



Electoral Reform in Haiti: Ensuring Increased Women's Participation and Representation

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Abstract

Women around the world continue to be marginalized in social, economic and political spheres. In the recent years, the idea of increased female representation and participation in the global political machinery has been gaining momentum. However, there are still a number of countries where the progress is stagnant, with Haiti being among them. Struck with poverty, natural disasters, gender-based violence and deeply rooted structural stereotypes, Haiti has so far been unable to institute equal representation in political life. This paper aims to explain the existing hurdles of increasing female representation in Haiti, based on a wide spectrum of consideration, including legal, political, cultural and economic factors. Its qualitative side of research draws from feminist theories and compares Haiti with Rwanda and Tunisia, two countries that have been successful in increasing female political representation in the country over the past decades. Additionally, interviews with eleven different gender experts were conducted in, which supported drafting of recommendations for increasing the female representation in the upcoming elections in October 2019 that conclude this research paper.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Political theorists historically justified the exclusion of women in political life on the basis of their allegedly non-rational nature. Indeed, it has been proven that such generalization is unfounded, and the discrimination of women is deeply rooted in the society itself. The suffragist campaigns in the beginning of 20th century achieved a right to vote for women in many of the Western countries, including the U.S. and UK. (Ballington and Karam, 2005)

In the U.S. the movement started even before the civil war. At that time the right to vote was only enjoyed by white men. After years of campaigning and struggling, the 19th amendment to the U.S. constitution was introduced in 1920, extending the right to vote for all women. (Source: History.com, 2019). In the UK, women got the right to vote in 1918. (UK Parliament) However, this was just the beginning and there is still a long way to go before we are able to assure fair women's political participation and representation. However, the attitude has shifted, and countries are starting to recognize the value of the underutilized capacity and talents of women. In the past two decades, the percentage of female representation in the national parliaments worldwide has risen from 11.3% (1995) to 22.8% (2016). (UN Women, 2017) In around 90% of 174 countries the average share of women parliamentarians has increased, with Sub-Saharan Africa being among the region with the most substantial increase (9.8% to 22.3%). (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2015)

Recognizing this step forward, the reality is still below the UN identified benchmark of 30%. (Economic and Social Council, 1990) As the UN General Assembly resolution on women's political participation notes, "Women in every part of the world continue to be largely marginalized from the political sphere, often as a result of discriminatory laws, practices, attitudes and gender stereotypes, low levels of education, lack of access to health care and the disproportionate effect of poverty on women". (United Nations, 2012)

The magnitude of gender inequality in almost all areas, including education, health, politics etc. is higher in less economically developed countries in comparison to higher developed nations. (Jayachandran, 2015) Haiti is a developing economy where women have not yet achieved equality

in social, economic and political realm. Currently, Haiti is the least-developed country in the Western Hemisphere, where 60% of the population lives under the national poverty line. (Central Intelligence Agency, U.S.)

While Haiti's population is made up of 53% women, this proportion is not at all reflected in terms of political representation. (IFES, 2018) Haiti's parliament shows a rate of 2.7% of women's representation (IDEA, 2017) and only one woman among 30 senators (IFES, 2018), which is more than alarming. In terms of gender equality in parliament, Haiti ranks 184th of overall 193 countries. (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2018)

For three years now, Haiti's Provisional Electoral Council has worked in tandem with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and other development actors, to foster a National Gender Strategy to establish legislation that is sensitive to gender. The objective is to enhance women's influence in the political system and governance structures in the form of participation and representation. IFES also seeks to increase the number of women as voters, candidates, political party representatives, and civil society members. (IFES, 2018) In 2012, the constitution was amended and two new articles (Article 17.1 and 31.1.1) were included in the constitution, introducing a 30% quota in all elected and appointed positions on local councils, political candidates and at the national level. (Constitute, 2012) However, although Haiti's Constitution formally protects women from discrimination, physical as well as sexual abuse and guarantees the right to political participation, these provisions are only partially implemented. (USAID, 2017)

Our research is being supported by the comparison drawn from two countries - Rwanda and Tunisia. Despite obvious geographical, historical or religious differences, these two countries have successfully implemented policies increasing the women's political representation and participation. According to our interviewees, change is already afoot in Haiti. The women of Haiti are ready to change the status quo as the civil society is rising up against this discrimination. The current electoral reform is providing a window of opportunity to make important changes.

1.1 Motivation and aim

Goal 5, gender equality, is an important component of the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals. In addition to being a goal of its own right, it is also closely linked to other goals and targets, such as economic growth, promotion of justice, health, partnerships, only to

name a few. In light of this, UNDP has already been working on projects to improve the status of women and their political representation and participation in Haiti. This research offers UNDP in Haiti, national governmental actors, in particular the CEP, and civil society, valuable insights into the issue of female political representation in the country, in terms of existing policy gaps and future policy recommendations.

The objective of this research is to explain why the gender quota required by the constitution of 30% women at all decision-making levels, is not implemented and how it can be successfully achieved with the right electoral reforms. The analysis on quotas will be complemented by the study of other factors and policy recommendations which impact female political participation and representation in Haiti. We hope that the policy recommendations help UNDP and other aforementioned bodies in Haiti to formulate effective policy actions for the upcoming elections in 2019 and for other elections in the future.

2 WOMEN'S POLITICAL REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION IN HAITI

2.1 Political representation

Pitkin (1967) describes several forms of political representation. The author defines “authorised representation” as: “When a representative stands for a group by virtue of sharing similar characteristic such as race, gender, ethnicity or residence”. She also adds that to represent is simply to make present again. Thus, political representation refers to the activity of making the voices, opinion and perspectives of citizens *present* in the public policy making processes. (Stanford, 2016)

The rationale for gender balance in the representation lies at the very heart of democracy – political circles should represent all citizens, and therefore including women. Democracy cannot truly deliver for all citizens if a half of the population remains underrepresented. (Hatakka, 2015)

The challenges facing female candidates have increased over the years. These obstacles derive from cultural as well as structural origins and lead to a lack of support from men and women for women striving for a political career. The women of Haiti face a number of obstacles in terms of political

participation, including patriarchal attitudes toward leadership, lack of financial support, and threats of violence and intimidation. (USAID, 2017)

The nationwide survey “Haiti Public Opinion Survey 2017” of the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) asked the population among other issues about their opinion of women as political candidates. (IFES, 2018) While 68% women were in favour of this topic, only 48% men were. The same pattern could be seen when it comes to the issue of women working in the electoral commission: 66% women supported this idea, while only 46% men shared the same opinion. A small part of the surveyed population, 11% of men and 22% of women, agreed that including more female candidates and party leaders would lead to more effective political parties. (IFES, 2018)

These results reflect the society’s beliefs and also explain the reasons why women’s political representation is at a very low level in Haiti. While there is commitment to increase women’s political representation, the degree of women being represented in politics remains marginal. One of the reasons for the quota of 30% being largely not implemented is possibly the lack of support for gender quotas in general. The results of the Haiti Public Opinion Survey show that only 29% of men support gender quotas, while this applies to 46% of women. (IFES, 2018)

2.2 Political participation

The concept of political participation is defined and understood in various ways. In this paper political participation comprises all citizen’s activities that affect political processes. (Deth, 2016)

For a more detailed understanding we can also consider the following definition:

“Participation in electoral processes involves much more than just voting. Political participation derives from the freedom to speak out, assemble and associate; the ability to take part in the conduct of public affairs; and the opportunity to register as a candidate, to campaign, to be elected and to hold office at all levels of government”. (Mungai, 2014)

The Haiti Public Opinion Survey 2017 draws attention to other challenging areas that limit women’s participation besides voting. Although 84% of women reported that they find themselves completely free to choose a candidate during elections, only 44% stated to be completely free in their decision to leave their home without permission and a low rate of 18% reported of being totally restrained to do so. Just 60% of women stated that they are able to make use of freedom of speech freely such as speaking with friends about critical topics. Moving about freely in public spaces is a concern for Haitian women as well, as 53% stated that they can do so without any fear.

These figures demonstrate the still existing obstacles for Haitian women to fully engage in political and civil life and thus, the barriers to women's political participation. (IFES, 2018)

2.3 Election systems

From a technical point of view, the type of the electoral system used, as well as the provisions of quotas can have a direct impact on female representation, and therefore, also their participation. Generally, the main distinction lies between proportional and majoritarian systems. Whereas proportional representation is the most common type, a considerable amount of countries uses mixed systems and 64, including democracies such as the United States, the United Kingdom or Canada use the "winner-take-all" majoritarian systems. Majoritarian voting is a system in which candidates have to receive the majority of the votes to be elected, however, in some cases only a plurality is required if no candidate can achieve a majority. The most common example is the first-past-the-post electoral system, where the candidate with the highest number of votes wins. Different variations of the system exist, including instant-runoff – used for example in Australia – or plurality at large.

Proportional voting is today the most commonly used system – introduced in Belgium in 1889, the aim was to achieve a fairer electoral representation also of minority groups and to allow for plurality. The system is based on receiving seats in proportion to their electoral strength in order to avoid monopolisation of the parliament. Proportional voting can take different formats – one of the most frequently used is the party list proportional system, or open and closed systems in which the voters can or cannot influence the order of candidates, respectively. Sometimes, electoral thresholds are implemented as well, which must be passed by the candidates in the first round. (European Parliament, 1997)

The question of electoral systems becomes even more relevant in relation to female political representation – often, female candidates struggle to use the system to their advantage and get stranded by the majority of male candidates. According to the research paper of the Australian Parliament, all countries in Western Europe where the number of women in parliament exceeds 20% have adopted the proportional system. (Parliament of Australia, 2013)

Haiti on the other hand uses a majoritarian system. (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2016) Countries where a mixed system or a majoritarian system dominates, anticipate the lowest level of female participation. Similar patterns can be seen also worldwide – countries with more than a 30% female representation have a proportional or mixed system, whereas less than 10% or no female

representation at all occur in countries with majoritarian electoral system. The reason is that majoritarian systems can often be seen as unfair to women, as the success of the party heavily depends on the single candidate – frequently, that is a man. On the other hand, the party system usually tries to appeal to a wide spectrum of voters and listing of female candidates occurs more often. Nevertheless, one should not forget many other factors that come into play – often the socio-political context of the country can be of decisive nature, regardless of the electoral system used. (Parliament of Australia, 2013)

2.4 Quota provisions

The introduction of gender quotas is a relatively new concept, which has gained more importance over the last two decades. Up until today, gender quotas have been implemented in more than 130 countries all over the world. (Krook, 2010) Quotas are particular tools, that have been developed as a form of equal results measure – implemented in areas where marginalised groups (female, minorities) have been under-represented. Quotas are a threshold, often percentual, which serves as a minimum requirement to be occupied by the given group of people.

Quotas are, however, criticised for similar reasons as affirmative actions – as discriminatory and undemocratic. Several types of quotas have been implemented in the world: reserved seats guarantee that a certain percentage of women are elected, implemented by legislative position precluding it compulsory. Legislative candidates quotas require a certain percentage of women to run for political positions, whereas party quotas are mere voluntary measures taken by political parties in order to increase female participation. These types of quotas are often used in Western liberal democracies, as it is believed that the political scene will adapt itself, without the need of imposing rules.

Quotas alone cannot be the only solution for female discrimination – it is only the beginning of the process. Examples from elsewhere show that even voluntary party quotas like the zipper rule in Sweden can be effective, as well as Tanzania's single majority electoral system managed to increase the representation of women.

3 PARAMETERS INFLUENCING WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

3.1 Legal system

A minimum quota of 30% for female candidates on voting lists for elections on the municipal and local level was created by the Haitian Electoral Decree in 2015. It was also associated with financial incentives for political parties to foster compliance. (IFES, 2018) Multiple local officers who were directly elected saw the quota being fully implemented in 2015/16. This was the first time in Haiti's history that the quota was successfully implemented. However, this represents only a partial success due to its limited applicability to the next elections. The quota established in 2015 was on a local level and issued via decree, which means that it is not applicable for further elections in the future. In order to apply it to the next elections, further legislative actions need to be taken. Furthermore, the constitutional gender quota established in 2012 lacks working enforcement mechanisms, especially those that would make listing women on the candidate's list compulsory. Officially implemented, but not functioning in practice, the quota thus only seems as a tool to formally meet the international standards. Professor Gabrielle Bardal, a senior lecturer and gender specialist from IFES even calls this situation *a constitutional gender crisis* because of the operating government not respecting the constitution. Women representation cannot stop at prescribed gender quotas and must be complemented by more specific provisions to increase gender equality. (IFES, 2018)

3.2 Lack of political will

Lack of political will is one of the key parameters influencing women's roles in society and their political representation. IFES (2018) identifies lack of political will, besides political instability, insufficient financial resources and a slow legislative process, as the main reason for the unsuccessful implementation of policies and laws in Haiti. In our empirical research, the role of political parties has been emphasized several times - especially their reluctance to develop ways to include women in their programme. The problem is further widened by dissent and continuous disbelief among the parties as the developments are seen as derogatory to men participating in the public life. The lack of political will is reflected in the low support for gender quotas, as shown in chapter 2.1, and in the lack of implementation of the 30% quota enshrined in the constitution.

This problem can only be countered with creating awareness among the existing party members about the need and importance of having more women in the parties. One of our interviewees, works on such awareness and training programs with some political parties in Haiti and emphasized

the importance of educating the male party members for changing mind sets in order to reshape the political scenario in favor of women.

3.3 Women's role in society

Even if enforceable legal provisions do exist, women in Haiti are faced with societal and cultural obstacles on their path to increased political activity. These tendencies are stemming from deeply rooted gender stereotypes, which foresee women as the center of the family, who, however, has no power to initiate structural changes. These views are also supported in the media, where male candidates undermine the position of women in the election – e.g. the infamous sexist and degrading remarks made by former President Michel Martelly saying: “go get a man and go into the bushes” towards a woman at in a rally during the 2015 campaign. (IFES, 2018; BBC, 2015) Women struggle to become members and later candidates of political parties, which are male-dominated and show little interest to change the status quo. Just recently, discussions to reduce the number of ministries and merge the Ministry of Women's Affairs with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour were disclosed to the public. (Loop News, 2018) According to ceremonies of Voodoo, which is the prevailing religion in Haiti, the women represent the pole of the society, hold everything together but in reality, they have little power which is complemented by lack of trust to them.

3.4 Violence conducted against women

A USAID report (2017) identifies the key challenges facing women and girls in Haiti in this area as: gender-based violence, a need for safe spaces for girls in schools and a weak judicial system, which often leaves sexual harassment without redress. This factor represents a vast area of research as violence appears in all forms: physical, sexual, and economic. Every third Haitian woman aged 15 to 49 has been exposed to physical and/or sexual violence. (USAID, 2017) This shows that the scope of violence is immense, appearing in the public as well as the private spheres, in households, the internet and conventional media; acting as a threat to women wanting to engage politically. These women are being subjected to attacks, harming their reputation, moral and public image with rigid and defamatory insults. The attacks oftentimes reach to the lowest possible spheres, accusing women of prostitution in return for political favours. This leads to more and more women being discouraged from running for office or getting politically involved. Therefore, there is also an urgent need to make the electoral environment peaceful for women and prevent violence and attacks, both physical and verbal.

This factor was strongly highlighted by the majority of our interviewees.

3.5 Least developed country status

It should not be forgotten that Haiti still belongs to one of the least developed countries in the Western hemisphere and faces a serious lack of resources, economic stagnation and volatile political situation. In general, this does not constitute ideal conditions for women to proceed with their aspirations. As mentioned in section 3.2, the lack of financial resources is one of the reasons why policies and laws related to women's political representation have not been implemented yet. (IFES, 2018) Poverty easily translates to other struggles such as health, and education and further integrates deeply its bound to cultural norms of the society. Lack of a functioning middle class makes it difficult to "break the circle" of the poverty and therefore majority of women does not get a chance to get educated. Others are suffering from the consequences of economic barriers as many women are single parents and have to raise kids by themselves, resulting from so called serial monogamy. That leaves them hardly with enough time or resources to run for office.

3.6 Lack of financial resources

As mentioned above, political progress in Haiti is hindered by a lack of financial resources. According to some of our interviewees, this problem is worse for women than for men. Lack of financial resources, coupled with the lack of political will, means that women often find it difficult to obtain the necessary finances to support their election campaigns and reach out to potential voters. As a result, many of them are demotivated from running for office in the first place.

4 FEMINIST THEORIES

This research paper uses feminist theories to better understand the influence of various factors on the political underrepresentation of women in politics across various parts of the world. According to the theory, the gender-power-order always exists in our society. This, in turn, shapes societal structures and power relations. (Blomgren, 2010) A central feature of feminist political theory is the notion that women and their situation are central to political analysis. Its interest lies in questioning the fact that men appear to have more power and privilege than women and asking how it can be changed. (Bryson, 2003)

The concept of gender quotas represents a shift between different concepts of equality. While the classical liberal idea of equality meant providing equal opportunities or focusing on competitive equality, feminist pressure in recent years has led to the formation of a new idea. This idea can be referred to as “equality of result”. The idea entails that real opportunities do not exist just because formal barriers are removed. There are a number of forms of discrimination and hidden barriers that still prevent women from being selected for political offices and gaining their share of political influence. Thus, in this case, quotas and other such measures can be considered as means towards equality of result. (Dahlerup, 2009)

In this context the distinction between the two concepts of gender equality and equity should be mentioned. UNESDOC (2000) describes gender equality as equality between men and women - that enables individuals to take decision independent of their gender, stereotypes and social norms. That means that opportunities, responsibilities and rights of men and women should not depend on their sex. In contrast, the concept of gender equity comprises providing fair treatment to women and men, which is tailored to their respective needs. Thus, the treatment can be equal or different, but needs to enable men and women to have equal rights. (UNESDOC, 2000)

A crucial issue to consider is the fact that differences among males and females, such as class, ethnicity, race and age etc. greatly impact their interests and priorities. There are important differences among women that should not be neglected, whilst the difference between men and women also play an important role in the politics of representation. (Lovenduski, 2002)

5 WOMEN’S POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN RWANDA AND TUNISIA

5.1 Gender Equality in Rwanda

Rwanda is the country with the highest women’s political representation in parliament worldwide, but also in other areas Rwanda has successfully managed to narrow the gender gap. (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2018; World Economic Forum, 2017) The Global Gender Gap Index, which combines multiple indicators to measure the gender gap, records a steady improvement in Rwanda’s performance concerning women’s position in society. As a consequence, Rwanda

achieves the top fourth spot among 144 countries worldwide. Currently, the country has managed to close the gap because of improved parity concerning income and an increased share of women in ministerial positions. The augmented number of women's representation has increased the performance of women in politics measured by the Political Empowerment Subindex, and places Rwanda on the third place worldwide. (World Economic Forum, 2017)

Both, the findings of the empirical research and the literature review, point towards the same results: Political will on the highest level and quotas in form of reserved seats are among the key drivers for Rwanda's high performance concerning gender equality.

5.1.1 Women's Political Representation: Quotas and Reserved Seats

With a share of 61.3% women, Rwanda is the country with the highest number of seats held by women in the national parliament worldwide. (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2018) This path towards a higher number of women in political positions has started more than 20 years ago. Before Rwanda's conflict-affected period, which is marked by the civil war in 1990 and the genocide in 1994, Rwanda's parliament had never had more than 18% women. (Turianskyi and Matebe, 2017) During the genocide, the country realised what it meant to exclude women from participating in society, which should have led to the president Paul Kagame saying: "*How can we develop our country if we leave half of the population behind?*". (Topping, 2014) Directly after that period, in 1994, the administration decided to promote and improve women's rights. One critical factor for this development was that approximately 70% of the population at that time were women. In 2003, a major step was taken when the quota that reserved 30% of the position for women in each chamber of parliament was established in the constitution. Political parties as well had to make sure that 30% of their high-level positions are guaranteed to women. The success of these efforts was reflected in the results of the 2003 elections: women's representation in the lower chamber climbed to 48.8% of the seats as well as 34.6% in the upper chamber. (Turianskyi and Matebe, 2017) Thus, the quota of 30% was not only successfully fulfilled, but women nearly reached half of all seats in the lower house. Women in reserved seats were on average far younger than those in non-reserved seats, which could indicate that reserved seats represent an opportunity for the younger share of women to gather experience before competing for open seats. (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2015) The quota played a major role in creating the remarkable share of women being represented in the parliament, but it was not the quota alone. Political will to put the legislation into practice, was another significant factor in promoting women's political representation.

5.1.2 Political Will

A key factor in Rwanda's success in promoting women's rights and political representation is political will at the highest level. (Turianskyi and Matebe, 2017) Political will was a major contributor in passing gender sensitive laws, establishing institutions and formulating a strategy. This included the quota that has been enshrined into the constitution in 2003, the establishment of institutions such as the Gender Monitoring Office, the National Women's Council and the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, as well as the formulation of Rwanda's National Gender Strategy.

Moreover, political will on the highest level helped fostering the exchange among women and build a parliamentary caucus. In 1996 the Forum of Rwandan Women Parliamentarians was founded with the goal to ensure gender sensitivity concerning legislation. This forum brings all women parliamentarians, independent of their party, together as it consists of all female members in the parliament and aims to enhance legislative work by providing technical advice and training. Additionally, a number of male members of parliament assist the forum by becoming supporting members to foster gender equality by establishing strategic partnerships. (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2015)

5.1.3 Opposing Views

Even though, the statistics presented above depict Rwanda as a country which has been successful in achieving gender equality in terms of politics, there are views that oppose this narrative. According to many critics, the increased number of women in parliament and the labor force is just a smokescreen to help the government improve their image, while continuing female repression. Despite the high number of women in the parliament, women do not hold any effective power in the decision-making progress and their actions are often dictated by the male political elite. (Essa, 2018) More detailed research in this matter should account for both sides of the situation and shouldn't evaluate the status of women in Rwanda based only on statistics.

5.2 Gender equality in Tunisia

Seven years after the Revolution of 2011 and four years after the adoption of the Constitution (2014), women now make up 47% of the local council positions in Tunisia following the May 2018 elections. The percentage of women in Parliament in Tunisia is currently 33.6%, which is the highest in the Arab world. (Zayat, 2016) The increased political participation has also been complemented by increased gender parity in other areas. 19.5% of the ministerial positions in the

country are occupied by women. (Mahar, 2016) These factors show an overall trend of increasing gender parity and political representation of women.

5.2.1 Electoral Law of Tunisia

In Tunisia's case, the empirical part of this research suggests that the electoral law passed in 2016 appears to be the main reason that the country has reached such a high percentage of women elected to local governments. The electoral law establishes horizontal and vertical gender parity, which means that women make up 50% of candidate lists (horizontal) and women and men candidates alternative through the list (vertical). This matches with the literature that has been available on this very recent issue, such as the UN Women (2018) article which describes the result of 47% women in local government in the May 2018 elections as consequences of the electoral law changes in 2016. Tunisia is among a small number of countries globally to introduce horizontal and vertical gender parity across candidate lists. (UN Women, 2018)

5.2.2 Legislative Strides in Tunisia

Tunisia has historically been a country that embraced opportunities to introduce modern legislation related to women's rights. The first wave of reform came after the independence in 1956 under President Habib Bourguiba and was primarily top-down policies imposed by a state in an effort to modernize the country at a fast pace. The Tunisian Code of Personal Status (CPS) was a series of laws and constituted a radical shift in the interpretation of the Islamic laws. The CPS reformed laws on marriage (including, e.g. a ban on polygamy and a raise of the minimum age for marriage), divorce, custody and to some extent also inheritance, although the man remained the head of household. In the 1960s the principle of wage equality was introduced, schooling became mandatory for boys and girls and contraception was made available. (Charrad, 2011; World Bank, 2012) If this first wave of reforms was prompted by a nationalist agenda, the second major wave of reforms that occurred in the 1990s was triggered by women's activism. During the 1970s and 1980s, many new women's organizations emerged and feminist discourse became increasingly part of public debates. The most significant reform during this wave was the possibility for Tunisian women to pass their nationality to their children. Other important changes were policies about protection against domestic violence, laws against workplace discrimination and social policies that support low-income working women and divorced women and their children. With these reforms, Tunisia stands out as the most progressive country in the Arab-Islamic world when it comes to "woman friendly" legislative changes. (Dahlerup & Johansson, 2012)

More recently the government has also made efforts to combat gender-based violence in the country to empower women and elevate their social, economic and political position. Gender-based violence had been a widespread problem in Tunisia. In July 2017 the Tunisian parliament passed a bill introducing criminal provisions and increasing penalties for various violations against women, including sexual harassment and discrimination. The Human Rights Watch described the bill as a “landmark step for women’s rights.” (Mneimneh, 2018)

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our empirical and qualitative research, we are proposing the following recommendations for the way forward for Haiti:

1. **Compliance from Political Parties:** To increase the possibility of successfully implementing the quota in parliament, further legal measures and financial mechanisms need to be implemented. Adding financial incentives or penalties to legal measures, such as the quota, can help ensuring compliance. Introducing a bonus for every female candidate elected or imposing financial penalties for parties where every alternate candidate is not a woman (lesson from Tunisia’s success with introducing quotas in the parties’ lists), are feasible measures to increase women’s political representation for the upcoming elections. According to one of our interviewees, the political parties are starting to realize the importance of increased female representation and are working with gender experts to include the gender aspect in their strategic plans. If that is the case, the government can build up on the existing momentum and use the above-mentioned measures to direct the parties in the direction of increased female representation.

Feasibility: This is a socially and politically feasible recommendation and can be implemented in the short run (for the coming elections).

Challenges: This might impose administrative and monitoring costs on the government.

2. **Introduction of Proportional System:** Majoritarian and mixed systems tend to show the lowest rate of female participation, whereas countries that have adopted a proportional system have a relative high number of women represented. Thus, using a proportional system instead of a majoritarian could help increasing women’s political representation in Haiti. While implementing this finding might be infeasible for the upcoming electoral reforms, establishing a top-down in combination with a bottom-up approach should be viable.

Feasibility: This is a socially and politically feasible recommendation.

Challenges: This is a long-term solution and can't help the government in the coming elections.

3. **Bottom-up Approach:** Looking at the example of Tunisia, Haiti similarly needs to start with a bottom-up approach - due to cultural and economic constraints, women are constrained to participate in politics. Haiti must ensure that there are existing local trainings, which provide women with skills and merit required for running for an office. Educating voters, providing training and workshops to female candidates and building partnerships as well as networks that foster gender equality are realistic bottom-up measures that could substantially impact women's political representation.

Feasibility: This is a socially feasible solution and will not only lead to a sustainable increase in female political representation in the country but will also help in building Haiti's human capital.

Challenges: This recommendation will require considerable administrative and financial resources and will only bear results in the long run.

4. **Role of Conventional and Social Media:** There is a need to enforce the role of media and news and increase the number of female journalists, as this sphere is still dominated by men. According to one of our interviewees media is already helping in raising awareness about the role of women in politics and can be further used to raise awareness about the constitutional provisions in this matter. This way, promoting of increased female political representation and participation can be supported also by forming a valuable public opinion.

Feasibility: This is a socially, politically and economically viable solution. Already existing media channels can be used to shape public opinion. Also, the speed of information flow on social media can be strategically used to initiate immediate policy dialogues and to gather support.

Challenges: Media is also a powerful tool for the people opposed to the idea of increased female participation and representation. They can also use it to oppose the idea and push their own agendas.

5. **Role of Civil Society:** Any progress in terms of female political participation and representation, must be a holistic effort, rather than a one-sided struggle from a single entity. Making political bodies and the public aware that women, which make up more than 50% of society, need to be represented at all levels of decision making is a crucial step.

There must be a coordination between civil society organizations and political parties to increase awareness (through trainings, research and campaigns etc.) and identify the best way forward; e.g. introducing vertical and horizontal parity such as in the Tunisia case would be one way to make sure that enough women are represented in political parties.

Feasibility: This is a socially and politically feasible solution. It can be implemented, both, in the short and the long run to bring sustainable progress.

Challenges: Such coordination and work would require substantial administrative and financial resources, align with expertise in the subject matter.

7 CONCLUSION

Not only in terms of political representation, but also in many other areas Haiti still has a long way to go to achieve gender equality. In the current political system, there are still numerous hurdles for female candidates, which include political parties and their organization, lack of political will, threats of violence, the legal system, as well as the perception of women in society. As a consequence, only 2.7% women are present in parliament. However, especially in the last years the country has demonstrated efforts to increase women's political representation. In 2015, an Electoral Decree, associated with financial incentives was established on a local level. This was the first time that the quota of 30% has been fully implemented in multiple local offices. This success was due to legislative efforts in combination with further mechanism. Thus, the progress is gaining importance and our aforementioned recommendations can help to formulate effective policy actions for the upcoming elections in 2019 and for other elections in the future.

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9 APPENDIX

LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

- 1) Anbreen Ajaib, Women Right's Activist, Pakistan
- 2) Gabrielle Bardall, Gender Specialist in IFES, Canada
- 3) Khamayel Fenniche, IFES, Tunisia
- 4) Asmaa Guedira, Gender Advocate, Morocco
- 5) Miriam Jerotich, PhD Student, USA
- 6) Marie Frantz Joachim, Sec. General of CEP Provisional Electoral Council, Haiti
- 7) Karoline Klose, Former Associate Governance Officer at UNDP, Haiti
- 8) Marie Laurence, IDEA Head of Programme, Haiti
- 9) Ninette Umurerwa, National Coordinator at HAGURUKA, Rwanda
- 10) Kelly Zhang, Political Scientist, USA
- 11) Amour Boubakri, Constitutional Lawyer, Tunisia

METHODOLOGY

The methodological focus of this research is on qualitative research, which is fairly balanced with quantitative aspect and partial work with secondary data. The reason underpinning this decision is simple, we believe that in our scenario these are the most suitable and complementary methods of reaching practical results. Since there is not a lot of existing research or data analysis on the topic, a first understanding of the problem and roots of this issue is gained by empirical research. Primary data for the research was gathered through eleven semi-structured interviews. The interviewees are from Haiti, Rwanda, Tunisia and other countries. The interviewees were contacted on the basis of their expertise on the subject and their location specific knowledge. The interviewees from Haiti, Rwanda and Tunisia were able to provide information according to country specific contexts and gender experts from other parts of the world were able to help with theoretical knowledge and a deeper understanding of the topic. The data collected from the interviews was analyzed and combined with the findings of the literature review to outline the main challenges for female political participation and representation in Haiti.

Even though the research focuses on the analysis and policy recommendations for Haiti, it also has a comparative component, comparing Haiti with Rwanda and Tunisia, two countries that went

through similar challenges as Haiti in terms of female political participation and representation. These countries, however, have been able to considerably improve their situation in the past years and this research analyzes their situation and policy changes to recommend future policy actions for Haiti.

To establish a rational basis for comparison between the three countries, we compared the countries based on different indicators and found a number of similarities between the conditions in Haiti today and the conditions in Rwanda and Tunisia at their turning points. The indicators included structure of parliament, electoral system, power structure, political party system and nomination of political candidates, gender based committees and ministries, GDP, HDI, Labor force participation rate, Gender Inequality Index (GII), Literacy Rate, Number of Women in the Parliament and ministerial positions, and impact of various social factors on the condition of women in the country.

LIMITATIONS

The topics of gender issues, and female political participation and representation have only recently gained importance in the Haitian society. Due to this there is limited background data, research or analysis available on the topic. This was one of the main factor that pushed us towards a more qualitative approach and to spend time on gaining an in-depth understanding.

The question of subjectivity always plays a role in qualitative research and since the data collected for this research is mainly from interviews from various people, human biases and experiences may affect the answers of the interviewees and may have a negative impact on the validity of certain results. Even though Haiti, Rwanda and Tunisia are similar in some respects, there are certain important factors that limit direct comparability. One substantial area in which comparison is only partly given are the local circumstances when the country's measures and policies promoting gender were put into place. Thus, introducing particular measures in one country to advance women's representation does not necessarily lead to equivalent results in another country. This may affect the validity of the comparison and the feasibility of certain policy recommendations. Moreover, our sample size of 10 interviewees may affect the reliability of the policy recommendations. The small sample size is a result of geographical distance from the countries being studied in the research paper. The research team is based in Europe and can only contact potential interviewees through mutual contacts, email or Skype; which form not the most convenient or preferred methods for people who have busy work schedules and often limited access to a reliable internet

connection. In addition, problems occurred with scheduling of interviews/Skype calls due to different time zones of the participants, followed by difficulties with internet connection which greatly affected the sound quality and hence, also the reporting of the answers. Additionally, there is also the possibility of finding out that the choices of interviewees were not as fitting as hoped, and their knowledge of the topic was limited, or their responses are too general and therefore, not concludable in a statistical manner. When it comes to quantitative research, some sources were hard to find, if at all.