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**Human Rights Council**

**Fiftieth session**

13 June–8 July 2022

Agenda items 2 and 10

**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner  
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the  
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

**Technical assistance and capacity-building**

Technical cooperation and capacity-building to promote and protect the rights of women and girls to full and effective participation in decision-making and in public life and to freedom from violence, with a view to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls

Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights[[1]](#footnote-2)\*

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| *Summary* |
| The present report, submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 48/24, focuses on technical cooperation on the full and effective participation of women in decision-making and in public life and on the elimination of violence, with a view to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. The report serves as a basis for the discussions during the annual thematic panel discussion on technical cooperation in the field of human rights at the fiftieth session of the Council. In preparing the report, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights gathered information on national and regional experiences, including good practices, of technical cooperation and capacity-building. |
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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 48/24, in which the Council requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to prepare a report on its activities and plans and those of relevant United Nations country teams and agencies and regional organizations to support the efforts of States to promote the full and effective participation of women in decision-making and in public life and to eliminate violence, with a view to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. The report serves as a basis for the discussions during the annual thematic panel discussion on technical cooperation in the field of human rights at the fiftieth session of the Council.
2. In preparation of the present report, OHCHR gathered information on national and regional experiences, including examples of good practices received from States, United Nations entities and other relevant stakeholders in the areas of technical cooperation and capacity-building. OHCHR is grateful for the contributions received from Argentina, Burundi, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, El Salvador, Iraq, Italy, Mexico, Portugal, Serbia, Spain, Togo, Türkiye and Uzbekistan, as well as from the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) for the present report.
3. OHCHR, with its partners, implements technical cooperation programmes, at the request and with the agreement of States, to support their efforts in promoting the rights of women and girls to participate in decision-making and to freedom from all forms of gender-based violence. The present report provides concrete examples of such programmes carried out during the period from 2019 to 2021 in the following areas: strengthening legal, policy and institutional frameworks; increasing women’s voices in decision-making and in public life; protecting women and girls who have been victims of violence; and promoting research, knowledge exchange and the sharing of experiences. The report provides a non-exhaustive overview of some concrete examples of States’ efforts to achieve gender equality and to eliminate gender-based violence against women and girls through technical cooperation, with a view to facilitating an exchange of experiences and highlighting opportunities for technical cooperation.

A. Current situation

1. Since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995, States have made important gains in the area of gender equality. Between 2010 and 2020, 131 States enacted 274 legal and regulatory reforms in support of gender equality. By 2020, the number of girls not enrolled in primary schooling had halved, from 65 million in 1995 to 32 million, and the rate of child marriage had declined from one in four in 1995 to one in five.[[2]](#footnote-3) Despite such progress, women remain underrepresented in all levels of political leadership. While the percentage of women in national parliaments had more than doubled, to 26 per cent by May 2022 compared to 11 per cent in 1995, that percentage represented only one in four seats in parliament, and only five States had 50 per cent or more women members of parliament.[[3]](#footnote-4) As at September 2021, there were only 26 women Heads of State and Government. In 2020, women constituted 36 per cent of local government members and 21 per cent of cabinet-level members. At current rates of progress, gender parity will not be achieved in national legislative bodies before 2063, or, at the level of Heads of State and Government before 2150. Women remain underrepresented in the judiciary, the foreign service, international and regional entities, academia and the private sector. In 2019, for example, women held 28 per cent of managerial positions worldwide. In 2020, women represented 23 per cent of delegates in global peace processes led or co-led by the United Nations, and nearly 40 per cent of humanitarian planning processes held no consultations with local women’s organizations.[[4]](#footnote-5) Furthermore, on average, women do three times more unpaid care and domestic work than men, limiting their access to other opportunities, including participation in public life.[[5]](#footnote-6)
2. Gender-based violence against women and girls is one of the most extreme manifestations of discrimination against women and girls, representing a major impediment to the achievement of gender equality and remaining one of the most persistent violations of their human rights. Prior to the start of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, almost one in three women – an estimated 736 million women – had been subjected to violence, and there is evidence of an intensification of violence during the pandemic. During 2020, 81,000 women and girls were killed, of whom 58 per cent were killed by intimate partners or family members. Less than 40 per cent of women who experience violence seek help, and less than 10 per cent of women who seek help appeal to the police. The majority (92 per cent) of detected victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation are women and girls,[[6]](#footnote-7) and at least 80 per cent of women parliamentarians have experienced some form of violence from members of the public and/or fellow parliamentarians.[[7]](#footnote-8) In recent years, women and girls have increasingly experienced discrimination, intimidation and violence, which have undermined their rights to participate in decision-making and public life and to access health and other services that respect and strengthen their autonomy.[[8]](#footnote-9)

B. Normative and policy framework

1. The rights of women and girls to active, free and meaningful participation in decision-making and in public life and to freedom from all forms of gender-based violence are at the heart of their universal and fundamental rights, including gender equality, and they are essential for the realization of all other human rights. The Beijing Declaration recognizes that women’s empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality, including in decision-making processes as well as access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace (para. 13). The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women outlines the obligations of States to eliminate discrimination against women in all areas of political and public life (arts. 5, 7, 8 and 14). The Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes the right of girls to be heard in all matters affecting them and to actively participate in the community (arts. 12 and 23).
2. Gender-based discrimination and violence against women and girls prevent them from exercising their equal right to participate in public life and are prohibited under customary international law. Through its general recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women and its jurisprudence, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has clarified that discrimination against women, as defined in article 1 of the Convention, includes gender-based violence and that States have the obligation to eliminate all forms of gender-based violence against women and girls, wherever they occur. The Convention on the Rights of the Child outlines the obligation of States to take all necessary measures to protect girls from all forms of violence (art. 19).
3. The rights of women and girls to participate in decision-making and in public life and to freedom from all forms of gender-based violence are enshrined in numerous international and regional human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (arts. 7 and 21), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (arts. 3, 21, 25 and 26), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (arts. 3 and 7), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (arts. 6 and 16), the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (paras. 8 and 18), the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (arts. 1–3), the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the International Labour Organization (ILO) Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190). At the regional level, violence against women and girls is prohibited under the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) (art. 9), the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará), the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (art. 23, including Directive 2006/54/EC), the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention) and various declarations of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on the elimination of violence against women and children, including on bullying and online exploitation and abuse.
4. Recommendations made by international human rights mechanisms, including the treaty bodies and special procedures of the Council and in universal periodic reviews, provide guidance for technical cooperation on promoting and protecting the rights of women and girls to public participation and to freedom from gender-based violence. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women general recommendations No. 23 (1997) on political and public life and No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures clarify actions needed by States to accelerate de facto equality between men and women. The Committee on the Rights of the Child, in its general comments No. 12 (2009) on the right of the child to be heard and No. 20 (2017) on the implementation of the rights of the child during adolescence emphasize the right of girls to be heard at all levels of society and to have opportunities for participation and decision-making. Joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 (2019) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on harmful practices, Committee on the Rights of the Child general comment No. 8 (2007) on protection from corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment and Committee on the Rights of the Child general comment No. 13 (2011) on freedom from all forms of violence recommend legislative, policy and other measures for eliminating violence and harmful practices that affect the rights of women and girls and underscore the obligations of States to protect women and girls from all forms of gender-based violence.
5. The United Nations Working Group on discrimination against women and girls has provided recommendations in its reports on: eliminating discrimination against women in political and public life with a focus on political transition;[[9]](#footnote-10) promoting and protecting girls’ and young women’s activism;[[10]](#footnote-11) and countering rollbacks against the human rights of women and girls.[[11]](#footnote-12) It has emphasized that failure to ensure the equality of women and girls within the family undermines any attempt to ensure their equality in all areas of society, including in political and public life.[[12]](#footnote-13) At its sixty-fifth session, in 2021, the Commission on the Status of Women adopted agreed conclusions on women’s full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, emphasizing that the full and equal representation of women and men at all levels of decision-making in all spheres of life is needed to promote peaceful, just, inclusive and sustainable societies ([E/2021/27](http://undocs.org/en/E/2021/27), chap. I, sect. A). In recent years, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences has recommended measures to prevent and combat violence against women in politics ([A/73/301](http://undocs.org/en/A/73/301)) and gender-based violence against women in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic ([A/75/144](http://undocs.org/en/A/75/144)). The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children has advocated for the prevention and elimination of violence against children and for the inclusion of children in decision-making processes relating to their safety, protection and well-being.[[13]](#footnote-14) The guidelines for States on the effective implementation of the right to participate in public affairs ([A/HRC/39/28](http://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/39/28)) provide recommendations to counter the adverse impact of discrimination, including multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, on the effective exercise of the right of women and girls to participate in public affairs.
6. Removing legal barriers to the equal rights of women and girls is essential for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and ensuring that no one is left behind. While States have committed, under Sustainable Development Goal 5 (target 5.5), to ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life, women’s participation in decision-making and the elimination of gender-based violence against women and girls are essential to achieving all of the Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 16 aims at ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels (target 16.7) and calls for a significant reduction in all forms of violence (target 16.1), including against children (target 16.2). Other goals aim at eradicating specific forms of violence, such as trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation (target 5.2), child marriage and female genital mutilation (target 5.3) and child labour, including the recruitment of children in armed conflict (target 8.7). The Secretary-General’s call to action for human rights, which places human rights at the centre of sustainable development, calls on the international community to support efforts towards the equal rights of women and girls. In 2019, in the context of the Secretary General’s appeal for “peace in the home”, 146 States committed to strengthening efforts to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls during the COVID-19 pandemic.

II. Technical cooperation to support the efforts of States to promote and protect the rights of women and girls to full and effective participation in decision-making and in public life and to freedom from violence

1. Technical cooperation is critical to implementing the OHCHR programme to support the efforts of States to promote and protect human rights and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the global mandate of the High Commissioner under General Assembly resolution 48/141 to promote and protect the enjoyment and full realization of all human rights by all people everywhere. Through advisory services, technical assistance, capacity-building and grants, OHCHR undertakes technical cooperation, at the request and with the agreement of States, within the Office’s priorities, expected results and strategies and in line with the components for ensuring effective technical cooperation outlined by the Board of Trustees of the Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights and of the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance in the Implementation of the Universal Periodic Review. [[14]](#footnote-15) Achieving gender equality and promoting the equal enjoyment by women and girls of all human rights are at the core of the OHCHR programme.

A. Strengthening legal, policy and institutional frameworks

Legislative and policy reforms

1. Technical cooperation programmes should be anchored in the universality and indivisibility of all human rights and include both elements for the protection and the promotion of human rights. In this regard, supporting States to adopt and implement anti-discrimination and gender equality laws that comply with international human rights standards is a human rights imperative and a priority of the international community, as emphasized in the Secretary-General’s call to action for human rights and in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. Sustainable Development Goal 5, target 5.C, highlights the particular necessity of adopting and strengthening sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels. In Serbia, the United Nations country team, including OHCHR, supported the preparation and adoption of legislative reforms and policies strengthening the country’s legal framework on protection from discrimination against women, including a draft law on gender equality and amendments to the law prohibiting discrimination.
2. Temporary special measures, including quotas, are necessary to advance the equal participation of women in decision-making and public life.[[15]](#footnote-16) In Burkina Faso, UN-Women, in coordination with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and civil society, provided technical assistance to parliamentarians on the passage of a new quota law. In line with recommendations of human rights mechanisms and following advocacy efforts by OHCHR and its partners, Kazakhstan established a minimum quota of 30 per cent of parliamentary seats for women and youth.
3. States have received support from United Nations country teams for the development of legislative and policy measures criminalizing gender-based violence against women and girls. In Nigeria, OHCHR supported the National Assembly and State legislatures to align domestic legislation with international human rights standards, placing emphasis on the prohibition of gender-based discrimination and harmful practices, including forced and early marriage, female genital mutilation and gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict situations. Also in Nigeria, OHCHR supported the analysis of a provincial law on rape to assess its compliance with international human rights standards, which supported advocacy efforts on appropriate responses to the increase in the number of cases of rape and gender-based violence reported during the COVID-19 pandemic. Following joint advocacy by the United Nations country team, including OHCHR, for an analysis of the impact of various ordinances issued by the Government on the enjoyment of women’s human rights, Nepal adopted legislation to criminalize acid attacks on women and girls and to regulate the buying and selling of the acids used in such attacks.
4. North Macedonia, with the support of the United Nations country team, adopted a law on the prevention and protection of women from violence, including domestic violence, marking an important milestone in promoting the autonomy of women and girls and safeguarding their right to freedom from fear and violence. OHCHR supported the working group in drafting the law, ensuring that it complied with international and regional human rights standards, and supported its implementation by providing advice on including a holistic, victim-centred approach in secondary legislation on prevention, protection, support and criminal justice responses. The country team also supported the drafting of new legislative initiatives on improved access to justice, criminal law amendments to curtail violence against women and girls and compensation for victims of violence as part of the new draft law on State-funded compensation for victims of violent crimes. Emphasis was placed on addressing the intersecting and multiple forms of discrimination and the negative gender stereotypes associated with gender-based violence.
5. In Libya, OHCHR mobilized national partners, including the committee of Libyan experts on combating violence against women, to conduct a comprehensive review of the draft law on violence against women to ensure its compliance with international human rights standards. OHCHR, together with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UN-Women, presented the draft law to women members of parliament, and will advocate for its endorsement in 2022. In Brazil and El Salvador, UN-Women supported multi-stakeholder advocacy and provided technical assistance to national legislatures, contributing to newly passed legislation addressing violence against women in politics.
6. Efforts were made to support the development of national policies advancing women’s right to participation in decision-making. Regarding the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda under Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), in Iraq, UN-Women supported the adoption of the second national action plan for the implementation of the resolution. In Nepal, the United Nations country team, in coordination with OHCHR, advocated for the endorsement of the second national action plan on women, peace and security, which was drafted in collaboration with women victims of conflict. As of March 2022, the action plan was pending cabinet approval.

Gender-responsive institutions and programming

1. Building and strengthening national frameworks and institutions in the field of human rights is an important component of technical cooperation. In this context, United Nations country teams supported States in using the gender mainstreaming strategy, including through gender-responsive legislative processes and budgeting, to implement legislation and policies advancing gender equality. In Liberia, OHCHR developed a human rights and gender checklist for endorsement by the national legislature to ensure the mainstreaming of gender issues and concerns when drafting legislation and undertaking reviews and strengthened the capacity of the legislative committee in using the checklist to mainstream human rights and gender into legislative and policymaking processes. OHCHR also supported the Independent National Commission on Human Rights in assisting the Government and the Ministry of Justice to strengthen legal and policy reforms to advance gender mainstreaming and prohibit discrimination.
2. In Türkiye, UN-Women launched a project for the implementation of planning and budgeting sensitive to equality of women and men, supporting the integration of gender equality into all stages of policymaking and budgeting processes at national and local levels. In Cuba, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and UNDP supported the National Institute of Territorial Planning and Urban Development in incorporating a gender approach into urban resilience measures in Havana, Bayamo and Santiago de Cuba. With technical assistance from UNDP and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Ministry of Agriculture developed a gender strategy for the agricultural system, with an inclusive action plan for achieving women’s empowerment and gender equality in the agricultural, forestry and tobacco industries. Mexico launched its feminist foreign policy and mainstreamed a gender perspective as a transversal priority in all of its international cooperation initiatives.
3. States have been supported in their efforts to strengthen the capacities of national institutions responsible for promoting gender equality to mainstream gender into national institutions to combat gender-based discrimination and violence and to promote the right of women and girls to participate in decision-making.In the State of Palestine, OHCHR provided training for staff of gender units within the State ministries and the general and military intelligence services on the human rights-based approach and on addressing cases of discrimination and identifying patterns of discrimination against women. In Papua New Guinea, UNDP and OHCHR conducted capacity-building for government officials in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville on women’s rights to public participation and the importance of inclusive and consultative decision-making processes.
4. Burundi established a gender sector group, bringing together government institutions, civil society and international organizations to monitor the implementation of laws, policies and programmes on gender equality, including the national gender policy, and the steering committee for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). In Timor-Leste, UN-Women, the United Nations gender theme group and OHCHR supported the development of a country-specific gender equality profile to be used in the monitoring and reporting of the State’s commitments on gender equality, women’s empowerment and the Sustainable Development Goals, including recommendations made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and in the context of the universal periodic review and the high-level political forum on sustainable development.
5. The Secretary-General has called for technical cooperation to develop COVID-19 response and recovery plans, with the participation of women, that promote sustainable development and drive transformative change towards inclusive and equal societies. UN-Women generated evidence-based knowledge and tools to support gender mainstreaming in parliamentary responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, including “A primer for parliamentary action: gender-sensitive responses to COVID-19”, which provides guidance to members of parliament and parliamentary staff on ensuring a gender-responsive response and recovery to the COVID-19 pandemic and legislating from a gender perspective when supporting the COVID-19 crisis. The primer has informed the parliamentary support work carried out by UN-Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Papua New Guinea.[[16]](#footnote-17)

B. Increasing women’s voice in decision-making and in public life

Awareness-raising and training to eliminate gender stereotypes and gender-based violence against women and girls

1. United Nations entities have provided support to States in conducting awareness-raising and training activities to eliminate the barriers to women’s effective participation in public life, including discriminatory gender stereotypes and gender-based violence against women. In the State of Palestine, OHCHR and UN-Women conducted awareness-raising campaigns on women’s political participation in the context of elections and violence against women on the occasions of International Women’s Day and during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign. The campaigns included videos with testimonies of survivors and key advocacy messages for duty-bearers and the general public that amassed over 815,000 views on OHCHR social media channels. In Paraguay, OHCHR, in coordination with the European Union and the gender secretariat of the Supreme Court of Justice, developed a draft “Guide to guarantee access to justice to all people without distinction in Paraguay” to challenge harmful gender stereotypes and mainstream a gender perspective into the administration of justice. It is anticipated that the guide will be validated and disseminated through training for judicial officials in 2022. In Southeast Asia, OHCHR, UN-Women and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization organized a 10-month online training for 42 women journalists from 15 countries on the protection of women journalists and women’s human rights to public participation in the context of shrinking democratic space. Participants created a community of practice for engagement and the sharing of experiences. In Azerbaijan, the United Nations country team organized an event to raise the awareness of 48 representatives (of whom 35 were women) of civil society and bar associations on gender-based discrimination and violence and key challenges to women’s access to justice. In Fiji, OHCHR supported the International Commission of Jurists in conducting a training for 35 lawyers of the Fiji Women Lawyers Association on eliminating discriminatory gender stereotypes and behaviours towards women, enhancing access to justice for women human rights defenders and their role in combating gender-based violence against women and girls.

Economic empowerment

1. Poverty and social exclusion are persistent barriers to women’s full enjoyment of their rights to political and public participation.[[17]](#footnote-18) Investing in the economic empowerment of women and girls is essential for nurturing their political aspirations and promoting their public engagement. In Türkiye, UNDP, the Sabanci Foundation, the Ministry of Family and Social Services and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security launched the “Young women building their future” project to empower and promote the active participation of young women in economic and social life through vocational training, mentoring and employment opportunities.
2. Iraq, with support from the World Bank, launched its women’s economic empowerment plan for 2021–2022 to build capacities for gender-responsive budgeting, develop women’s skills in the digital and agricultural sectors, boost women’s access to finance and implement legislative reforms to reduce gender gaps. In 2022, Uzbekistan improved its regulatory and legal framework through a presidential decree to further accelerate the work on the systematic support of family and women and a national programme on increasing the activity of women and girls in all spheres of economic, political and social life 2022–2026.

Inclusive decision-making and electoral processes

1. United Nations country teams, in cooperation with national partners, supported practices and programmes to promote inclusive electoral processes, including through technical assistance to electoral bodies. In Iraq, ahead of the 2021 parliamentary elections, UN-Women supported the establishment of the Supreme Committee of the Council of Ministers, providing technical assistance to its work in contributing to the development of an electoral code of conduct specifying provisions to address the barriers, including violence, faced by Iraqi women to their participation in political life. In coordination with the Independent High Electoral Commission, the Supreme Committee trained 669 female candidates for the elections. For its part, UN-Women worked with national partners and civil society to carry out inclusive civic education and sensitization campaigns and to advocate for changes in electoral regulations to ensure women’s fair access to the political sphere, both as voters and candidates. As a result, 949 women were nominated, of whom 156 were independent candidates, and 96 women were elected into the Iraqi parliament, exceeding the national quota of 25 per cent by 13 seats. OHCHR also conducted 147 interviews with women candidates to document and monitor the challenges they faced during the electoral processes.
2. Supporting women’s candidacies and political campaigns, including through campaign financing, is essential for achieving gender parity in public office. In Togo, additional funding was provided to political parties that presented female candidates. In Argentina, the EUROsociAL programme of the European Union provided information for legislators, civil society and the public on women’s political autonomy, monitored compliance with the parity law and established the observatory for parity democracy to promote the participation of women in decision-making in political parties and the participation of women candidates at national, provincial and municipal levels of government in the executive, legislative and judicial branches. In Senegal, OHCHR assisted the national parity office in preparing brochures on the application of the parity law and organizing a workshop on strategies for women leaders, elected women and potential candidates to ensure that women are at the top of lists for local elections. In Cameroon, OHCHR and UN-Women trained 67 women parliamentarians on the legal framework for the protection of women’s rights, the contributions of parliamentarians to peacebuilding and the role of women parliamentarians in mitigating the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the rights of women with disabilities and indigenous women. The training, which was chaired by the Vice-President of the National Assembly, marked the beginning of a United Nations partnership with the network of women parliamentarians of Cameroon.
3. United Nations country teams supported advocacy and civil society dialogue with parliamentarians and government officials for the inclusion of issues affecting women in the agendas of political parties. In Costa Rica, the national women’s institute, with its development partners, promoted women’s political participation in the 2022 national elections by advocating for the inclusion of the demands and interests of diverse groups of women in political party agendas, supporting women’s political rights defenders to promote their participation and gender parity in the elections and documenting good practices for future replication. In Indonesia, UN-Women held consultations involving women’s parliamentary caucuses, civil society, women activists and academia to identify a common agenda to advance gender equality, which included supporting the elimination of sexual violence bill, creating opportunities for civil society engagement with women parliamentarians in national policy dialogue and debates and building the capacities of women parliamentarians on gender-responsive budgeting. In Bangladesh, OHCHR supported the development of a platform for national level policy dialogue, involving local government and administration officials, tea-garden authorities and garden-level local council leaders, on gender-responsive planning and budgeting and on advancing the rights of women working in the tea industry.
4. In Libya, to support efforts to increase women’s participation in peace processes, UN-Women supported the work of the Libyan Women Network for Peacebuilding in building the mediation skills of women peacebuilders, ensuring their mobilization to resolve conflict and increasing their online presence to raise public awareness of the importance of women’s engagement in peacemaking. In Yemen, UN-Women supported efforts to strengthen the collaboration and linkages between processes on different peace tracks, including in the context of the stalled peace process, and conducted consultations with women peacebuilders to reflect on an alternative track for women to contribute to the peace process. Following the Secretary-General’s call for a global ceasefire in 2020 to focus on defeating COVID-19, UN-Women brought together more than 100 women civil society organizations from Iraq, Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen and the State of Palestine to issue a call for a ceasefire, leading to the establishment of the Arab Women Mediators Network to increase women’s participation in mediation of peace processes, in partnership with the League of Arab States.

Capacity-building of women to participate in decision-making and in public life

1. A key component of technical cooperation for promoting women’s participation has involved building their capacities, skills and expertise to participate in public life and exercise leadership. Togo, in cooperation with the European Union, launched a political academy for young women leaders to build their capacities to participate in political life, through which training was provided to women in all regions of the country. With the support of UN-Women, Togo implemented two national programmes on women’s political leadership and women’s professional leadership, conducted awareness-raising activities for political parties on gender equality and women’s participation in decision-making, provided training for female political candidates on leadership, communication skills and electoral techniques and launched a professional leadership platform for women to share their experiences, challenges and strategies for overcoming barriers to their participation in decision-making. In 2020, Togo appointed its first female prime minister and 12 women to ministerial positions, representing 34 per cent of female representation, higher than the African Union’s recommended quota of 30 per cent and an important step in the right direction.
2. In Kyrgyzstan, prior to the 2021 parliamentary elections, UN-Women conducted cascade training for 183 women candidates to enhance their knowledge, skills and confidence in running for office and effectively managing electoral campaigns. Of the 18 women who were elected through party lists, seven had participated in training organized by UN-Women. In Colombia, the Presidential Council for Women’s Equity, with UN-Women, the Hanns Seidel Foundation, the Swedish Embassy and Sergio Arboleda University, created the leadership school of women for Colombia to inspire women to represent their communities and actively participate in decision-making processes. As of March 2022, 4,500 women had completed their training and more than 10,000 women were enrolled in the school. Of the 3,500 women who enrolled in 2021, 62 per cent were aspiring to hold an elected position.
3. The Institute for Training and Studies in Democracy in Costa Rica implemented the “Women on the road” project to provide training for the female leadership of political parties in order to develop their knowledge and skills in political representation and to carry out the responsibilities of their positions in party structures. In Nigeria, the Young Women’s Political Academy, launched by UN-Women and the Forum of Nigerian Women in Politics, trained 50 young women in Kogi State on developing their political careers, including how to navigate party politics, conduct community outreach and strengthen communications skills. Participants established a network for young women in politics to facilitate peer learning and advocate for their greater participation in politics. In El Salvador, the National Association of Salvadoran Syndicate Councillors and Mayoresses, supported by UN-Women, trained 100 women in political leadership to contribute to parity democracy through cooperation with State institutions and political organizations. In Fiji, OHCHR and the University of the South Pacific launched in 2021 an academic course on human rights defenders to inspire a new generation of leaders on human rights: 54 students, including 35 women, from Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu participated in the course.
4. Building the capacities of women human rights defenders to participate in decision-making processes, including through advocacy, has been a focus of technical cooperation on gender equality. In Liberia, OHCHR, with civil society and the Independent National Commission on Human Rights, trained 75 women human rights defenders on advocacy and drafting legislation and national action plans. The United Nations Human Rights Training and Documentation Centre for South-West Asia and the Arab Region organized an online training for 35 young women human rights defenders from 12 countries in the region on human rights monitoring and reporting and international human rights standards, including with regard to gender-based discrimination. In Uzbekistan, OHCHR and the Centre for Support of International Protection provided training for 37 civic activists, including 26 women, on promoting and protecting women’s rights, planning for successful advocacy and developing partner networks for cooperation. In the Republic of Moldova, OHCHR strengthened the capacity and knowledge of 30 civil society representatives, including 22 women, from the Transnistria region to promote and advocate for the rights of survivors of domestic violence, persons with disabilities and other persons in vulnerable situations. Participants of the training activities drafted advocacy papers and media publications and conducted informational sessions on the human rights of vulnerable groups.
5. Particular efforts were made to support the participation of women affected by intersecting forms of discrimination, including indigenous women, rural women and women with disabilities, in decision-making.Chile, with its development partners, organized a meeting in 2019 with 100 indigenous women leaders from across the country to create a road map for developing public policies on the empowerment of indigenous women. As of March 2020, 250 Aymara women leaders had received training and support on leadership and economic empowerment, benefiting around 1,000 Aymara women and 26 associations of indigenous women. In Cuba, FAO supported the implementation of a local agricultural innovation project in Matanzas Province to ensure the social recognition and participation of rural women in decision-making. In Tunisia, OHCHR supported the creation of the first association of women with disabilities in the country and provided training on their rights and the existing legal framework. In Kenya, OHCHR supported the organization of nine community dialogues in informal settlements and marginalized areas, including indigenous and pastoralist communities, for 300 young human rights defenders, of whom half were women, in order to enhance youth engagement in political life ahead of the 2022 elections. OHCHR also organized a leadership retreat of 20 women human rights defenders, including women from informal settlements and indigenous women, to create a space for women’s participation and leadership during the elections.

C. Protecting women and girl victims of violence

Access to victim-centred protection measures and services

1. Protection measures and services for women and girls should be centred around the victims and survivors, acknowledging women and girls as rights holders, respecting their views and choices and promoting their agency and autonomy. Such activities include ensuring their access to free or affordable high-quality medical, psychosocial and counselling services and financial assistance.[[18]](#footnote-19)
2. Through the Spotlight Initiative, supported by the European Union, the United Nations supported the development of the first regional action plan for Africa on the elimination of violence against women and girls; provided financial assistance to more than 100 women and girls in Mexico fleeing violent situations in the States of Chihuahua, Guerrero and Mexico; and conducted awareness-raising activities in Argentina on eliminating femicide and violence against women and girls, including the provision of prevention and protection services and reparations to victims. In Fiji, Kiribati and Solomon Islands, UN-Women supported relevant ministries and civil society to develop standard operating procedures for the provision and coordination of standardized essential services to women and girl victims of violence. As of May 2022, it was supporting the efforts of Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu in the development of their standard operating procedures.
3. United Nations country teams supported States in ensuring that health services are responsive to trauma and include comprehensive mental, sexual and reproductive health services. In theDominican Republic, OHCHR, through the Inter-agency Gender Group, advised the Ministry of Health on elaborating national regulations on comprehensive health services for women victims of violence, including gender-based and domestic violence. In North Macedonia, the United Nations country team supported State and non-State actors in establishing protocols for the operation of shelters and referral centres and the provision of immediate assistance and support for women and girl victims of violence. Togo, with support from UNFPA, launched its first holistic care centre, called the one-stop centre, providing medical, psychosocial and legal services for victims of gender-based violence, and established a legal aid fund for girls and women victims of violence.
4. In Burundi, to provide survivors of violence with training and employment opportunities, OHCHR and the Youth Empowerment and Leadership Initiative provided professional and vocational training to 150 young girls and women victims of human trafficking. The training strengthened their knowledge about women’s rights, life skills and psychosocial rehabilitation and community reintegration programmes and empowered them by providing information on financial education and income-generating activities, business plan development, culinary arts and artisanal food processing and artisanal soap making. In Jordan, UN-Women launched a project on the resilience and empowerment of vulnerable women and COVID-19 for the economic empowerment of Syrian refugee women and Jordanian women in vulnerable situations, including victims of sexual and gender-based violence.

Access to justice and remedies

1. Under international human rights law, States have an obligation to prevent and protect women from gender-based violence, punish perpetrators and provide victims with effective remedies, including reparations.[[19]](#footnote-20) In Kenya, UN-Women and OHCHR are implementing the “Let it not happen again” project to ensure access to justice for victims of gender-based violence and to strengthen preventive and response mechanisms by improving the capacities of competent judicial authorities and local civil society organizations ahead of the presidential elections in 2022. In addition, 15 human rights defenders, of whom 11 were women, were trained to support 139 victims of gender-based violence in accessing health and legal services. In Burundi, OHCHR and the Youth Empowerment and Leadership Initiative provided training for 99 representatives, including 60 women, of associations of domestic workers, victims of trafficking and administrative and police officials at the grassroots level on collecting, monitoring and evaluating cases of human rights violations affecting women and girls, in particular trafficking in rural areas. The training provided a platform for the participants to identify strategies for addressing human rights violations in their communities, providing redress to victims and preventing reoccurrence. Following the training, focal points were established in all 18 provinces to monitor the trafficking of women and girls. In Libya, in response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on national judicial systems and mechanisms, OHCHR provided virtual technical assistance to the Supreme Judicial Council and the Supreme Court on establishing dedicated courts for cases of violence against women and children.
2. At the regional level, the Ibero-American Access to Justice Programme, consisting of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru and Spain, incorporated into its 2021 programme an objective on seeking measures and institutional policies to reduce gender gaps in access to justice and ensuring that women have access to effective judicial protection through a cross-cutting gender approach. The programme strengthened training on the gender perspective for personnel working in the justice system in the region, and elaborated a manual on good practices in access to justice with a gender perspective.
3. States were supported in adopting and providing training on legal provisions and administrative regulations for investigating cases of violence against women. In theAmericas, UN-Women, through the Spotlight Initiative Africa Regional Programme, organized consultations with more than 100 women human rights defenders to support the development of the Esperanza Protocol, a guideline for the criminal investigation of threats of violence against women human rights defenders. In Chile, OHCHR and the Public Prosecutor’s Office signed an agreement to draft a national protocol for investigating femicide: OHCHR carried out a needs assessment that will inform the development of the protocol in 2022. In Uruguay, OHCHR and UN-Women provided technical support to the Office of the Prosecutor to prepare national guidelines for prosecutors on the investigation of femicide. In Kyrgyzstan, OHCHR supported civil society organizations in conducting an analysis of law enforcement and judicial practices in cases of violence against women and launched a human rights school on strategic litigation in cases of violence against women.

D. Promoting research, knowledge exchange and the sharing of good practices

1. United Nations entities supported States to generate evidence-based research and tools to inform the development of targeted policies and measures that promote women’s equal political participation, combat gender-based violence and ensure a safe environment for women and girls to exercise their rights. In Cambodia, OHCHR provided technical and financial support for two studies on gender-based violence against indigenous women prepared by the Cambodian indigenous women’s association and Klahaan, an independent organization, as well as a report on monitoring cases of gender-based violence in courts prepared by the Cambodian Centre for Human Rights. These studies provided the basis for a project launched in 2022 by the Cambodian Centre to combat sexual and gender-based violence against indigenous women and to provide training for judges and prosecutors on ensuring accountability for gender-based violence. In Tunisia, OHCHR carried out a study on the implementation of the law on violence against women by the justice sector and contributed to a special session requested by Parliament on examining the law. In the Pacific, OHCHR launched a study on the situation of women human rights defenders in Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, and will use the study in 2022 to develop a protection strategy for women human rights defenders and conduct relevant capacity-building activities.
2. In Colombia, the Colombian Women’s Observatory was established by the World Bank, UN-Women, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the National Administrative Department of Statistics to provide information on the situation of women and indicators for monitoring the protection of their rights, including with regard to violence, participation and public and private leadership. Colombia has partnered with the Inter-American Development Bank and Gender Lab to implement “workplaces without sexual harassment”, a technological platform using algorithms and artificial intelligence to identify, address and prevent sexual harassment in the workplace: as at March 2022, 35 companies were involved in the project. In Cambodia and the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, the project on strengthening gender equality and empowerment in mine action, supported by the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Centre, strengthened research, training and knowledge exchange on women’s empowerment in humanitarian demining programmes in the region.
3. UN-Women compiled global data to create a universal baseline for monitoring and analysing national, regional and global trends on women’s political representation and launched a knowledge portal on local governments that centralizes data with information on local government organization, electoral systems and legislated quotas.[[20]](#footnote-21) These tools have been used to: advocate for women’s increased participation in local government; provide technical assistance to national partners on legislative reform, monitoring and reporting; and build the capacities of the police, judiciary and media. In 2021, the 22 Heads of State of the Ibero-American Conference approved the Ibero-American cooperation initiative to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women: as at March 2022*,* 12 States were actively participating in the initiative through their respective gender-based violence prevention institutions.

III. Conclusion

1. **United Nations entities have provided technical assistance to States in aligning their national legislation, policies and practices with international human rights standards and in building the capacities of relevant stakeholders to apply human rights principles in the design and implementation of measures to increase the participation of women and girls in decision-making and eliminate gender-based violence. The majority of inputs received for the present report demonstrated legislative and policy measures to combat gender-based violence, including through the criminalization of various forms of violence and the alignment of national laws with international human rights standards. However, few of the inputs received specifically addressed gender-based violence in the digital environment and gender-based violence against women in public life, highlighting the need for increased efforts to address online violence and discrimination and violence against women in public life, including women human rights defenders. Strong leadership by national Governments, as well as diverse partnerships and effective participation by all stakeholders, are essential to establish an enabling legal, policy and institutional environment for women and girls to freely and safely participate in decision-making and in public life.**
2. **States were supported to increase women’s voice in decision-making and in public life through inclusive decision-making and electoral processes, the elimination of barriers faced by women and girls to effectively participate in decision-making and in public life and the empowerment of women through capacity-building. Many positive examples were identified, particularly of capacity-building activities for women to participate in political life and awareness-raising activities addressing discriminatory gender stereotypes. Training activities for women are important not only for empowerment through knowledge and skills training but also for joint advocacy and partnership building. Nevertheless, the majority of temporary special measures focused on promoting gender parity in legislative bodies and OHCHR received very few inputs on efforts to: address gender inequality in private spheres, which can constitute a barrier for women’s participation in public spheres; increase the representation and leadership of women in the judiciary, the foreign service, academia and the private sector; and ensure the meaningful participation of girls in all matters affecting them. These gaps indicate the need for a stronger recognition of the interdependence of equality in all spheres of women’s and girls’ lives. In order to ensure that gender inequality in private spheres does not hinder women’s participation in public spheres, sustained policies and measures are also needed to promote and protect the equal rights of women and girls in private spheres, including in the family. More work is also needed to increase the representation and leadership of women and girls in all areas of decision-making and public life, including in the judiciary, the foreign service, academia and the private sector.**
3. **With regard to protection measures for victims of gender-based violence, States were supported to ensure that such measures were victim-centred, acknowledged women and girls as rights-holders and promoted their agency and autonomy. While many positive examples have emerged in recent years, most inputs received for the present report focused on the provision of medical, psychosocial and financial services and vocational training for victims. Targeted measures are needed to ensure that women and girls who have faced gender-based violence have access to justice and reparations, that all cases of gender-based violence against women are adequately investigated and perpetrators are prosecuted and that statistical data on all forms of gender-based violence against women and children are systematically collected, analysed and used for the development and evaluation of relevant policies and programmes.**
4. **United Nations entities supported States in generating research and exchanging good practices to inform the development of measures to promote women’s equal political participation and to combat gender-based violence. The examples in the present report demonstrate the important role of research and evidence in advocating for legislative and policy changes that are necessary for gender equality, as well as in conducting awareness-raising and capacity-building activities of relevant stakeholders to promote and protect the rights of women and girls. Such initiatives should be adequately resourced, involve diverse partnerships and include strategies for disseminating and following up on the recommendations that were identified.**
5. **The active, free and meaningful participation of women in decision-making and in public life, and the elimination of all forms of gender-based violence against women and girls, are requirements for the full enjoyment of the human rights of women and girls and for achieving sustainable development.** **The international community must work collectively to protect the gains made with regard to the rights of women and girls and must urgently advance their substantive equality so that no women or girls are left behind. In this regard, OHCHR and its partners can provide technical assistance to States in applying international human rights standards at the national level for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, including by convening diverse groups of stakeholders, in particular women and girls affected by intersecting forms of discrimination to influence decision-making on matters that affect their human rights, and by facilitating knowledge exchange and the sharing of good practices.**

1. \* The present report was submitted after the deadline in order to reflect the most recent information. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. See <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/03/womens-rights-in-review>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. See [https://data.ipu.org/.](https://data.ipu.org/) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. See [https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures.](https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. See https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/03/womens-rights-in-review. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. See <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. See <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/issue-briefs/2016-10/sexism-harassment-and-violence-against-women-parliamentarians>; https://www.ipu.org/news/press-releases/2021-11/widespread-sexism-and-violence-against-women-in-african-parliaments-according-new-ipu-report. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. [A/HRC/38/46](http://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/38/46) and [A/HRC/50/25](http://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/50/25). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. See A.[HRC/23/50](http://undocs.org/en/HRC/23/50). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. See [A/HRC/50/25](http://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/50/25). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. See [A/HRC/38/46](http://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/38/46). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. See [A/HRC/23/50](http://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/23/50), [A/HRC/29/40](http://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/29/40), [A/HRC/38/46](http://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/38/46) and [A/HRC/50/25](http://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/50/25). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. See Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, “Children as agents of positive change” (United Nations, New York, 2021) and *Keeping the Promise: Ending Violence against Children by 2030* (United Nations, New York, 2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. [A/HRC/37/79](http://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/37/79), paras. 31–34; [A/HRC/40/78](http://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/40/78), para. 50; and [A/HRC/43/68](http://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/43/68), paras. 38–48. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, general recommendation No. 25 (1996) on temporary special measures, para. 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. See <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/06/a-primer-for-parliamentary-action-gender-sensitive-responses-to-covid-19>. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. [See](https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/06/a-primer-for-parliamentary-action-gender-sensitive-responses-to-covid-19) [A/HRC/23/50](http://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/23/50) and Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, general recommendation No. 23 (1997) on political and public life. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, general recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, paras. 28 and 31(iii). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Committee on the Elimination of Violence against Women (General Assembly resolution 48/104), art. 4; general recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, paras. 32–33. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. See <https://localgov.unwomen.org/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)