



*Parlementaires pour les Amériques
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Women's Political Representation in the Commonwealth Caribbean and Latin America: A Preliminary Analysis



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Purpose



Highlight the general accomplishments of female parliamentarians across the region, arguing however that institutional factors such as political parties and the nature of the political model often limit the ability of women parliamentarians to make a more significant impact on the agenda setting of government.

Areas to be Highlighted



- General Overview of Representational Politics
- Women in parliament
- Four policy areas:
 - Domestic Violence Legislation
 - National legislation on Sexual Harassment
 - Sexual Harassment legislation
 - Human Trafficking

Women's Representation in National parliaments (lower Chambers only)
Inter Parliamentary Union February 1, 2013
More than 30% Parliamentary Representation



World Ranking (190)	Country	# Women	% Women
18	Argentina	96	37.4
3	Cuba	265	45.2
15	Costa Rica	22	38.6
26	Ecuador	40	32.3
29	Guyana	21	31.3

**Women's Representation in National parliaments (lower Chambers only)
 Selected Regional Countries: Inter parliamentary Union February 1, 2013
 Status of Commonwealth Caribbean Countries (excluding Guyana)**



World Ranking (190)	Country	# Women	% Women
33	Trinidad& Tobago	12	28.6
79	St. Vincent & Grenadines	4	17.4
83	St. Lucia	3	16.7
97	Grenada	2	13.3
98	Bahamas	5	13.2
99	Jamaica	8	12.7
100	Dominica	4	12.5
109	Antigua and Barbuda	2	10.5
113	Barbados	3	10.0
125	St. Kitts-Nevis	1	5.7

V. Eudine Barriteau



“Even though women have been able to vote and stand for elections for over sixty years in the Caribbean, at the end of the decade of the 1990s the region still lacks a critical mass of women as key political decision makers.”

Violet Eudine Barriteau, ‘Beyond Backlash: The Frontal Assault on containing Caribbean Women in the Decade of the 1990s’, in *Gender Equality in the Caribbean: Reality or Illusion*, eds. Gemma Tang Nain & Barbara Bailey. (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2003), 201-232.

Strategic Institutional Context in the Commonwealth Caribbean



Because Westminster model in the Caribbean confers on the winning party absolute power and the losing party no power, and because the winning party is unlikely to incorporate the interests of the losing party, the stage is set for permanent conflict. Ruling parties contain or marginalize opposition parties while opposition parties try to sabotage the work of the ruling parties. This antagonism is total, because what is at stake is the power of governments to control almost every aspect of the society. This has led to a crisis of governance that is reflected in the inability of the governmental system to transform formal democracy into substantive democratic outcomes and advance the cause of nationhood (Hinds 2008).

Why is Gaining a Foothold in Parliament Critical



The greater inclusion of women in political parties and government would bring to the political agenda their specific interests which it is claimed cannot always be represented by men. Consequently, it is expected that the larger the share of parliament seats that women occupy the greater the representation of specific women's concerns which will translate into policy action.

How Do We Determine Whether or not Presence Results in Action



An evaluation of the bills that women parliamentarians pilot through national legislators is therefore one of the major tools that can be used to make a determination of the impact that women legislators make in advancing the cause of women nationally.

Does the Political Opportunity Structure to Support Change exist



Factor 1

In legislatures where women constituted at least 20 percent, there was a greater tendency for women to introduce/sponsor legislation concerning women, families, and children than their male counterparts. Where women constituted less than 10 percent, women and men did not differ in their sponsorship.

Sue Thomas, *How Women Legislate*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Political Opportunity Structure to Support Change exists (Continued)



Factor 2; Two fold effect

Political parties fundamentally shape the pursuit of women's policy issues. Consequently parties act as mediators in terms of how women represent women.

1. The Partisan effect
2. Institutional partisan structure - which can either enhance or reduce partisan inclinations

Tracey L. Osborn, *How Women Represent Women: Political Parties, Gender and Representation in the State Legislatures*; Oxford University Press, 2012.

Implications for Agenda Setting By Women In the Commonwealth Caribbean



Two Principles/Features Stand Out

- ❑ given the requirement of strong party line
- ❑ and collective responsibility

Limits ability to deviate from the party line and to influence the Cabinet of Ministers given the few women who are part of the inner circle of government.

Legislative, social policy and other Achievements Associated with some Caribbean Women Parliamentarians (selected countries)



- Grace Augustine (St. Lucia) – Founder and the first president of the St Lucia Women's Association designed to draw the St Lucian woman out of the home, away from traditional social welfare activities and into the world of civics and government
- Mabel Moir James – Minister of Communications and Works. She ensured that women were employed in road works; serving water, braking stones, carry loads – any task that ensured they earned a wage. She urged women to uplift themselves, get an education, and be self-reliant. As Minister of Home Affairs she ensured that domestic workers, those who lived-in and those who did not, were treated fairly and provided with proper working conditions. She supported Emmanuel Loblack's fight for the establishment of a National Provident Fund/social security system. Increase in Child maintenance
- Jackie Creft – Free secondary education in Grenada and mass education through the Center for Popular education
- Mia Mottley – Edu Tech 2000, the CFATF won important concessions from the FATF with Mottley's leadership

The Status of Domestic Violence in the English Speaking Caribbean



First Countries to Pass

Country	YEAR PASSED	National Legislation/ Year of Enactment
Bahamas	1991	1991 (amended in 2007)
Barbados		1992
Belize		1992 (amended 2007)
Guyana		1996
Jamaica	1995	1996 (amended 2004)
Saint Lucia		1995 (revised 2005)
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines		1995
Trinidad and Tobago	1991	1991 (strengthened 1999)

Second Group

Country	YEAR PASSED	National Legislation/ Year of Enactment
Anguilla		2011
Antigua and Barbuda		1999
Dominica		2001
Grenada	2001	2001 (replaced 2010)
St. Kitts Nevis	2001	2005

The Status of Domestic Violence in Latin America



Country	YEAR PASSED	National Legislation/ Year of Enactment	Country	YEAR PASSED	National Legislation/ Year of Enactment
Argentina		1994	Guatemala	1990	1999
Bolivia		1995	Honduras		1997
Brazil		(included in the federal constitution, 1988 and a specific legislative decree, 1995)	Mexico		1996
Chile	1993	1994	Nicaragua		1996
Colombia		1996	Panama		1999
Costa Rica	1994	1996	Paraguay		2000
Ecuador		1995	Uruguay		1995
El Salvador		1996	Peru	1993	1993 (strengthened in 1997)

Status of Sexual Harassment Laws in Selected Latin American and Caribbean Countries



Country	Law	Year
Belize	Protection against Sexual Harassment Act	1996
Chile	Law 20.005 on Sexual Harassment in the Workplace	2005
Costa Rica	Law no. 7476 on Sexual Harassment in Employment and Teaching	1995
Jamaica	Anti Sexual Harassment Bill	2007

Other ways of Treating Sexual Harassment



In most Commonwealth Caribbean countries, laws aimed at criminalising sexual harassment are contained in labour legislation many of which are outdated:

- Domestic violence legislation
- Criminal Code
- and the Equality of Opportunity and Treatment in Employment and Occupation Act

Impact of Political Opportunity Structure in Stalling Legislation in Barbados



Labour Minister: Esther Byer-Suckoo

“I do not have as much support as I would like to have with this legislation as there are still a lot of people who are afraid of this legislation. They think that it would disrupt our society, that it is going to threaten every man and the way he relates to any woman and they think it will threaten the viability of small businesses by bringing tension in the workplace.”

“Suckoo: Join me in push for sexual harassment law,” posted 4/9/2011, retrieved 30 April 2013, The Barbados Advocate (online)

Explaining Slowness in Latin America



1997, Gaby Ore-Aguilar contended that:

“Sexual harassment is one of the most tolerated human rights violations against women in Latin American societies. Because it is often a hidden crime, Latin American governments have not specifically penalized sexual harassment in their domestic legislation.’ In fact, laws on sexual harassment in the region are primarily incorporated into general labor or penal code provisions. These laws rarely apply to educational establishments or other spheres of women's lives. Furthermore, no Latin American government has passed a national law defining sexual harassment as a human rights violation.”

Status of legislation Governing Human trafficking in the English Speaking Caribbean



Two Countries:

2003 Belize enacted the Trafficking in persons Prohibition Act

2007 Jamaica enacted the Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Suppression and Punishment Act)

Modalities of Approaches to Enhance Output (1)



Cross Party Caucuses

- Influencing government and political processes by helping to shape the agenda and by providing information and advocacy
- Raising awareness of an issue by acting as a catalyst for communication on certain issues between government and civil society, and by providing information and advocacy
- Acting as a watchdog for certain issues by ensuring that concerned individuals and groups are aware when relevant legislation is up for review
- Providing a platform for members of caucuses to act as spokespeople for their issues, thereby streamlining information and raising awareness
- Providing oversight of the budget
- Promoting the legislative implications of international human rights instruments
- Initiating gender-based or minority legislation
- Ensuring relevant legislation is enforced

Modalities of Approaches to Enhance Output



Cross Party Caucuses

In Jamaica a Women's Political Caucus existed as an NGO, operated by female community activists, to support and facilitate the participation of women in politics.

In Grenada a Women's Caucus (Grenada Women's Parliamentary Caucus (GWPC), was formed of both past and present parliamentarians to provide mentorship, give a voice to women's issues while supporting women's desire to enter parliament.

Modalities of Approaches to Enhance Output



Cross Party Caucuses: Rwanda

The Rwanda Women Parliamentarians Forum (FFRP), a cross-party political caucus, coordinates the women's agenda in Rwanda.

Since 2003, it has worked to enhance gender equality within parliament, initiating gender-sensitive laws and improving gender-based governmental oversight.

Its' most significant achievement to date is the introduction in **2006 of a landmark bill to combat gender-based violence, which marked the first time the definition of rape in Rwandan law.**

Modalities of Approaches to Enhance Output (2)



Collaborating closely with men, involving them in every stage of the policy making process and ensuring they took ownership of the issue along with them. The Rwandan example.

When the bill was introduced it was sponsored by four men and four women.

CIWIL (enhancing Women's capacity)



CIWiL was conceived as a non-political and independent institution established to monitor and strengthen the work to increase women's political participation in the region, and in so doing create a sustainable, effective and efficient women's political base to achieve equality for all sub-populations of women.

CIWIL (enhancing Women's capacity)



Countries Targeted:

Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago

- Duration: 4 Years 2008 - 2011
- Project Launched in Grenada, June 2008

CIWIL (enhancing Women's capacity)



CIWIL Mandate:

To advance women's transformational leadership. Specifically it is intended to train and support women in leadership, decision-making politics to hasten the transformation of politics and governance towards the achievement of sustainable development in the Caribbean.

CIWIL Goal:

To increase the number of women in politics, leadership and decision-making in the Caribbean towards 50 per cent by 2015.

CIWIL (enhancing Women's capacity)



CIWIL Objectives:

- Promote and strengthen gender equality and gender awareness
- Advocate for transformative politics and policy-making
- Stimulate research and contribute to increasing numbers and skills of women in positions of leadership in public life
- Provide education and training to increase representation of women in politics and decision-making

CIWIL (enhancing Women's capacity)



- Leadership training programmes – over 90 women in 4 countries: Jamaica, Belize, St. Kitts/Nevis and St. Lucia
- Research project on Gender and political parties currently under way – recommendations to be given to political parties
- Provided support to women candidates contesting elections – brought them together with experienced successfully politicians to share strategies
- Ongoing networking and mentoring. Matching mentees (aspiring female leaders) with experienced female politicians



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Thank You