas in its implementation. One key conclusion from these papers is that community-driven development programs appear to only increase WPPL when program participation shifts attitudes around women's political authority.

[4] Instead, they show that having more women in the political elite is positively correlated with the political participation of female citizens.

While economic development and growth may be positively correlated with women's political participation in some developing regions, the available evidence suggests that **income-generating programs that fail to address and include gender norm change do not meaningfully change women's political participation.** The key constraint to these programs being effective appears to be gender-biased social norms. This suggests that norm-based constraints are more binding for WPPL than resource-based constraints, and highlights the importance of building norm-based interventions into resource-based interventions.

3.4 FREE TIME AND DOMESTIC RESPONSIBILITIES

Problem: Time poverty due to the double bind of political participation and domestic work.
Studied solutions: n/a.

In patriarchal societies, women are assigned the responsibility of caring for the home while men are responsible for earning income. As a result, many have suggested that **women do not participate in politics simply because they do not have sufficient free time** to do so given all of the many demands placed on their time (Burns et al, 2004). These concerns are exacerbated when women are balancing both labor force participation and domestic duties. For aspiring women leaders, time poverty poses a double challenge: it directly limits their available time to take on political positions, yet women, unlike men, are preferred by voters if they have children. Teele et al (2018) show in a survey experiment with voters in the U.S. that women political leaders are preferred in a hypothetical election when they are married and have children. Their results imply that women are more likely to be elected to leadership roles if they have children and, as a result, women leaders are likely to face a "double bind" where they must balance domestic responsibilities and the demands of a political leadership career. It is the requirement of this balance that leads many women, they argue, to opt out of politics. The promise of these arguments is that women would participate in politics more if they had more time or programs that help to alleviate their domestic responsibilities.

The ET's search of the literature revealed no programs that evaluated the impact of interventions aimed at addressing time poverty on WPPL. This indicates a lack of evidence on what the impact of addressing time poverty would be on WPPL. Given that women, particularly aspiring women leaders, articulate that time poverty constrains their political participation (Burns et al, 2004), future programming and research should evaluate the impact of alleviating this constraint on increasing WPPL, as well as what interventions or strategies would be most effective.

3.5 SOCIAL CAPITAL AND NETWORKS

Problem: Inequalities in social capital and social networks.
Studied solutions: Women's groups and mentorship programs.

Social capital theorists have long attributed variance in political behavior and broader political outcomes to the level and structure of social capital and networks. Putnam (2000) defines social capital as the "features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit." The idea is that whom one knows and whom one is connected to affects what one wants, what one does, and how one does it. Highly patriarchal societies are marked by large gender inequalities in social capital. These gender inequalities manifest at both the micro level, with women having fewer social ties than men, and at the meso level, where men's networks are denser and have higher levels of trust and coordination than women's networks. Inequalities in social capital at all levels have been argued to drive inequalities in political participation.

The most common forms of women's groups for which the link with WPPL has been rigorously studied are groups organized for economic purposes, such as microcredit.[5] Given inequalities in social capital, **the formation of such women's groups has been shown to substantially boost women citizens' political participation** in local politics. While political participation is not the intended goal of these groups nor a reason for which women opt into group participation, the regular convening of such groups has been shown to foster the development of social capital among women (Feigenberg et al, 2010). As mentioned above, Prillaman (2021) shows that participation in such groups increases women's political participation—particularly non-electoral political participation like community meeting attendance and claims-making—in her study of a natural experiment in India that arbitrarily determined which villages had access to the self-help group mobilization program. Importantly, women did not opt into these groups with the intention of gaining access to politics, nor did group organization explicitly target increasing political participation. This suggests that one of the key **values of women's groups lies in the fact that they provide women with social capital, and social capital among women leads to political participation**. While capacity-building and community-driven development programs in some instances led to reductions in women's political participation despite it being a direct aim of the programs, participation in women's groups, even when not directly focused on politics, enabled women's political participation because it provided a mechanism to combat backlash due to restrictive gender norms. **Women's group members deployed their newfound social capital to contest the resistance they face to their political inclusion**. An observational study of women's group participation across five states in India has shown similar effects (Kumar et al, 2019). Most of the evidence on the efficacy of women's groups comes from South Asia, particularly when focusing on political impacts; however, Brody et al (2015) show similar effects of women's group participation on social capital in Africa and Southeast Asia. More evidence is needed to understand whether this social capital translates into political participation in contexts with varying gender norms.

For individual women political leaders, networks have also proven to be a key asset in their political success. Most of the intervention-focused research in this domain has focused on mentorship, one way of building women's networks within hierarchical systems. Many have argued that **having access to mentors, largely men and women with experience in positions of political leadership, is one of the key drivers of women's successful entry into political office** (Fox and Lawless, 2005). This speaks to the dimension of WPPL related to access to positions of political authority. Practitioners have sought to integrate network-building and mentorship opportunities into capacity-building programs by fostering connections between new and aspiring political leaders with more senior women political leaders, but the ET lacks systematic evidence of the efficacy of these interventions. Qualitative evidence from programmatic studies suggests that these multi-faceted capacity-building programs facilitated women's greater success in positions of political leadership, and access to networks and mentors may have been critical in this success (Khan and Hussein, 2014; Howell, 2012; Chikoore and Abu-Hasabo, 2015; Catalla and Kong, 2009; Khan and Zia, 2004). These studies suggest that mentorship may also shape women's agency and power once they already have access to positions of authority. However, the ET found no studies with rigorous and scientific methods of evaluation testing the role of mentorship, or of more general networking among women leaders, for women's success as political leaders. Such evidence is necessary to identify how and when mentorship and networking matter for women's political leadership.[6]

[5] The evidence on political group is strikingly missing and presents an important opportunity for future research.

[6] It is important to acknowledge that women's movements, another key manifestation of women's networking, have been argued to be a key driver in ensuring the representation of women's voices in politics. Across the globe, scholars have noted that policy changes that protect women's equal rights and institutionalize gender justice correlate with mass autonomous movements by women. For more information on women's movements, see the scholarship of Laurel Weldon, Mala Htun, Erica Chenoweth, Aili Tripp, Sonia Alvarez, and Raka Ray. Further research should consider ways that external intervention can help to catalyze and

Social capital among women appears to be one of the most critical resources for women in navigating political participation and leadership. The value of social capital appears to be threefold. First, through connections to women with varied backgrounds, women with more social capital are likely to have more information about the political process and how to successfully engage as participants and leaders. Second, social capital facilitates women's collective action, which can help women to gain access to historically exclusionary public spaces. Third, social capital enables women to resist conservative social norms that prevent women from stepping into public spaces. Yet, the evidence on the value of social capital is largely derived from the experiences of women's groups. A promising area for testing and evidence is in identifying a range of interventions and programs that directly seek to augment women's social capital and subsequent political participation and leadership.

3.6 OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

While gendered inequalities in individual resources are often cited as key driving factors in inequalities in WPPL, few programs or interventions, outside of capacity-building programs, used to directly address these constraints have been rigorously tested. There remain many domains in which further testing and evidence are needed. Based on this evidence review, the ET has identified six key questions that should yield valuable evidence and improved programming.

- Under what conditions do capacity-building programs work to improve women's political leadership? What additional program interventions are needed alongside capacity-building in order for these interventions to have the desired outcome of increased WPPL?
- What components, including specific political skills and capacities, of capacity-building programs are more or less successful in increasing WPPL?
- In what ways should individual resource programs be designed to additionally address restrictive gender norms or with what additional programs or interventions should such programs be paired to ensure success at increasing women's political participation?
- How can women's groups and movements be externally supported and institutionalized so that they enable not only women's political participation but also the representation of women's particular interests?
- Other than through women's groups, how can social capital among women, particularly women leaders, be fostered and deployed for WPPL?
- How can the double bind of balancing domestic duties and a political career be alleviated for women political leaders and does this enable greater success and upward mobility in their careers?

4. CONSTRAINTS TO WPPL: SOCIAL AND CULTURAL NORMS

4.1 FRAMEWORK: FROM THE PERSONAL TO THE COMMUNITY

Patriarchy and gender-biased social norms have been shown to shape and constrain women's political behavior. The literature on the impact of social norms on women's status in society has focused on the role of social norms, attitudes, and beliefs in perpetuating women's relegation to the private and domestic spheres and the elevation and naturalization of men as public sphere actors and leaders. These theories argue that women and men are socialized into different gender roles that establish gendered divisions of labor and patterns of resource control, including allocating attributes associated with power and the

support these movements, while respecting grassroots social movements, to contribute to an understanding of what works for WPPL.

domain of politics to men. Under patriarchal gender roles, women are disproportionately expected to care for children and manage household responsibilities, even when they also work outside the home. The woman's space is seen as the house, whereas men have the freedom to engage in community institutions. These gender roles become reinforced and expected yielding patriarchal norms, where coercion and sanctioning are deployed to maintain women's subordinate position in society. At the core of this argument is that WPPL is limited by socialization and norm enforcement. From this perspective, patriarchy is seen as inhibiting women's political participation through the way that it structures women's ability to participate in public life, including politics.

In this review of what has been studied to produce evidence, the ET has identified three evidence-based domains where norm-based constraints operate: through how they shape individual attitudes and beliefs, through how they structure household relations, and through the nature of community norms and cultural institutions. In each domain, the team highlights the specific manifestations of norms that may shape an individual woman's ability to participate in politics, including aspirations and efficacy, stereotypes about women's leadership, autonomy from the household, men's attitudes, community norms, and collective efficacy in community institutions. Programs aimed at addressing norm-based constraints on WPPL must evaluate at which level they are targeting change and how that will interact with the other domains in which norms operate to constrain behavior. Each body of evidence is summarized in turn.

4.2. INDIVIDUAL ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS

4.2.1. BUILDING ASPIRATIONS AND SELF-EFFICACY

Problem: Low self-efficacy (lack of confidence) and limited political aspirations.
Studied solutions: Role models.

For individual women, the internalization of patriarchal norms (norms of male dominance) has been shown to be one factor that leads to **low beliefs of self-efficacy in political domains and limited aspirations around political participation**. In some instances, women's low levels of political participation and leadership become a self-reinforcing phenomenon as women internalize limitations to their political efficacy and respond through limited aspirations to seek political office or take on political roles.

However, research from around the globe has shown that **as women gain more and more representation in political office, the aspirations of other women grow**. This work highlights the usefulness of **role models** in increasing women's aspirations and beliefs of self-efficacy in highly patriarchal contexts where women have historically been absent from public leadership. Observing role models of women acting as political leaders and actively engaging in political participation has been shown to increase women's political aspirations through two key mechanisms. First, role models provide symbolic representation. As Barnes and Burchard (2013) describe, "descriptive representation actuates symbolic representation by sending a signal to the so-called 'described' that the political arena represents them and is receptive to their part." Additionally, role models can signal that norms of women's political exclusion have shifted and that it is more acceptable for women to participate in historically non-traditional roles. By seeing women succeed in political spaces, female citizens may update their beliefs about the acceptability and efficacy of women's political participation.

The success of women in electoral domains has been shown to have important spillover effects on young girls' political aspirations. Analyzing a sample of 23 countries, largely concentrated in Europe, Wolbrecht and Cambell (2007) show that the share of women in the lower house of the legislature is positively correlated with young women's aspirations and political discussion and with adult women's levels of political participation. Beaman et al (2012) leverage the randomized reservation of

women to local political office in India to show that the general aspirations of young girls were 32 percent higher with a female political leader for two consecutive electoral cycles. Studying public opinion data from 40 countries, Alexander and Jalazi (2020) show that living in a country with a female executive is correlated with greater political interest, albeit for both women and men.

Role models not only serve to increase women's psychological motivations to participate in politics but have been shown to increase women's *actual* political participation and leadership, even in the continued face of structural barriers. Evidence leveraging the randomized imposition of gender reservations in municipal elections in Mumbai, India shows that after being elected under reservations, women often stay in political office even after the reservation has been removed (Bhavnani, 2009). Similar patterns attain for state legislative assembly members in India (Bhalotra, Clots-Figueras, and Iyer, 2018). More recent work suggests that there is even potential for women's upward electoral progression following their initial election through a reserved seat (Goyal, 2020; Karekurve-Ramachandra, 2021). These patterns, which have been largely studied in the Indian context, are replicated in Lesotho, where Clayton and Tang (2018) show that the removal of reservations for women in local politics in Lesotho did lead to more frequent female electoral success—see Gilardi (2015) for similar effects in Switzerland. Importantly, they document that this effect emerged largely because of the success of women incumbents and not because of the new entry of female candidates, suggesting that there may be limitations to the role model effects absent institutional protections for women's political leadership. The prevalence of studies across the globe with similar results provides strong evidence in support of the potential transformational impacts of role models. Further research on the long-term consequences of role models, including whether role models can be coopted into existing gender systems, is needed.

There is additional evidence that women's electoral representation begets the political participation of female citizens, with several studies reporting increases in women's political participation following the election of a female leader in local government (Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004; Barnes and Burchard, 2013). However, these studies do not disentangle whether such an effect is because of reactions to symbolic representation or changes in beliefs over self-efficacy and gender norms. Atkeson (2003) attempted to differentiate these mechanisms in the U.S. context by evaluating whether the positive effect on women's political participation from women's political candidacy is conditioned by the competitiveness of the electoral race. The idea was that in more competitive races, women were more likely to be viewed as viable candidates, so women's electoral contestation was not just seeing a woman run for office, but seeing other people want a woman in office. She found that increases in women's political participation and beliefs of self-efficacy were only evident when the female role model was a viable political candidate. This suggests that **descriptive representation alone may not be sufficient to raise women's political participation unless it is coupled with the belief that others see women's political participation as legitimate**. More evidence around ways to strengthen perceptions of existing women leaders may further help to erode discriminatory social norms and internalized attitudes.

It is important to caution, however, that role models signal how an initial success can create further successes down the road, without specifically highlighting how initial victories can be won. The positive effect of role models on women's subsequent political participation, however, may be **conditional on the state of democracy and the depth of patriarchal norms**. Studying mostly newer democracies in East and Southeast Asia, Liu (2018) analyzes large public opinion surveys and finds a negative correlation between women's representation in the national Parliament and citizens' political discussion and political participation. She suggests that these inverse results may be the result of a backlash and self-censorship effect on women's political representation in the region.

4.2.2. CHANGING STEREOTYPES ABOUT WOMEN'S POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

Problem: Biased beliefs that women cannot or should not participate in politics.

Studied solutions: Signals from social referents, exposure to female leaders, corrections to misperceived beliefs, school-based trainings on gender equality, and radio programs on gender equality.

A vast body of evidence evaluates whether voters are biased against women in positions of political leadership. Most studies do so through candidate choice survey experiments that ask a sample of people to evaluate a series of hypothetical candidate profiles, where gender is among the randomly varied attributes, and select their preferred candidate. The results of these studies largely show that voters are not systematically biased against women in Brazil (Aguilar et al, 2015) and Malawi (Clayton et al, 2019), as well as in a meta-analysis of candidate choice experiments (Schwarz and Coppock, 2020).

Women, however, are only well received if they abide by normative stereotypes. Clayton et al (2019) show that women in Malawi are preferred only if they have young children. Blackman and Jackson (2021) show in a survey experiment in Tunisia that there exists a bias against female candidates for voters with strong patriarchal attitudes. Further, they show that women are less likely to be chosen in a hypothetical electoral contest if they emphasize women's issues, as compared to women who emphasize issues of national security. More conservative voters in the U.S. punished hypothetical female candidates for being politically ambitious (Saha and Weeks, 2020). **The conditions and constraints on women's electoral success have been shown to limit women's aspirations toward political leadership**. Kanthak and Woon (2015) leverage a laboratory experiment in the U.S. to show that, while equally likely to emerge as candidates when unconstrained, women are less likely to contest political office if they face an electoral contest. They argue that "even if potential candidates have the same qualifications, harbor the same ambitions, face the same incentives, and confront the same unbiased voters and electoral institutions—in short, encounter identical decision problems—the fact that representatives are chosen by electoral means is enough to dissuade women from putting themselves forward as candidates…Campaigns are at once too costly and too noisy affairs. Women's entry into the candidate pool increases only if we simultaneously guarantee that campaigns are completely truthful and eliminate the private costs of running for office" (Kanthak and Woon, 2015, pg. 596).

An important strand of evidence highlights the **importance of social referents signaling the acceptability of WPPL** for eroding biased beliefs about women in politics. First, religion appears to play an important role in mediating biases against women in politics (Benstead et al, 2015; Kao and Benstead, 2019). Masoud, Jamal, and Nugent (2016) show that hypothetical female candidates were more likely to be selected for political office in Egypt if a religious leader endorsed women's leadership.

More recently, attention has been placed on misperceptions of commonly held beliefs. The idea is that people may uphold and abide by patriarchal norms not because they have internalized these beliefs but because they believe that others have internalized these beliefs and will sanction violations of the norms. Striking evidence from Saudi Arabia showed that **people perceived members of their community to be substantially more biased against women's labor force participation than they actually are** (Bursztyn et al, 2020). **Correcting these beliefs led to greater labor force participation among women**: the research team then provided a random set of people with the true population rates of beliefs in support of women's labor force participation and found that, in response, women entered the labor force at higher rates. In a similar study on perceptions of attitudes around women's voting in Pakistan, Gulzar et al (2020) show a similar misperception around bias against women's voting. While it has not been studied explicitly, this suggests that there may be value in identifying and correcting such misperceptions around women's political participation.

Observing women serving in positions of political leadership has, in some circumstances, led to people around the globe positively updating their beliefs about women's capacity for political success (Alexander, 2012, Beaman et al, 2008). In India, leveraging the random reservation for women in local office, Beaman et al (2008) show that people in villages with a female political leader were

more likely to believe that women can be effective politicians and showed less bias toward women's performance in the public sphere, as measured by an implicit association test. However, Clayton (2018) replicated this study in Lesotho and found that people living in areas with female quota politicians had no less biased beliefs about women's suitability for politics than those in areas without gender quotas. Clayton (2015, 2018) suggests that the differences between Lesotho and India may be for two reasons: First, she studies reactions in Lesotho shortly after the implementation of quotas, whereas the studies in India observe reactions after more than a decade of quota implementation. This suggests that there may be differences in short- and long-term updating to observing women in leadership positions. Second, she suggests that there was a negative reaction to quota adoption in Lesotho by citizens, many of whom felt they did not have a voice in the policy adoption. This, as Clayton suggests, may have led to more negative updating to female leaders.

A more recent evidence base has focused on how biased beliefs about women's capabilities can be intentionally eroded, particularly for young populations. Delivering **intensive training on gender equality to adolescent youth** has proven successful in reducing biased beliefs for both young girls and boys. In a randomized experiment with 314 secondary schools in India, Dhar et al (2022) evaluate the efficacy of a gender equality educational program—which provided roughly 27 hours over two years of education on both the human rights and pragmatic values of women's equality in public spaces—on student's support of gender equality. They find that this program shifted attitudes for both young girls and boys, converting roughly 16 percent of regressive attitudes. Importantly, they show that these changes in attitudes remain two years after the completion of the program.

Another innovation aimed at shifting individual beliefs about the role of women in politics is the use of **radio programming** and the inclusion of programs on women's leadership. Qualitative programmatic evaluations in Burundi[7] and Indonesia[8] have shown that radio programs can lead listeners to positively update their beliefs about WPPL (Basse, 2020; Howell, 2012). The evaluation in Burundi, however, drew on qualitative evidence to suggest that targeting men and youth to override traditional positive associations of masculinity may be most efficacious. While not focused on political participation or leadership, a randomized evaluation of a video program in Ethiopia was shown to have positive outcomes on psychological beliefs (Bernard et al, 2014). More evidence on the precise effects of such radio programs is needed to determine whether this is a useful intervention to shift attitudes around WPPL.

4.2.3. CHALLENGES AND OPEN QUESTIONS

What emerges from the available evidence is that both aspirations to enter the political arena and norms around the suitability of women's political participation are important factors for the levels of WPPL. The evidence on both, however, largely centers on the importance of role models, which is only one way to shift women's individual attitudes and beliefs toward political participation and leadership and one that has largely affected only women. Promising new research has demonstrated the capacity to shift men's attitudes by changing their beliefs about other men's attitudes. Additionally, **the focus on role models leaves a gap in the understanding of how to raise self-efficacy and aspirations from the bottom up for both men and women**. Recent evidence has shown **the value of school-based trainings in shaping attitudes about women's political participation**. Studies of this type focused on self-efficacy and aspirations could help to fill the gap in understanding.

[7] Search for Common Ground's "Support Women Leaders of Today and Tomorrow to Advance Peace in Burundi" project, financed by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund.

[8] Search for Common Ground's "Transformational Women's Leadership Project in Indonesia," financed by the US State Department.

The evidence on changing beliefs about women's capacity for political engagement suggests that such changes will happen naturally only when citizens perceive that the beliefs of others have changed or when they themselves observe challenges to those beliefs. More recently, there has been a growing focus on how to intentionally change attitudes and beliefs, particularly at critical ages. More evidence and testing are needed in refining the optimal ways to target information and interventions to best convert regressive attitudes and erode gender-biased social norms.

4.3. HOUSEHOLD CONSTRAINTS

4.3.1. INCREASING WOMEN'S AUTONOMY FROM THE HOUSEHOLD

Problem: Women's limited autonomy from the household.
Studied solutions: Vote mobilization campaigns focused on the value of women's participation, delayed marriage, and women's groups.

The household is a constraining force in women's lives, with **some suggesting that women's autonomy from the household, or the ability to act and exert agency independent of the household, is the most important driver of their political participation**, particularly in localities with strong patriarchal norms (Chhibber, 2002; Prillaman, 2021). It is argued that ties to the household can inhibit WPPL in two ways. First, if households have a shared set of political preferences, then it may be cost-effective for the household to form a political division of labor. Since patriarchal norms typically allocate the household as the domain of women and public engagement as the domain of men, women will often abstain from political participation under a household political division of labor. Given that political participation is costlier for women than men due to time and resource poverty and social norms, women may defer political representation to the men in their households. Second, households are the locus of patriarchal norms and so largely male heads of the household may have incentives to exert dominance in household spaces, such as by curtailing women's mobility and enforcing women's abstinence from political participation.

Studying household political decision-making in Pakistan, Khan (2021) ran a lab-in-the-field experiment to evaluate whether men and women from the same household have the same political preferences. She found that preferences within households were significantly different; however, when told that only one spouse's preferences can be shared with local political leaders, women were much more likely to share their spouse's preferences than men (see also Afzal et al, 2017). In fact, many women, particularly those with the most divergent preferences, were willing to turn down a monetary incentive to share their own preferences. The results from this study importantly reveal that **women defer political participation and authority to the men in the households**, even when doing so is at the cost of the representation of their personal interests. Prillaman (2022b) shows, in a descriptive study of household political decision-making, that there are many reasons underlying this deference to male authority, including the internalization of norms of male dominance and fears of verbal and violent sanctioning by male family and community members, both of which lead to limits on women's political agency.

How can women gain autonomy from the household? A set of studies in Pakistan demonstrated that **vote mobilization campaigns that target women and provide information on the value of women's political participation can importantly increase women's voting**. In the first of these studies, Giné and Mansuri (2018) randomized a voter mobilization campaign for women in rural Pakistan. They found that women who were directly mobilized to vote were 11 percent more likely to vote than women in villages that did not receive the voter mobilization campaign. Importantly, they show that the neighbors of women mobilized to vote were also substantially more likely to vote. This suggests **that just observing increases in other women's voting behavior can increase women's voting**. Following up on this study with another randomized mobilization campaign in urban Pakistan, Cheema et al (2021)

show that **voter mobilization campaigns that integrate direct appeals to women are most effective when delivered to both men and women in the household**. In fact, they show similar effects on women's political participation when only men are told about the value of women's voting. These results demonstrated that **incentivizing men's support of WPPL and shifting their attitudes can boost WPPL, but does not identify mechanisms through which women break free from male control over their political behavior**.

A recent study by Carpena and Jensenuis (2021) shows a correlation between **delaying women's marriage and their subsequent political participation**, particularly if the delay corresponds with greater educational attainment. Studying a large public opinion survey in India, and leveraging the age of menarche as an instrument for the age of marriage, they show that the average age of marriage for women in India is 18; however, women who got married after the age of 21 were more than 25 percent more likely to participate in politics. They find that these effects are concentrated in women who had received at least some schooling, with no effects for those women who had never attended school, suggesting that higher educational attainment may be an important channel of impact. They find that age of marriage does not affect women's employment, physical mobility, or household decision-making power.

A final approach to expanding women's autonomy in the household has focused on the **creation of women's groups**. While not intended to shift WPPL, **microcredit groups** have been shown to substantially increase women's political participation (Brody et al, 2015; Kumar et al, 2019; Prillaman, 2021; Javed et al, 2022). Leveraging a natural experiment in the rollout of self-help groups, a form of microcredit group in India, Prillaman (2021) demonstrates that women who had participated in these groups for several years were twice as likely to participate in everyday forms of politics as compared to women who did not have access to these groups. These effects doubled (meaning women were four times as likely as those not in groups) if self-help groups also received a **gender consciousness-raising program** (Prillaman, 2022). In both instances, women gained access to political spaces through group-based collective action, which enabled them to contest backlash against their violation of patriarchal norms.

4.3.2. SHIFTING THE ATTITUDES OF GATEKEEPERS

Problem: Male sanctioning and gatekeeping of women's political participation.
Studied solutions: Vote mobilization campaigns focused on the value of women's participation, and gender sensitization discussion groups.

Should men be targeted to increase WPPL? The results from the Cheema et al (2021) study of a voter mobilization campaign in Pakistan described above suggest that **men serve as gatekeepers to women's political participation and are, in fact**, **a critical node for interventions aimed at increasing WPPL**. A distinct literature looks at the role of daughters in reshaping fathers' attitudes toward women's political roles. This literature demonstrates a large effect of having daughters on male politicians' support for gender-equalizing reforms and policies, though the evidence is largely drawn from advanced democracies (Washington, 2008; Oswald and Powdthavee, 2010; Shafer and Malhotra, 2011; Glynn and Sen, 2015; Sharrow et al, 2018) and no such effect was found in a similar study in South Africa (Clayton, de Kadt, and Dumas, 2019). This further suggests that incentivizing male support for WPPL, such as through empathy-building with men, may help shift regressive gender norms and improve WPPL.

In a more explicit attempt to understand whether the attitudes and beliefs of male gatekeepers can be changed, Pierotti, Lake, and Lewis (2018) evaluated a **gender sensitization and intimate partner violence prevention program for men** in eastern DRC. The program entailed discussion groups that were intended to challenge norms of intra-household decision-making and authority as well as intimate partner violence. The researchers conducted a series of interviews before and after the program implementation and an ethnography during implementation and found that while men were willing to take

on some of the tasks typically allocated to women, they resisted challenges to their authority in the household and community. Their results highlight the depth of challenges in shifting gender systems and **the inability of direct, discussion-based interventions targeted at men in reshaping household power structures**.

The ET did not find any additional studies that met the standards of evidence that directly evaluated the link between programs targeting men and WPPL; further research in this domain would be substantially warranted.

4.3.3. CHALLENGES AND OPEN QUESTIONS

Households appear to be a key constraining institution for WPPL. It is important to highlight that most of the evidence for this derives from South Asia, where patriarchal norms strictly constrain women's roles outside of the household and where many global indicators of gender inequality are particularly high. More research is needed from other contexts on the role of the household/norms in shaping women's political behavior. Furthermore, while there is evidence that men serve as gatekeepers for WPPL, the ET lacks a strong evidence base of the mechanisms to shift men's attitudes toward women's political inclusion utilizing rigorous evaluation methodologies. The ET further discusses how the effects of gatekeeping may be further amplified in political organizations, such as parties, even when women are able to navigate these challenges at home.

4.4. COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL NORMS

4.4.1. CHANGING CULTURAL NORMS AWAY FROM PATRIARCHY

Problem: Patriarchal cultural norms and patrilineage.
Studied solutions: Changing inheritance laws.

Patriarchal cultural norms and patrilineage have been argued to be one of the most deeply rooted drivers of women's subordination, with direct and indirect consequences for politics broadly (Hudson et al, 2015; Hudson et al, 2020). Patrilineage in particular has been shown to inhibit women's political participation through the way that it structures both access to resources and coordination around political participation. Studying variation in matrilineal and patrilineal communities in northeast India, Brulé and Gaikwad (2021) show that **women's political participation is significantly higher in communities where inheritance is passed through women**. They argue that this is rooted in the way that norms of matrilineality shape economic resources. It is this inequality in resources that drives political behavior. While shifting norms of patrilineality is difficult, this study suggests that finding ways to structure formal and informal institutions so that women have control over financial assets and inheritance is likely to improve WPPL in the long run.

Similarly studying differences between patrilineal and matrilineal communities, this time in sub-Saharan Africa, Robinson and Gottlieb (2019) alternatively argue that cultural norms shape political behavior by setting expectations over whose behavior will be socially accepted. They suggest that cultural norms create community-based coordination around how identity, namely gender, will translate into political behavior. Empirically, they document how it is not land ownership per se but rules of land inheritance that drive women's political participation. Even women who have greater economic resources will be unlikely to participate in politics when there is a norm against doing so. Cross-national studies have also shown a larger correlation between cultural norms and the gender gap in political participation than resources (Norris and Inglehart, 2003). These studies highlight a deeper challenge of eroding expectations of women's absence from politics (or men's dominance in politics).

An implication of this body of research is that changes to inheritance laws may foster norm change and subsequently WPPL. However, it is important to highlight that such legal changes may have unintended consequences that in fact exacerbate gender inequalities. Bhalotra et al (2020) find that son preference increased in India following the implementation of equal inheritance rights, highlighting the complexity of norm change. At a minimum, this work suggests that it is important to consider the wider normative environment when designing programs around WPPL.

4.4.2. INCREASING WOMEN'S EFFICACY AND VOICE IN COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS

Problem: Low efficacy and representation of women's voices in political institutions.
Studied solutions: Women's groups and women's embeddedness in community activities.

Even once women are able to participate in political spaces, they often face substantial barriers to being heard and having their needs met. These barriers are likely to inhibit women's participation in the first place, as women may see little benefit in engaging in politics if it is unlikely to respond to their demands, in addition to the violent and non-violent sanctions they may face for political participation. For example, Parthasarathy et al (2019) recorded and transcribed 290 village community meetings in rural South India, an area of India where gender norms have historically been relatively more progressive. What they found revealed the depth of gender inequality in community institutions: women were less likely to speak, less likely to set the political agenda, and less likely to receive a response from local politicians.

Here, as well, **women's groups have proven effective at helping women gain access to and representation in community institutions**. In a follow-up paper, Palaniswamy et al (2019) study the efficacy of the Pudhu-Vaazhvu Project, a program that mobilized women into self-help groups and then developed group infrastructure for women's speech in community meetings. They find that villages with the Pudhu Vaazhvu Project, for which implementation was not random, had higher rates of women's participation and speech in the community meetings. Prillaman (2021) echoes these findings in her study of self-help groups in north India, as does Sanyal (2009) in her qualitative study of self-help groups in West Bengal. These group-mobilization programs mirror in effect that of women's movements more broadly, which has proven to be one of the most effective strategies for contesting patriarchal structures and norms (see Htun and Weldon, 2012 and Alvarez, 1990).

At the elite level, **women political leaders, even after reaching office, are less likely to be seen or treated as politically important or influential**. Analyzing survey data from the Philippines, Cruz and Tolentino (2020) show that female political representatives were less likely to be seen by citizens as having political influence than male political representatives. And, unlike for men, **connections and wealth did not correlate with women's perceived political influence**. Instead, women who were more embedded in the community and more involved in community activities, in ways that aligned with norms expecting women's lives to center around social and familial responsibilities, were more likely to be perceived as politically influential. For example, women were expected to be more involved in bayanihan, which loosely translates to community volunteering strongly engrained in Philippine culture, in line with norms around caretaking by women. This provides further evidence that **women's ability to successfully navigate political institutions relies on to what extent they align with the dominant patriarchal norms**.

4.4.3. CHALLENGES AND OPEN QUESTIONS

Norm-based interventions typically focus on shifting individuals' attitudes and beliefs in the hopes that with enough change, community (organizational) norms will also shift. These studies highlight the role of institutions and key actors in perpetuating gender-biased norms and potentially inhibiting the ability of individually targeted interventions in improving norms around women in politics. Studies have considered

how to change the beliefs and attitudes of key actors in communities. Future evidence-building may want to determine how to focus norm-based interventions on key community gatekeepers, as opposed to only women, to maximize women's political efficacy, voice, and representations. Additionally, a fruitful path for evidence-building would think about how to deepen connections between existing women's groups and influential political actors to potentially enable simultaneous bottom-up and top-down norm change.

4.4.4. BACKLASH AND RESISTANCE TO WPPL

The process of changing norms of patriarchal power structures will inevitably entail backlash and resistance from those with power. Evidence abounds of backlash to gains in WPPL, and more explicitly to shifts in general attitudes around the value of women's political inclusion. This backlash targets women in positions of political authority and female citizens seeking greater access to the state. Importantly, **backlash may lead some women to refrain from political participation.** Evaluating program impacts over the long term is critical to understanding the extent of backlash and the efficacy of programs in truly generating sustainable change.

Women leaders across the globe experience much higher rates of violence and social sanctioning than their male counterparts (see for example Krook, 2018; Håkansson, 2021, and Bjarnegård et al, 2022)**.** In Lesotho, Clayton et al (2019) show that women politicians experience substantial negative campaigning. Brulé (2020) documents backlash to women in quota seats in rural India after they exert political authority. Analyzing a survey experiment conducted in the U.S., Saha and Weeks (2020) find that female political candidates are punished for being ambitious in hypothetical elections. Few interventions have been evaluated which aim to help women protect themselves and evade such violence. More programming and evaluation are needed in this domain.

For female citizens, **training programs aimed at women's empowerment in particular have been shown to increase social sanctioning and violence against women**. Gottlieb (2016) studies the randomized implementation of a civic education program in Mali that included both men and women. Contrary to expectations, she finds that **participation in this civic education program reduced women's political participation**. Leveraging qualitative interviews to understand the reason for this contradictory effect, she highlights how women self-censored their political behavior after participating in the program precisely because men observed them engaging in behaviors that violated social norms. Similarly, Bulte and Lensink (2019) find that women were **more likely to experience intimate partner violence after participating in a gender and entrepreneurship training program**. Prillaman (2022) also shows that women's group members who received a gender consciousness-raising program were more likely to experience community harassment. The results from these studies critically highlight the importance of program design and ensuring that the implementation of programs aimed at women's political participation do not, in fact, exacerbate these concerns.

Interventions aimed at WPPL must provide tools for women to navigate and stand against the inevitable backlash. Historically, most evaluations have failed to take a sufficiently long time horizon to measure and evaluate whether program participation had unintended negative consequences. Many studies also fail to measure or identify sources of backlash. As a result, the scale, scope, and sources of backlash remain unknown. Even more, few programs integrate mechanisms to not only protect women from backlash but provide them with the tools to contest and stand against such resistance. The arena is wide open for more programming and evidence on how to protect women from resistance to WPPL.

4.5. OPPORTUNITIES AND OPEN QUESTIONS

Building on the existing evidence base around the normative constraints to WPPL, the ET has identified four key questions that may yield valuable evidence and improved programming:

1. How can linkages between women political leaders and female citizens be strengthened to ensure a more direct line of support and a stronger coalition in favor of WPPL?
2. Who are the key gatekeepers outside of the household to WPPL and how can they be best targeted to accept and enable women's political inclusion?
3. Who are the key social referents establishing and upholding gender-biased attitudes and do interventions targeted at these influential people lead to faster-paced normative change?
4. What are the most effective strategies to prevent and combat backlash and resistance to WPPL?

5. CONSTRAINTS TO WPPL: INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

5.1 FRAMEWORK ON INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS: MACRO-INSTITUTIONS AS GUARANTEEING AND/OR SUPPORTING WPPL

Institutional accounts of political behavior suggest that political institutions and organizations set the rules for how norms and inequalities of male dominance are translated into political power. Moving beyond the individual and the community as the units of analysis, institutional determinants focus instead on organizational and super-structures that create conditions for the continued dearth of women's leadership in politics, while also opening space for more large-scale transformation of WPPL.

There are two sets of problems in how to design and test institutional solutions to improving WPPL. First, for more macro solutions, the design and implementation of solutions become a challenge as it is now in the realm of system-wide changes. Second, the actual study of legal and institutional factors is empirically hard because establishing a good counterfactual scenario is difficult with these solutions. As a result, the evidence on the efficacy of factors under the broad umbrella of institutions is limited; it arises from a few specific cases where data and institutional arrangements are available. A key implication for policy is that future work in this domain should pay particular attention to collecting robust evidence on the efficacy of solutions deployed.

5.2 IMPROVING REPRESENTATION IN POLITICAL PARTIES: ACTIONS BY SENIOR LEADERSHIP

Problem: Underrepresentation of women in political party positions.
Studied solutions: Recruitment by party elites.

Political parties are critical to the functioning of modern democracies—they not only represent the preferences of citizens in government action but they also are increasingly the shapers of political preferences and actions. Despite this importance, women remain underrepresented in party infrastructure around the world. This creates a multitude of problems that both upset the party's own election prospects while also weakening representation overall. For the former, parties face an increasing challenge of mobilizing women without many women in their ranks. For the latter, parties are unable to properly aggregate the preferences of all citizens without women in important positions. Together, the two hurt the bottom line of both parties in terms of votes, and voters in terms of representation.

While political parties have long been the object of study in the social sciences, **there is relatively limited intervention-focused research on political parties because of the hurdle researchers face in accessing these organizations**. This is why researchers often refer to political parties as a "black box" of research (Green, Ha, and Bullock, 2010; Wantchekon, 2003; Gulzar, Hai, and Paudel, 2021). Consequently, there is a dearth of high-quality evidence on the success of interventions to improve WPPL in political parties.

A few scholars, particularly those working in the U.S., have started examining ways in which the gender gap in political party positions can be addressed. The focus of this research tends to be on political candidates—those who run for political office via the party's nomination.

Fox and Lawless (2010) designed one of the earlier studies to demonstrate that there exists a gap in how political parties recruit women for candidacy positions. Data from the Citizen Political Ambition Panel Study with 2,000 potential candidates in the U.S. show that male potential political candidates were more likely to be approached by political parties than women. One interpretation of this discrepancy is that party leaders are rational and know that women are likely to not respond to political recruitment anyway and therefore they exert less effort to recruit them. There is a spate of new evidence that runs contrary to this assertion. This quantitative evidence also aligns with more qualitative accounts from large-scale programs that document improvements in women's local political participation as candidates and leaders—see Beardon and Otero (2013) for evidence from Armenia, Guatemala, Pakistan, and Tanzania among others.

Karpowitz et al (2017) study internal promotions within the Republican Party in the U.S.—the election of women as delegates to a statewide nominating convention. Local party precinct chairs were randomly assigned to receive one of four letters printed on the party's letterhead and signed by the state party chair (a senior party leader). In the control group, the leader was encouraged to foster a good environment at the caucus. In group 2, the local leader was made aware of the gender gap and encouraged to reach out to women to run for a position. In group 3, the local leader was instructed to read a paragraph about gender disparity at the caucus. In group 4, both treatments from groups 2 and 3 were given out. The idea was that group 2 would spur recruitment from above while group 3 would encourage a push from below. The authors find that encouraging both supply and demand (group 4) was the most efficacious in electing women. The authors conclude that "Active party recruitment of female candidates combined with credible party rhetoric encouraging voters to vote for women can have an important impact on women's representation."

Crowder-Meyer (2013), however, cautions against deploying party recruitment without special attention to pre-existing gender differences, arguing that party leaders who use a traditional, insular recruitment network focused on people already active within the party are less likely to recruit female candidates. Crowder-Meyer argues that women are more often recruited by parties that seek candidates from broader networks of groups, occupations, and other contacts. In a similar vein, Preece et al (2016) test a party recruitment technique in the U.S.: 5,510 male and 5,506 female active Republican Party members were invited to attend a free candidate training seminar with the idea that capturing interest in this seminar is a stepping stone for eventual political candidacy. They find that republican women were half as likely to respond to an invitation for a free candidate training seminar as men. Importantly, outreach by the party increased men's self-reported political ambition significantly more than women's, thereby widening the gender gap in the innate desire to run for office.

These findings suggest that party recruitment practices, absent a gender-conscious design, may not be successful in addressing women's underrepresentation as political candidates. Once there are women in the party already, the path to achieving more gender equality gets easier. Goyal (2020) makes the case that female representation has mobilization effects. Examining the gender of political workers in Delhi, Goyal shows that in places where races were mandated to be women-only (via political quotas), female campaign workers are more likely to be recruited. This has an improved downstream effect on women being contacted during door-to-door campaigns.

Gulzar et al (2022) studied a large-scale field experiment conducted by the Aam Aadmi Party in Jharkhand, India. The experiment aimed to boost party recruitment of rank-and-file members by randomizing various messages on pamphlets distributed to tens of thousands of ordinary voters. The control gender condition

depicted the story of existing male party members and highlighted what they have achieved by being associated with the party. In the treatment condition, the story of existing women party members was highlighted in a similar manner to their male counterparts. The authors find that the female-branded pamphlets yielded more new party members overall and that these new members were more likely to be women, belong to marginalized populations, and carry higher skills.

Together, the two studies from India deviate from previous work in bringing evidence from a developing country context, while also expanding the study of gendered recruitment at the base of party operations. It remains to be seen if expanding the supply of women at the base will yield more women leaders, including candidates, in the future.

5.3 LEGAL PROTECTIONS

5.3.1 QUOTAS—INCLUSION OF WOMEN AS REPRESENTATIVES AND LIMITATIONS

Problem: Underrepresentation of women as candidates.
Studied solutions: Mandated representation.

By far the largest base of evidence on the institutional development of WPPL comes from the mandated representation of women in politics: gender quotas. The bulk of evidence here is positive and shows how the status quo is actively inhibiting qualified women from entering politics and how this hurts the quality of representation and leadership.

Mandated representation can help break entrenched power structures and enable qualified women to rise in office. Besley et al (2017) establish this convincingly in Sweden, which many consider to already have tremendous gender parity. Using data on the entire Swedish population to establish measures of political competence in seven parties, 290 municipalities, and 10 elections, the paper examines the impact of quotas on women: the law, called a "zipper quota," mandated that men and women be listed one by one on party candidate lists. Contrary to traditional concerns that these quotas will harm the quality of elected representatives, the authors show that the quota actually raised the competence of politicians by paving the way for mediocre male leaders to resign. Experiences such as those reported from programming in Armenia suggest that advocacy work can lead to the adoption of quotas for women (UNDP Armenia, 2021).

Enabling women to get elected improves democratic outcomes. Parthasarathy et al (2019) show that when women are elected via quotas, the voices of women in India are more likely to be heard in village meetings. Similarly, Karpowitz, Mendelberg, and Shaker (2012) show that the more women are represented in deliberative spaces, the greater the representation of their interests. Ban and Rao (2008) also show that, unlike concerns that quotas will reduce the quality of representation in general, women elected on quotas in southern India are equally competent and perform as well as men elected via open races.

It is worth noting, however, **that high-quality evidence on quotas is available from only a few countries and it is unclear if quotas can be powerful in improving democratic outcomes in all settings**. Beath et al (2013) study an experiment carried out in 500 villages in Afghanistan that randomized mandated gender-balanced village development committees, equal participation of men and women in the election of the committees, and the prioritization of at least one project demanded by women. The two-year program increased women's participation in village life but had no impact on the deeply entrenched cultural dimensions of decision-making within the household or on attitudes toward women's role in society. In a related study, a large-scale development program in the DRC was examined by van der Windt et al (2018), who studied the effects of mandated representation in which 75 clusters

were randomly assigned to a gender parity treatment where the village development committees had a 50 percent gender quota while control villages got to choose the gender composition of committees. Unlike the previous paper, which relied on direct questions and focus groups to measure women's empowerment, this study examined how a grant that was given to the committee after the experiment was spent in the absence of conditions or oversight. The authors found no evidence that the quotas affected project choice, the role of women in the community, or attitudes toward women. This evidence suggests that political quotas are not a panacea for the underlying patriarchal problems in communities.

As with the development of WPPL in political parties, studies also show positive downstream effects of mandating women's representation on broadening the pool of women in subsequent elections. Bhavnani (2009) finds that women are five times more likely to win if their constituency was previously reserved, perhaps because quotas enable women to win office and circumvent biased candidate selection within parties—see also O'Brien and Rickne (2016) for evidence from Sweden and Karekurve-Ramachandra (2021) for positive effects on upward mobility in India.

Studies also examine the effect of quotas on patriarchal attitudes and behavior more broadly. In Lesotho, Clayton (2015) found that there could be negative effects of women's self-reported engagement with politics in the presence of quotas, but Clayton (2018) found weak long-term evidence on gender bias in attitudes. Brulé (2020) examined the effect of quotas on women's inheritance in India and shows that while property rights improve for women under female political leadership, there are chances of backlash by men.

5.3.2 ELECTORAL SYSTEMS

Problem: Underrepresentation of women in political party positions.
Studied solutions: Proportional representation systems.

The ET found some literature that suggests that the effects described above are couched within the electoral system within which one operates. These electoral systems share the incentives that women and organizations like political parties have in promoting women to leadership positions. Iverson and Rosenbluth (2008) reviewed this literature and concluded that proportional representation systems are most likely to promise women's political careers because they are more likely to support women's careers in case of career interruptions for childcare and other family work. Public relations systems are also associated with better electoral success for women—see also Rule (1987) and Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler (2005). Similarly, Kittilson et al (2012) showed that these institutions are also likely to promote social changes: survey evidence from New Zealand, Russia, France, and Uruguay suggest proportional electoral outcomes have larger effects on women's political engagement and participation than on men's. Skorge (2021) shows evidence from Norway that moving from a plurality to a proportional representation system substantially decreased gender inequality in voting.

5.4 OPPORTUNITIES AND OPEN QUESTIONS

The ET has argued that there is a dearth of quality evidence across the solutions being used to increase WPPL. This exists both in the quality of evidence as well as the contexts from which it is available. Significant progress can be made on both. On quality, research using rigorous methods of evaluation with political parties as agents of change is particularly thin and especially ripe for further work. The evidence base is much more solid for political quotas, but given the limited efficacy of these institutions for transformative change, subsequent work should examine ways in which the opportunity created by political quotas can be expanded for real change in WPPL. In context, as this review showed, the vast majority of evidence is coming from the U.S., Scandinavian countries, and India. The latter is less problematic given the size of the country's population, but given that a lot of what works well is enabled

because of the data-rich environments, particularly in Scandinavian countries, opportunities must be created in other contexts for developing learnings.

6. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS: BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

The table below summarizes the main findings from the survey of the literature above. Researchers have explored in detail several avenues in assembling evidence on the three domains that structure WPPL: resources, norms, and institutions. Table 1 highlights the identified constraints to WPPL alongside studied solutions.

While much of the conversation in advanced democracies has focused on individual resources, attributing political gender gaps to gendered lags in the economic development process, few interventions aimed at alleviating individual resources have proven successful at meaningfully raising WPPL in low- and middle-income countries. On the contrary, several of the interventions that provided women with political information or economic resources found that such programs actually exacerbated gender gaps in political participation by activating social norms that keep women out of the public sphere. Programs likely to bear fruit are those that create a bulwark against such norm enforcement by men. The one domain studied that shows promise for WPPL is the creation of social capital, particularly social capital amongst women. Notable interventions, including the formation of women's groups and mentorship programs, have proven highly successful at enabling women to access political institutions and contest restrictions to doing so as a result of defiance of prevailing social norms.

Substantial focus in low- and middle-income countries has been paid to precisely examine these normative environments that act to enforce women's exclusion from political spaces. This review highlighted ways that interventions can target individual women, households and key male gatekeepers, and community spaces to unlock WPPL. Many of these interventions, such as the provision of female role models, conducting trainings and programs on gender equality, and targeting key social referents with gender equality campaigns, have proven to substantially shift attitudes toward the status of women in politics and increase women's political participation. The efficacy of these interventions is proof of the importance of norms in shaping women's political lives and behavior. Many of the most promising interventions, such as school-based gender trainings, have been tested in only a limited number of contexts, suggesting more research on these topics could have big payoffs. A fruitful domain for further evidence and testing is in determining whom to target with what information to best shift beliefs and expectations around WPPL. Additionally, several recent studies have highlighted that increases in women's political participation are not always associated with increases in women's political agency. Understanding what works for women's political agency, including what helps women to contest backlash to their political empowerment, is an open and important field for future research and programming.

A final domain in which interventions have been deployed to largely foster women's political leadership is in the design of institutions. The most widespread intervention aimed at women's political empowerment is the deployment of quotas for women in public office and in other key political arenas. This review not only documents the efficacy of such programs for opening the door to women's political leadership but also highlights that this leaves open an important opportunity to understand how women political leaders can be best supported to ensure the authentic representation of their and their female constituent's interests. With several decades of quotas in many countries, now is also a prime moment to study the long-term impact of quotas and whether the response of male elites to such institutions is supportive or potentially undermining. This review also documents more recent interventions aimed at the incorporation of women in party processes, highlighting the importance of women's inclusion and participation at all stages of the political process.

The varying degree of quality in the evidence across these domains presents both challenges and opportunities. The key challenge is the recognition that the sample from which much of the evidence emerges is restricted to the U.S., Scandinavian states, and other advanced democracies alongside a growing body of evidence from India. There is evidence that entrenched democracies—albeit with problems—are likely to structure the way in which women are able to emerge into leadership processes. For example, as described above, research argues that electoral rules moderate the impacts of all variables that are downstream on the causal chain. It is therefore not a stretch to argue that the adoption of more democratic norms is likely to affect women's political participation in different ways. A way in which the experience of many countries is similar is that in which men act as gatekeepers to political spaces. Solutions across all domains showcase that taking seriously the role of men in creating roadblocks and as enforcers of patriarchal norms is important for the design of successful solutions.

These challenges are highlighted in the summary table, where the few conditioning factors that have been rigorously studied and identified have proven critical for understanding the efficacy of programs in particular contexts. Additionally, what emerged was a paucity of studies that measured WPPL directly. The evidence base is substantially hindered by intervention evaluations failing to measure WPPL.

Overall, the vast majority of evidence relates to interventions that target individuals, with considerably less work on norms and institutions. This can be interpreted as an opportunity. Researchers and practitioners can focus on assembling rigorous evidence on norms and institutions from a variety of settings. A particular focus on how community norms are changed is warranted from the findings in this review. Furthermore, the ET has also taken care to identify ways in which existing evidence can be extended to ask secondary questions. The establishment of these secondary pieces of evidence will often necessitate the creation of conditions to reestimate the primary effects in newer contexts, thereby requiring the creation of fresh evidence in new places. In this manner, researchers and practitioners can 1) replicate and 2) build substantively on top of existing pieces of evidence. This will accelerate an understanding of the determinants of WPPL going forward.

TABLE 1: SUMMARY TABLE OF CONSTRAINTS AND SUCCESSFUL, EVIDENCE-EVALUATED INTERVENTIONS

CONSTRAINT TO WPPL		FORM OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION	COUNTRIES WITH EVIDENCE	CONDITIONING FACTORS	EVIDENCE EVALUATED INTERVENTIONS	SUCCESSFUL Y/N/ MIXED	EVIDENCE QUALITY
Individual Resources	Women's limited knowledge of political systems	Electoral and non-electoral participation	Mali, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sri Lanka	Patriarchal norms; gender composition	Civics education programs with women citizens	Mixed	Few randomized experiments, most from qualitative, programmatic studies
		Success in positions of political leadership; representation of women's interests	Pakistan, Sudan, South Sudan, Indonesia, Cambodia	Patriarchal norms	Capacity-building programs with women-elected representatives	Mixed	Limited to qualitative, programmatic studies
	Inequalities in economic resources and labor force participation	Electoral and non-electoral participation	India	Democratic institutions	Microcredit programs	N	Large body of quasi- and randomized experiments
		Electoral and non-electoral participation	Afghanistan, DRC		Community-driven development programs	Mixed	Some randomized experiments
		Electoral and non-electoral participation	DRC		Unconditional cash transfer programs	Y	Limited to qualitative, programmatic studies
	Limited free time due to the double bind of political participation and domestic work				n/a		
	Inequalities in social capital and social networks	Electoral and non-electoral participation	India (Africa and Southeast Asia)		Women's microcredit groups	Y	Large body of quasi- and randomized experiments
		Political representation and success in positions of political leadership	Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Pakistan		Mentorship programs	Y	Limited to qualitative, programmatic studies

CONSTRAINT TO WPPL		FORM OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION	COUNTRIES WITH EVIDENCE	CONDITIONING FACTORS	EVIDENCE EVALUATED INTERVENTIONS	SUCCESSFUL Y/N/ MIXED	EVIDENCE QUALITY
Norms	Low self-efficacy and limited political aspirations	Political interest, non-electoral participation, political representation	Africa, Europe, India, Lesotho, Switzerland, U.S.		Role models	Y	Large body of quasi-experiments
	Biased beliefs that women cannot or should not participate in politics	Gender attitudes, electoral participation	Egypt, Tunisia	Must entail norm-compliant behavior	Signals from social referents	Y	Survey experiments
		Gender attitudes, non-electoral participation	Europe, India, Lesotho		Exposure to female leaders	Mixed	Large body of quasi-experiments
		Gender attitudes	Saudi Arabia, Pakistan		Corrections to misperceived beliefs	?	One randomized experiment and data collection
		Gender attitudes	India		Training on gender equality	Y	Some randomized experiments
		Gender attitudes, electoral and non-electoral participation	Burundi, Indonesia, Ethiopia		Radio programs on gender equality	Y	Limited to qualitative, programmatic studies
	Women's limited autonomy from the household	Electoral participation	Pakistan	Best effect with men's inclusion	Vote mobilization campaigns focused on the value of women's participation	Y	Some randomized experiments
		Electoral and non-electoral participation	India		Delayed marriage	Y	Correlations from public opinion surveys
		Non-electoral participation	India		Women's groups	Y	Large body of quasi- and randomized experiments
	Male sanctioning and gatekeeping	Electoral participation	Pakistan		Vote mobilization campaigns focused on the value of women's participation	Y	Some randomized experiments

CONSTRAINT TO WPPL		FORM OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION	COUNTRIES WITH EVIDENCE	CONDITIONING FACTORS	EVIDENCE EVALUATED INTERVENTIONS	SUCCESSFUL Y/N/ MIXED	EVIDENCE QUALITY
	of women's political participation	Gender attitudes, intimate partner violence	DRC	Strong patriarchal norms	Gender sensitization discussion groups	N	Some randomized experiments
	Patriarchal norms	Electoral and non-electoral participation	India, Africa, Globe		Matrilineal inheritance	Y	Quasi-experiment from historical cultural interventions
	Low efficacy and representation of women's voices in community spaces	Non-electoral participation	India		Women's groups	Y	Large body of quasi- and randomized experiments
		Political influence; political leadership	Philippines		Women's embeddedness in community activities	Y	Correlations from large surveys
Institutions	Underrepresentation of women in political party positions	Political representation, non-electoral participation	U.S., Armenia, Guatemala, Pakistan, Tanzania, India		Recruitment by party elites	Y	Some randomized experiments
	Underrepresentation of women as candidates	Political representation	Sweden, Armenia, India, U.S., DRC, Lesotho		Mandated representation	Y	Large body of quasi- and randomized experiments
	Underrepresentation of women in political party positions	Political representation	Europe, Norway, New Zealand, Russia, France, Uruguay		Proportional representation systems	Y	Correlations from public opinion surveys

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