



Women Political Leaders (WPL)

Commitment to Generation Equality

2021



Action Coalition Feminist Movements & Leadership

AC 6 / Action 3

COMMITMENT 2: TRANSFORMING PERCEPTIONS OF LEADERSHIP

Women Political Leaders (WPL) is making an ambitious commitment to Generation Equality to challenge and transform perceptions of leadership and to close critical data gaps on the specific beliefs and ingrained gender norms that prevent women from advancing in positions of leadership across all sectors. This commitment is devised to drive transformative change in leadership and to underpin the work of the Action Coalition on Feminist Movements and Leadership, which WPL is proud to co-lead.

Specifically, over the next five years:

WPL commits to transforming perceptions of leadership within politics, the private sector, and civil society. WPL will use the Reykjavík Index for Leadership (#Bestof Davos 2019) to measure the extent to which people perceive women and men as suited to lead. Expanding this Index by as many as 50 new countries, WPL will amplify data on the extent of stereotypes. High-level convenings will showcase impacts of women leaders, design evidence-based actions in response to discrimination, and elevate women's voices in global leadership spaces. WPL will invite leaders from across sectors, genders, geography, ability, and age to become Champions of the Index and to take action to increase the leadership of women and girls. Furthermore, WPL will build an enabling network in order to:

- **Support women leaders in strengthening their leadership influence, networks, and engagement in decision-making;**
- **Share diverse best practices that transform women's leadership and mentorship;**

- **Analyse power relations with actionable solutions that reduce deterrents to women's leadership;**
- **Advocate for the inclusion of more women within both public and private sector leadership structures;**
- **Create space for inter-generational discourse between different generations of women in leadership roles, to strengthen inter-generational learning, sharing, and influence by women.**

CONTEXT

Women have proven that they possess the abilities required to lead organisations and movements of every scale and in every sector. Women around the world are clearly and eminently capable of holding positions of leadership in the political sphere, the private sector, health and social services, academia, civil society, and all other facets of society. Nevertheless, women continue to face multiple structural barriers to leadership, including discriminatory laws and policies and capacity constraints that deny women and girls access at the same level as men to education, financial resources, and networks that enable success. Women and girls are also disproportionately impacted by poverty and face related barriers such as restricted access to healthcare, child care, and other supporting structures.

In addition to these very visible barriers and obstacles, women and girls must overcome pernicious and less recognised obstacles to leadership. Skewed perceptions regarding equality and leadership can be as much of a hindrance as structural or institutional barriers in preventing women from taking their rightful positions in leadership, and they can be more difficult to uncover and address. The annual Reykjavík Index for Leadership, created by WPL and Kantar, has revealed significant, complex, and deep-seated prejudices toward women – wherein women have not been viewed as equally suitable to lead.

Perceptions of equality and leadership potential are deeply rooted in harmful gender norms and discriminatory stereotypes, and these manifest in numerous ways across every aspect of society, government, and business:

- Perceptions lead to further prejudice in the distinct opportunities offered to boys and girls;
- Perceptions can impact women’s career paths; and
- Perceptions affect who is nominated within countries to create and improve policy, disrupting the chance for policymaking to adequately reflect the societies it is meant to serve.

It is paramount that our focus remains on embedding the progress already made for women and girls, in all their diversity – especially in the face of disproportionate negative economic impacts for women and girls from COVID-19, and bearing in mind the need to “build forward” with more women leading across all sectors and organisations.

COMMITMENT GOALS

Together with partners, WPL will:

- Activate its global network of thousands of women leaders from 130 countries (including senior political leaders, executives from the private and social services sectors, and leaders in international civil society) to pinpoint opportunities for advocacy and perception-change at the national level, and to identify and disseminate insights, best practices, and solutions to bring more and diverse women into positions of leadership.
- Significantly expand the Reykjavík Index for Leadership – launched in 2018 as the first measure of perceptions of women and men in terms of their suitability for leadership, this Index is a powerful source of data on where prejudices persist in society's perceptions in this regard.
- Leverage the Reykjavík Manual, the Women's World Atlas, and other knowledge platforms, and analyse and amplify data and knowledge on women's leadership through the Reykjavík Global Forum, an annual convening of women leaders from government, business, academia, and civil society.
- Through WPL's #Girl2Leader programme, support young women in all their diversity to view themselves as leaders, and to create pathways for them to attain and effectively harness political power for positive impact.

COMMITMENT OUTCOMES

- More women political leaders will be directly involved in Generation Equality and in driving the process and implementation of Commitments at the national level.
- Greater national public investments will be made in Generation Equality priorities, including but not only through **IDA20**.
- More women, including girls and young women, will participate substantively in leadership and decision-making roles across all sectors in their countries and regions.
- Demands will be increased around Generation Equality and women's leadership.
- Increased commitment from men and women leaders alike, both globally and nationally, to women's leadership and Generation Equality priorities.
- Increased visibility, influence, and significance of women leaders of diverse dispositions.
- Perception-change and shifting of restrictive gender norms about the role of women in leadership.
- Contesting and combating negative stereotypes about women in positions of leadership, in order to break down barriers to increased women's participation in senior leadership.

PROPOSED STRATEGY AND ACTIONS

Uncovering and challenging perceptions of leadership

Now in its third year, the **Reykjavík Index for Leadership** is an innovative research and evidence tool that enables better and more nuanced understanding of where prejudice resides in society's perceptions of women and men in leadership. The Index allows policy-makers and organisational leaders to ascertain where such stereotypes endure, as well as where public policy or private sector investments are making a difference.

The Index currently publishes findings drawn from the attitudes of over 20,000 people across ten countries – the G7 nations (comprising Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States) along with India, Kenya, and Nigeria.

Over the next five years, WPL and partners will:

- Extend the Reykjavík Index to at least 50 more countries, in order to truly globalise its findings and to ensure a holistic set of data on leadership and the role of women and men as leaders – currently lacking or incomplete in many countries. This expansion will include the remainder of the G20 countries and an additional 30 to 40 low- and middle-income economies across the Global South.
- Ensure that the Reykjavík Index and related research will be oriented to nationally-contextualised and actionable findings that support perception-change and the challenging of restrictive gender norms, as well as positive legislative, policy, and normative changes in both the number of women leaders across all sectors and their personal capacities to lead and drive transformational societal change.
- Make the findings of this work and other evidence tools available to governments and to leadership within the private sector and civil societies to advance their work on overcoming barriers and biases.
- Provide analysis and information on how countries can use the Index to support Generation Equality objectives, along with speakers' guidelines, Commitment guidance, and connections to relevant representatives at UN Women, the World Bank, the OECD, and other international fora.
- Provide WPL's global network of thousands of women leaders with access to evidence-based data, research, and necessary tools to develop and advance policy and programmatic initiatives that directly advocate for and support increasing the number of women in positions of leadership.

YOUNG WOMEN'S POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

WPL will leverage its networks at national and global levels to identify, engage, and mentor girls and young women who aspire to, or who already hold, positions of political leadership in their countries.

As an enhancement of its ongoing **#Girl2Leader** initiative, WPL will also engage girls and young women in Generation Equality, to support their growth and open pathways to greater political power and influence. This will enable them to both shape and deliver on the objectives of Generation Equality within national political and public policy spheres.

#Girl2Leader was launched in 2017 under the patronage of President Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca of Malta (2014-2019), in order to connect today's women leaders with the next generation. The initiative provides girls and young women with the space, knowledge, and contacts they need to build their capacities and knowledge of political processes through a unique mentoring approach. Over the past three years, Members of Parliaments from almost 20 countries across four continents as well as Members of the European Parliament have hosted activities in collaboration with the **#Girl2Leader** programme. Each year, this programme takes centre stage on the International Day of the Girl, when its impacts are amplified through a series of tailored messages.

ADVOCACY AND AMPLIFICATION

WPL is committed to a holistic communication-and-advocacy strategy that widens and magnifies the visibility, significance, and influence of the Reykjavík Index and its findings on perceptions of women's leadership at both national and global levels. The current global context has plainly revealed fault lines in terms of unequal leadership; in order to build forward, women must be equally represented in both leadership and decision-making positions.

WPL's global advocacy efforts toward the actualisation of valiant Generation Equality Commitments in line with Generational Equality's priorities will in turn drive catalytic actions with following goals:

- Fundamental gender-progressive policy change.
- Increased representation and participation of women in leadership.
- Deconstruction of unjust gender biases, stereotypes, and perceptions.
- Heightened visibility and influence of women in leadership.
- Strengthened collective women's voices and access to networks.
- Elevated awareness and demands for accountability on gender equity.
- Expanded spaces for candid discourses on women and leadership.

ABOUT WPL

Founded in 2013, Women Political Leaders (WPL) is the global network of women in political office. The mission of WPL is to increase both the number and the influence of women in political leadership positions. In all its activities, WPL aims to demonstrate the positive global impact of more women in political leadership.

Together with partners, WPL:

- Fosters and supports a growing network of women leaders around the world, including young women leaders. Currently, WPL supports a network of thousands of women political leaders across 130 countries. WPL also leverages the insights, connections, and capabilities of dedicated WPL Country Ambassadors, who are officially appointed by the relevant political leadership entity of their respective country to act as its representative in the fulfillment of WPL's mission. There are currently over 60 WPL Country Ambassadors spanning Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, Oceania, and South America.
- Works at national, regional, and global levels to promote dialogue on gender equality among leaders and decision-makers.
- Advocates for women's effective and meaningful participation in politics
- Generates evidence-based data to help shape gender-equity policies at the national level.

Women Political Leaders is a co-leading organisation of the Generation Equality Action Coalition on Feminist Movements and Leadership (Action Coalition 6). As a result, WPL is uniquely placed to ensure strong links between national legislative frameworks and the global aspiration of Generation Equality to accelerate progress for gender equality by 2030. The selection of WPL as a key partner in this visionary project ensures that the focus on the role of women politicians (both incumbent and up-and-coming) will remain a cornerstone of Generation Equality.