

Chapter 74

Women's Participation and Equal Opportunities for Leadership in Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

The goal of ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership in political, economic, and public life is still a major challenge in Tanzania. This chapter addresses three questions: What accounts for low participation of women in leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic, and public life? What measures have been undertaken to address gender gap in leadership? And, what are the best ways to ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership? Findings suggest several determinants of gender gap in leadership including low level of education among women, patriarchal political norms and values reinforced with high levels of poverty, as well as the dual burden of triple roles, which women carry. Moreover, women are perceived to be lacking public speaking skills and competitiveness. All those factors make women less likely than men to aspire for leadership careers in political, economic, and public life.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades, the majority of post-colonial institutions of governance in Africa have laid efforts to address “inequality in leadership”. Since 1990s, several strategies such as Quotas in decision making bodies, guidelines, policies and international agreements have been adopted to address that gap in decision making organs. Nevertheless, it is men who continue to monopolize the decision-making organs. Given the slow speed at which the number of women in leadership is growing in political and economic life, the chapter investigated what account for low participation of women in leadership at all levels of decision-making in political and economic life. Further, the chapter provides measures to bridge that gap.

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In Africa's milieu, women's participation and equal opportunities for leadership are now widely recognized as integral and inseparable parts of any sustainable strategy for economic growth and pro-poor development. A number of stakeholders have argued that the participation of women in leadership would make a qualitative difference to the governance of countries, and that women have special skills and unique experiences they would bring into these processes (Meena, 2009; TGNP, 2005; Grabe, 2015; Yoon, 2013). Workers also perceive female executives as being honest and ethical than they do male executives. For instance, Pew's study on "Women and Leadership" in 2015 found that 34% of respondents surveyed Americans articulated that women are better at leadership, while only 3% of respondents indicated men are better at it (64% say there's no difference). Other studies also show that women are better at making deals in the Senate than their male peers collaborating and working across party lines in greater numbers than the men. According to the information from Pew research center (2015) "Over the past seven years, the Quorum analysis found, the average female senator co-sponsored 6.29 bills with another Senate woman, while the average male senator co-sponsored 4.07 bills with another Senate man" and that "the average female senator co-sponsored 171.08 bills with a member of the opposite party; for the average male senator, that figure was 129.87." These shows that what can work in the Senate can work in the boardroom. Studies also show that women can improve a company's bottom line. For instance, studies by Catalyst (The Bottom Line: Corporate Performance and Women's Representation on Boards, 2004-2008, March 2011) determined companies that achieve gender diversity and manage it well attain better financial results. The findings of these studies show that companies with the highest percentages of women board directors saw a 16% higher return on sales and a 26% higher return on invested capital than companies with the lowest representation. McKinsey & Company (2010) find that women are more likely than men to use leadership skills, such as employee development, rewards, role models, inspiration, and participative decision making. Brown et al. (2002) suggest that when there are more women on boards there is closer scrutiny of the handling of conflicts of interest. Catalyst (2008), Credit Suisse research Institute (2012) Chanavat and Ramsden (2013), and McKinsey & Company (2007, 2010) assert that better performing firms tend to have more women on their boards. Dezso and Ross (2012), covering the enterprises included in Standard and Poor's 1500 Composite Index for the period 1992-2006, found that female representation in top management does improve firm performance. exclude women from decision making therefore deprives a country of a valuable contribution to the progress and welfare of the people, which are crucial for poverty eradication and the achievement of the sustainable development goals.

Available literature of women leadership drawn from both, the academic and the development practitioners provides a survey of successes and failures of policies and initiated interventions or programs that promote women's participation and equal opportunities for leadership. The engagement of stakeholders such as donors, international communities, national and local governments, NGOs, private companies and knowledge institutes have been critically analyzed. Among their claims, is the fact that women's participation and equal opportunities for leadership is essential for strengthening democracy and attainment of sustainable development (Beijing Platform for Action, 1995; The convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women). This argument is also supported by the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania which recognises women capacity and the right to participate in politics, as well as in social and economic life of the country. The right to vote and stand for election are also provided equally for men and women (URT, 2012).

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