Support to women and girls' leadership

A rapid review of the evidence

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Key messages

- Early intervention through support to girls' leadership is essential to foster women leaders. A supportive family environment, the presence of role models and formal education are key.

- Girls and women's individual and collective leadership can progressively change discriminatory gender norms. Women leaders act as role models and can normalise the idea and practice of women holding power. Women acting together can shift adverse social and legal norms in their community and polity.

- Formal institutional change, such as the introduction of quotas, often enables women to access leadership positions. How variations in regime type and political settlement influence women's pathways into power is under-explored, however.

- Autonomous women's movements are the vanguard of gender justice. Women's coalitions have been key to gender equality gains, including by producing and supporting women politicians and feminist bureaucrats.

- More research is needed on how women reach leadership positions, and on the factors that explain when and how women leaders of all types are able to advance their interests and change others' ideas and behaviour.

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Acknowledgements

1 Introduction

This rapid review is part of a two-year Learning and Evidence Project on Women Voice and Leadership in Decision-Making.[1] It focuses specifically on programmes or interventions that aim to build the leadership capabilities of women and/or girls, and asks (i) what the evidence is on the factors that enable women and girls' leadership capabilities; and (ii) what the evidence is on whether/how women and girls are able to use leadership positions to achieve better and/or more equitable outcomes. The review is structured as follows:

- Section 2 provides a summary of the nature and quality of the evidence base and the main findings.
- Section 3 discusses how authors conceptualise leadership, and their assumptions about which factors are important and why.
- Section 4 and 5 summarise the evidence.
- Section 6 draws out implications for international support to women and girls' leadership.

2 Summary of evidence base and main findings

2.1 Nature and quality of the evidence on support to women and girls' leadership

Our findings are based on a review of **literature on support to women and girls' leadership in low- and middle-income countries**.[2] The studies included in the review are research about women or girls' leadership, either its development or its exercise (this was a selection criterion). The body of evidence is **relatively small,** particularly on support to girls' leadership, and is **largely grey literature** written or commissioned by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as advocates or programme implementers. The studies cover a relatively even spread of geographical regions, with only the Middle East and North African countries underrepresented (with only three studies).

A **minority of studies apply analytical rigour,** exploring what leadership means and establishing (and testing) assumptions about how it might be developed and/or the relationship between women's leadership and other things (e.g. women's power, their influence, changes in policy, services or social norms, etc.). These more analytically sophisticated pieces are mostly academic, although there are some notable exceptions in the grey literature (e.g. CARE, 2009, 2012; Oxfam, 2013a, 2014; Repila, 2011). **Qualitative methods are most common** in project evaluations, with quantitative methods relatively scarce and only one identified use of experimental design (Bandiera et al., 2012).

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[1] This rapid review accompanies a larger report that provides a more comprehensive assessment of the evidence on women's voice and leadership. This latter looks at the evidence relating to increasing women's voice and leadership through interventions in the following areas/sub-areas: women's social activism (social mobilisation, social accountability activities); women's political participation (quotas, political parties, electoral reform, constitutional reform, peace agreements); and women's economic empowerment (access to assets; labour market participation) (see Domingo et al., 2015). The project will also involve case studies and a synthesis report.

[2] Our search initially identified 99 sources, 54 of which were assessed as relevant and included in the review. See Appendix for a description of the literature collection and analysis methods.

2.2 Main findings

The review organises the empirical evidence on the **factors that enable or constrain women and girls' leadership around three categories** (see Section 4):

1. *Childhood experiences and girls' leadership* – including family background, female role models, formal and informal schooling, and out-of-school activities;

2. *Individual women's formal political leadership* – including family background and home environment, 'political entrepreneurship', paid and voluntary work, gendered social norms, quotas, electoral and party systems, decentralisation, community leadership, and poverty and disadvantage;

3. *Linking women's individual and collective leadership* – including networks and sharing of expertise, linkages between movements and formal leadership, movements standing in for political parties, and the socialisation impact of women in leadership.

Fewer studies report on **how women's leadership has influenced outcomes for women** – such as more equitable laws and policy, improved services or more inclusive political settlements – and this discussion is almost entirely absent from the studies of girls' leadership. However, there are some common findings about the factors that influence whether women are able to use their leadership capabilities and positions to advance their interests and achieve their goals, whatever the specific content of these might be (see Section 5). This literature is important because there is consensus that the ability to achieve individual or group objectives (whatever the content or source of these objectives are) is central to the concept of leadership, and therefore their achievement in practice is a measure of successful or *effective* women's leadership, as distinct from women having leadership capabilities or occupying leadership positions.

Enabling conditions for women's leadership coalesce around the development of capabilities, both individual and collective; supportive political institutions, including quotas and women's access to and appointment into political careers; and increased levels of socioeconomic development within society as a whole. Key factors to inform women's effective leadership include their having professional expertise and credibility (which also mirrors educational achievement); the existence of an autonomous women's movement (and its relationship with/support to women in government/the bureaucracy); the lobbying capabilities of women civic leaders; and collaborative approaches with government and 'working politically' (Section 5). By contrast, authors find constraints on women's leadership, whether in political, civic or business spheres, arise from discriminatory social and gender norms more generally. However, when gender relations and roles change over time, the opportunity structure for women's leadership appears also to change, in ways that allow more women to gain access to leadership capabilities and positions.

2.3 Main gaps in the evidence

The **main gaps** in the evidence base are as follows:

- Comparative data on women's leadership is scarce. This makes it difficult to draw conclusions as to which factors are more/less important to women's leadership capabilities in different socio-political contexts (a notable exception is Tadros, 2014 and also recent research on women in executive positions, as discussed in Waylen, 2015).

- The majority of studies look at interventions to develop grassroots women's leadership or to help women get into formal political positions. In our set, there are few in-depth studies of whether women are effective leaders once in office,[3] or of the success of interventions to support women politicians, and none on the development of women's leadership in business or the non-profit sectors. What evidence does exist (e.g. Hassan and Silong, 2008; True, 2008) is cursory and tends to focus on individual traits and barriers and to neglect broader political, social and institutional enabling factors.

- With some exceptions (e.g. Hodes et al., 2011; Tadros, 2014), our search methods did not pick up studies or interventions related to women's national movements – perhaps because they are not presented in terms

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[3] An older exception is Goetz and Hassim (2003), who develop a framework for women's political effectiveness. As Waylen (2015) notes, there is also a very recent and nascent – and (as yet) inconclusive – body of research on women's access to executive positions, which focuses on understanding women's access to and performance in cabinet and in head of government roles, and the impact of their achieving these positions.

of women's leadership development. It is unclear how and why certain women emerge as leaders within collectivities, for example women's networks.

- Most studies do not consider directly *which* women are able to develop leadership capabilities; those that do tend to focus on family background and upbringing.

- Some evidence exists on the relationship between collective and individual leadership capacities, but data and analysis on the causal relationships between individual leadership capabilities, collective action and women's social change and influence are scarce.

- Women's leadership and business/private enterprise is an under-explored area in development literature/programming.[4]

- The studies in our set do not consider the role of men and boys in developing women's leadership, or of progressive changes in gender norms and relations more generally.

- There are no long-term longitudinal studies, so it is not possible to determine sustainability of outcomes. It is possible that indirect effects, for example on social norms or policy, accrue later on.

- Barely any studies discuss the role of external funders or analyse how their relationship with implementing partners, women leaders and women's networks might affect the efficacy of women or girls' leadership programmes.

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[4] This was also a finding from the main report on Women's Voice and Leadership in Decision-Making, which included an assessment of the literature on economic empowerment and women's voice and leadership (Domingo et al., 2015).

3 Definitions and assumptions

3.1 What is leadership?

In her review of the role of leadership in economic and social development, Lyne de Ver (2008) notes the **absence of agreed definitions of leadership,** within or across different disciplines. Drawing on the work of Bass (1990), she reviews different concepts of leadership. Some authors present leadership as **individual personality traits,** such as vision, charisma or the ability to bring along a constituency. Others focus on leadership as the **processes and behaviours** that enable groups to manage relationships and goal achievement. While influence is central to most authors' understanding of leadership, some emphasise coercion and 'the art of inducing compliance', whereas others stress the ability of leaders to persuade and coordinate. Some discussions present leaders as corralling and directing their followers in pursuit of a distinct objective. Others see leaders as emerging from the interaction of the group (Lyne de Ver, 2008: 7-12).[5] Chin (2004) points to the recent shift in the business and management literature from looking at individual traits to the 'dimensions of team and collaborative leadership' (p.2). At the same time, along with Wijnen and Wildschut (2015), she cautions that Western management models and practices are not necessarily relevant to other cultural/social settings.

Leftwich and Hogg (2007) highlight the more recent distinction between **'transactional leadership',** where individuals and groups seek to obtain their objectives within the existing political order, and **'transformational leadership',** which seeks to challenge it. However, Wijnen and Wildschut (2015) also point out that transformational leadership, whereby leaders are 'seen as catalysts of constructive change' emerged from Western discourse and that research shows 'different countries have various cultural profiles that differ from this transformational leadership model' (p.2). Lyne de Ver (2008) also points out that much of the general literature on leadership comes from the US and assumes a stable and liberal institutional order. Other distinctions can be made between 'ascribed' and 'achieved' leadership, with the former based on a defined role (e.g. a chief) and the latter the ability to retain followers (citing Sahlins, 1963); or between 'attempted' and 'successful' leadership, depending on whether attempts to change the behaviour of others is successful (Lyne de Ver, 2008: 8, 10).

3.2 Leadership in the development literature on women and girls

In an analysis of leadership development programmes,[6] Lyne de Ver and Kennedy (2011) find that only 9 out of the 67 reviewed to clearly set out what they mean by leadership, but that programme content suggests that 'most programmes implicitly define "leadership" as an individual trait or quality rather than as shared process between leaders and others' (p.v). Higgitt (2011) also notes this lack of conceptual clarity about leadership in the women's empowerment and development literature, as well as authors' tendency to associate leadership with individual rather than collective qualities ('power over' and 'power to' rather than 'power with') and their 'proclivity to conflate leadership as asset with leadership as process' (p.99).

Nevertheless, in the studies on women and girls' empowerment that do define leadership, there is a **common emphasis on personal and collective change** among leaders, their 'followers' and society. For example, Higgitt (2011) suggests 'advocating for women's leadership building flows from a normative conception of a leader as a change agent, a person whose acts, in part by virtue of their charisma, affect other people more than other people's acts affect them' (p.99). Others use adjectives such as 'transitional' (Muzvidziwa, 2014) and 'transformational' (Wijnen and Wildschut, 2015) to convey that leadership entails transformation of self, empowerment of others and/or changes of organisations or the external environment. Similarly, the sport and development organisation, Women Win, defines leadership as 'the ability of an adolescent girl or young

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[5] Batliwala (2010) also found from a review of 'hundreds' of definitions of leadership that 'they fall into two categories: definitions of *leader/s*, which mainly focus on the attributes and practices of effective leadership, and definitions of *leadership*, as a process and practice' (p.17, emphases in original).
[6] Their review included, but was not restricted to, leadership programmes specifically for women/girls.

woman to exercise her rights and drive change' (Wijnen and Wildschut, 2015: 4), and CARE (2009) describes a 'girl leader' as 'an active learner who believes that she can make a difference in her world, and acts individually and with others to bring about positive change' (p.18) (see Box 1).

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Box 1: CARE's definition of girls' leadership

CARE's Girl Leadership Programme defines a 'girl leader' as 'an active learner who believes that she can make a difference in her world, and acts individually and with others to bring about positive change'. CARE understands girls' leadership as having three 'pillars':

1. Realising the power within, which relates to the 'competency-based model of leadership' and includes girls developing: voice/assertion, decision-making/action, self-confidence, organisation and vision/ability to motivate others.
2. Gaining legitimacy, which is about relationships and girls gaining legitimacy in public spaces.
3. Taking action, which is about how to influence others and create an enabling environment.

Source: CARE (2009, 2012).

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These understandings of leadership differ markedly from previous notions that power and ideas flow in one direction from leader to dependent 'followers'. Instead, they are in line with contemporary ideas about the need for organisations to become less hierarchical and more flexible and team-oriented (Muzvidziwa, 2014).

3.3 Women's leadership and feminist leadership

Does gender make a difference to how leadership is either exercised or perceived? Lott (2007, cited in Batliwala, 2010) argues the **mainstream literature has a gendered conception of women's leadership** characterised by 'feminine' qualities, such as nurturing, collaboration and consensus-building. In a mediated online discussion between 100 members of the American Psychology Association's Women Leadership Initiative, many women commented that they are

> […] diminished when they demonstrate 'feminine traits' in their leadership styles […] All too often, behaviors associated with femininity are rated as negative to good leadership […] nurturing leadership styles have been viewed as lacking in substance. Conversely, women are also viewed negatively when they adopt styles and traits characteristic of men leaders […] The challenge women and feminist leaders grapple with is how to conform to what is 'expected' while still retaining their credibility and effectiveness as leaders (Chin, 2004: 7).

Batliwala, a prominent Indian scholar-activist, also notes the challenge of recognising that 'women can bring different qualities to leadership, with a greater attention to collaboration, cooperation, collective-decision making and, above all, relationship-building. But these come hazardously close to essentialising women (and axiomatically, men too) and playing into long-standing gender stereotypes' (Batliwala, 2010: 7). Wijnen and Wildschut (2015, citing Kark, 2004) point to 'convincing evidence that female leaders tend to be more transformational than male leaders' (p.2). Hassan and Silong (2009) find, however, that the evidence on whether women and men have different styles of leadership is mixed: some studies find differences, for example that women leaders are more likely to be transformative or focus on collaboration and men leaders more on goal-setting, whereas others find no correlation between gender and leadership style.

Women's leadership therefore encompasses a range of styles and purposes, but is there something distinct about feminist leadership? Batliwala (2010) reviews writing both on 'mainstream' understandings of leadership and on feminist writing about leadership, including the work of prominent feminist activists and scholars from low- and middle-income countries, with many sources not in English or unavailable online. She finds that, while a definitive definition of *feminist* leadership is lacking, 'the concept of feminist leadership has […] been widely discussed, described and analysed' (p.11). From her review of feminist writing, she identifies the **common features of feminist understandings of leadership** to be a view of leadership as a means to social transformation and a belief that collaborative styles of leadership are integral to achieving an equitable

society (see Box 2). She argues that these feminist constructions of leadership have arisen from their debates about what alternative social orders might look like and their desire not to replicate unequal power relations inherent in patriarchal worldviews. This is a normative perspective on what feminist leadership involves or should involve, but also emerges from qualitative research with women leaders from around the world who self-identify as feminists (although the sample size of studies, such as Batliwala and Roa (2002) and Chin (2004) are small).

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Box 2: What is leadership and what is feminist leadership?

Based on a review of mainstream definitions of leadership and feminist definitions of leadership, Batliwala (2010) proposes the following (normative) definitions that bring together the common parts of prominent definitions.

Leadership is 'a set of actions and processes, performed by individuals of character, knowledge, and integrity, who have the capacity to create a vision for change, inspire and motivate others to share that vision, develop ideas, and strategies that direct and enable others to work towards that change, and make critical decisions that ensure the achievement of the goal' (p.18).

Feminist leadership is 'women with a feminist perspective and vision of social justice, individually or collectively transforming themselves to use their power, resources and skill in non-oppressive, inclusive structures and processes to mobilize others – especially other women – around a shared agenda of social, cultural, economic and political transformation for equality and the realization of human rights for all.' She outlines three common features of feminist understandings of leadership: (i) a set of attributes and behaviours, commonly including inclusiveness, collaboration, empowering and consensus-building; (ii) recognition of, and reference to, power and politics 'that are almost invisible in mainstream definitions of leadership, even of feminine [i.e. women's] leadership'; and (iii) critical reflection of 'feminist leaders own use of and practice of power when they occupy leadership positions' (p.14).

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Feminist leadership is therefore seen as a type of 'transformational leadership', with similar features to the definitions some women and girls' leadership programmes use. Both sets of literature stress the internal rather than 'extrinsic' motivation of such leaders and how their interaction with others leads to the personal transformation of both leaders and 'followers', and through this to the transformation of society (Batliwala, 2010: 8). At the same time, as Wijnen and Wildschut (2015) discuss, there is debate within feminist writing about what feminist leadership is and looks like, with some (though not all) post-colonial feminists criticising this focus on transformational leadership as privileging the view of Western or elite feminists and promoting universal conceptions of women (and their leadership). Wijnen and Wildschut make the case that, to avoid the risk of imposing a dominant discourse of leadership and to recognise the diversity of women's experiences, leadership programmes should enable women and girls to say what leadership means (an approach Women Win promotes).[7]

Therefore, it may be useful, conceptually and analytically, to distinguish between *women or girls' leadership,* as leadership by women or girls, recognising the potential diversity of styles and variation in policy commitment or other objectives; and *feminist leadership,* as leadership by women who identify themselves as feminists and who have a clear goal to reduce gender and other forms of inequality and *potentially* a particular style of leadership based on collaboration and inclusiveness. Nevertheless, as **empirical analysis is growing on how women in leadership roles contribute to transformative change,** a key empirical question relates to what makes feminist leadership – leadership with gender equality objectives – most effective in practice. Responding to this may result in interrogating the balance between features of 'means and ends' in this definition of feminist leadership.[8] In feminist institutional analysis, there is an increased interest in the *process*

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[7] Similarly, in a discussion of girls' leadership, CARE (2009) stresses that models of youth leadership need to be appropriate for adolescents in different cultural settings. They suggest that, in societies where children, particularly girls, are 'discouraged from managing tasks or organizing others as a matter of deference to elders', competency or 'characteristic-type' models may be more appropriate than 'outward-facing' Western models of leadership that emphasise particular actions or tasks that leaders perform (pp.10-11).

[8] For example, see Antrobus' (2011) opinion piece on how a 'masculine' leadership style that privileges overwhelming power and domination has heightened not lessened insecurity in the wake of the terrorist attacks in the US in September 2001 and how a different style of leadership is needed to achieve peace.

aspect of institutional and socio-political change (what enables it, and how change is achieved) (see, e.g., essays in Krook and MacKay (2011) and articles in MacKay and Waylen (2014)). Other emerging research on the pathways to and impact of women's leadership role in the executive branch, either in cabinet or as heads of government, is also looking empirically at what enables access to those roles, and what political strategies achieve advances in gender equality agendas (e.g. Alexander and Jalalzai, 2014; Krook and O'Brien, 2012).

3.4 What are the assumptions about how women and girls become leaders?

Lyne de Ver and Kennedy (2011) find few leadership development programmes to explicitly set out their theory of change (10 out of 67 reviewed) and comment that, of those that do, 'most do not adequately explain the processes through which leadership is developed, and how this leadership then creates change' (p.v).[9] Nevertheless, particular concepts of leadership already begin to build in assumptions about how people become leaders (if not the most appropriate inputs to support these processes). For example, trait or personality models imply some people have 'special innate or inborn characteristics or qualities', whereas skills and styles approaches to leadership suggest people can acquire the necessary competencies, behaviour or processes (Chin, 2004: 3).[10] As women and girls' leadership programmes favour a skills or styles (rather than inherent traits) approach, there is a **tacit assumption that all women and girls have the *potential* to be leaders** with the right support and environment.

Some academic studies of leadership programmes go further, with **explicit discussion of theories** that are consistent with the assumptions of the programme. For example, a community-based education programme to reduce girls' vulnerability to HIV/AIDS in Nepal builds on Bandura's (1977, 1997) theory of **'individual self-efficacy'.** This proposes that 'self-efficacy is specific to a domain (i.e. leadership skills) and develops through successful mastery experiences that build individuals' confidence in their ability to achieve specific goals. As such, it is an explanatory psychological construct that mediates or accounts for actual changes in an individual's behaviour' (Posner et al., 2009: 287).

Similarly, Madsen (2010) uses Wieck's '**growth-task model' of human development** to analyse women's leadership in the United Arab Emirates. This model assumes people are curious and have the capacity for development, but also that exposure to tasks and experiences, particularly in youth, influences later aptitude towards growth and development. Wieck's model picks up on the importance of adolescence to personal development, including of leadership competencies and attitudes. (CARE (2009) also stresses that the receptiveness of adolescents to learning makes this a particularly important age to teach girls' leadership.)

The 'growth-task model' also provides a link to another concern in the literature on leadership development: whether and how girls' **experience of gender roles influences their development** of particular ways of being and acting. For example, Hoyt and Kennedy (2008: 205-206) situate the development of girls' leadership capacities within broader discourses of identity formation: drawing on Gilligan (1993), they argue that adolescent girls confront a 'psychological resistance' in which, unable to 'hear themselves' in dominant cultural discourses, they experience a conflict between what they feel themselves to know and experience, on the one hand, and what socio-cultural norms permit them to express outwardly, on the other. It follows that effective leadership development for adolescent girls includes real-life observation (e.g. role models) and experiences.

As Singh (2014) notes, 'leadership and empowerment are closely related' (p.248) – and such **concern with identity, gender roles and power relationships provides a link between leadership and empowerment theories.** Rowlands' (1997) dimensions of empowerment provide the analytical framework from which much of the literature on women's leadership capabilities draws, often implicitly. These dimensions are (i) 'power within' (cognitive change, belief in self-worth); (ii) 'power to' (behavioural change, ability to make choices and influence others); (iii) 'power over' (ability to control others); and (iv) 'power with' (acting with others to challenge discriminatory structures). Leadership development programmes, such as Oxfam's Raising Her

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[9] However, they also note that 'compared with leadership development programmes in general, those programmes which are aimed at women's leadership show greater understanding of leadership as political process, are more often based around concrete objectives, and work together more frequently as a movement' (Lyne de Ver and Kennedy, 2011: v).

[10] As Chin (2004) argues, newer thinking on what leadership means is encouraging for women because it focuses less on traits, often seen as male ones and therefore excluding women, and more on the skills and styles compatible with leadership, and which women or men can acquire.

Voice (Oxfam, 2014) or the sport and development organisation Women Win (Wijnen and Wildschut, 2015), both funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), tend to be framed by an understanding of leadership whereby empowerment is perceived to occur on two related but separate planes: one where individual women or girls receive leadership training to acquire internal assets (power within), which increases their bargaining power (power to); and another where the women or girl, possessing 'power within' and 'power to', inspires and mobilises others with whom she shares a collective female identity.
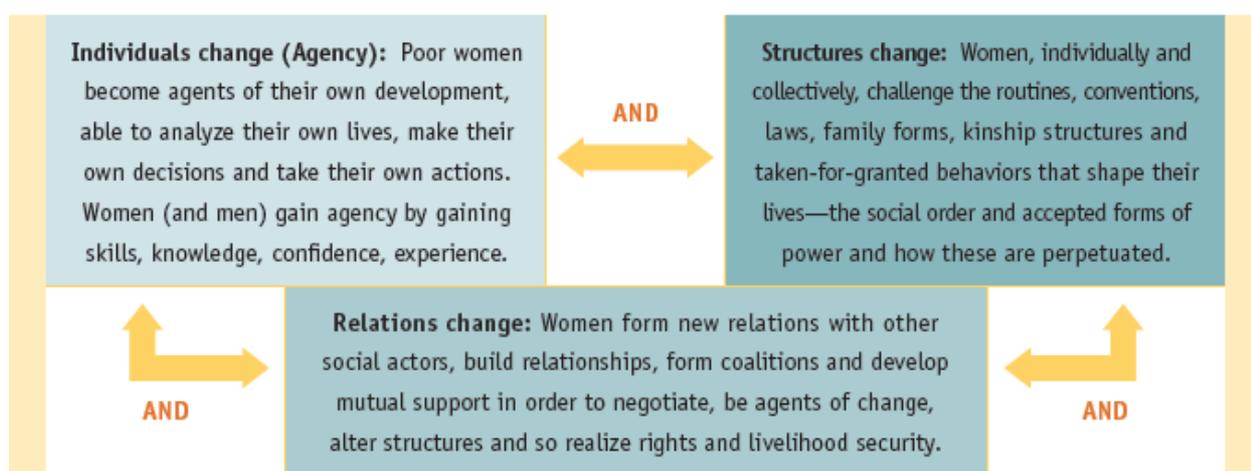
However, others **challenge theories of change that contain assumptions about the linkage between individual and collective women's leadership and empowerment.** Higgitt (2011) argues the assumption 'within such a framework [is that] to create women leaders is hence to transmit empowerment exponentially, from one woman to many; with *power with* gradually eroding the firmly entrenched ideological basis of gender subordination' (p.113). Similarly, CARE (2009) sets out a theory of change for girls' leadership development (pp.20-21) structured around girls' formal and informal education and their external environment and influences (see Figure 1) but embedded within its 'gender empowerment framework', which elaborates a cycle of individual change (agency), relational change and structural change (p.18) (Figure 2).

Figure 1: CARE's theory of change for girls' leadership development

Girls' Primary School Completion	Girls' Leadership Skills Development	Girls' Rights are Upheld
• Equitable, quality education • School transitions • Learning opportunities for older girls • Gender sensitive policies and programs	• Diverse extracurricular activities for girls • Social networks of girls • Girls' participation in civic action	• Attention to harmful traditional practices • Reduction of risk and vulnerability • Role models, mentors and champions for girls

Source: CARE (2009).

Figure 2: CARE's gender empowerment framework

Individuals change (Agency): Poor women become agents of their own development, able to analyze their own lives, make their own decisions and take their own actions. Women (and men) gain agency by gaining skills, knowledge, confidence, experience.

Structures change: Women, individually and collectively, challenge the routines, conventions, laws, family forms, kinship structures and taken-for-granted behaviors that shape their lives—the social order and accepted forms of power and how these are perpetuated.

Relations change: Women form new relations with other social actors, build relationships, form coalitions and develop mutual support in order to negotiate, be agents of change, alter structures and so realize rights and livelihood security.

Source: CARE (2009).

Higgitt (2011) proposes that **women's diversity means we cannot assume that individual women leaders will identify with or represent other women and their causes** – and this disrupts the assumed link in much

of women's leadership programming between support to individual women leaders and the empowerment of other women and social change. For the latter to occur, he argues, women's leadership programmes must seek not only to build women's individual leadership competencies but also to *explicitly* build their power through women's organisations and their *strategic* use of women's assumed 'oneness' and shared interests. Women's use of their perceived common identity is strategic in the sense that women are able to harness it to advance their interests while simultaneously recognising the diversity of their experiences and their uniqueness. For example, women have different experiences of motherhood but, in politically constrained environments such as in pre-transition Latin America, women have been able to use their gendered roles as 'mothers', and the legitimacy this gives them, to challenge rights abuses in a way that would not have been possible for men (Domingo et al., 2015).

Apart from these exceptions, most empirical pieces, particularly the grey literature, fail to explicitly discuss the capabilities associated with (successful) leadership or assumptions about how women and girls develop these, either individual or collectively. Furthermore, discussion or theories of change about the pathways through which women leaders effect social change are almost entirely absent from the material reviewed – including the question of how effective feminist leadership (women leaders with gender justice objectives) is fostered. This lack of consideration of causal factors and pathways is not surprising given the under-theorisation of leadership in development more generally (Lyne de Ver, 2010).

4 Evidence on what enables women and girls' leadership

This section provides an overview of what the empirical literature says about the profile of women leaders. It then summarises the evidence on the factors that enable women and girls' leadership capabilities.

4.1 Evidence on the profile and attitudes of women leaders

What does the empirical evidence tell us about the **profile, attributes and attitudes of women leaders** in practice? Examples from the review include the following:

- Based on case studies, including life histories, of women in different levels of government in eight countries,[11] Tadros (2014) found the profile of women leaders to include the following common factors: women being married, professional backgrounds, 'nurturing' or community-facing occupations (e.g. teaching, social work) and education, with a correlation between level of education and level of government office.

- In-depth interviews with women leaders in the education sector in Zimbabwe found commonly observed characteristics to include creativity, flexibility, calmness and patience, as well as a tendency towards open and frank discussion and away from the forceful exertion of authority (Muzvidziwa, 2014).

- A quantitative study of women's self-help groups in India found that, compared with non-leaders in the groups, women leaders were from wealthier families, were younger and more educated, had higher media exposure and levels of participation in household decision-making, were more mobile and more confident communicators, and were more progressive thinkers with greater interest in social activities (Singh, 2014).

- Interviews with 20 women leaders from around the world revealed a common emphasis on feminist leaders as risk-takers, strategists and negotiators, because they operate in environments hostile to their (gender equity and social justice) goals and where they face resistance and, often, hostility or reprisal (Batliwala and Rao, 2002, cited in Batliwala, 2010).

- Women participants in a series of Community Women Leaders' Forums in rural Cambodia said they shared some qualities with men, particularly recognition of the value of their work and self-assurance in implementation of this work. However, they also thought they had a more consultative style of leadership than men and were more willing to recognise their own limitations and to seek to develop their leadership capabilities (Choeun et al., 2008).

- Emerging work on women in executive office finds that formal institutional factors are important in enabling pathways to formal leadership roles, including in the degree to which, for instance, presence through quotas contributes to socialisation and normalisation of women in political office (Krook and O'Brien, 2012)

4.2 Evidence on enabling and constraining factors

The empirical evidence on the **factors that enable women and girls' leadership can be organised according to three categories:** childhood experiences and girls' leadership; individual women's political leadership; and women's collective leadership. In general, however, there is little analysis in the literature of why different factors are important and the specific causal mechanisms through which they enable women and girls' leadership. Notable exceptions include Tadros and her colleagues collection of case studies, which explicitly examines women's pathways to political leadership (Tadros, 2014), and recent scholarship on women leaders

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[11] Bangladesh, Brazil, Egypt, Ghana, India, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Sierra Leone and Sudan.

in the executive branch, which signals the importance of changes in social norms, as well as wider political and economic development (e.g. regime type, level of economic development) (see summary of some preliminary findings in Waylen, 2015).

4.2.1 Childhood experiences and girls' leadership

Family background: Madsen's (2010: 83-86) study explores the influences that current women leaders in the United Arab Emirates believe were most critical to preparing them for leadership. She finds presence of male siblings (i.e. interaction with males in early, formative years) and 'more open-minded' fathers to be the most important enabling factors for the later development of leadership capabilities. Conversely, lack of parental and community support can inhibit the effective delivery of girls' leadership programmes by limiting girls' participation, availability of facilities and community participation in outreach events (DFID, 2014b). The Champions Project at Harvard University seeks to understand why some girls from disadvantaged families in India are able to reach university. Their survey data (n=800) strongly suggests family attitudes and behaviour ('mentorship') – in particular whether close family members such as parents and older brothers provide psychological and financial support – are more important than targeted gender education programmes.[12]

Female role models: Several studies also point to the importance of female role models outside of the family, including teachers, uneducated women with non-academic strengths and talents, and community leaders (Beaman et al., 2012; Madsen, 2010; Muzvidziwa, 2014; Sperandio, 2010). Sperandio's (2010) study of the role of Ugandan secondary schools in leadership among adolescent girls found students admired role models primarily for being well organised, disciplined and professional, and second for exhibiting qualities of thoughtfulness, caring and helpfulness. The survey dealt primarily with role models and leadership within schools, but the author concludes that, given the choice, many girl respondents would have named people outside the school context as those they 'most admired'. A study of the effect of female political leadership on adolescent girls in India found presence of women on village councils, enabled by affirmative action, had a positive influence on girls' career aspirations and educational attainment (Beaman et al., 2012).

Formal schooling: Formal schooling is not only important for academic learning. Sperandio's (2010: 1) qualitative research found the 'provision of motivation and opportunities to learn how to be a leader' to be an important part of the 'hidden curriculum' of effective education, including in ways that support girls' gender equality. For example, school can promote clearly articulated beliefs, values and expectations that equip students to take on leadership roles later in life or provide training by appointing pupils to positions of student leadership, for example as prefects, monitors or sports captains.

Informal schooling and out-of-school activities: Similarly, informal education and out-of-school activities can contribute to girls' leadership development. For example, internal reviews of DFID's ongoing Leadership for Change programme found that, after one year of its Women Win: Building Young Women's Leadership through Sport programme, beneficiaries reported increased confidence and self-esteem, with 75% reporting an increase in adolescent life skills relating to sexual and reproductive health rights, gender-based violence and economic empowerment; and nine out of eleven participants in the accompanying mentoring programme reporting new personal leadership skills (DFID, 2014a, 2014b). Girls in CARE's (2012: iv-v) leadership development projects learn and practise five essential leadership competencies – voice to express their own opinions, decision-making, self-confidence, organisation and vision – through a series of extracurricular activities that they help to design. In a remote region of Yemen, for example, more than 50% of participants demonstrated positive change in all five of the essential leadership competencies as measured by CARE's Girls' Leadership Index, after participating in a project that fostered community support for girls, offered extracurricular activities and ensured access to equitable education. Lessons learnt from the programme as a whole include the value of building leadership on a foundation of education (although schools should not be the sole partners in leadership projects) and of deliberately involving boys and men in such projects from the outset. CARE found that, while girls tend to 'make rapid gains in leadership skills, and participate avidly in leadership activities of their choice when introduced to leadership projects', changing social norms, attitudes and behaviour to support girls' rights represents a more complex, longer-term challenge.

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[12] Forthcoming; email correspondence from Research Director Jacqueline Bhabha.

4.2.2 Individual women's formal political leadership

There is a trend in the literature towards more holistic approaches to women's empowerment, which start not with targets for national-level representation but with women's **pathways to leadership** (Ahern et al., 2000; Cornwall, 2014; IDEA, 2014; Sudarshan and Bisht, 2006; Tadros, 2011a, 2014). As Tadros (2011a) puts it, a 'woman's political trajectory should be seen as a process and not a moment that begins and ends with a project or election cycle' (p.2). Similarly, Kassey Garba (1999), in her case study of 'endogenous empowerment' in Nigeria, argues that 'a woman is never fully empowered but must continue to upgrade the skills and capacities necessary to be an effective participant in ongoing decisions that surround her' (p.134). The Developmental Leadership Program's work on women's coalitions is premised on a similar conception, arguing that

> […] studying leadership 'as a process' rather than 'as the traits of individual leaders' pushes us to look beyond the individual leaders and helps us gain an understanding of the structures of power and political opportunity in which progressive and reforming leaderships have to work, and how they frame their strategies and mobilize people and resources to advance their goals within such contexts (van Notten, 2010: 4-5).

Family background and home environment: The potential of individual women to develop and exercise leadership capabilities may be attributable, in part, to their family background, in particular having a stable, relatively prosperous childhood where girls are encouraged to pursue a good education and come under less pressure to contribute to the family income (Madsen, 2010; Singh, 2014). However, family background and home environment are also critical to the leadership potential of women in adulthood. Women struggle to enter politics without the cooperation of their families, in the form of either psychological support and encouragement, especially from husbands (Singh, 2014), or help with child care and other domestic responsibilities, particularly from daughters and other female family members (Madsen, 2010, Singh, 2014). Singh's (2014) quantitative study of the factors contributing to the emergence of women leaders within Mumbai self-help groups found 94% of leaders were not subject to restrictions on their physical mobility imposed by older family members, compared with 80% of non-leaders.

'Political entrepreneurship': In countries where there are restrictions on women's mobility and participation in public life, informal domains can be especially important to women developing political skills and networks – what Cornwall and Goetz (2005) call 'political entrepreneurship'. For example, Tadros (2014: 7) points to the case of Welaa Saleh El-Deen, who was the first woman President of the Student Union in the University of Khartoum and, in the face of evening curfews for women, used gatherings in her dorm to build a constituency, organise and persuade others. However, Cornwall and Goetz also describe factors that hamper women's acquisition of political skills and experience. One of women's routes into politics is through political parties, but their membership of women's wings can consign them to 'feminine' activities and/or their reliance on the patronage of 'big men' can undermine their independence. Both of these outcomes make it difficult for women to build the external support base (including connecting with women voters) they need not only to remain in political office but also to have political weight in negotiations with peers.

Tadros (2014) also found **home environment and other 'private' spaces to be significant as incubators for women's political leadership.** Where other family members, such as fathers or husbands, are involved in politics, the home becomes a place for 'political immersion', an 'arena through which relations, activities and networks are forged and negotiated […] the association of the home with the private with the private and politics with the public is highly problematic when so many high-profile meetings, whether discreetly behind closed doors or more publicly, happen in people's homes' (pp.6-7). Family connections can influence women's pathways to political power in more direct ways, as when women follow their fathers or husbands into political office.[13] Much less empowering is when quotas prevent men from standing for office and lead them to instead use female relatives as a proxy or 'front' for their political interests, whether in national assemblies – as Domingo et al. (2012) find in Burundi – or in local government – as has been documented in India (Jaquette, 1997; Sudarshan and Bisht, 2006).

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[13] Although particularly in terms of entry into the higher levels of political office, this 'pathway' to power is also likely to be reflective of how dynastic politics is – and is found more often in South and South-East Asian countries, such as Bangladesh, India, Indonesia and Pakistan. This indicates how broader political-institutional features influence women's routes into political office. For example, emerging research suggests higher levels of economic development and changes in broader social norms in some Latin American countries mean women are more likely to follow the same routes as men into office and to compete with them on that basis (e.g. through workers' parties).

Paid and voluntary work: Tadros (2014) found the professional and voluntary activities of women leaders, in welfare and religious organisations or professional associations, were critical to enabling them to build the independent constituency and reputation they needed to be politically viable. Women leaders were found often to be 'engaged in multiple associations, thus extending their ability to build a repertoire and learn how to mediate interests and conflicts in different settings […] similarly, associations with multiple causes or different groups allows for an expansion of social capital' (p.16). At the same time, Tadros also discovered women tended to equate politics with formal politics and to not view their activities within the community or university as political.

Gendered social norms: An attitudinal survey conducted by Abdela (2000: 18-20) in Cameroon found a perception among men that 'women do not want to be in politics or to be leaders'. *Both* male and female respondents thought that 'there are no capable women' (although women went on to stress the need for training to overcome this). There was also a widespread perception that women leaders were far less susceptible to corruption, prompting fears on the part of male leaders that working with or alongside women might force them to become less corrupt.[14] Local-level violence, either physical or structural, may be employed to confine women to the private sphere or, if they are able take up public office, to constrain their roles (Oxfam, 2013c). Oxfam's Promoting A Culture of Equal Representation project in Sierra Leone found that, for these types of reasons, their interventions to support women candidates at both the local and the national levels may not lead to more women in political office. For example, while the district of Koinadugu fielded its first parliamentary candidate in 2007 and had six women on its district council in 2009, there was a drop in women's representation in Kailahun district in the same election (Oxfam, 2009).

Belief in the potential for themselves or other women leaders to effect change on an individual or collective basis is another important precondition for leadership. Janssens' (2009: 984) study of NGO Mahila Samakhya's work in Bihar found that (controlling for household and community characteristics) women in programme villages – that is, those with women's groups – were significantly more likely to agree that 'people like themselves [could] have an influence in making their community a better place to live' and 'by joining forces with other community members they would be able to improve the state of education or the roads in their villages'. At the executive branch level, the symbolic value of women's presence is found to be important to attitudes towards women's leadership (Alexander and Jalalzai, 2014). However, participants in Choeun et al.'s (2008) study of Cambodian Community Women Leaders' Forums and Manaute's (2013) study of the Raising Her Voice women's networks in Honduras also reported women feeling constrained by social norms and traditionally accepted gender roles – pointing to the intersecting forms of discrimination and barriers to political leadership some women face. The country context analysis preceding the Raising Her Voice Indonesia project found negative beliefs about women's capacity to engage in the public sphere excluded them from participation/leadership in informal spaces (Oxfam, 2014).

Tadros (2014) found that more women political leaders were married, but that 'the cultural stigma' against unmarried women in politics can be offset by other factors: 'where women have strong constituencies and have forged a reputation for having served their community with integrity and loyalty, being unmarried is not a barrier to reaching political office' (p.10). Importantly, however, Singh's (2014) findings also demonstrate that it is not single factors that enable women's leaders but their combination: 'the existence of joint or extended family alone is not sufficient to justify the reason for [women] becoming leaders in self-help groups, rather it should be looked at in association with other factors, such as freedom of mobility and decision making […] the analysis shows that "trait theory" alone is unable to explain leadership in female self-help groups' (p.256).

Quotas: Changes in formal political opportunities, for instance through quotas, can help counter gendered social norms that hinder women's formal political leadership (Alexander and Jalalzai, 2014; Waylen, 2015). There is broad consensus on the importance of quotas or measures to support women's presence in formal political space, including in terms of the symbolic value and socialisation effect this has on shifting perceptions about women in public space. While the evidence shows quotas by no means assure substantive representation

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[14] A recent systematic review of the evidence on corruption challenges this perception, however, finding that, 'Much of the recent literature suggests women are not necessarily or automatically prone to be less corrupt than men, and the relationship between gender and corruption may be highly dependent on the social conditions in which opportunities for corruption arise' (Rocha Menocal and Taxell, 2015: 34).

of gender equality agendas, they do appear to have impacts on social norms and perceptions (see Domingo et al., 2015 for a summary of the literature on quotas). Donors and NGOs have begun to examine the limitations, as well as possibilities, of affirmative action. A multi-country study (part of the DFID-funded Pathways to Women's Empowerment programme) found quotas can redress the numerical gender imbalance in legislatures, but are not a 'magic bullet' because their effectiveness is contingent on the type of quota used, the type of electoral system in place and local configurations of power. For example, in Brazil, a quota for numbers of women appearing on candidate lists exceeded the number of available seats and therefore 'had a maximum ceiling effect rather than a multiplier effect on increasing women's representation in parliament' (Tadros, 2011a). The Huairou Commission's Global Summit on Grassroots Women's Leadership and Governance identified a trend whereby quotas had a positive effect on women's participation in formal decision-making structures, but qualitative and structural inequalities in power relations persist (Pinheiro, 2011).

Electoral and party systems: Quotas work to get women into politics (Krook, 2009, among others). But we also know that other institutional aspects of electoral and party systems can present obstacles to women's formal political leadership. For example, significantly more women are elected in proportional representation systems than in 'single-member district' systems, and top-down administrative structures can affect women's positions on candidate lists. Women's lack of access to campaign financing is also a serious constraint (Tadros, 2014). There is growing research on how electoral systems, party systems and regime types (such as presidentialism versus parliamentarism) intersect, including in relation to quotas and affirmative action in formal political space to enable or constrain women's access to decision-making roles (including the executive branch) and the trajectories of women's political careers. There is also an emerging body of knowledge focused on understanding how these institutional features are further textured by how informal institutions operate to shape (or impede) opportunities for women's access to decision-making roles (Waylen, 2006, 2014).

While this turn towards looking at pathways to women's leadership rather than discrete interventions or mechanisms is promising, much of the literature implicitly equates leadership with individual women leaders and the focus remains on the means by which they are able to access formal leadership positions.[15] Within this area, programming tends to be based around training and support to women political candidates or leaders of grassroots associations. As Tadros (2014) notes, the 'transitory' and 'project-bound nature of training interventions' is problematic because women need linkages to networks, including with men and funders, as much as they need skills.

Decentralisation: Others look at the institutional mechanisms that can increase women's access to political positions. For example, several studies emphasise opportunities for women's leadership created by processes of decentralisation, particularly where this creates new spaces and structures. Sudarshan and Bisht (2006) argue that, in India, decentralisation with reservation (one-third quota in the Panchayati Raj institutions) has provided a space for women in local governance: 'an enabling institutional framework gives access to women, assists in articulation of voice, and ensures that [women's] concerns find a place on the policy agenda' (p.1) (see below for indirect outcomes). However, the Huairou Commission summit report notes that, although a global process of decentralisation has opened up participatory opportunities, it has also created a complex combination of new laws, policies and structures women need to learn to navigate in order to benefit from new fora (Pinheiro, 2011).

Community leadership: Training for and experience of community leadership can equip women to make full use of leadership opportunities as they arise. For example, Cambodian NGO Banteay Srei's delivery of women's leadership training to village working groups yielded unanticipated results when, two years later, local commune councils were introduced and 11 female commune council members were elected from within Banteay Srei's village development group and development committee members (Choeun et al., 2008). Similarly, Sudarshan and Bisht (2006, citing Hust, 2004) make a distinction between 'political representation' and 'political empowerment', arguing that 'the more empowered – in terms of confidence, gender-awareness, exposure, mobility and autonomy – women already are, the greater is the impact of the reservation of women' (p.7). Top-down demands for responsive institutions and women's representation assume such structures do not merely facilitate but can lead change; however, the effectiveness of these structures is contingent on the

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[15] The main evidence review on Women's Voice and Leadership (Domingo et al., 2015) looks at academic literature on how quotas, electoral reform and political parties influence women's access to formal political positions and power. Here, we present findings from the grey literature on women's leadership programmes reviewed.

extent of women's empowerment. They argue that prior experience in forms of community involvement such as women's groups appears to make a difference to the autonomy and effectiveness of women who take up formal positions at the district level.

Poverty and disadvantage: However poverty and poor literacy rates can be significant barriers to women's political leadership and participation more generally at community and other levels, including their participation in interventions designed to improve their political voice and participation (Hill, 2002, cited in Larson and Tian, 2005; Janssens, 2010). Women participants in Oxfam's (DFID-funded) Lempira, Honduras, project reported having to confront or overcome the dual burden of income-generating/household work and familial mistrust in order to participate in newly created women's organisations (Manaute, 2013). Lack of education also prevents women from entering higher levels of political office:

> If women are to make the transition from being informal political leaders to assuming formal political office to move from contesting at the local to the meso or national levels, meeting the minimum education attainment that is socially expected is a prerequisite […] it is clear that if policies and programmes are serious about expanding the pool of women leaders who are able to nominate themselves for political office beyond the elite cohort, they will have to address the education factor (Tadros, 2014: 13).

In general, however, much of the grey literature assumes the benefits offered by mainstream approaches to strengthening women's access to political power (Tripp, 2001) and fails to employ robust measures of causality. For example, UN Women (n.d.) attributes increased numbers of women elected to legislatures in Kenya, Timor-Leste and Zimbabwe, at least partly, to its own training and advocacy programmes. Jayapadma's (2009) discussion of the work of NGO Gram Vikas in Orissa, India, describes the introduction of quotas into village committees but, as with much of the literature, does not examine the quality of women's involvement and/or contributions.

4.2.3 Connecting collective and individual leadership
The lack of consideration in studies of the relationship between women's individual and collective leadership development is notable – between 'power within' and 'power to', on the one hand, and 'power with', on the other. Few programmes report links between women's individual and collective empowerment and their leadership development. Exceptions include Oxfam's Raising Her Voice programme in Lempira, Honduras, which focused on creating local women's networks. Participants reported 'personal growth' and more ability to publicly discuss as a result of the training and the **solidarity and mutual support engendered by membership in a network** (Manaute, 2013). It is unclear, however, whether women felt empowered on an individual basis as well as within the context of the group. Nevertheless, the programme provided an opportunity to identify and foster the capacities of potential individual leaders, with some receiving party offers to run as local election candidates.

Networks and sharing of expertise: National and transnational women's networks may also enhance the capabilities of individual women leaders through the sharing of expertise and resources. Several studies emphasise the importance of leadership fora that enable women to discuss achievements, challenges and brainstorm potential solutions (Ahern et al., 2000; Choeun et al., 2008; True, 2008). However, again, the literature tends to be weak on the causal links between information-sharing and network-building, on the one hand, and enhanced leadership capabilities, on the other. Some go further to claim that open, collaborative forms of individual leadership may empower the wider community as well as the leaders themselves, but without providing evidence (Muzvidziwa, 2014).

Linkages between movements and formal leadership positions: However, several studies do present findings on how the presence of strong women's civic movements and leadership can support and increase the power/influence of women in formal political leadership positions. Tripp's (2001) study of the Ugandan women's movement found the very existence of an independent women's movement enabled women within Museveni's government to advocate for a women's rights agenda. One reason for this is that they provided a visible women's constituency, which meant women politicians could make the case that, by addressing women's causes, the National Resistance Movement could improve its support and reach.

Women's movements standing in for political parties: Women's movements can also contribute to individual women's leadership through practical and strategic support to women candidates and politicians,

such as providing them with credible gender-disaggregated data (Ahern et al., 2000), campaigning for political parties to increase the number of women candidates at local and national level in Chile (Delgado, 2013) or providing inputs such as financial and technical support usually provided by political parties, as was the case with the 50/50 Group in in Sierra Leone (Tadros, 2014).

Socialisation impact of women in leadership: A new body of work seeks to interrogate assumptions about the (positive) socialisation impact of women in leadership. While more research is needed, cross-country comparisons suggest there is a symbolic value to women leaders, beyond whether or not substantive representation is achieved through their policy action. For example, in a secondary review, Alexander and Jalalzai (2014) find that 'women's presence in parliaments is shown to positively influence women's political engagement, political interest and participation, and that findings hold across samples of culturally and developmentally diverse nations under controls for countries' level of development and democracy' (p.6-7).

5 Evidence on outcomes of women and girls' leadership

What is the evidence on the correlation between women in leadership positions and improved outcomes for women, including more equitable policy and services or more inclusive political settlements – and the reasons that explain any relationship?

It is notable that the evidence on outcomes of *girls'* leadership is confined to changes in their capabilities (their 'power within), and in some cases their ability to mobilise other girls ('power with'). Studies do not present evidence on how girls' individual and collective leadership have effected other changes in their environment (e.g. 'power to' and 'power over'). As such, this section refers specifically to the outcomes of women's leadership.

5.1 Outcomes of women's leadership

In his study of the women's rights organisation Nagorik Uddyog in Bangladesh, Higgitt (2011) argues that, critical to its success at building women's leadership is the organisation's explicit attention to **fostering women's solidarity and common interests while also enabling them to reflect on their diversity.** Women are selected on the basis of some demonstrable 'aptitude for leadership, generally on the basis of overt expression of *power within*' (p.108) and form grassroots women's leaders networks (GWLNs) of around 25 women who attend quarterly and intensive but voluntary (i.e. unpaid) meetings. These sessions are designed to enable women to explore their individuality (e.g. women are asked to introduce themselves by their given rather than family names) while also facilitating discussion about their lives and common reflection on harmful gender norms and cultural practices. These women leaders also organise 'women's group discussion' with their neighbours to provide non-GWLN members with support and to 'exercise their burgeoning power within and increase their social capital' (p.109).

What is notable about Higgitt's study is that he not only provides an explanation of how Nagorik Uddyog's interventions develop women's leadership, but also looks at how they use their leadership capacity. For example, reviews of these programmes find women have more presence in male-dominated traditional community mediation (*shalish*) and are able to get more favourable decisions for women in property or marriage disputes. GWLN members have increased status in their community, with other women turning to them when they have a problem, and are also found in increased numbers in civic associations, such as school management committees, development committees, village development committees and political parties. They have also come together to take action on local problems, such as corruption, child marriage and dowry (Higgitt, 2011: 110-111).

This consideration of both enablers of women's leadership *and* its outcomes is unusual in the literature on women's leadership programmes – and is also poorly developed in the academic literature. Few of the studies reviewed analyse what women are able to effect or achieve through their (newly acquired or existing) leadership capabilities – despite influence and 'power over' being central to the concept and practice of leadership, and certainly to effective leadership.[16] As such, the evidence base on the relationship between women's exercise of leadership, either individual or collectively, and improved outcomes for women,

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[16] Lyne de Ver and Fraser's (2011) review of leadership development programmes also found programmes to focus on individual capabilities rather than broader outcomes: 'The majority of programmes reviewed … only evaluate at the individual level. Most of those only provide anecdotal evidence of participant satisfaction. As such, they have no way of knowing whether they contribute in any way to development (p.vi). However, beyond the more narrow literature that looks primarily at research on women's leadership programmes, and external support to these, there is a broader academic and grey literature on the outcomes of women's individual and collective action, and their influence through various mechanisms, government/state, civic society and in the home, but this rarely explicitly discusses or uses the concept of leadership (see Domingo et al., 2015).

including more equitable policy, services and political settlements, is thin. Examples that do exist from the material reviewed include the following:

- The engagement of the Women Leaders' Network, a transnational advocacy group, with Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), an intergovernmental organisation, improved the latter's accountability, responsiveness and openness to external participation, and resulted in the use of **gender analysis in policymaking.**

- Women leaders groups in Pakistan set up by Oxfam helped nearly 116,000 women gain **national identity cards** and persuade the local *panchayat* authority in Attock to **ban honour killings** (Repila, 2013).

- Policymakers in Honduras agreed women's organisations supported by the Raising Her Voice Programme were instrumental to ensuring the enforcement of national legislation on **local budget allocations to projects benefiting women** (Manaute, 2013).

- Members of the Uganda Coalition for African Women's Rights persuaded the two main political parties to address key articles of the African Women's Rights Protocol on **reproductive health rights** in their campaign manifestos (Oxfam, 2014).

- A review of the effectiveness of the Solidarity for African Women's Rights Coalition's campaign to compel African states to ratify, domesticate and implement the Protocol to the **African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women** found it to have been a key driving force behind **Kenyan ratification** (Oxfam, 2013a).

- In Nepal, women members of community committees were also able to influence decisions affecting women's lives – for example by lobbying for pumps to operate around meal times when **water** is most needed and for better access to **maternal health care** (Oxfam, 2014).

- In a widely cited article, Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004) compared the investments made by local *gram panchayats* in two districts (Birbhum, West Bengal; Udaipur, Rajasthan, n=265). One-third of village council head positions are reserved for women, with these being selected randomly by the state based on specific rules. Chattopadhyay and Duflo found *panchayats* **headed by a woman were more likely to make policy decisions and allocations that reflect women's interests** (such as investments in drinking water and education).

- A survey showed that circle discussions the Women's Legal Resource Centre facilitated as part of the Raising Her Voice programme had a **tangible impact on social attitudes and practices,** reducing violence against women by 30-35% over a period of two years (DFID, 2014a).

5.2 Constraints to and enablers of women's effective leadership

Below we summarises the findings of studies that look at the constraints and enablers of women's ability to influence others and effect change.

5.2.1 Constraints
- Once elected, the **quality of women office-holders' performance can be limited** by family work burdens (as discussed above), being assigned low-status roles, negative attitudes towards women in public office that constrain their ability to fulfil governance roles, fewer opportunities for external training (compared with male counterparts) and a lack of confidence to challenge others' decisions in adversarial settings (Brody, 2009; Choeun et al., 2008; ICRW and UN Women, 2012).

- The Iranian women's parliamentary caucus, formed in 2000, had to pursue a **policy of moderation because a more radical reform agenda would have provoked backlash** (Koolaee, 2009).

- Women politicians' class, family or religious interests may shape their political interests more than their gender, and **women leaders may not advocate for gender justice.** Indeed, women leaders may oppose legislation that conflicts with other policy or personal interests – for example the stability of the family or economy (Oxfam, 2014; Tadros, 2011a). For example, in Costa Rica in 2007, in a debate on a proposed Bill to Criminalise Violence Against Women, the president of the Congressional Women's Commission disagreed with the bill on the basis that the sanctity of the family came before women's rights. Women

legislators in Costa Rica also opposed a bill to cap the workday for domestic workers because of the negative effect this would have on professional women's careers, including their own (Tadros, 2011a, citing Sagot, 2010).

- A study of Indian *gram panchayats* found their mandate resulted in a tight focus on public services (sanitation, eligibility for social welfare scheme), with little attention devoted to gender norms and power relations. The frequency with which women privately raised gender equity issues, particularly domestic violence, with their *panchayat* representatives was not reflected in the concerns tabled during meetings – because **problems arising from gender relations/norms were seen by both male and female elected leaders as private matters** (ICRW and UN Women, 2012).

- **Challenges experienced by women business leaders** include employer bias or discrimination negative perceptions regarding women's professional capabilities and commitment (Madsen, 2010) and the prevalence of 'traditional caretaker roles' (Jamali et al., 2005, cited in Madsen, 2010). Women business leaders may also be constrained by their exclusion from informal networking and a lack of mentoring support, as well as the absence of family-friendly policies (Madsen, 2010).

- However, an Oxfam, CARE, Trócaire and ActionAid (2012) **study of women leaders spanning the business, politics and non-profit sectors** in Myanmar found all participants confronted similar barriers to and challenges of leadership: patriarchal cultural norms; the double burden of home and work responsibilities; and gender-based violence in the form of mockery, insults, harassments, physical and sexual assault.

- The **elite nature** of the Women Leaders Network was found to have contributed to its negotiations with the inter-governmental body, APEC, moving away from the human development concerns of poor women towards neoliberal economic approaches (similar to those of APEC itself) (True, 2008).

5.2.2 Enablers
- An evaluation found the simultaneous creation of local women's networks and provision of capacity-building support to municipal offices for women created a **clear, accessible channel through which women might raise grievances,** particularly instances of gender-based violence, in Honduras. However, it is not clear whether these organisations were able to secure redress (Manaute, 2013).

- Project evaluations of interventions for adolescent girls make a **causal connection between girls' leadership capabilities, their ability to work together and their ability to influence harmful socio-cultural norms** in ways that improve their wellbeing (e.g. girls having greater HIV knowledge, practising fewer caste-associated menstrual prohibitions) (Posner et al., 2009).

- There is consensus that the presence of an **autonomous women's movement** is necessary if women politicians and bureaucrats are to remain accountable and sensitive to women's concerns (Sudarshan and Bisht, 2006). For example, an evaluation of the Raising Her Voice programme in Chile found parliamentary monitoring by civil society actors made a crucial contribution to the strengthening of accountability, providing individual women leaders with leverage on issues of particular relevance for women (Delgado, 2013). Research on women's coalitions in Egypt, Jordan and South Africa found the more successful coalitions were those seen as being authentic representatives of women's issues because they had a broad base and had developed mechanisms to build internal consensus and manage conflict, as well as those where coalition members were already known to each other (Hodes et al., 2011; Tadros, 2011b).

- Process tracing revealed that pressure exerted by the Solidarity for African Women's Rights Coalition prompted governments to act on ratification of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. The Raising Her Voice programme supported the coalition through awareness-raising activities and by developing members' **lobbying skills** (Oxfam, 2013a).

- **Broad-based collective approaches** provide a more secure platform to empower the marginalised and poorest because of 'safety in numbers' (Repila, 2013: 4).

- There is also agreement in the literature on the benefits of **reformers 'working politically' and working collaboratively with government.** For example, Tadros' (2011b) research on six women's coalitions in Jordan and Egypt and Hodes et al. (2011) research on the South African National Working Group on

Sexual Offences found similar factors to be important to success. This includes coalition leaders using their informal relationships with key decision-makers to press for change – a strategy that Hodes et al. (2011) calls 'soft advocacy' and which Tadros (2011) found to be more influential than traditional advocacy (e.g. petitions, conferences, media engagement). Successful coalitions also established their credibility (e.g. through professional standing and in-depth knowledge of law), framed issues in ways that enabled them to outmanoeuvre (religious) opposition and were able to spot and use political opportunities.

- The Women Leaders Network was set up in 1996 to increase women's participation in trade and economic policymaking through engagement with APEC. The original 60 members were 'all well-connected women leaders holding high-level positions in government, business, and academe, particularly in the field of science and technology. The network has since expanded into a coalition of 2000 elite and grassroots women in all 21 APEC countries, but the **professional expertise** of the Women Leaders' Network has been critical to their credibility and ability to influence the APEC' (True, 2008: 10).

It is notable that studies find constraints to arise from the socioeconomic conditions, whereas enablers focus more on women's personal and collective capabilities and actions, but the interactions between social norms and women's exercise of leadership are not elaborated. The evidence suggests women's collective action to change discriminatory gender roles and hierarchies are central to shifts in gender norms (Evans and Nambiar, 2013). Leadership is a necessary adjunct to collective action, but the process whereby a woman leader can develop a sense of 'power with' other women (to 'collectively self-objectify') is unclear (Higgitt, 2011: 93). Apart from research on feminist and historical institutionalism (e.g. McKay and Waylen, 2014), which is not reflected in the material on programming, there is also little attention in the literature to political, social and economic factors beyond gender norms that affect women's leadership, such as type of political settlement, political liberalisation, poverty and inter-sectional exclusion.

6 Recommendations for international support to women and girls' leadership

What does the empirical evidence tell us about the types of interventions most likely to support the effective leadership of women and girls? Below we highlight lessons on better ways of working to support women's leadership, noting that few of the studies reviewed discuss the role of external funders and implementing agencies. We conclude with recommendations about the substantive content of programmes most likely to enable women and girls' leadership.[17]

6.1 Lessons from programming on effective ways of working

The evidence on programme design and ways of working and funding leadership interventions is scant. Some of the factors that emerge as being important include the following:

- Long-term support to a core group of activists rather than *ad hoc* interventions to large numbers of women (Oxfam, 2013b);

- Locally relevant and led leadership programmes: for example girls and women are able to propose their own understanding of leadership, what problems they face and what inputs they need (Wijnen and Wildschut, 2015);

- Politically smart programme design and implementation: programmes not only use political analysis but also are designed in ways that enable women leaders, and the organisations supporting them, to work politically (Hodes et al., 2011; Oxfam, 2013b);

- Flexible programming, which enables programme participants to focus on 'locally determined objectives' (p.57) and on 'what works and why', rather than on problems or deficits (p. 68) (Larson and Tian, 2005), and where funders have a 'goal oriented' rather than 'project oriented' focus (p.30), and appropriate monitoring and evaluation (Hodes et al., 2011).

6.2 Broader policy messages about programme content

What should the focus of women's leadership development programmes be? What factors should these programmes take into consideration? We draw nine key messages from the evidence on what enables women and girl's leadership.

Support to girls' leadership is essential to foster effective women leaders. The evidence points to a strong relationship between girls' experience and opportunities in childhood and adolescence and their leadership capabilities. Girls from disadvantaged households do not have a family life that can provide the foundation for the development and exercise of leadership and political capabilities in adult life. External interventions and positive role models, both in and out of school, can help level the playing field by building girls' self-belief, skills and networks. As family attitudes and behaviour have a strong influence on girls' success, support to families as well as girls is essential.

Education for all girls is critical to their leadership potential. The evidence shows women leaders are educated women, and particularly so beyond community level. Women need an education to access power,

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[17] Building more systematic evidence on what works and what does not in assistance to support women's voice and leadership in development is an objective of the next phase of the project, which entails a set of case studies building on the assessment of the evidence, rapid and otherwise (see also Cummings and O'Neil (2015) and Domingo et al. (2015)).

but they also need further education and professional training to be credible and have influence once they are in leadership positions, within civic associations, business and formal political positions.

Formal institutional change is important to counter gendered social norms. Institutional change that evens the playing field, such as through affirmative action or quotas in parties, electoral lists or seats, contributes to women's descriptive representation and to their access to decision-making and leadership positions. Importantly, there is variation in how quotas intersect with wider political economy conditions (e.g. regime type, party and electoral systems and informal political rules) and wider socio-normative and development patterns – and these differences affect whether and how quotas contribute to women's access to leadership roles and their ability to advance gender equality agendas. More research is needed in this area.

But informal institutions and spaces are also critical for women to be effective leaders. The evidence strongly suggests the importance of informal spaces and norms both to the development of women's political skills and to their effective exercise of these once in leadership positions. Early exposure to political ideas, debate and connections within the family or university are often the foundations of women's 'political entrepreneurship' – as is the opportunity to practise these new skills and build new social capital afforded by membership in, or leadership of, voluntary associations. Once in leadership positions, women's ability to influence decision-making processes depends heavily on whether they are able to gain access to, and negotiate within and around, the informal processes and spaces where alliances are built and backroom deals made.

Women's individual and collective leadership is important to counter adverse gender and social norms. The evidence finds these norms are the main constraint to women and girl's leadership – but also that women's leadership can progressively change these norms. For example, women in leadership positions not only provide role models for girls but also normalise, for both men and women, boys and girls, the idea and practice of women holding power. However, there is also no automatic link between the emergence of individual women/girl leaders and women/girls' collective leadership and action. Programmes need to explicitly build connections and solidarity between women, and their ability to act together to change harmful social norms.

Men and boys are critical partners in changing gender norms. Progressive change cannot happen through the actions of women and girls alone. More evidence on the role of men and boys in supporting women and girl's leadership is needed, and should be factored into international support.

Autonomous women's movements are the vanguard of gender justice. The evidence is clear that women's coalitions have been critical for advancing gender justice, including by producing future political leaders and bolstering the ability of women politicians and feminist bureaucrats ('femocrats') to work effectively within government to advance gender equity. Women's organisations and movements foster solidarity and collective purpose among women, strengthen social capital and create safe environments to help women confront adverse and disabling norms and conditions – and they need to be supported.

Donor programming (and theories of change) need to reflect the combination of factors that support women and girls' leadership. Support for the development of particular leadership skills can be important, but women and girl's leadership arises from a range of factors and over time. Supporting leadership capabilities therefore needs to be seen as an ongoing process through women's early life, as they enter leadership positions and as they continue to develop once in them – and not as discrete or *ad hoc* interventions (e.g. focused around elections). Leadership development also needs to be placed in broader social, political and institutional context – not only because social factors such as education are critical but also because effective women leadership benefits from enabling institutional frameworks as well as individual skills.

More research is needed on the processes through which women are able to influence public decision-making. More cross-country evidence is needed about the factors that explain when and how women coalitions, women politicians and other types of women leaders (including women leaders in the private sector) successfully advance their interests and change the ideas and behaviour of others. This includes the need to look at how these effective leaders work strategically and politically to advance their and other women's interests. There is an emerging literature on how social and economic structures beyond gender norms, as well as the wider political-institutional conditions, affect women's leadership (e.g. looking at factors such as type of political settlement, degree of political liberalisation and poverty and interaction of different forms of exclusion). However, in many respects this research is either nascent or somewhat siloed. For instance, too

little is known about the linkages between women leaders in the business world and women leaders in formal political space. There is a need to invest in research on the trajectories and impact of women's individual and collective pathways to leadership and decision-making roles.

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Appendix: Literature collection and analysis methods

6.3 Literature identification

Search of academic databases. The search strings for the larger review of the literature for this project included terms to identify academic articles on support to women and girls' leadership. Synonyms in the string included leadership skills, leadership training, mentoring, coaching, peer support/learning, shadowing. Delimiters were also applied, such as 'women' and 'girls' and 'middle-income' and 'low-income' country. Full details of this stage of the literature search can be found in the 'Women Voice and Leadership in Decision-Making Learning and Evidence Project: Search Protocol', which is available on request.

Snowballing and expert recommendations. Active advice on relevant literature was sought from key experts, and by looking at the reference lists of those publications. Information was also requested from DFID and from NGOs through the Women's Political Participation Group of the Gender and Development Network.

Capturing the grey literature: This was particularly relevant given the focus on leadership programmes, and involved targeted searches of institutional websites (NGOs, donor websites, women's organisations) and using internet search engines such as Google. Search strings included 'women + leadership', 'girls + leadership', 'women + leadership skills', 'girls + leadership skills'. Time spent searching for grey literature was capped at two days, consistent with overall resource allocation to the project.

6.4 Literature analysis prioritisation

In total, 99 studies/reports were identified, including both academic and grey literature (mostly programme evaluations and reviews but also policy material). All studies were entered into a database, reviewed and coded according to the following categories: year, country focus, keyword, source of document, type of document, methods, quality of evidence and key concepts.

Studies were also coded for relevance. There were three categories (relevant, possibly relevant and not relevant). The criteria for relevance were direct consideration of our research questions (what factors enable/constrain women and girls leadership; what are the outcomes of women and girls leadership) and transparent research design/methods. We also included important secondary reviews and theoretical/conceptual pieces.

Only the studies assessed to be relevant or possibly relevant were read in full, a total of 54 studies. Material was extracted and synthesised based according to the main sections of our report.

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