**UN Working Group on discrimination against women and girls**

**Questionnaire on girls’ and young women’s activism – submission on behalf of DLA Piper**

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* 1. Executive Summary

**Methodology**

This submission is a compilation of research conducted by DLA Piper in five jurisdictions including Australia, Germany, Romania, Russia, United Kingdom. Our lawyers studied the respective legal frameworks and completed those sections of the Questionnaire on girls’ and young women’s activism that directly concerned legal protections, namely, I (1), II (1.i, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8), III (1, 3, 4, 6), and where possible, section V on recommendations. The included countries were selected based on the capacity and interest of our offices in undertaking the research. More country could be added if the UNWG allows further submissions.

We hope that our research findings will be helpful to the Working Group’s efforts in compiling the thematic report for the 50th session of the Human Rights Council.

**Findings**

Overall, the States studied provide robust legal frameworks that ensure formal equality between women and men. All of the States have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) as well as the majority of the core international human rights instruments. Nonetheless, there is substantial progress to be made toward securing substantive equality in and the implementation of these treaties in the domain of activism and public participation. Although the States differ significantly in terms of wealth and legal system, similar difficulties are highlighted in ensuring equal access to the public sphere. Best practices and successful initiatives also share key similarities across all surveyed States.

Normative frameworks

In the surveyed States, the protection of women and girl’s participation in the public sphere is secured by a combination of general provisions guaranteeing rights of expression and assembly, as well as non-discrimination provisions. However, none of the States have primary legislation dedicated specifically to supporting the participation of women and girls in the public sphere. These aims are pursued through delegated legislation or non-binding recommendations and action plans.

Although all the surveyed States have ratified CEDAW, the enforceability of international law varies by country. For instance, Germany is largely monist: provisions from CEDAW and other treaties are directly enforceable. In the UK, on the other hand, international law must be implemented by domestic legislation. Moreover, in Germany and Romania, EU law has both historic and current impacts on the development of discrimination law.

Good practices

Unsurprisingly, enforceable measures are most effective. In Australia for instance, the Labour party’s use of quotas has led to 43% of their MPs being women, compared to much smaller numbers in parties that have no binding rules. Nevertheless, non-binding “soft law” such as government action plans can be a positive first step where there is limited political consensus. Such soft law is more effective where it is narrowly tailored to the broader objectives and sets specific goals and targets, such as the German National Equality Strategy 2020. Additionally, industry groups can take effective action where governments do not – the Australian Stock Exchange’s corporate governance recommendations which required measurable objectives for diversity.

In all States, research highlighted the importance of NGO and civil society action to improve women’s and girls’ participation in the public sphere. This included providing direct support, such as shelter for victims of gender-based violence, providing legal representation and assistance, as well as campaigning on key issues and organising themselves into coalitions.

Challenges and recommendations

National differences are more pronounced in answers on challenges and recommendations. For instance, the research on Russia noted that the ongoing assault on civil society is undoubtedly having a significant impact on the participation of women and girls in politics, something that cannot be said for the other surveyed States.

Nonetheless, there were some common themes. In all States, representation in legislatures and governments remains insufficient. When considering obstacles to representation in Romania and Russia, both surveys noted the fact that patriarchal values remain socially entrenched and highly pervasive. In Australia and Germany, the surveys focused on a lack of specific measures to redress disparity or to go beyond a formal equality approach. All the surveys acknowledged the pernicious effect of discrimination in stigma in making the public sphere unwelcoming for women and girls and thus undermining their participation.

* 1. AUSTRALIA

# Nature, modalities and trends of girls' and young women's activism

## What is the normative framework related to girls' and young women's civic space and activism?

1. At present there is no normative framework for girls' and young women in the civic space and activism in Australia. Women are certainly encouraged to engage in activism and politics, however there are no regulated or legislated quotas in place to ensure participation occurs particularly in the political realm. This is reflected in the relatively low representation of women in politics and public life in Australia, and in the House of Representatives in Australian Parliament, which is further discussed in more detail below.
2. With respect to activism generally, trends in the legal industry are certainly shifting. The legal industry fosters some of the most influential female activists in the nation, which is why it is the most important profession to foster female growth and dominance. Unfortunately, there are no quotas in this space on a public basis, but clerkship and graduate programs in privatized law firms are certainly now focusing on gender balanced cohorts for the next generation of lawyers. This is a key step towards promoting women in public life, allowing women to find their voice in society and a push for social reform to provide a more balanced socio and political Australia. As of October 2020, in Australia, women make up 53% of Australia's legal profession. This continues a trend first observed in 2018, when female practitioners became the majority for the first time.
3. Some of Australia's most influential female activists that are also lawyers include Gillian Triggs. Law Dean and international lawyer, Emeritus Professor Gillian Triggs is now President of the Australian Human Rights Commission, where she tries to keep Australia on point in following its international legal obligations. Gillian has achieved crucial progress on difficult human rights issues during her presidency. Her work has included leading a national inquiry that provided evidence of the experiences of children and families held in Australia's immigration detention centers and recommending their release into the community.
4. Antoinette Braybrook, another lawyer and CEO of the Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service (**FVPLS**). A Kuku Yalanji woman, Antionette came from humble beginnings and suffered severe racial abuse, which led her to choose not to continue with her studies. At age 30, she decided to pursue her dream of studying law. Antoinette as awarded the 2017 Inspirational Women of Yarra Award and in 2015, the Law Institute of Victoria's Access to Justice Award for her work ensuring that Aboriginal women can live free from violence. Pivotal moments in her career came from when she helped shape recommendations following the Victorian Government's Royal Commission into Family Violence.
5. Professor Rosemary Kayess, at age 20 sustained a spinal cord injury in a car accident. She is now a Visiting Fellow and Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Law at the University of New South Wales, Rosemary has since devoted her career to human rights and discrimination law. She has contributed to the development of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which entered into force in 2008.
6. Whilst there is no normative framework at present, women are certainly taking activism, public, and politics in Australia in their stride. The major issues stopping girls, young women and women in general in Australia, include financial differentiation with the gender pay gap, parental and carer's responsibilities, discrimination and the lack of quotas in political parties that are still heavily male dominated. These issues are further discussed in detail below.

# Enabling factors and good practices

## What solidarity and support frameworks are available in the countries or regions of your operation that enhance girls' and young women's activism?

1. ***Legal/policy and institutional frameworks***
2. There are many external factors at play that limit the participation of women in public life, politics, and activism. These include gender pay gaps[[1]](#footnote-2), sexual and domestic violence, differential treatment, discrimination, and parental/carer's responsibilities.
3. The Australian government has implemented measures to target these forces, with a view to encouraging girls and women to engage with public life, politics, and leadership positions from an earlier stage.
4. In 2012 the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (**WGEA**) was established to promote and improve gender equality in Australian workplaces. The Agency works collaboratively with employers providing advice, practical tools and education to help workplaces improve their gender performance. WGEA also works collaboratively with employers to comply with reporting requirements under the *Workplace Gender Equality Act* 2021. This reporting framework aims to encourage measures that improve gender equality outcomes and has been designed to minimize the regulatory burden on businesses. Whilst this is not directly targeted at girls' and young women's activism, or roles in public life, it encourages institutional changes in workplaces, which inevitably permeate throughout society. It is Australian workplaces where political and public leaders are born. This legislative and policy driven initiative supports gender equality in society. For clarity, most politicians in Australian have backgrounds in both the finance and legal profession. Improving gender diversity in professional workplaces in particular, will allow for better engagement of girls, and women of all ages in politics and public life.
5. There are also general legislative measures implemented to target systemic issues that lead to less women contributing to the workforce, public life, and politics. Some of the support frameworks available for women include access to domestic violence leave. All employees (including part‑time and casual employees) are entitled to 5 days unpaid family and domestic violence leave each year.[[2]](#footnote-3) Australia also has an array of state based and Commonwealth legislation, which protects against gender‑based discrimination in the workplace.[[3]](#footnote-4) As in most other states, Australia also has available 18 weeks paid parental leave for primary carers, with an additional 12 weeks available on an unpaid basis to primary and secondary carers. These legal frameworks are just some of the measures in place to ensure women stay active in the workplace and in turn become leaders either in public life or in the workforce generally.
6. From a policy and institutional perspective, the National Council of Women Australia (**NCWA**) was established as a non‑government umbrella organization with broadly humanitarian and educational objectives. It seeks to raise women and girls’ awareness of their rights and responsibilities as citizens and encourages participation of women in all aspects of community life. The NCWA works with, and across all sectors to identify and bring about change for women as representatives and leaders. NCWA does not fundraise but it does advocate for policy changes to improve the lives of women at all levels – local, state, national and international. The NCWA writes submissions to government on issues affecting women, meets with Members of Parliament and participates in government working groups. At the international level it advocates through the International Council of women.
7. NCWA has appeared at the UN for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (**CEDAW**) review and at the Commission on the Status of Women (**CSW**). This is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, run exclusively by women, for women.

## What are the concrete ways in which the State promotes and secures girls' engagement/activism? Are there particular issues and platforms in which the State encourages their engagement?

1. At present, the State encourages and promotes youth engagement and activism in public life with the establishment of youth based political party associations. Organizations such as Young Liberals and Young Labour, promote young people's approach to public life and politics. Young Labour encourages its team members to engage in issues such as whether to restore industrial manslaughter laws, the exploitation of ethnic women in Australia and income inequality.
2. Further to the above, and for young women in general, the Australian Labor Party (**ALP**) and all State branches adopted a voluntary quota at its 1994 national conference. This quota was set with the aim of ensuring that women were preselected to 35% of winnable seats by 2002. This figure was increased to 40% in 2012, and again in 2015, to 50% by 2025.[[4]](#footnote-5) The ALP constitution sets out the requirements of the quota under clause 19, which includes affirmative action to recruit women in public life, minimum percentages, and public office pre‑selections.
3. One major ongoing issue in Australian politics is the lack of representation of women which has been linked to parental and carer's responsibilities. Parliament has attempted to remedy this in different ways to ensure that it accommodates the parental responsibilities of young women in public life. The sanctity of the floor of the parliamentary chamber is a longstanding aspect of Westminster parliamentary practice.[[5]](#footnote-6) The Australian House of Representatives is the only House in Australia that currently provides for the free movement of children being cared for into the parliamentary Chamber at any point in a sitting day, without relying on the discretion of the Speaker. Combined with the availability of proxy voting for nursing mothers, this has seen the House of Representatives described as "the most family‑friendly chamber of any parliament in Australia".[[6]](#footnote-7)
4. Childcare facilities can take a variety of forms. Formal childcare facilities – such as those offered by the Capital Hill Early Childcare Centre at Parliament House in Canberra – may be offered to members and parliamentary staff on parliamentary grounds. They are usually closed to the public and may be open longer hours than usual childcare facilities, based on the length of sitting days.[[7]](#footnote-8)
5. The NSW Parliament has also opened its 'Parents Room' on 11 May 2017, providing a space for MPs and parliamentary staff with young children. The room features a separate sleeping area with cots and change tables, along with a larger play area featuring children's' toys and books. Users are also given access to kitchen facilities and a workstation with computer to allow them to work while supervising their children. The opening of the Parents Rooms represents the first time that Members of NSW Parliament have been provided with a dedicated space to care for their children.[[8]](#footnote-9)

## What is the legal protective framework for the activities and development of girls and young women in your country? To what extent do international instruments apply in your country?

1. Australia has been at the forefront of the international community's efforts to empower women to overcome disadvantage and discrimination. Australia was one of the first countries to sign CEDAW and it continues to ensure its effective implementation through national and state based enforcing legislation. Some of this legislation at a federal level includes the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth), and *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth). Some of this legislation at a state level includes, for example in New South Wales, the *Anti‑Discrimination Act 1977* (NSW).

## What are the achievements at the national level in the implementation of laws, policies, plans and/or programs and practices relevant to promoting girls' and young women's engagement/activism? What roles have NGOs played in this respect?

1. In an attempt to address low levels of women members in parliaments throughout the world, a number of domestic and international bodies have developed frameworks for increasing female representation. One of the most extensive and well‑regarded frameworks is the Plan of Action for Gender‑Sensitive Parliaments (the **IPU Plan**), which was developed in 2012 by the Inter‐Parliamentary Union (**IPU**). Australia is an ongoing member of the IPU. The IPU Plan is a seven‑step checklist which is designed to give parliaments the tools they need to mainstream gender equality concerns throughout their legislative, oversight and administrative work. The ultimate aim of the IPU Plan is to develop a parliament that is "gender‑sensitive", that is, one that responds to the needs and interests of both men and women. The IPU actively encourages political parties to take a proactive role in the promotion of gender quality and female participation in public life.[[9]](#footnote-10)
2. Further to the above, in 2010, the Commonwealth Government set a target of 40% of women and 40% men on Commonwealth Government board positions by 2015, and this target was achieved for the first time in 2013.[[10]](#footnote-11)
3. On an NGO level, the matter of gender diversity on corporate boards has attracted attention both in Australia and overseas, with many countries adopting strategies or quotas to increase the number of women in boardrooms. In 2011 the Australian Institute of Company Directors reported that women accounted for nearly 30% of all new board appointments by the 200 largest companies listed on the Australian Stock Exchange (ASX 200). This was largely because of the ASX corporate governance recommendations on gender diversity that required members to adopt and disclose a diversity policy, establish measurable objectives for gender diversity on boards, and provide results in annual reports. The Institute attributed its success to its chairmen's mentoring program, where 80 leaders have mentored and recruited women.[[11]](#footnote-12) This achievement as permeated through the likes of international companies like Goldman Sachs in recent years.

# Challenges and structural barriers

## What kind of gender and age specific barriers are affecting girls' and young women's participation/activism in your national context? Please indicate concrete examples of direct and indirect as well as formal and informal factors posing threats and risks for girls and young women engaging in the public space (examples of these can include stereotyping based on gender and age, restrictions on freedom of expression, speech, assembly, liberty, etc., legal restrictions to capacity to provide legal consent, legal age of marriage, etc.)

1. There is no consensus amongst researchers in the field as to why women continue to be under‑represented in public life, although several contribute to the gender imbalance. There are a number of barriers that inhibit women from being elected to national parliaments, which include the nature of the electoral system, processes of political parties, women's lower levels of education and socio‑economic status, traditions and beliefs about the role of women in society, and the burden of combining work and family responsibilities.[[12]](#footnote-13)
2. The low levels of female representation in parliament have led to public expressions of concern from within the political sphere. Following the 2015 General Election, the then NSW Treasurer Gladys Berejiklian stated that the low levels of female representation in parliament needed to be addressed as a matter of urgency.[[13]](#footnote-14)
3. ***Electoral System***
4. For example, the representation of women in the House of Representatives is party centric. Rule 10 of the Australian Labour Party's National Constitution developed in 2011 committed the party to having equal numbers of men and women at all levels in the organization and in pre‑selections for public office.[[14]](#footnote-15) The ALP's National Labour Women's Network, launched in 1996 at the National ALP Conference, represents all women members of the party. It encourages women 'to participate in all levels of the Party's structure, the government and public life'.
5. Whilst gender quotas of different kinds are widely used internationally to increase women's participation in national parliaments, they have been somewhat controversial in the Australian context. In 1994 the ALP adopted a mandatory 35% pre selection quota for women in winnable seats at elections by 2002. The proportion of female candidates preselected rose from 14% in 1994 to 35.6% in 2010. A 40:40:20 quota system was introduced from 1 January 2012 'to produce an outcome where not less than 40% of seats held by Labour will be filled by women, and not less than 40% by men. The remaining 20% may be filled by candidates of any gender.[[15]](#footnote-16)

Coalition parties, which include the Liberal Party and Nationals, have not adopted affirmative action measures for their respective parties' parliamentary wings, on the basis that gender quotas contradict the principle of merit. This reflects in the numbers of women that represent the parties.[[16]](#footnote-17)

1. ***Cultural and social factors***
2. One US study, for example, noted that '[w]omen in public office stand as symbols for other women, both enhancing their identification with the system and their ability to have influence within it.'[[17]](#footnote-18) The study also found that prevailing perceptions of traditional social roles still actively discourage women from standing as political candidates.[[18]](#footnote-19)
3. The Westminster system of representative democracy adopted in the UK, Australia and New Zealand promotes a confrontational style of politics. Political scientists Marian Sawer, Manon Tremblay and Linda Trimble argue that this model of democracy makes cooperation on areas of interest to women more difficult on the floor of the chamber, suggesting that women parliamentarians find more scope for cross‑party cooperation on committees. A notable example of cross‑party cooperation occurred in the Commonwealth Parliament in 2005, when four women from the ALP, Australian Democrats, Liberal Party, and The Nationals joined together in a private members' bill to remove ministerial power over the use of the 'abortion pill', RU486. An Australian women's rights activist, Sara Dowse, noted in 2009:
4. *The fact that a vote like the one on RU486 has yet to be repeated prompts some reflection. For how well does our parliament actually serve the citizens it's designed to represent, if women, who comprise over half the voting population, still constitute less than a third of the parliament?[[19]](#footnote-20)*
5. ***Family***
6. Another factor that has historically influenced the number of women in public life and activism relates to conflicts between campaigning, whilst meeting family and carers responsibilities.[[20]](#footnote-21)
7. The political preselection process has been viewed as 'one of the reasons why women have been kept out of the political process for so long and have not been candidates in safe seats'. Parties have assumed that women are unable to combine a career in politics with family responsibilities. Sex discrimination is widespread as many female politicians can recount tales of being asked personal questions by selection committees relating to their marital status and childcare arrangements when male candidates generally are not asked such questions.[[21]](#footnote-22)
8. ***Financial***
9. Australia's national gender pay gap is 14.2% across all industries. The national gender pay gap is calculated by WGEA using data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. As at May 2021, women's average weekly ordinary fulltime earnings across all industries and occupations were less $261.50. Adding the part time workforce, the total earnings gender pay gap for all employees widens to 31.3%. In May 2021, the gender pay gap was 17.5% in the private sector and 10.8% in the public sector. The average gender pay gap increases to its highest point at 17.7% for the over 55 years and over age group. Women in this age group are more likely than men to have spent time out of the workforce to care for children. As such, the higher financial burdens for women are a substantial factor to why young women are underrepresented in public life. There is no legislation currently regulating the remuneration of women.
10. ***Media Portrayal/ Discrimination***
11. When a woman becomes the first to attain a political leadership role, her exceptionalism has immense news value. She is different because she is a woman in a position traditionally held by men. Journalists invariably direct attention to the intimate and 'private' dimensions of her life, highlighting her trailblazer status with a first‑woman frame.[[22]](#footnote-23)

## What issues or gaps do arise with regard to existing frameworks (i.e. legislation, policies, plans, and/or programs) relevant to girls' and young women's civic space and activism? Are there any specific laws, policies and practices that place obstacles to their participation, activism or collective action? What role do NGOs play in response to these gaps?

1. The continued viability of representative democracy as a system of government is contingent on sufficient numbers of citizens putting themselves forward as candidates for elected political office which includes girls and young women.[[23]](#footnote-24)
2. At first instance the representation of women in Australian politics is low. Across Australia women continue to be significantly under‑represented in parliament and executive government and comprise less than one third of all parliamentarians and one‑fifth of all ministers.[[24]](#footnote-25) This issue is an indirect consequence of the challenges and structural barriers stipulated above, coupled with the fact that there are no specific laws, policies and practices in place to actively and positively ensure and mandate participation of women in activism and politics.
3. Internationally, Australia's ranking of women in national government continues to decline when compared with other countries. The representation of women in Australia's parliaments hovers around the 'critical mass' of 30% regarded by the United Nations as the minimum level necessary for women to influence decision‑making in parliament.[[25]](#footnote-26)
4. The ALP is largely responsible for the improved representation of women in Australian politics, with the party nearing parity at 43%. The lag is apparent on the conservative side, however, with the Liberals at 21% and the Nationals having just two female MPs in the lower house it is clear that the existing frameworks available to girls and young women are not encouraging.[[26]](#footnote-27)
5. Inevitably, if an equal number of women do not occupy high office then this reality permeates to girls and young women and their ability to access and/or participate in political life and activism. There are no policies in place to ensure women are championed in parliament and Australia has actually gone backwards in its progress. According to the IPU's data on 188 countries as at 1 April 2014, Australia's ranking of women in Commonwealth Parliament has significantly declined over a decade, when compared with national parliaments globally. Australia's ranking declined from 20th place in 2001 to 44th 2013. As of 1 April 2014, Australia's ranking had further declined to 48th position.[[27]](#footnote-28)
6. In September 2011, women political leaders attending the 66th session of the UN General Assembly in New York noted that women comprised less than 10 per cent of world leaders and fewer than one in five parliamentarians. They signed a joint statement calling for women's equal right 'to participate in all areas and at all levels of political life' and reaffirming support for the role of the UN in achieving gender equality and empowerment of women.[[28]](#footnote-29) Given the slow progress to date internationally, many countries have adopted some form of gender quota to increase women's representation in politics. However electoral quotas remain controversial democracies such as Australia, where critics oppose them on the basis that they discriminate against men and undermine the selection of candidates on the basis of merit.[[29]](#footnote-30)

## Are there particular threats girl and young women activists in your country or region experience in relation to their work?

***Facing intimidation, harassments, and attacks (direct or indirect, online or offline, sexual or physical)***

1. Sexual harassment has been rife in parliament, politics and general public life, particularly for young women in Australia. Recently, former Chief Justice of Australia Dyson Heydon was found to have sexually harassed six young female associates, an independent inquiry by the High Court found. It is one of the most shameful moments in political history in Australia, however the damage had already been done as Heydon sat on the bench from 2003 to 2013.
2. Further sexual harassment claims were recently made against Australia's former Attorney General – Christian Porter. The allegations include that he raped a woman in 1988 three times whilst at university. Another recent case of Brittney Higgins involves a young woman working her dream job at Parliament House in Australia, only to be raped by a young man in the Office of the then Defence Minister, Linda Reynolds in March 2019, and was encouraged to keep her ordeal quiet by the Australian Liberal Party.

The above very recent examples show that women are not safe to participate in public life in Australia.

1. ***Lacking access to justice and reparations for violations of their rights***

The sexual assault victims of the above recent Australia cases show that women are scared to come forward against their harassers for years. The women had to wait many years for their peers or colleagues to take them seriously, or to bring forward their complaints.

## What are the challenges, in your national/regional context, in the recognition and protection of girls as human rights defenders? What negative trends undermine their evolving capacities and interests at the family, community, and State levels? How do NGOs (including your organization) promote and work with girl human rights defenders?

1. As mentioned above, challenges include:
	* + The electoral system
		+ Cultural and social factors
		+ Media portrayal
		+ Discrimination
		+ Family and carers responsibilities
2. As stated above, these negative trends undermine girls, young women and women of all ages ability to participate in public life and activism.

# Recommendations/ the way forward

## What concrete measures should be adopted and implemented to ensure girls' and young women's meaningful participation, activism and collective action at all levels?

1. In Australia particularly, government gender quotas should be imposed on all political parties to ensure that women are equally represented in politics and public life.[[30]](#footnote-31) The main reason for electoral gender quotas is to "force the political parties to break with their tradition of recruiting mainly male candidates for their lists and instead to start seriously recruiting women," to promote female issues and female rights. [[31]](#footnote-32) This approach focuses on the importance of real, rather than symbolic representation of women in activism.
2. A number of international conventions and instruments emphasise the importance of women participating in public life (Australia signatory to all of them) and the need to facilitate access to the political system. For example, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the Vienna Declaration and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action contain sections supporting the right of women to participate in public life.
3. Women should be encouraged at school level and from a young age to participate in political life, with initiatives imposed by the Australian government as part of the school curriculum.

## What concrete measures should be adopted to address systemic gender‑based/age‑based discrimination and challenges affecting girls' and young women's engagement in the public and political life?

1. One of the systemic and gender based/ age‑based challenges affecting girls and women in public life is their differential representation in the media, particularly when campaigning. Media outlets should be held to a higher standard when reporting and limit reporting, when it is purely gender based during a campaign. This may be difficult to achieve in a censorship context and may not be able to be regulated formally.

## What concrete measures should be introduced to improve solidarity, support, collaborations towards creating an enabling environment for girls' and young women's engagement in the political and public life?

1. As stated above, girls should be encouraged at school level and from a young age to participate in political life, with initiatives imposed by the Australian government as part of the school curriculum.

## What particular roles should NGOs and feminist movements play towards the promotion and protection of girls' and young women's meaningful participation, activism and collective action?

1. Non‑government organizations should play an active role in promoting gender quotas in their workplace for leadership roles.
	1. GERMANY

# Nature, modalities and trends of girls' and young women's activism

## What is the normative framework related to girls' and young women's civic space and activism?

1. The normative framework in Germany related to girls' and young women's civic space and activism is multi‑facetted and consists of numerous national laws and recommendations, European guidelines and acts, and international treaties and principles.
2. One of the most important principles of German constitutional law is that all people are equal before the law.[[32]](#footnote-33) German Basic Law also stipulates that men and women have equal rights and that the state shall promote the actual implementation of equal rights for women and men and work towards eliminating existing disadvantages.[[33]](#footnote-34) The promotion clause is not a general opening for affirmative action measures of any kind, but rather clarifies above all that the legislature is striving for gender equality and the elimination of unequal treatment as a constitutional goal.
3. In addition to the provisions of German Basic Law, the General Act on Equal Treatment came into force in 2006.[[34]](#footnote-35) It implemented four anti‑discrimination directives of the European Union. The aim of the General Act on Equal Treatment is to prevent or eliminate discrimination on the grounds of race or ethnic origin, gender, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual identity. In this context, the General Act on Equal Treatment protects against discrimination in working life and prohibits discrimination in general civil law transactions.
4. It follows from these principles that formally young women and girls in Germany have equal rights to express their position and engage in activism practices as men. These rights of participation in civic space and activism include inter alia:
	* + The right to assemble peacefully and without weapons without registration or permission.[[35]](#footnote-36)
		+ The right to freely express and disseminate one's opinions in speech, writing and pictures and to obtain information without hindrance from generally accessible sources.[[36]](#footnote-37)
		+ The right to elect the members of the German parliament and to be elected from the age of 18.[[37]](#footnote-38) At the state and local level, the right to vote may exist from the age of 16, depending on state‑specific regulations.
		+ The right of participation in or establishment of political parties, associations and societies.[[38]](#footnote-39)
		+ The right of participation in or establishment of social organizations or associations. Minors from the age of 7 to 18 may act independently as founders of an association if they only gain a legal advantage or at least no disadvantage by founding it or if their legal representative's consent.[[39]](#footnote-40)
5. Other legal regulations in which the state promotes and secures girls' engagement and activism include, inter alia, various education packages that support children, adolescents and young adults from families with lower income. These benefits can be used to take advantage of offerings at school and in leisure time to promote social participation.
6. In addition, the Strong Families Act was passed in 2019 to strengthen families and their children in a targeted manner. The law aims to strengthen fair opportunities for social participation for children from families with low incomes. The child supplement for low‑income families will be redesigned and education and participation benefits for children and young people will be improved enhancing activism and social engagement of girls and young women.

# Enabling factors and good practices

## What solidarity and support frameworks are available in the countries or regions of your operation that enhance girls' and young women's activism?

1. ***Legal/policy and institutional frameworks***
2. Policy and institutional frameworks supporting and enhancing girl's and young women's activism include the German government's National Equality Strategy "Strong for the Future" adopted in summer 2020.[[40]](#footnote-41) In this, the federal government concretizes its goals and the implementation of equality between women and men in legislation and in its funding programs. The equality strategy formulates nine goals for equality:
	* + Equal pay and independent economic security throughout life.
		+ Strengthen social professions as attractive and permissive career professions.
		+ Equality policy standards in the digital world of life and work.
		+ Strengthen the compatibility of family, care and career ‑ promote an equal distribution of gainful employment and unpaid care work between women and men.
		+ Equal career opportunities and participation of women and men in leadership positions.
		+ Equal participation of women in parliaments at all levels.
		+ Equal presence and participation of women and men in culture and science.
		+ The federal public service expands its pioneering role in the reconciliation and equal participation in leadership positions.
		+ The federal government promotes actual equality across the board and structurally.
3. The institutional framework contains NGOs influencing the process of enhancing women and girls' activism.

## What are the concrete ways in which the State promotes and secures girls' engagement/activism? Are there particular issues and platforms in which the State encourages their engagement?

1. In Germany there are policy structures, government programs, and strategies that support and promote voluntary civic engagement in general and promote girls's activism.
2. Courts and governmental and non‑governmental bodies and organizations accept and process specific complains or draw attention to abuses and thus levelling the field for girl's engagement.
3. Some of these organizations include, for example,
	* + the Petitions Committee of the German Government,
		+ the Federal Anti‑Discrimination Agency,
		+ the Commissioner for Human Rights Issues and
		+ the German Institute for Human Rights. As an independent institute, the German Institute for Human Rights works to ensure that Germany upholds and promotes human rights at home and abroad. The Institute also accompanies and monitors the implementation of various UN conventions.
		+ In addition, the National Action Plan for Business and Human Rights was adopted in 2016, which describes measures by the German Government to uphold the state's duty to protect human rights in the business context.
		+ Furthermore, the German Foundation for Engagement and Volunteering began its work in 2020. The foundation serves primarily as a service point for advice, support and networking. The foundation's goal is to sustainably strengthen volunteerism ‑ particularly in structurally weak and rural parts of the country ‑ in coordination with existing federal programs.
4. All these platforms as well as equal opportunities for participation for boys and girls promote equality and may subsequently influence girls' attitude toward activism.

## What is the legal framework protecting human rights defenders in your country? How is a human rights defender define in your jurisdiction and do girls activist fall under the definition and entitled to any protection?

1. The cornerstone for the protection of human rights in Germany is the German Basic Law. Building on this foundation, Germany has ratified numerous international human rights treaties and incorporated them into national law. In the event of a violation of fundamental rights, the German Constitutional Court can be called upon. Likewise, the European Convention of Human Rights can be invoked.
2. In Germany, no law exists that focuses exclusively on the protection of human rights defenders. Nevertheless, German residence law offers the possibility of granting protection to human rights defenders in special emergency situations. Admission for urgent humanitarian reasons is possible, and admission can furthermore be granted to protect the political interests of the Federal Republic of Germany.[[41]](#footnote-42) Human rights defenders who are persecuted and threatened have access to this procedure. Girls' activists and human rights defender might there be entitled to protection if a special emergency situation is given.
3. A definition of human rights defenders furthermore additionally is not found in German law. However, the definition developed within the framework of the UN and supplemented by the European Union also takes a position in German law due to its "friendliness" to international law.
4. In 2020, the FDP‑parliamentary group also called on the German government to protect human rights defenders in Germany and to protect them from foreign persecution and surveillance.[[42]](#footnote-43)

## What is the legal protective framework for the activities and development of girls and young women in your country? To what extent do international instruments apply in your country?

1. Protection of human rights and thus protection of activism by girls and young women is in Germany provided by courts and compliant bodies, which pursue human rights violations and file complaints. With its membership in the UN and the Council of Europe and by ratifying numerous human rights treaties, Germany is integrated into the international and European human rights protection system. The legal protective framework for the activities and development of girls and young women in Germany is described under number 2.3 above.
2. In Germany, treaties under international law have the rank of a simple federal law, and therefore rank below the Basic Law.[[43]](#footnote-44) However, some human rights, such as the prohibition of genocide, slavery and torture, are recognized as general rules of international law and apply immediately and take precedence over ordinary laws.[[44]](#footnote-45)

## What are the achievements at the national level in the implementation of laws, policies, plans and/or programs and practices relevant to promoting girls' and young women's engagement/activism? What roles have NGOs played in this respect?

1. In recent years some achievements at the national level regarding the implantation of laws and policies promoting girls and young women's activism can be recognised. Examples will be given under Number 2.6 below.
2. These achievements were considerably driven by NGOs. In implementing and promoting girls' and young women's' engagement NGOs play an important role. NGOs not only help in individual cases of concrete human rights violations, but also make important contributions to the protection of human rights in other ways. For example, NGOs have helped to raise public awareness and to improve human rights protection considerably. The German government attaches great importance to cooperation with non‑governmental organizations.
3. NGOs therefore play a considerable role in terms of promoting girls and young women's right of activism, by initiating the law‑making process and taking part in the working groups on preparation of draft laws. With regard to law making, NGOs exert great influence through the right of initiative. They can point out legal gaps and indicate where something should be newly regulated. During the contract negotiations, NGOs are then granted observer status. With regard to law enforcement, NGOs undertake concrete project and lobbying work "on the ground," procure information about human rights violations and monitor compliance with human rights norms and inform the public and the affected persons.

## Please provide concrete examples of good practices and any innovative initiatives taken by the State, NGOs and other stakeholders, and lessons learnt.

1. Some examples of good practices by the State to promote young women's activism include:
	* + the implementation of the Act to promote pay transparency between women and men. Employees in companies with 200 or more employees are able to assert an individual right to information and demand information about the pay structures in their company.
		+ the implementation of the Act on Equal Participation of Women and Men in Leadership Positions in the Private and Public Sector. The Act creates conditions for equal participation in working life.
		+ the implementation of parental allowance and the new parental allowance plus. With the parental allowance and the new parental allowance plus, the deductibility of childcare costs, the nationwide expansion of childcare and an expanded range of all‑day schools, the German government has set a decisive course for a better reconciliation of family and career, so that women and girls are encouraged to get involved in society.
2. NGOs have also made a major contribution to improvements in the advancement of women and girls. The NGO "Terre des femmes", for example, has campaigned for the enforcement of the minimum age for marriage of 18 years and contributed to the passing of the law to combat early marriages and to the fact that marriages contracted abroad with minors will no longer be recognized or annulled in Germany in the future.

# Challenges and structural barriers

## What issues or gaps do arise with regard to existing frameworks (i.e. legislation, policies, plans, and/or programs) relevant to girls' and young women's civic space and activism? Are there any specific laws, policies and practices that place obstacles to their participation, activism or collective action? What role do NGOs play in response to these gaps?

1. Among the obstacles for girls' and women's participation is that laws and recommendations are merely "soft law" and do not provide for specific remedies and implementation measures.
2. The National Action Plan for Business and Human Rights for example describes measures by the German Federal Government to uphold the state's duty to protect human rights in the business context. It also lays down German companies' responsibility, with a focus on global supply and value chains. However, business enterprises in Germany have neither been placed under an obligation to undertake gender‑responsive due diligence nor been instructed or especially encouraged to do so. Also lacking is a specific approach to remove barriers faced by women in particular in the areas of participation or remedy.
3. Another example is the federal government's various education packages for children and young adults from socially disadvantaged families.[[45]](#footnote-46) These education packages are highly bureaucratic, do not regulate individual legal entitlement to coverage of necessary needs, and benefits are only granted on a case‑by‑case basis.
	1. ROMANIA

# Nature, modalities and trends of girls' and young women's activism

## What is the normative framework related to girls' and young women's civic space and activism?

1. Two key pieces of legislation regarding the civic space and activism are Law 78/2014 on activism in Romania and Government Ordonnance 26/2000 regarding associations (NGOs) and foundations.
2. One important legal act regarding girls' and women's access to the civic space in Romania is Law 202/2002 on the equality opportunities women and men. This is one of the central laws in Romania that ensures equality between women and men in all aspects of life (work, activism, education, culture and so on). Law 202/2002 is supported by detailed delegated legislation which concern its application. However, as will be detailed below, this is not always reflected in practice: according to the 2020 Gender Equality Index, "Romania ranks 26th in the EU, with 54.4 out of 100 points. Its score is 13.5 points below the EU's score.[[46]](#footnote-47)
3. One example of the impact of Law 202/2002 in the civic space is Art. 21, which states that public authorities, economic entities, political parties, worker unions, and all NGOs have the obligation to promote and encourage the equal participation of both men and women in leading roles and in decision taking.
4. Furthermore, Law 202/2002 creates a legal entity called the National Agency for Equal Opportunities Between Women and Men (Agenția Națională pentru Egalitatea de Șanse între Femei și Bărbați – ANES, "the National Agency").
5. The National Agency is an institution under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection which is mandated to coordinate the implementation of government policies and strategies in the field of equal opportunities and for preventing and combating domestic violence. It can propose legal amendments and national plans of action and oversees their implementation and their harmonization with international human rights law. It also collects statistical data and conducts surveys.
6. Another important institution, The National Commission for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men is an inter‑ministerial body that operates under the coordination of the National Agency, which supports its activities. The National Commission includes representatives of the relevant ministries, central public administration units, trade unions, employers' associations, and non‑governmental organizations (NGOs) active in the field of gender equality.
7. In addition, County commissions on equal opportunities between women and men (established by Law 202/2002) are consultative and informative organs which report to the National Commission and are composed of representatives of the local public administration, entities subordinate to the local public administration, trade unions and local NGOs. They have yet to be made operational in all counties.
8. The Ombudsperson designated by Parliament as the national human rights institution, has an important role in advancing the rights of women, by reporting to Parliament and proposing legislative amendments and reviewing complaints. Given that substantially fewer women than men have submitted complaints, women's access to this mechanism could still be improved.

## What are the main features of their activism/participation in political and public life in countries or regions you are working?

1. Women's and girls' organizations in Romania play a key role in the fight against gender discrimination, often taking on a leading role in securing the rights of women and girls or complementing Government initiatives. Their activities include raising awareness, education and training on gender equality and gender‑based violence, providing shelter and support, rehabilitation and reintegration services for survivors of gender‑based violence and for migrant and refugee women, and providing services for poor women and girls.
2. Consequently, there are many NGOs in Romania with the main purpose of building a better world for women, such as "Asociația Centrul FILIA", "Asociația ANAIS", "Asociația Femeile se implică", "Asociația Femeilor Împotriva Violenței ARTEMIS".
3. A study published in the Annals of the University of Bucharest[[47]](#footnote-48) shows that women comprised under 10% of the 2008‑2012 Parliament. This points to a reduced involvement of women in general in the political landscape, which is still a male dominated field.
4. Another study, published on cursdeguvernare.ro in 2016[[48]](#footnote-49), showed that out of 22 Presidential Counsels, 9 were women; out of the total number of Ministers, only 8 were women (38%) and only 66 MPs were women (11%). Even worse, out of 3.187 mayors, only 147 were women (4,6%).
5. Generally, women in Romania are well represented in the different public institutions but their representation in senior positions is mostly low. For example, although women hold 52 per cent of the management positions at the Central Administration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, only 27 per cent of the diplomatic missions and consular offices of Romania abroad are headed by women. In the police force, women represent 32 per cent of police officers and the police is currently headed by a woman. It is encouraging that 73 per cent of judges are women (3,491 out of 4,753). At the High Court of Cassation, the president is a woman and the rate is similarly high, with over 73 per cent of women magistrates. However, at the Constitutional Court, only three out of nine judges are women. Women are also the majority of prosecutors (1,338 women out of 2,572).[[49]](#footnote-50)
6. Women activist groups engage with a range of authorities. As evidenced by the annual report of Asociatia ANAIS[[50]](#footnote-51), they frequently collaborate with the police authorities in order to raise awareness against domestic violence. The European Parliament is also a target of advocacy, as shown in Centrul Filia's 2019 annual report[[51]](#footnote-52), which highlights the NGO's interaction with the EP on projects regarding the improvement of the ability and competence of educators/professors/tutors on gender equality. Similarly, Centrul Filia highlights the fact that it is a member of the Europarliamentary Forum for Diversity.
7. The Government Committee for equality between genders, which often holds meetings with members of the civil society interested on this topic. Similar committees exist within the Romanian Parliament that take certain legislative and other initiatives on women's rights and gender equality. Their continued and strengthened engagement with relevant institutions and women's and girls' organizations would further contribute to promoting women's and girls' rights.
8. Levels of engagement with women's activism is hard to quantify. Searching through the activity reports of the main women‑focused NGO's, we can see that they are usually part of international organizations focused on gender equality and other topics of women's interest and that they interact with several international authorities.
9. Moreover, many NGOs group up into stronger cooperation groups, such as the Romanina Women's Lobby, The Coalition for Gender Equality, Anti‑discrimination coalition, in order to achieve greater impact.

## What are the forms and modalities for girls' and young women's engagement/activism in countries or regions you are working (specifying the country/ries or region/s)? Please provide information about any structures in place (formal and informal) and how they operate.

1. As shown before, most activism by girls and young women in Romania is done through NGOs with the purpose of achieving gender equality.
2. Structures such as NGO coalitions exist to improve the reach of activism on women's and girl's rights.
3. In addition, as shown before, there are governmental and parliamentary bodies that frequently interact with NGOs.

# Enabling factors and good practices

## What solidarity and support frameworks are available in the countries or regions of your operation that enhance girls' and young women's activism?

1. According to Law 78/2017, the Romanian state supports volunteering through all its institutions that operate in fields where volunteer activities are carried out in accordance with the law.
2. Furthermore, public administration authorities support the development of volunteering activities by including in local or national development strategies separate chapters on the role of volunteering as a resource for developing social welfare, and not simply to reduce costs, as well as how to support volunteering to achieve local or national priorities.
3. In addition, according to Law 202/2002, one of the principles by which equality of opportunity between women and men is achieved is the principle of cooperation and partnership. Central and local public administration authorities collaborate with civil society and non‑governmental organizations for the elaboration, implementation, evaluation and monitoring of public policies and programs on the elimination of all forms of sex discrimination, as well as for de facto equality of opportunity and treatment between women and men.
4. Under Law 202/2000 the Ministry of Education must provides appropriate training of teachers in all forms of education, public and private, on the topic of equal opportunities for women and men.
5. On women's involvement in politics, Law 202/2000, provides that political parties must have regulations for gender‑based affirmative action in their statutes and internal regulations. This applies to the decision‑making level and with a view to ensure a balanced representation of women and men in the nomination of candidates in local, general and European elections.

## What are the concrete ways in which the State promotes and secures girls' engagement/activism? Are there particular issues and platforms in which the State encourages their engagement?

1. Many of the above‑mentioned provisions have are applicable here as well.
2. Key platforms through which the state encourages women engagement and activism are the National Agency for Equal Opportunities Between Women and Men (ANES) and the National Commission for Equal Opportunities Between Women And Men (CONES), both mentioned above.
3. One ANES project, "Justice has no gender", seeks to raise awareness among over 15,000 Romanian students about the negative effects of discrimination and gender stereotypes.
4. Another is the "FemTalk campaign" where female leaders in the field of education, culture, health, business and media were invited to talk about their experiences in private or professional life, in which they faced various stereotypes of gender, prejudice or discrimination.
5. Similarly, in 2020 ANES held a campaign called "6 days of activism against violence against women", in which a series of events were held in order raise awareness against domestic violence.
6. In addition, Romania has vowed to launch an integrated system to prevent all forms of violence, encourage a cadre of gender equality experts and create programs to engage girls and boys in political, social, and economic life, aimed at creating the next generation of leaders.[[52]](#footnote-53)
7. Even further, ANES and UNICEF in Romania have signed a partnership to promote and integrate the gender perspective in Romanian public policies in the benefit of children and adolescents. The partnership will be implemented between June 2020 and December 2022.[[53]](#footnote-54)

## What is the legal framework protecting human rights defenders in your country? How is a human rights defender define in your jurisdiction and do girls activist fall under the definition and entitled to any protection?

1. There is no specific legal framework regarding the specific protection of human rights defenders, other than the regular framework regarding any volunteer or NGO.

## What is the legal protective framework for the activities and development of girls and young women in your country? To what extent do international instruments apply in your country?

1. As mentioned before, one of the most important laws regarding young women and girls in Romania is Law 202/2002.
2. Other such important laws are Law no. 62/2009 for the approval of the Government Emergency Ordinance no. 61/2008 on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment between women and men regarding access to goods and services and the provision of goods and services, Law no. 23/2015 for declaring May 8 the Day of Equal Opportunities between Women and Men, Government Emergency Ordinance no. 137/2000 on the prevention and sanctioning of all forms of discrimination.
3. Romania is a member of the European Union meaning that all EU Law is applicable. This includes the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, Directive 2004/113/EC regarding equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services, Directive 2006/54/EC regarding equal treatment for men and women in employment and occupation.
4. Two other EU regulations that are very important are the Gender Equality Strategy 2020‑2025 and the Gender Action Plan III 2021‑2025.
5. Romania has also ratified CAT, CCPR (along with OP2), CEDAW, CERD, CESCR, CRC (including both optional protocols), CRPD. These conventions, once ratified by the Romanian Parliament, are directly applicable and mandatory for all Romanian legal entities and natural persons, including Romanian authorities, and have the same force as if they were Romanian laws. Even further, according to the Romanian Constitution, the Romanian state undertakes to fulfill in good faith the obligations incumbent on it from the treaties to which it is a party. Also, in case of conflict between the pacts and treaties on fundamental human rights, to which Romania is a party, and domestic laws, international law takes priority.

## What are the achievements at the national level in the implementation of laws, policies, plans and/or programs and practices relevant to promoting girls' and young women's engagement/activism? What roles have NGOs played in this respect?

1. In 2018, amendment 178/2018 to Law 202/2002 introduced the possibility for public and private institutions with more than 50 employees to hire an "equal opportunities expert" or designate an employee to oversee gender equality. This person is tasked with making recommendations for implementing the principle of equal treatment between women and men. However, only a few institutions have appointed them.
2. According to UN Human Rights Committee, in its 2017 report on Romania, some legislative measures taken by the State were regarded as positive aspects, including
	* + Law No. 429/2003 on the revision of the Constitution;
		+ Law No. 286/2009 on the new Criminal Code and Law No. 135/2010 on the new Criminal Procedure Code;
		+ Law No. 287/2009 on the new Civil Code and Law No. 134/2010 on the new Civil Procedure Code;
		+ The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, on 31 January 2001;
		+ The Optional Protocol to the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, on 25 August 2003.
3. Still, in another report by the UN Human Rights Council, report by the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, it was recommended to the Government that it should "*Consult young generations of women, particularly high school and university students, to ensure their concerns are taken into account in the design of policies and strategies that concern them and ensure a nurturing environment for girls' activism and collective action*", which shows that there is still room for improvement.

# Challenges and structural barriers

## What kind of gender and age specific barriers are affecting girls' and young women's participation/activism in your national context? Please indicate concrete examples of direct and indirect as well as formal and informal factors posing threats and risks for girls and young women engaging in the public space (examples of these can include stereotyping based on gender and age, restrictions on freedom of expression, speech, assembly, liberty, etc., legal restrictions to capacity to provide legal consent, legal age of marriage, etc.)

1. Fortunately, at a formal level, Romanian law does not provide for cases in which women are discriminated against. In terms of liberty of expression, assembly, capacity to provide legal consent and even legal age of marriage, Romanian law offers and equal legal landscape for both men and women.
2. In addition, being a member of the European Union, Romania does not have laws that heavily restrict liberty of expression. Liberty of expression, of thought, of assembly are all fundamental human rights that the Romanian Constitution protects.
3. Practically however, there is still a long way to go toward factual equality between sexes, especially in rural areas.

## What issues or gaps do arise with regard to existing frameworks (i.e. legislation, policies, plans, and/or programs) relevant to girls' and young women's civic space and activism? Are there any specific laws, policies and practices that place obstacles to their participation, activism or collective action? What role do NGOs play in response to these gaps?

1. As mentioned above, the legal framework in Romania is very focused on creating an equal landscape for both men and women. Important laws were passed to ensure a better place for women. Therefore, from a legal point of view, it would be hard to identify any specific laws or policies that impede women in their activism or collective action.
2. Regarding gaps between women and men in Romanian society, according to the Gender Equality Index[[54]](#footnote-55), women have a lower full‑time employment rate (42% vs 60%), duration of working life (30 years vs 36 years) and a lower career prospects index (66 vs 67) than men.
3. However, it should be noted that while there exists a mean monthly earnings gap (953 PPS vs 1003 PPS) between women and men, it is significantly lower than the European average gap (2249 PPS vs 2809 PPS).

## What are the challenges, in your national/regional context, in the recognition and protection of girls as human rights defenders? What negative trends undermine their evolving capacities and interests at the family, community, and State levels? How do NGOs (including your organization) promote and work with girl human rights defenders?

1. The UN Working Group on discrimination against women and girls highlighted the challenges that affect women and girls in society. According to its latest report[[55]](#footnote-56), "*at the political level, barriers include frequent changes of government, insufficient coordination between the different relevant authorities, and with NGOs, and limited resources of the authorities in charge of gender equality*."
2. The report shows that at the socioeconomic level, the country faces a high level of poverty and a significant rural‑urban divide. Furthermore, the report raises concerns on the conservative views that exist in society about women, including gender stereotypes. It also shows that "*There is also a limited understanding of the structural problems that different groups of women and girls face in the enjoyment of their human rights. The implementation of an increased range of targeted measures, as well as measures to address barriers to equality, is necessary*".
3. As pointed in a previous section, women's participation in politics is at a very low level, which heavily impacts the focus that authorities have on the problems of women and girls in general. While women are well represented in public administration, they struggle to raise beyond a certain glass ceiling.
4. The report also shows that "*access to an adequate standard of living is a challenge in poverty‑affected rural Romania, as social services, housing, and other infrastructure is often of low quality, disproportionately affecting rural Roma women and girls. Adequate gender‑sensitive investment in social goods and services should be prioritized.*"
5. One other important point shown, which is entirely true, is that gender‑based violence against women is also a challenge and Romania has a high rate of trafficking, in particular. While the report acknowledges that the Government has been taking actions to combat violence against women and girls, including the adoption of solid legislative and policy frameworks, it also points to a "*lack of sufficient resources, persistence of gender stereotypes in public institutions, corruption, insufficient availability of comprehensive services for victims/survivors, and insufficient availability of gender‑sensitized qualified personnel*" which remain challenges.
	1. RUSSIA

# Nature, modalities and trends of girls' and young women's activism

## What is the normative framework related to girls' and young women's civic space and activism?

1. Russian legislation is based on the principle of the equality of human rights regardless of people's gender or age. The Constitution of the Russian Federation explicitly underlines that men and women shall enjoy equal rights and freedoms and have equal possibilities to exercise them.[[56]](#footnote-57)
2. Accordingly, formally Russian laws provide men and women with equal rights to express their position and engage in activism practices. The regulatory framework for the respective activities comprises:
3. participation in public events aimed at expressing and distributing opinions concerning various issues of political, economic, social and cultural issues:[[57]](#footnote-58)
	1. Generally, public events may be held in the form of assemblies, rallies, demonstrations, marches, and picketing or by using various combinations of those forms;
	2. Demonstrations, marches and picketing may be organized by Russian citizens who have reached the age of 18 years, and assemblies and rallies may be organised by Russian citizens who have reached the age of 16 years;
	3. Any public event, except for the "sole picketing" (a picketing by one single participant), shall be approved by the authorities beforehand, and participation in public events that has not been approved constitutes an administrative offence (or a crime – if repeated);
	4. The law allows authorities to refuse approval of a public event based, for example, on the fact that the place chosen by the organiser is not acceptable or that for the date chosen another assembly has been approved to take place. As a matter of practice, this is often used by state authorities to limit organisation and holding of public events in respect of various sensitive and significant topics that may be considered us undesirable by the state;
	5. Administrative / criminal liability for breach of the procedure for running public events;
	6. In COVID‑19 pandemic environment public events are formally banned at the local level in multiple regions across Russia (including, "sole picketing"). Reference to sanitary / anti‑pandemic measures is often made for justification of impermissibility of public events / liability of individuals who participates in public events;
4. participation in NGOs, their foundation and operation, and setting out various legal forms of NGOs:[[58]](#footnote-59)
	1. Funds: a fund is an organisation incorporated by individuals and (or) legal entities on the basis of voluntary contributions of property by individuals and (or) legal entities for achieving charitable, cultural, educational, or other social objectives;
	2. Associations (unions): an association (union) is an association of individuals and (or) legal entities incorporated for the purposes of the representation and protection of common, *inter alia*, professional interests, achieving public and other non‑commercial objectives;
	3. Social Organisations: a social organisation is an association of individuals based on common spiritual and other non‑material interests aimed at representing and protecting such interests;
	4. Social Movements: a social movement is an association of individuals and (or) legal entities pursuing social, political and other generally useful goals which are supported by the participants of the social movement;
	5. Autonomous non‑profit organisations: an organisation that has no membership and is formed on the basis of property contributions of citizens and/or legal entities for the purposes of provision of services in the fields of education, health care, culture, science and other spheres of non‑profit activities;
	6. Subdivisions and representative offices of foreign NGOs: foreign NGOs may establish their presence in Russia by incorporating a subdivision, which is considered a Russian legal entity, or via a representative office, which is not treated as a Russian legal entity but rather a division of a foreign NGO;
5. participation in or establishment of political parties:[[59]](#footnote-60)
	1. Russian citizens are entitled to freely establish and voluntarily participate in political parties. Establishment of political party or participation therein is not subject to any consent of the authorised body (other than standard formation / registration procedure applicable to all legal entities in Russia);
	2. Participation of political parties in real political processes however is substantially limited – see;
6. development of the youth policy in Russia:[[60]](#footnote-61)
	1. Support of initiatives from youth;
	2. Promotion of social activities aimed at supporting youth;
	3. Support of young families;
	4. Support for the activities of youth social organisations;
	5. Promotion of the participation of young people in volunteer activities.

The overall framework is rather declarative and does not provide for particular promotional measures / incentives.

1. volunteer activities:[[61]](#footnote-62)
	1. Volunteering is defined as an activity in the form of gratuitous performance of works and (or) rendering of services for various socially beneficial purposes, including support of socially significant youth initiatives, projects, children's and youth movements, children's and youth organisations;
	2. People can participate in volunteer activities solely or via volunteer organisations;
	3. The organizers of the volunteering and the voluntary service organisations have the right to receive support from the state and local authorities.

The overall framework is rather declarative and does not provide for particular promotional measures / incentives.

# Enabling factors and good practices

## What solidarity and support frameworks are available in the countries or regions of your operation that enhance girls' and young women's activism?

1. ***Legal/policy and institutional frameworks***
2. The legal framework is limited to the acts and initiatives described in items 1 – 5 of the answer to Question 1.11.1 of Section 1.
3. The policy framework is determined by the adopted the National Action Strategy for Women for 2017 – 2022 adopted by Government of the Russian Federation ("**Strategy**"). [[62]](#footnote-63) In terms of the Strategy, in 2019 the Government approved the Plan of Actions for the Implementation of the Strategy in 2019 – 2022 ("**Plan**"),[[63]](#footnote-64) which sets out the list of actions to be taken by state authorities for the implementation of the Strategy and includes, inter alia, the following:
	1. For the purposes of improvement of women economic position, realization of their well‑being growth:
		1. Conducting events aimed at engaging women in the creative industries sector and developing the competencies necessary for this professional area,
		2. Carrying out activities aimed at developing women' and girls' professional skills and competencies necessary in industries,
		3. Carrying out annual outreach activities aimed at (i) engaging women in mathematics and science studies, (ii) engaging women in knowledge‑intensive professions and advanced technology companies by organizing special job fairs, (iii) promoting women's entrepreneurship,
		4. Conducting annual contests for business and socially active women in the regions of Russia,
		5. Carrying out activities aimed at informing women about their labor rights and measures taken to improve the conditions and safety of women labor,
	2. For the purposes of prevention of social disadvantage of women and violence against women:
		1. Provision of state support to NGOs that provide shelter to victims of violence and provide them with psychological and social support,
		2. Conducting events aimed at preventing the sexual exploitation of women and human trafficking,
	3. For the purposes of the enhancement of women participation in public and political life:
		1. Implementation of measures aimed at increasing participation of women in public and political life,
		2. Providing assistance to NGOs that implement measures to improve the status of women,
		3. Implementation of measures to create the information space of women' organisations on the Internet, etc.
4. The institutional framework includes various NGOs influencing the process of enhancing women and girls' activism. These organisations are engaged in the promotion and agitation of women's activism and women rights protection, organisation of respecting volunteer movements, etc.[[64]](#footnote-65)

## What are the concrete ways in which the State promotes and secures girls' engagement/activism? Are there particular issues and platforms in which the State encourages their engagement?

1. Although the Strategy provides for multiple concrete ways in which the State shall promote women and girls' engagement and activism. However, the Strategy *de facto* lacks proper implementation.
2. State support for women is basically limited to the provision of social benefits to women in connection with pregnancy or motherhood. Other examples of the Strategy realization include increased attention to domestic violence and sexual harassment issues and enhancement of international cooperation in the sphere of women rights.
3. At the same time, the scope of concrete measures introduced by the State in order to support women or girls' activism and engagement is rather narrow.
4. Russian legislation does not provide any specific rules in respect of children‑related engagement in activism. Basically, children and, in particular, girls' engagement and activism are promoted as part of educational activities. This includes various events on the school level, competitions between schools, various regional contests, etc., which concern various spheres of activism – mostly, however, scientific or cultural. The contests and conferences for children are also conducted in the sphere of law, economics and political science (as school subjects) and cover general leadership and success topics. All these measures as well as equal opportunities for participation for boys and girls may subsequently influence girls' attitude towards activism.
5. Generally, Russian legislation provides certain ways to receive State support (including financial) for concrete social initiatives. We are not aware of any particular support measures available for promoting and securing girls' engagement / activism.

## What is the legal framework protecting human rights defenders in your country? How is a human rights defender define in your jurisdiction and do girls activist fall under the definition and entitled to any protection?

1. Protection of human rights in Russia is provided and monitored by the Presidential Council for the Development of Civil Society and Human Rights ("**Presidential Council**"), [[65]](#footnote-66) Commissioner for Human Rights (ombudsman) [[66]](#footnote-67) and Commissioner for Children's Rights (children's ombudsman).[[67]](#footnote-68)
	1. The Presidential Council is a consultative body established to assist the President in the exercise of his constitutional responsibilities to guarantee and protect human rights and freedoms, keep the President informed on the situation.
	2. The operation of ombudsman and children's ombudsman is aimed to assist in restoration of violated human rights and freedoms of adults and children of all sexes. In 2015, there was also an initiative on establishment of a post of women's ombudsman for strengthening the protection of women's rights. [[68]](#footnote-69) However, the initiative was finally rejected shortly after discussions.
2. In respect of private organisations and individuals *de facto* involved into defending human rights in Russia, Russian legislation does not vest them with any specific legal status and does not specifically regulate their activity.
3. In 2018, there were discussions in the Parliament with respect to adoption of special regulation of human rights defenders. [[69]](#footnote-70) One of the major initiatives during discussions concerned the establishment of official understanding of human rights defenders as persons and organisations representing interests of other individuals and providing legal assistance without requisite legal education. Meanwhile, legal act on human rights defenders has not been adopted yet.

## What is the legal protective framework for the activities and development of girls and young women in your country? To what extent do international instruments apply in your country?

1. The legal protective framework for the activities and development of girls and young women in Russia is limited to regulation described in items 1 – 5 of the answer to Question 1.11.1 of Section 1.
2. The implementation of international instruments takes place in the following ways:
	1. Ratification of international conventions, such as the Convention concerning Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women Workers: Workers with Family Responsibilities (1981, ILO Convention No. 156) with the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Once international convention is ratified, it becomes subject to direct application in Russia;
	2. International organisations and NGOs are allowed to operate in Russia. Such organisations as UN Women [[70]](#footnote-71) and Global Fund for Women [[71]](#footnote-72) actively participate in the women‑related events in Russia.

## What are the achievements at the national level in the implementation of laws, policies, plans and/or programs and practices relevant to promoting girls' and young women's engagement/activism? What roles have NGOs played in this respect?

1. Legislative measures aimed at protecting women's rights are promoted / supported predominantly by relevant social non‑governmental initiatives. NGOs contribute to this process by initiating the law‑making process and taking part in the working groups on preparation of draft laws.
2. In the absence of institutional / legal support, number of concrete practical achievements is limited:
	1. Draft law focusing on domestic violence is currently being finalized for the submission to the Russian Parliament, and NGOs take one of the leading roles in its development. The draft law vests state authorities, such as police, ombudsmen, child ombudsmen, prosecutor's office, etc., with a special authority needed to prevent domestic violence and also set out a list of remedies for its prevention.
	2. Russian NGOs effectively support women seeking protection of their rights in state and international courts and enforcement authorities and provide them with related legal assistance. Prominent examples include:
		1. ECHR case "Volodina v. Russia" (2019) the claimant, Ms. Volodina, was represented by the Fund "Justice Initiative";
		2. Ruling of the Russian Supreme Court No 56‑KG20‑12K9 (2/2979/2020) of 29 January 2021. The court dismissed a defamation claim against the women who accused the claimant of sexual violence.
		3. Resolution No 11‑P of the Russian Constitutional Court of 9 April 2021 on changes to Russian Criminal Code provisions regarding battery.

## Please provide concrete examples of good practices and any innovative initiatives taken by the State, NGOs and other stakeholders, and lessons learnt.

1. There are several examples of good practices and initiatives undertaken by different actors:
2. State authorities:
	1. Different state centers for assistance to women in crisis situations have been organised. For example, St. Petersburg State Budgetary Institution "Crisis Center for Helping Women" or State Institution "Almus Social Rehabilitation Center"[[72]](#footnote-73);
	2. Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation together with the Interparliamentary Assembly of Member Nations of the Commonwealth of Independent States organize the Eurasian Women's Forum ("**EWF**"). [[73]](#footnote-74) Within the framework of the forum various events, contests, discussions aimed at women activism and engagement promotion are undertaken. For example, the contest "Women innovators".

In addition to the EWF as a one‑time event which takes place once every three years, the EWF Global Platform was created. The Platform transforms the EWF into a constant systematic work focused on addressing challenges within the country and development of women's agenda and is aimed at discussing a new role and opportunities for women in the challenges of the 21st century, consolidating women leaders, women's associations in the interests of peace and humanitarian cooperation.

* 1. NGOs:
		1. Various NGOs aimed at protecting women's rights were created. For instance, the Independent Charity Center for Sexual Abuse Survivors "Sisters",[[74]](#footnote-75) Russian Nationwide Social and State Organisation "Union of Women of Russia",[[75]](#footnote-76) NGO "Woman Rights", [[76]](#footnote-77) Consortium of Women Non‑Governmental Associations, [[77]](#footnote-78) Centre "Anna", [[78]](#footnote-79) others;
		2. Such NGOs maintain a helpline for survivors of sexual violence, organize personal consultations of psychologists, provides legal assistance, undertake educational activities and promotes women rights protection in the social media, lectures, trainings and master classes.

# Challenges and structural barriers

## What kind of gender and age specific barriers are affecting girls' and young women's participation/activism in your national context? Please indicate concrete examples of direct and indirect as well as formal and informal factors posing threats and risks for girls and young women engaging in the public space (examples of these can include stereotyping based on gender and age, restrictions on freedom of expression, speech, assembly, liberty, etc., legal restrictions to capacity to provide legal consent, legal age of marriage, etc.)

1. By way of a general comment on the environment:
	1. The patriarchal culture is predominant in Russia and predetermines the existence of stereotypes – such as women's inability to take on leading roles in politics and business due to alleged psychological and emotional characteristics. Moreover, household duties are traditionally considered as duties to be assigned to women, that also affects both expectations for women and their real ability to spend time and efforts for career development, social activities and politics.

Although social research conducted in 2019 shows that people support participation of women in politics, only 45% of women and 19% of men agree that a female shall become a head of the state in the next 10 – 15 years. [[79]](#footnote-80)

* 1. There are numerous practices normally assessed as discriminatory practices [[80]](#footnote-81) or limiting women activism [[81]](#footnote-82). This also includes practices based on "regional traditions": mutilation practices, [[82]](#footnote-83) "honor killings", [[83]](#footnote-84) bride kidnapping. All this is formally inadmissible under an existing legal framework.
1. Formally, there are no restrictions as to women participation in any activities, from career development to activism and politics and any limitation or restriction based on gender is considered as a discrimination and prohibited by laws.
2. There are, however, certain legal restrictions and enforcement practices that are not related to political sphere and activism.
	1. The Russian Ministry of Labour adopted the list of professions prohibited for women, which includes 100 professions as of 2021. [[84]](#footnote-85) Earlier, the list included more than 450 professions, and reduction is well received.
	2. As to the legal age of marriage, while generally the legal age of marriage is 18 and may be lowered to 16, regional legislation may set out rules allowing marriage before 16. [[85]](#footnote-86) In some regions, marriage may be allowed for people of 14 in case of special circumstances. [[86]](#footnote-87) While these rules may apply equally for both girls and boys, according to statistics of the Federal State Statistics Service, in 2020 only 589 marriages involved boys of age under 18 against 4569 marriages with girls of the same age. [[87]](#footnote-88)
	3. As to the activism, recently adopted legislation and practice shows restrictive attitude of the authorities to such activities in general.
		1. Russian legislation on the public events, such as assemblies, rallies, demonstrations, requires any of such event to be approved by the authorities beforehand, which may be used by the authorities to restrict respective activity (see item 1 of the answer to Question 1.1 of Section 1).
		2. Recently adopted legislation on foreign agents makes it burdensome for NGOs to conduct their activities: [[88]](#footnote-89)
			1. Any organisation or a person that has received financing from foreign persons, legal entities or international organisations, and that participates in political activities (very broadly interpreted) may be declared performing functions of a foreign agent. No court decision is required.
			2. Political activities for the purpose of the concerned law means organisation of public assemblies and discussions, public appeal to the authorities, dissemination of an opinion on decisions made by the authorities and state policies, conducting social research for the purpose of formation of political and social views.
			3. Once recognized as a foreign agent, NGO becomes subject to additional audit and reporting obligations and obligation to mark all its publications and to begin each oral statement with a disclosure that it is being given by a foreign agent.

For example, in 2020 the center "Nasiliu.Net" ("No To Violence"), which helps victims of domestic violence and participates in projects aimed at liquidation of gender inequality, has been declared performing functions of a foreign agent allegedly due to its active involvement in the work on the draft of the Domestic Violence Law.

* + 1. A foreign or international NGO may be declared "undesirable" by the Russian Prosecutor General, if it represents a threat to the fundamentals of the constitutional system of the Russian Federation, the state defence and national security. [[89]](#footnote-90) The law restricts any activities, including the incorporation of the Rep Offices of undesirable organisations in the territory of the Russian Federation and distribution of its information materials. If an organisation is included in the list of undesirable organisations, banks and other financial institutions will refuse to conduct financial and property transactions with it.
		2. An anti‑extremist legislation with quite vague definition of extremism may be used to limit activity of organisations and activists. [[90]](#footnote-91)

Recently the Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology, and Mass Media of the Russian Federation proposed to declare radical feminist organisations and movements as extremism . The same proposal was brought by a member of the Russian Parliament.

## What issues or gaps do arise with regard to existing frameworks (i.e. legislation, policies, plans, and/or programs) relevant to girls' and young women's civic space and activism? Are there any specific laws, policies and practices that place obstacles to their participation, activism or collective action? What role do NGOs play in response to these gaps?

1. There is no special legislation on girls' and young women's activism – these activities are equally regulated for all people regardless of their gender. Accordingly, there are no gaps that are specifically related to women, and all the obstacles are of the general nature as described in items 2 – 3 of the answer to Question 3.1 of Section 3.

## Are there particular threats girl and young women activists in your country or region experience in relation to their work?

1. ***Being prosecuted and punished for their activism***
2. Russian officials and enforcement authorities demonstrate strong negative attitude towards political, feminist, and LGBTQ+ activism, which is, however, not gender specific.
3. Many opposition activists, including females, were held responsible under the Code of Administrative Offenses and prosecuted under the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation for organisation and participation in public assemblies and protests. Examples include:
	1. Political activist Anastasia Shevchenko was prosecuted for participation in the activity of a foreign NGO, in respect of which a decision to recognise its activity as undesirable has been made. Authorities also executed search warrants with respect to other activists related to Ms. Shevchenko.
	2. Feminist and LGBTQ+ activist Julia Tsvetkova is being prosecuted for publication of several art works schematically depicting female bodies to engage de‑stigmatization of female physiology. Law enforcement authorities consider her actions as distribution of pornographic materials.
4. ***Facing intimidations, harassments, and attacks (direct or indirect, online or offline, sexual or physical)***
5. There are examples of activists, including females, being attacked for their activities and position, especially when it comes to feminist and LGBTQ+ activists. This might include messages with threats of physical abuse of an activist or its family members, publication of personal data such as address, mobile phone, etc. (including such information of family members).
6. Number of recent case include activities of so‑called "Masculine State" – an informal association arranging and practicing physical and internet attacks and bulling against women, feminists, LGBTQ+ people and activists. [[91]](#footnote-92) No particular measures have been taking by the official authorities.
7. ***Lacking access to justice and reparations for violations of their rights***
8. Several activists that participated in protests to support Julia Tsvetkova were arrested. According to information from mass media, some of them were not allowed to meet an attorney.
9. Law enforcement authorities may refuse to proceed with prosecution if threats were received on the Internet (as a commentary to a publication in a personal account, etc) because these threats may be considered as unreal and not present.

## What are the challenges, in your national/regional context, in the recognition and protection of girls as human rights defenders? What negative trends undermine their evolving capacities and interests at the family, community, and State levels? How do NGOs (including your organization) promote and work with girl human rights defenders?

1. Russian officials and enforcement authorities demonstrate overall restrictive approach in respect of any activism aimed at protecting human rights if it comes in contradiction with the official policy, and the wide range of respective preventive measures has been developed and introduced in recent years.
2. Recently authorities adopted more restrictive approach to activism in a form of protests and public assemblies as well as other forms of activism – including activism through publications on the Internet.
3. Liability under the Code of Administrative Offences may be imposed on children from 16. Moreover, if a child participates in a non‑approved protest, parents may be subject to administrative liability.
4. Also, activists may be declared foreign agents (updates to legislation on "foreign agent" status also allows to declare individuals as a "foreign agents" and not only NGOs) [[92]](#footnote-93) which discourages all people from participation in any kind of activities, including when it comes to human rights defense.
5. Nevertheless, NGOs spotlights the problem through public discussions on gender equality and distribution of respective materials and information. For example, the NGO called "Nasiliu.Net" published a video "Girls will be girls", which encourages participation of girls and women in any kind of activities, including ones related to politics and human rights defense.

# Recommendations/ the way forward

## What concrete measures should be adopted and implemented to ensure girls' and young women's meaningful participation, activism and collective action at all levels?

1. Full‑blown court system reform aimed at establishing institutional guarantees of judges independence.
2. Revisiting authorities rights to limit public events.
3. Reform of election legislation reducing a scope of qualification for political party to be admitted to elections at all levels.
4. Abolish discriminatory lists of professions unavailable for women.

## What concrete measures should be adopted to address systemic gender‑based/age‑based discrimination and challenges affecting girls' and young women's engagement in the public and political life?

1. Abolish discriminatory lists of professions unavailable for women.
2. Introducing gender quota for higher positions in state service and private businesses.

## What concrete measures should be introduced to improve solidarity, support, collaborations towards creating an enabling environment for girls' and young women's engagement in the political and public life?

1. Promotion of an active role of a woman as new normality.
2. True secularisation of any state initiatives and policy.
3. Introducing sex education at schools.

## What particular roles should NGOs and feminist movements play towards the promotion and protection of girls' and young women's meaningful participation, activism and collective action?

1. Attracting attention to particular practices of discrimination, gender‑based offences and crimes.
2. Legislation initiatives against domestic violence, toward freedom of speech and expression of opinions, court system reform.
	1. UNITED KINGDOM

# Nature, modalities and trends of girls' and young women's activism

## What is the normative framework related to girls' and young women's civic space and activism?

1. ***Legal/policy and institutional frameworks***
2. The United Nations Secretary‑General (UN SG) has ensured that resetting and reorienting the UN's focus on youth and young people has been prioritized[[93]](#footnote-94).
3. The UN Secretary‑General's Executive Committee has endorsed the Youth2030, a strategy launched in 2018 that provides the framework for this reorientation[[94]](#footnote-95).
4. One of the main priorities of Youth2030 allows for the protection and promotion of the rights of young people as well as supporting their civic and political engagement in promoting peace and sustainable development[[95]](#footnote-96).
5. "In the context of civic space, protection means ensuring that young people can safely exercise their human rights without risk of threats and reprisals, especially their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, which are enshrined in various human rights instruments[[96]](#footnote-97)."
6. In 2020, UNSCR 2535 was implemented which urged Member States to "facilitate an inclusive, safe, enabling and gender‑responsive environment" in which youth actors with different backgrounds can "carry out their work independently and without undue interference" while also ensuring that cases of violence against youth are investigated and perpetrators held accountable[[97]](#footnote-98).
7. "In his report on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS), the UN SG asked for dedicated guidance on the protection of young people, including those who engage with the UN, to be developed as part of a new common protection agenda for the UN system[[98]](#footnote-99). A call for better protection of youth in civic space was reiterated by numerous Member States during the latest Video Teleconference Open Debate on YPS of the UN Security Council in April 2020[[99]](#footnote-100)."
8. Ultimately, young girls and young women are surrounded by a fearful atmosphere and worry about their safety when doing their work – this is regarded as a protection issue, regardless if they are exposed to threats or barriers directly or not.
9. The rights frameworks and mechanisms that should offer protection to young people are existent, but these mechanisms only exist in normative terms and are not accessible to youth or are currently inadequate at responding to young people's unique needs and wants.

# Enabling factors and good practices

## What solidarity and support frameworks are available in the countries or regions of your operation that enhance girls' and young women's activism?

1. In regards to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to take part in the government of his or her country – including young girls and young women[[100]](#footnote-101).
2. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) acknowledges that participation in public life is much broader than elections or being elected to the public office[[101]](#footnote-102).
3. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women article 7 extends to all areas of public and political life: "According to the Committee, the political and public life of a country is a broad concept, and can refer to the exercise of political power, in particular legislative, judicial, executive and administrative powers, all aspects of public administration and the formulation and implementation of policy at the international, national, regional and local levels.[[102]](#footnote-103)"

## What are the concrete ways in which the State promotes and secures girls' engagement/activism? Are there particular issues and platforms in which the State encourages their engagement?

1. "The United Nations Millennium Development Goals, and especially Goal 3 on gender equality and women's empowerment, entail a commitment by States to promote mechanisms that give women a voice in politics and governance institutions. Reviews of the progress achieved on the Goals show that women are slowly gaining political power, mainly thanks to quotas and special measures[[103]](#footnote-104)."
2. Further to this, States have adopted different forms of quota systems, the most common being political party quotas, legislative quotas and reserved seats. Political party quotas etnd to be voluntary, party‑specific and in place to increase the number of women/female party candidates and elected representatives by defining a percentage of women. Legislative quotas are binding national policies that are enforced through legislation, which require all political parties to include a certain number of females in their lists of candidate when it comes to elections[[104]](#footnote-105). Another way is to reserve seats for women in parliament through a national policy, which would ensure that a certain number of females are legislators[[105]](#footnote-106).
3. These measures are all meant to overcome some of the obstacles and systemic barriers that could still prevent girls' equal access to politics.

## What is the legal framework protecting human rights defenders in your country? How is a human rights defender define in your jurisdiction and do girls activist fall under the definition and entitled to any protection?

1. In regards to the United Nations Millenium Development Goals, reviews of the progress achieved on these Goals depict that young women are gradually gaining political power, and this is thanks to quotas and special measures[[106]](#footnote-107).
2. Achievements related to politics – legislation has been previously introduced and extended by the UK government in the form of the Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002, amended by the Equality Act 2010. This allows for political parties to use quotas or positive‑action measures like 'all‑women shortlists‑ in the selection of parliamentary candidates, until 2030. The highest‑performing countries are usually those using quotas. These measures have achieved significant gains[[107]](#footnote-108).
3. Young women's participation in aspects of political life is key but also for the diversity of perspective it can bring to decision making. UK stakeholders have also voiced the importance of contributions made through individual efforts of a number of female politicians, or 'critical actors'[[108]](#footnote-109).
4. The business, public and civil sectors, with support by academics, have worked hard over the years to overcome the challenges of women remaining under‑represented in public life and in the work place. To address the norm of men's over‑representation, organisations such as the UK Government Digital Service have formally committed to gender diversity at many events.
5. Group efforts in business and academia have allowed for a wealth of knowledge for the advancement of women in leadership. There is now an impressive body of relevant knowledge and evidence for 'what works' using the expertise of the girls' and women's sector, academia and business. For example in business, Lloyd Banking Group has a range of evidence‑based policy and practice for developing women's participation and leadership, including its Breakthrough network for women and mentoring partnership with Manchester Enterprise Academy[[109]](#footnote-110).

## Please provide concrete examples of good practices and any innovative initiatives taken by the State, NGOs and other stakeholders, and lessons learnt.

1. AWID's Resourcing Feminist Movements (RFM) Initiative – conduct research and analysis to assess how funding practices can be changed to better feminist movements[[110]](#footnote-111). Part of the reason why women's movements are perhaps not as successful as they should be is due to the under‑funding of women and girls' organisations – in 2010, median annual income of over 740 women's organisations around the world was just USD $20,000[[111]](#footnote-112). They provide examples of where corporates have partnered with women's organisations and funds:
	* + Chime for Change (Catapult and Gucci) – Catapult is a crowdfunding platform which encourages philanthropy for girls and women and Gucci has a long history of engaging with women's issues. They joined forces to campaign for women's empowerment, focusing on education, health and justice. A concert was hosted in London in June 2013 (The Sound of Change Live) which was underwritten by Gucci and raised USD 3.9m which was used to support 210 projects in 81 counties[[112]](#footnote-113).
		+ Fundo Elas (the Brazilian Women's Fund) and Chevron – Chevron wanted to work with indigenous communities so Fund Elas educated and advised Chevron on new ways of thinking and working by linking them to women's groups on the ground. Dialogues were held with 120 women in local communities to ascertain their needs and the ways in which Chevron could support them – Chevron then invested in four local communities to support the entrepreneurial activities headed by women in those communities[[113]](#footnote-114).
		+ Grassroots Girls Initiative (Global Fund For Women, Firelight Foundation, The Global Fund For Children, Mama Cash, American Jewish World Service And Empower, partnering with the Nike Foundation): has supported over 300 organisations since it began in 2006. They cite 4 characteristics as being essential to their success: local sustained presence which helps to build bridges between generations; identifying socially isolated girls/women and building links of trust with them; innovative and locally designed solutions which focus on the needs of the women and girls; community‑wide approach[[114]](#footnote-115).
2. #WhatWomenWant campaign for the HIV response (UN AIDS) – social media campaign launched which engages through a network of women‑led organisations and individuals who advance gender equality (focusing on women's rights and health). It has brought to the surface the priority issues for women and girls relating to their sexual and reproductive health and rights[[115]](#footnote-116).

# Challenges and structural barriers

## What kind of gender and age specific barriers are affecting girls' and young women's participation/activism in your national context? Please indicate concrete examples of direct and indirect as well as formal and informal factors posing threats and risks for girls and young women engaging in the public space (examples of these can include stereotyping based on gender and age, restrictions on freedom of expression, speech, assembly, liberty, etc., legal restrictions to capacity to provide legal consent, legal age of marriage, etc.)

1. Women suffer barriers to participation in politics and activism, largely due to backlash related to their gender: "Women in politics face an extraordinary amount of abuse, especially on social media, partly because they speak up but also simply because they are women. This discourages women from participating in political debate."[[116]](#footnote-117)
2. "sexual harassment is commonplace in local and national politics"[[117]](#footnote-118) – this is likely to deter women/girls from speaking out on sensitive gender‑specific issues,
3. Institutional sexism and misogyny[[118]](#footnote-119). A recent survey found that 4 in 10 women councillors have received sexist remarks from other councillors[[119]](#footnote-120).
4. Male‑dominated world – in Parliament and local government in the UK, men outnumber women 2:1, which impacts the willingness of women to seek election and also affects their experiences when running for election as well as their experiences if they are elected. Female politicians have complained of the pressure to conform to masculine expectations in order to be taken seriously[[120]](#footnote-121). This male‑dominated culture can make parties reluctant to listen to women's issues, and can deter women from raising these issues as they feel that they will not be taken seriously.
5. Caring and time demands: Female participation in politics is also diminished as a result of the caring and household responsibilities that many women are expected to assume. For many women, caring and household responsibilities are seen as their primary role, which can then make it difficult for them to engage in activism and political participation[[121]](#footnote-122). Activism and politics in general are demanding time, and involve commitment, long hours and potentially the need to be at home – these time constraints can also pose a barrier for women.
6. Financial barriers (resulting from the gender pay gap, the propensity for women top be engaged in part‑time employment and/or lower paid sectors of employment) – this can mean that women lack the financial resources to engage in activism[[122]](#footnote-123)
7. Aspiration/confidence: Many women have expressed that they do not participate in politics due to lack of self‑confidence. A study by Elder in the USA argued that the "political gender role socialisation hypothesis' represents a barrier – women are not encouraged to get involved in politics in the same way as men because as children they are still led to believe that politics is a man's world[[123]](#footnote-124)
8. The IMD has identified 7 facets of deprivation/social exclusion, which overlap and affect political participation (and may therefore act as barriers to women and girls in engaging in activism): income; employment; health deprivation and disability; education, skills and training deprivation; barriers to housing and services; and crime and living environment deprivation[[124]](#footnote-125). The CLEAR model (developed by Lowndes, Pratchett and Stoker) outlines the key factors which promote participation: Can do; Like to; Enabled to; Asked to; and Responded to[[125]](#footnote-126).
9. Barriers to online activism: Recent years have seen the importance of social media as a tool for women activists (hashtag activism e.g. #MeToo; enabling women victims to share their experience of violence and harassment; increasing political and public accountability towards gender equality through social media). However, there are barriers which prevent women and girls from being able to take full advantage of social media as a tool for activism and promotion of gender equality, including:
	* + Limited access to new tech: political advocacy can be restricted for women who are affected by illiteracy, language barriers and the digital divide in infrastructure between rural and urban areas
		+ Limited networking with institutional actors: women generally have fewer networking opportunities with decision markers and public figures. This disconnect from local women's movements can impact the success of online activism
		+ Information overload and scaling up: there are a lot of online campaigns. These can be overwhelming and lead to activism fatigue which affects the ability to scale up the campaign to a global level and attract new audiences
		+ Harassment: women activists have reported sexual harassment, which can deter them from speaking out online. Negative gender stereotypes and lower representation of women in the media also silences women's online voices[[126]](#footnote-127)
10. There seems to be a degree of stigma around being a feminist, and a barrier is therefore distrust for explicitly feminist objectives. Many women and girls are reluctant to describe themselves as feminist[[127]](#footnote-128).

## What issues or gaps do arise with regard to existing frameworks (i.e. legislation, policies, plans, and/or programs) relevant to girls' and young women's civic space and activism? Are there any specific laws, policies and practices that place obstacles to their participation, activism or collective action? What role do NGOs play in response to these gaps?

1. Some governments use censorship as a tool to silence women's voices. Blogs and websites written by women have frequently been censored by governments[[128]](#footnote-129). This prevents activists' messages from reaching their intended audiences, and the fear of being censored can act as a deterrent to women setting up these blogs.
2. There are still a number of countries where women either cannot or are restricted from voting. This clearly places an obstacle to their ability to participate in politics. These countries include[[129]](#footnote-130):
	* + Vatican City: women are prevented from voting
		+ Saudi Arabia: women are not allowed to make major political choices without male permission
		+ Afghanistan: women are protested at the polls and threatened by community members with violence and exclusion. They have previously received threats from the Taliban
		+ Pakistan: women can be barred from voting by their husbands and village elders. Women who do vote will often be harassed or chastised, and face violence at the polls
		+ Uganda: violence against women at the 2016 elections was such a concern that a control centre was set up to monitor it. However, women complained that this only further discouraged women from voting
3. Stereotypical gender practices in politics can make it harder for women to participate, as many women are primarily expected to assume caring and domestic responsibilities which are time‑consuming and curtail their ability to involve themselves in politics and activism[[130]](#footnote-131).
4. Financial barriers can prevent women from engaging, particularly in local government. Where women sit as local councillors, this is an unpaid role and the Fawcett Society found that many councils do not cover costs of childcare/dependent care or do not provide a sufficient amount to cover these costs. This causes financial hardship which has led to some women having to resign from office[[131]](#footnote-132).
5. A major issue is lack of government funding for NGOs which defend women's rights and issues. This means that a lot of women's NGOs are heavily reliant on private donations and sponsorships[[132]](#footnote-133).
6. The political climate in some countries makes it difficult for women's activism to succeed. For example, the political climate in Poland is hostile towards feminism – the ruling party has openly spoken against gender or lesbian/gay studies and seems to be unwelcoming towards initiatives connected to feminism and/or gender equality[[133]](#footnote-134).

## Are there particular threats girl and young women activists in your country or region experience in relation to their work?

1. ***Being prosecuted and punished for their activism***
2. Impact of Covid‑19 on ability to engage in activism (legislation was passed in the interests of public safety which limited the right to protest): This particularly came to light during the vigil that was held for Sarah Everard in Clapham Common in March 2021. The women's group that was organising the event was threatened with a £10,000 fine for breach of Covid‑19 laws which led to them having to abandon their plans to organise the event[[134]](#footnote-135). Several women were arrested at the event, despite protesting peacefully. They were handed fixed penalty notices. The Met's response to the incident was heavily criticised and policing tactics such as this could deter women from engaging in activism[[135]](#footnote-136).
3. Police have power to arrest an individual if they are breaching the peace. A protester can be arrested and charged under the Public Order Act 1986 if their conduct involves threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour or disorderly behaviour intended to cause harassment, alarm or distress[[136]](#footnote-137). The fear of being arrested can act as a barrier to women wishing to protest.
4. ***Facing intimidations, harassments, and attacks (direct or indirect, online or offline, sexual or physical)***
5. "Women in politics face an extraordinary amount of abuse, especially on social media, partly because they speak up but also simply because they are women. This discourages women from participating in political debate."[[137]](#footnote-138)
6. Women who come from conservative backgrounds may risk the threat of their family members being hostile to their engagement in activism. There is also a risk that the women's family members and loved ones could be targeted.[[138]](#footnote-139)
7. Many women activists feel as though they are not taken seriously when advocating for gender equality.
8. There is a culture of sexism within local government – almost 4 in 10 women councillors have received sexist remarks from other councillors.[[139]](#footnote-140)
9. Stigmatism and ostracism by community leaders, faith‑based groups, families and communities.[[140]](#footnote-141)
10. "Those working on sexual and reproductive rights or advocating the rights of women victims of domestic violence have often been specifically targeted. For example, in Ireland, defenders working on abortion issues experienced a smear campaign and stigmatisation. In many countries, segments of ultraconservative movements and far‑right or extremist religious groups have been the instigators of such attacks."[[141]](#footnote-142)
11. "Most defenders of women's rights are women. Women human rights defenders are at a high risk of experiencing gender‑based violence, rape and other forms of sexual violence, harassment and verbal abuse as well as attacks on their reputation on‑line and off‑line. A worrying phenomenon which has been identified recently is the increasing use of hate speech targeting women human rights defenders."[[142]](#footnote-143)
12. ***Lacking access to justice and reparations for violations of their rights***
13. Violence against women is a pertinent issue in the UK and women often do not receive justice where their rights are violated. The rape prosecution and conviction rate in the UK is shockingly low. In the year end of March 2020, only 1.4% of rape cases reported to police resulted in a suspect being charged[[143]](#footnote-144).
14. "Those working on sexual and reproductive rights or advocating the rights of women victims of domestic violence have often been specifically targeted. For example, in Ireland, defenders working on abortion issues experienced a smear campaign and stigmatisation. In many countries, segments of ultraconservative movements and far‑right or extremist religious groups have been the instigators of such attacks. A serious problem lies in impunity for such actions. All too often state authorities do not fulfill their duty to protect human rights defenders by ensuring effective investigations into these violations and adequate punishment for those responsible."[[144]](#footnote-145)
15. Are there particular concerns that may arise with respect to girls' and young women's access to technology and other infrastructures, and the corresponding divide? What role do NGOs play in response to these gaps?

## What are the challenges, in your national/regional context, in the recognition and protection of girls as human rights defenders?

1. In the UK, there is some stigma around feminism which can make women and girls unwilling to admit to supporting feminist ideologies.
2. "National authorities often fail to consult or listen to women's rights defenders on relevant policies and laws. In some countries, independent activists feel overshadowed by NGOs which are close to the government – the so‑called "GONGOs" (Government‑Organised Non‑Governmental Organisations). Another disturbing element is that women's rights defenders are not considered as equals by some fellow human rights defenders, who mistakenly consider women's rights and gender equality as a soft or secondary human rights issue."[[145]](#footnote-146)
3. ***What negative trends undermine their evolving capacities and interests at the family, community, and State levels?***
4. Women who come from more conservative backgrounds may struggle to be recognised and protected as human rights defenders, as their family members may become hostile – this hostility could extend to the community on a wider level.
5. "women's rights defenders face specific obstacles when they challenge patriarchal values, sexist stereotypes and the traditional perception of gender roles. They can be portrayed as destroyers of family values and national traditions or as agents of what has pejoratively been [[146]](#footnote-147)labeled "gender ideology"."
6. "Like human rights defenders generally, WHRDs become targets of state agents and non‑State actors, such as paramilitaries. However, because they are women, or working on gender equality issues, they can additionally face risks from their own families and communities. Moreover, they come across multiple risks due to religious extremism, increased violence in some regions, political transition and claims of cultural relativism. Additionally, WHRDs face different circumstances because they challenge gender stereotypes, for example, women defenders often face more risks when participating in collective public action because of perceptions of the traditional role of women in some societies. In addition to the risks faced by the WHRDS themselves, their family members are also frequently targeted."[[147]](#footnote-148)
7. ***How do NGOs (including your organization) promote and work with girl human rights defenders?***
8. Plan International works with vulnerable children, with a particular focus on girls, to enable them to learn, lead, decide and thrive. Their strategy involves child sponsorship and grassroots community work. They:
	* + Target areas where inequality for girls is the greatest
		+ Work with men, women, boys and girls to advance the girls' rights movement
		+ Collaborate through local, regional, national and global partnerships
		+ Engage through a global network of offices, partnerships, programmes and influence to reach over 100 countries
		+ Support communities to hold governments accountable
		+ Collaborate with others to influence policy changes and investments to advance equality for girls[[148]](#footnote-149)
9. AWID also works to protect women human rights defenders by:
	* + emphasizing the importance of self‑care and collective well being, and recognizing that what care and wellbeing mean may differ across cultures
		+ documenting the violations targeting WHRDs using a feminist intersectional perspective;
		+ promoting the social recognition and celebration of the work and resilience of WHRDs; and
		+ building civic spaces that are conducive to dismantling structural inequalities without restrictions or obstacles
		+ Promoting collaboration and coordination among human rights and women's rights organizations at the international level to strengthen responses concerning safety and wellbeing of WHRDs.
		+ Supporting regional networks of WHRDs and their organizations, such as the Mesoamerican Initiative for WHRDs and the WHRD Middle East and North Africa Coalition, in promoting and strengthening collective action for protection ‑ emphasizing the establishment of solidarity and protection networks, the promotion of self‑care, and advocacy and mobilization for the safety of WHRDs;
		+ Increasing the visibility and recognition of WHRDs and their struggles, as well as the risks that they encounter by documenting the attacks that they face, and researching, producing, and disseminating information on their struggles, strategies, and challenges:
		+ Mobilizing urgent responses of international solidarity for WHRDs at risk through our international and regional networks, and our active membership[[149]](#footnote-150).

# Recommendations/ the way forward

## What concrete measures should be adopted and implemented to ensure girls' and young women's meaningful participation, activism and collective action at all levels?

1. Consistent review and focus on female progress invites female participation‑ "The review of progress in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment also required a focus on the role of women in countries in special situations, particularly in crisis and post‑crisis situations. Towards this end, the Council held a policy dialogue on this issue, during which the extreme vulnerability of women and their marginalization in crisis situations were addressed. Participants made a strong call for promoting women's participation at all stages, from emergency relief to recovery and from peacekeeping to peace‑building. The establishment of specific mechanisms and institutional arrangements to promote the empowerment of women, with appropriate funding, was considered essential to bring about sustainable solutions to crises. The Council could play a useful role in following up on these recommendations in the future."[[150]](#footnote-151)
2. "I believe that consciousness‑raising campaign about the equal participation of women in the public sphere, leadership training and transparent hiring practices are all very important. First, we must eliminate discriminatory laws and practices and then we can encourage participation at the highest possible level right away. I believe that political parties should commit to achieving gender parity within the leadership and also in the list of candidates that they put up for elections."[[151]](#footnote-152)
3. In relation to climate crisis activism, women need to be empowered to make the difference they are capable of making‑ "Equality for all women and girls in their full diversity strengthens our collective ability to tackle the climate crisis. Their unique knowledge and skills help make the response to climate change more effective and sustainable, which is why advocating for women and girls' rights should be at the center of our climate activism….Limited access to finance restricts investment in climate solutions and recovery from shocks. 2 Studies show than just 3% of philanthropic environmental funding supports women's and girls' environmental activism."[[152]](#footnote-153)
4. Forming collective female spaces encourage participation‑ "Importantly, organising with other women can itself build the capacity for voice, such as critical consciousness and confidence. Women's participation in small community groups set up around economic programmes – such as cooperatives or self‑help groups – have created new or strengthened forms of social capital resulting in increased awareness of community politics, avenues to discuss community‑related issues around social norms (such as gender‑based violence), and contact with local officials.
5. Women's access to finances (through microcredit or direct transfers, for example), productive assets (such as land, property, livestock), or participation in the labour market can lead to changes in women's decision‑making and bargaining power within the household. However such changes are mainly related to decisions in 'women's domain', such as small household expenditure items, education and health."[[153]](#footnote-154)

## What concrete measures should be adopted to address systemic gender‑based/age‑based discrimination and challenges affecting girls' and young women's engagement in the public and political life?

1. Law Change‑ "I am convinced that, in order to put an end to these institutions, laws, and customs that perpetuate gender inequality the international community must carry out a monumental and consistent effort to break the inertia of injustice."[[154]](#footnote-155)
2. Change the fundamental structures that subjugate women‑ "I think that the main achievements are the gender equality causes are more vigorous and there is more awareness of the need to change structures that subjugate women. We know that the progress that we have made is far from uniform. In some countries, women have reached very high‑level positions while, in others, there are few spaces for them to work or to participate in civic affairs and they do suffer a lot of discrimination.
3. Politically correct statements about this matter are not enough. We need for women to stop being marginalized by structures of power and to stop being just minorities with little decision‑making powers because, on the contrary, in many societies, women are the same in numbers or in leaders. So, we need both the jury and the factor equality"[[155]](#footnote-156)
4. "Quotas, training, mentorship programmes, investing in accessibility, measures for the selection of candidates, gender‑sensitive policies, the promotion of role models and actions to combat and prevent violence against women in politics can contribute to increasing their participation"[[156]](#footnote-157) *Although proposed in relation to under‑represented groups of women, can apply to women as a whole*
5. "Enhancing participation of women from under‑represented groups in political and public decision making requires action at several levels. Society at large and political parties need to make space for women's active participation and engagement. The Assembly underlines that men also have an important role to play to this end by combating violence and discrimination against women in politics and speaking out against gender‑based stereotypes and sexism. Men can be allies and actively engage in promoting equality and participation of women in leadership. A profound change of both mindsets and political culture are essential to ensure that political and public decision‑making will be more inclusive and accessible for persons from various backgrounds."[[157]](#footnote-158) *Although proposed in relation to under‑represented groups of women, can apply to women as a whole*

## What concrete measures should be introduced to improve solidarity, support, collaborations towards creating an enabling environment for girls' and young women's engagement in the political and public life?

1. Collective goals, agreements and mission statements between organisations‑ such as the UN: "The United Nations has also maintained and strengthened its support for all women. It must show leadership by mainstreaming and prioritizing gender equality in all its work. It must ensure that its efforts are as coherent and effective as possible in support of women's empowerment and in the promotion of women's rights and security. I understand negotiations to establish a single composite United Nations body to lead this crucial agenda. May they at last be near conclusion."[[158]](#footnote-159)
2. "The United Nations can increase its impact on important issues, such as maternal mortality by using its resources and skills more strategically and adopting innovative approaches, such as Delivering as One. The Delivering‑as‑One approach allows the efforts of United Nations agencies to be coordinated, targeted, and more responsive to the needs of countries' government leading to more effective and efficient results on the ground. Innovative changes of this kind in the United Nations system are essential if it is to do more to improve the lives of women and girls worldwide and support wider development issues."[[159]](#footnote-160)
3. "Thinking and working politically. International support for women's voice and leadership is most effective when underpinned by politically attuned modes of engagement grounded in a deep understanding of the political economy of context. This includes engaging with formal political space as well as informal institutions, networks and forums of decision‑making and negotiation around the rules of the game. This is important also to identify relevant and strategic entry points for support to gender equality advocates.
4. Supporting locally driven change processes is essential. Technical support – including in the form of gender or legal expertise – is unlikely to be useful or relevant if it is not aligned with and supportive of locally driven and locally owned change processes.
5. Support to women's access to post‑conflict or transition processes of political negotiation (such as peace agreements or constitutional reform) is important. This includes supporting the strategic engagement of gender advocates through civil society or through formal access to the negotiating table. Material support to cover logistical needs relating to travel and subsistence and supporting safe conduct for women's political participation should not be underestimated.
6. There is a need for more research on the political economy of change processes. This means opening the 'black box' of the intersection between the formal and informal political space. There is a gap in our knowledge on how women navigate formal and the more invisible (but often more influential) informal political institutions, decision‑making forums and strategic networks. This includes building the evidence base on the development of political apprenticeship, leadership skills, capabilities and access to resources in contexts of gender‑based discrimination."[[160]](#footnote-161)

## What particular roles should NGOs and feminist movements play towards the promotion and protection of girls' and young women's meaningful participation, activism and collective action?

1. As above.
2. Utilising platforms such as social media to encourage participation whilst ensuring safety: "While the importance of face‑to‑face contact cannot be disputed, especially in environments where women have limited mobility and are socially isolated, social media and newer forms of communication that allow for personal interaction without the necessity of leaving home are also helping women mobilise. As one female Egyptian activist noted, 'We use Facebook to schedule the protests, Twitter to coordinate, and YouTube to tell the world' (as cited in Howard, 2011). Although there has been some concern that the importance the press devoted to social media has diluted the agency attributed to the Arab women using the media and redirected it to the media itself (e.g. Newsom and Lengel, 2012), the overall consensus from women users is that digital media is not only helping build momentum by linking formerly isolated voices, but enabling safer environments for activities (Zlitni and Touati, 2012; Marx, 2013). "[[161]](#footnote-162)
3. Providing women with the knowledge of their gendered interests: "The impact of women's movements on voice and leadership also appears to be stronger when groups help women recognise their unique gendered interests. Htun and Weldon (2012), in their exploration of the impact of women's movements on legal reform against gender‑based violence, note that 'women organizing as women generate social knowledge about women's position … they develop an oppositional consciousness' (p.549). Kabeer (2011) notes that in Bangladesh the most successful women's groups have deliberately grown women's awareness through 'on‑going processes of learning, reflection, action, experience, observation and analysis, reflective forms of practice generally absent in lives that were dominated by the struggle for survival' (p.511). Similarly, in India, Sanyal (2009) argues that membership in NGO associations has exposed women to new ways of thinking and provided them with information about their rights and the laws that protect them. This has led some to speak out against gender‑based violence, standing en masse in front of victims' homes, and others to engage with community leaders and fight to annul illegal child marriages"[[162]](#footnote-163)
4. Encouraging male participation in gender equality activism: "Until recently, women's movements were often the sole voice working to increase women's participation and leadership by interjecting notions of gender and empowerment into community and political discourse. This has started to change with the growth of NGOs allied with MenEngage, which is working with men and boys to actively promote gender equality (MenEngage, 2015). Often built around the establishment of 'new masculinities', men's groups are working with women as equal partners in the fight for women's rights. For example, men's participation has been critical to the success of Egypt's anti‑sexual harassment movement. While women activists have been monitoring which spaces are safe and which are not, coordinating reporting and establishing safe houses, men activists – such as the Tahrir Bodyguards – have borrowed tactics from the offenders and use their own bodies to keep women's safe (Marx, 2013; Ramanathan, 2013)."[[163]](#footnote-164)
1. Currently, Australia's national gender pay gap is 14.4%. the national gender pay gap is calculated by WGEA using data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. At May 2021, women's average weekly ordinary fulltime earnings across all industries and occupations was $1,575 compared to men's average weekly ordinary fulltime earnings of $1,8367.00. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. J McCann and J Wilson, 'Representation of women in Australian parliaments 2014', Parliamentary Library Research Paper Series, 2014‑2015, Parliament of Australia, Department of Parliamentary Services, 9 July 2014, p. 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Above n 4, p. 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Ibid p. 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Ibid p. 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. L Ismay, 'Women in parliament briefing paper No 3/2018', NSW Parliamentary Research Service, November 2018, p. 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Above n 8, p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Above n 4, p. 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Ibid p. 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Above n 4, p. 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Above n 8, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. Above n 4, p. 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. J Curtin and K Sexton, 'Selecting and electing women to the House of Representatives: progress at last?', Australasian Political Studies Association Conference, University of Adelaide, 29 September–1 October 2004, p. 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. Above n 4, p. 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. B Burrell, cited in JL Lawless, Becoming a candidate: Political ambition and the decision to run for office, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2012, p. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. Ibid p. 58,71‑72. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. Above n 4, p. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. Ibid p. 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. T Drabsch, 'Women in Parliament: The Current Situation', NSW Parliamentary Library Research Service Briefing Paper No 9/03, May 2003, p. 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. A Wagner, L Trimble, J Curtin, M Auer, V K G Woodman, B Owens, 'Gender novelty and personalised news coverage in Australia and Canada', International Political Science Review, 2021 Vol. 42(2) 164‑178, p. 165. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. Above n 4, p. 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. Ibid, p. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. Above n 21, p. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. I. Antoun, 'Gender Breakdown in parliament: Australia beats UK, US, Canada in female representation: https://www.theguardian.com/australia‑news/australia‑datablog/2021/mar/31/drilling‑down‑into‑the‑gender‑balance‑in‑australias‑parliament, 31 March 2021, accessed 15 October 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. Above n 4, p. 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. Joint statement on advancing women's political participation', United Nations Women, New York, 19 September 2011, accessed 15 October 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. Above n 4, p. 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. Above n 8, p. 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. Ibid, p. 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. Article 3 paragraph 1 of the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany of 23 May 1949. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
33. Article 3 paragraph 2 of the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany of 23 May 1949. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
34. General Act on Equal Treatment of 18 August 2006. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
35. Article 8 paragraph 1 of the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany of 23 May 1949. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
36. Article 5 paragraph 1 of the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany of 23 May 1949. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
37. Section 12, 13 German Federal Election Act of 23 Mai 1956. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
38. Article 9 paragraph 1 and 21 of the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany of 23 May 1949. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
39. Section 107 seqq. of the German Civil Code of 1 January 1900. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
40. The National Equality Strategy of the federal government of 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
41. Section 22 Residence Act of 1 January 2005. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
42. Parliamentary request of the FPD of 2020, Number 19/25242. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
43. Article 59 paragraph 2 of the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany of 23 May 1949. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
44. Article 25 of the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany of 23 May 1949. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
45. § Section 6b of the Federal Child Benefit Act, 28 of the Second Book of the Social Code (II) and Section 34 of the Twelfth Book of the Social Code (XII). [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
46. Available on https://eige.europa.eu/gender‑equality‑index/2020/country/RO. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
47. Băluță, I. (2012). Femeile în spațiul politic din România postcomunistă: De la „jocul" politic la construcția socială.

Annals of the University of Bucharest / Political science series, 14(2), 87‑95. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
48. Available at https://cursdeguvernare.ro/reprezentarea‑femeilor‑in‑politica‑romaneasca‑un‑raport‑actualizat‑la‑zi.html [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
49. Visit to Romania, Report of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, available at ohchr.org [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
50. Available at https://www.asociatia‑anais.ro/resurse [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
51. Available at https://centrulfilia.ro/rapoarte [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
52. As shown in https://www.unwomen.org/en/get‑involved/step‑it‑up/commitments/romania [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
53. As shown in https://www.unicef.org/romania/press‑releases/anes‑and‑unicef‑partner‑ensure‑equal‑opportunities‑all‑children‑romania [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
54. Available at https://eige.europa.eu/gender‑equality‑index/2020/country/RO [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
55. Visit to Romania, Report of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, available at ohchr.org [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
56. Article 19 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation of 12 December 1993. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
57. Russia Federal Law No 54‑FZ On Assemblies, Rallies, Demonstrations, Marches and Picketing of 19 June 2004. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
58. Russia Federal Law No 7‑FZ On Non‑Profit Organisations of 12 January 1996. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
59. Russia Federal Law No. 95‑FZ On Political Parties of 11 July 2001. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
60. Russia Federal Law No. 489‑FZ On Youth Policy in the Russian Federation of 30 December 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
61. Russia Federal Law No. 135‑FZ 'On Charity and Volunteering' of 11 August 1995. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
62. Order of the Government of the Russian Federation of 8 March 2017 No. 410‑r. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
63. Order of the Government of the Russian Federation of 7 December 2019 No. 2943‑r. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
64. For the examples of such organisations, see item 1.3 of the answer to Question 2.6 of Section 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
65. Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No 120 On the Presidential Council for the Development of Civil Society and Human Rights of 01 February 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
66. Russia Federal Constitutional Law No. 1‑FKZ On the Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation of 26 February 1997. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
67. Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No 986 On the Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights of 1 September 2009; Russia Federal Law No 501‑FZ On the Commissioner for Children's Rights in the Russian Federation of 27 December 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
68. https://iz.ru/news/583492 (in Russian). [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
69. https://www.advgazeta.ru/novosti/v‑sovete‑federatsii‑obsudili‑status‑pravozashchitnoy‑deyatelnosti‑v‑rossii/ (in Russian). [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
70. https://www.unwomen.org/en [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
71. https://www.globalfundforwomen.org/ [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
72. https://www.gov.spb.ru/gov/otrasl/trud/gender/psihologicheskaya‑i‑socialnaya‑pomosh‑zhenshinam‑postradavshim/ (in Russian); https://special.philanthropy.ru/women (in Russian). [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
73. https://2021.eawf.ru/en/about/organizers/ [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
74. https://vk.com/sisters.help (in Russian). [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
75. https://wuor.ru/ (in Russian). [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
76. https://www.womensrights.ru/ [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
77. https://wcons.net/ [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
78. https://anna‑center.ru/ [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
79. https://www.vedomosti.ru/opinion/columns/2019/03/11/796139‑buduschem (in Russian); see also. eg: https://jsps.hse.ru/article/view/8030/8733 (in Russian). [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
80. See, eg: https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/status‑women‑russian‑society‑conference‑report; [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
81. See, eg: https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/russia‑feminist‑activist‑projects/ [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
82. https://www.srji.org/upload/iblock/957/The\_practice\_of\_female\_genital\_mutilation\_in\_Dagestan\_strategies\_for\_its\_elimination\_15.06.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
83. https://www.srji.org/en/news/2018/12/honor‑killings‑of‑women‑in‑the‑north‑caucasus‑report/?sphrase\_id=1024495 [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
84. Order of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection No 512n On Approval of The List Of Industries, Jobs and Job Positions With Harmful and (or) Dangerous Conditions Subject to Restrictions Regarding the Employment of Women of 18 July 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
85. Family Code of the Russian Federation No 223‑FZ dated 29 December 1995. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
86. Article 10 of the Family Code of the Republic of Tatarstan; article 1 of Law of Moscow Region dated 30.04.2008 No. 61/2008‑OZ. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
87. File is placed on the page with the URL: https://rosstat.gov.ru/folder/12781. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
88. Russia Federal law No 7‑FZ On Non‑Profit Organizations of 12 January 1996. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
89. Russia Federal law No 272‑FZ On Measures To Be Taken Against Persons Involved in Violations of Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms, Rights and Freedoms of Citizens of the Russian Federation of 28 December 2012 ("**272‑FZ Law**"). [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
90. Russia Federal law No 114‑FZ On Combating Extremist Activity of 25 July 2002. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
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