

## GENDER EQUALITY IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION - GEPA, PHASE I

Public administration is the bedrock of government and the central instrument through which national policies and programmes are implemented. In an ideal world, public administration is guided by principles of fairness, accountability, justice, equality and non-discrimination, and the civil service should serve as a model where women and men equally participate and lead, including in decision-making.



However, globally, this is not yet the reality and, despite the fact that the internationally agreed target of a minimum of 30 percent women in leadership positions applies equally to public administration as it does to politics, women remain underrepresented in decision-making in public administration. In many developed and developing countries, public administration often remains a patriarchal institution, perpetuating gender-biased traditions, attitudes and practices.

In response to these challenges, UNDP undertook a research and policy development initiative; “Gender Equality in Public Administration” (GEPA) to analyse the situation of women in decision-making in public administration, to identify challenges that contribute to ongoing gaps in gender parity, even when laws and policies have already been developed and to propose recommendations to address these gaps.

In the first phase of this GEPA initiative, UNDP produced a global report, drawing on a desk review and 13 country case studies.

### Key findings from the GEPA Report

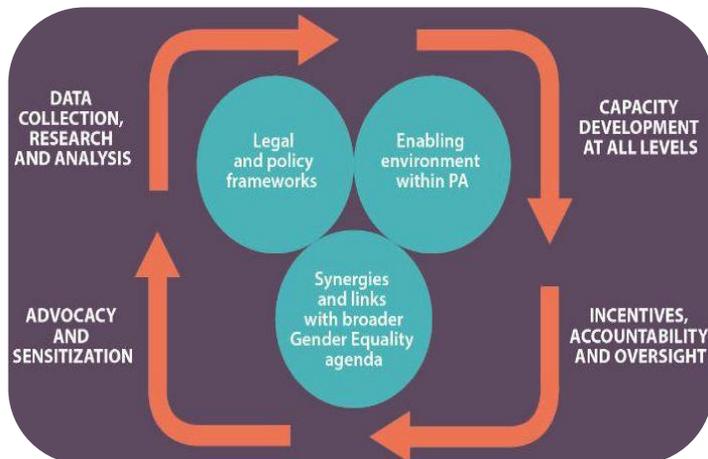
- Across all regions, women continue to be underrepresented at top levels of public administration.
- In 11 of 13 GEPA case study countries, women hold less than 30% of decision-making positions in public administration. In 7 of the 13 case study countries, women occupy 15% or less of decision-making positions.
- Constitutions, national legislation and policies, including those governing the public administration, are often discriminatory, both overtly and systemically.
- Women continue to hit glass ceilings and glass walls that prevent their equal participation in decision-making positions.
- The organisational cultures of many public administrations (stereotypes, human resource practices, etc.) often disadvantage women and need to be reformed.
- Gender equality issues generally and including in relation to women’s participation and decision-making in public administration are rarely prioritized in post conflict settings.

International law recognizes that everyone has a right to participate in public life, but it remains an ongoing challenge to achieve women’s *equal* participation, especially in decision-making.

-Helen Clark, UNDP Administrator

## UNDP's Key Recommendations

### Advancing Women's Equal Participation and Decision-Making in Public Administration



#### 1. Strengthen constitutional, legislative and policy frameworks

- Comprehensive review of constitutions, national laws and policies.
- Harmonisation of relevant laws, policies and regulations in public administration.
- Development and implementation of temporary special measures.

#### 2. Promote institutional change within public administration

- Change in organisational culture in public administration agencies and units.
- Human resource policies (recruitment, retention, promotion, performance, work-life, capacity-building, networking).
- Capacity and commitment to collect, analyse and discuss data to improve accountability.

#### 3. Promote synergies and linkages with the broader gender equality agenda

- Address systemic gender-based discrimination and bias.
- Support women's education and preparedness for civil service careers, with a focus on young women. Develop national gender equality plans with concrete strategies and implementation mechanisms.
- Support networks and multi-stakeholder platforms to exchange knowledge and experience
- Promote women's visibility and gender equality in traditional and social media.
- Strengthen national oversight, monitoring and accountability.
- Highlight that women's empowerment and leadership in public administration benefits not only women but public administration as a whole.

## Entry Points for UNDP Policy and Programming GEPA, Phase II

### A. Support data collection and analysis to inform policy, programming and advocacy

- Develop a methodology to collect data on women in decision-making positions in Public Administration.
- Create a platform to share relevant constitutional provisions, laws, regulations, policies, measures and good practices.
- Develop innovative research, support data and knowledge production.

### B. Leverage UNDP's convening power to build strong global, regional and national partnerships

- Support change in organizational cultures.
- Establish a global community/network of practitioners, decision-makers, and champions.
- Convene and facilitate dialogues with all relevant stakeholders.
- Broker knowledge, including innovative capacity development and leadership initiatives, and facilitate exchanges across countries.

### C. Use UNDP's expertise and extensive global presence to promote policy and programming at the country level

- Support additional GEPA country case studies and piloting of GEPA recommendations.
- Support capacity development at all levels, with particular attention to young women
- Develop practical policy guidance on how to promote women's leadership and preparedness in public service.
- Encourage the integration of women's participation and leadership in public administration in UNDAFs, CPDs, national policies (e.g. on youth), etc.
- Prioritise and scale up efforts to advance women's equal participation in decision-making.
- Facilitate better understanding of temporary special measures in specific contexts.

### D. Support greater organisational readiness

- Lead by example and intensify in-house progress on women's empowerment and gender parity.
- Further develop internal capacities.
- Identify in-house male and female champions.
- Develop a roster of experts on women's participation and leadership in PA and gender-sensitive civil service reforms.

For more information on the  
UNDP GEPA Initiative:

[www.undp.org/gepa](http://www.undp.org/gepa)

[gepa@undp.org](mailto:gepa@undp.org)

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