

VI. Policy responses to address barriers and promote women's participation and representation in elected public life

Table 12 portrays the policies that are required to support women candidates in combating various barriers, and promote their role in

political participation and representation. It provides the suggestions for the various actors to address policy needs.

Table 12. Policies recommended for overcoming barriers and promoting women's participation and representation in elected public life

Barriers	Policies	Support by			
		Local authorities	International agencies	Men	Women
Personal, related to skills and capacities	Design a strategy to support women in promoting their abilities and empower them to assume their roles in life, including a policy to train and educate women	X			
	Support the drafting of an electoral platform in accordance with legislation and laws		X		
	Coach women on their appearances in the media during elections			X	
Socio-cultural	Educate society about the importance of women's political participation and highlight examples of female historical and religious leaders	X	X	X	X
	Support the media discourse of women and enable them to present their programs and plans in a clear and effective manner	X	X		X
Institutional structures	Support women's organizations that empower women candidates and work to build their political and social capacities and knowledge of international laws and conventions		X		
	Encourage female and male candidates to attend together the highest media meetings and face-to-face meetings with decision-makers to benefit from their experiences			X	X
Low participation of women in the state and electoral systems	Enhance women's empowerment to be 50 per cent to allow them to take up executive and elected positions	X			
	Strengthen women to activate their role in society in order for traditional views to change	X	X	X	

Barriers	Policies	Support by			
		Local authorities	International agencies	Men	Women
Economy	Introduce her to the private sector and employers for financial support for her campaign			X	X
	Introduce unified advocacy for all candidates	X			
Violence	Confront campaigns and rumours that offend women professionally and morally			X	
	Stipulate in the law of IHEC the type and placement of electoral advertising	X			
	Enforce a law that holds accountable and takes appropriate action against anyone who exceeds and violates electoral laws	X			
Political	Encourage Parties to clarify their policies so that women are convinced to participate	X			
	End the quota system, introduce a fair electoral system and involve independent commissioners	X			
	Activate and endorse the Convention on Elimination Discrimination Against Women agreement	X			
Gender awareness	Promote literacy programmes, particularly women's programmes that support women candidates and enhance their role in society	X	X		
	Promote awareness and non-discrimination between females and males in small and large families		X		X
	Educate the community on the importance of women's role in the media		X		X
	Provide practical moral and material support to enhance the candidate's confidence in her own abilities and capabilities		X		

VII. General recommendations

Based on the findings of the present study and to ensure an enhanced and sustained women's political participation, all identified barriers and suggested mechanisms need to be addressed in an integrated manner. Accordingly, the present section proposes the following recommendations.

A. Creating of an enabling environment (political, legal and institutional)

- a. Develop a new strategy for the advancement of women that benefits from international expertise and emphasizes the support and promotion of a culture of equality, anti-discrimination and non-violence. This strategy should also take into account the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially Goal 5, aiming to ensure equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political and public life. This strategy should also include action plans and programmes for women's political, social and economic participation that the Government regularly follows and updates, in cooperation with civil society organizations, particularly non-governmental organizations, networks and women's movements;
- b. Create a national mechanism with a high level of decision-making capacity to coordinate the implementation of the strategy and follow up on the obstacles to its implementation, and all in cooperation with active civil society organizations;
- c. Allocate provisions in the State budget for addressing, developing, and promoting the political participation of Iraqi women to eliminate discrimination and violence

against women, and allocate development projects and achieve security and stability at all levels. This fund should promote women's leadership and political participation in parliamentary and PC election and can provide capacity-building, awareness-raising, advocacy activities and mentorship;

- d. Establish a national centre for women's studies to facilitate the conduct of studies on women's political participation, and to follow up on their situation and monitor the negative and positive aspects of their situation. This centre can study the impact of the specified challenges to women's participation and the cost of women's low participation in public life;
- e. Ensure that the quota is increased to reach the Beijing baseline of 30 per cent at least, and introduce measures to increase the presence of women in all decision-making structures (legislative, judicial and executive branches).

B. Fostering a socio-cultural context to raise awareness and combat stereotypes

- a. Promote and disseminate gender culture at all levels and in all State institutions to ensure that social and economic policies, including education curriculums, do not perpetuate deeply rooted negative stereotypes and exacerbate violence against women, but ensure the promotion of their full participation in public life, socially and economically;
- b. Disseminate nation-wide awareness-raising campaigns on women's political

participation and its added value economically and socially;

- c. Mobilize media in awareness-raising campaigns and establish guidelines to ensure their abundant coverage of women's political rights and that negative stereotypes are challenged. Special funds could be allocated to ensure this space on air;
- d. Promote moderate male and female religious leaders to create a platform to promote women rights and gender equality in a religious discourse.

C. Empowering female candidates technically and personally

- a. Provide a comprehensive technical capacity-building programme for women candidates that includes needed knowledge and information and skills;
- b. Empower women to build up their self-confidence and erase their doubts, and encourage them to participate in decision-making processes and run for elections;
- c. Design and implement comprehensive financing strategies aimed at political

training of women candidates and, specifically, at the nomination phase of their campaigns. International experience shows that of the three most common funding types – public, private, and combined public/private – public funding is the most advantageous for women.

In sum, and as revealed throughout the present study, the barriers to women's participation in political decision-making are obviously primarily rooted in patriarchy. Male hegemony can only recede when women are empowered and prepared for higher office through strategies for challenging sexist stereotypes in society and in the media.

It is also recommended to embrace the support approach and focus on how women can be effective agents of change. Rather than focusing only on how to run campaigns, and adopting only a top-down training approach, the more innovative approaches to adult learning such as expert on-the-job support, coaching and mentoring, or study and experiential visits, need to be effectively used. Capacity-building should not exclusively focus on empowering women in decision-making, but also on what men need to do to share the space with women and become agents of change.