Key Gender & Good Governance Concepts:

1. **Gender** is a social and cultural construct which distinguishes differences in the roles, responsibilities and attributes assigned to men, women, girls and boys. These roles are different across cultures and historical time periods. In patriarchal societies the roles assigned as masculine are given greater importance and value than the feminine. This is less so in matriarchal societies. Gender is described as a social construct because society determines these roles.

2. **Sex** refers to biological attributes including the reproductive and sexual anatomy of an individual. Sex can be categorized as male, female or intersex.

3. **Gender identity** refers to how persons identify themselves and their gender which may not correspond with their birth sex. This is a spectrum.

4. **Gender in the Caribbean** – the Caribbean has made a lot of progress on gender equity but socially assigned roles reflect a relatively rigid dichotomy. In a 2012 CARICOM study\(^1\), high school students in the Caribbean reported associating masculinity with strength, aggression, intellect and virility. Femininity was associated with weakness, submission, kindness and emotion. Male students reported that they were socialised not to express emotion or turn away from conflict and felt the need to pretend that they had sex as a mark of manhood. This reflects a culture of toxic masculinity. This culture contributes to the high levels of violence, gender-based violence and HIV that we grapple with in the Caribbean. In response, **Gender Equity** requires equal weight be given to IQ (Intelligence Quotient) and EQ (Emotional Quotient) and requires that being caring and kind become just as important as being tough.

5. **Good Governance** describes systems, institutions, laws, processes and outcomes that are democratic, protect human rights and enhance the well-being of all people regardless of sex, gender, ethnicity, religion, class or any category that may be used as a basis of subordination or dominance. It encompasses care of the earth, full accountability and transparency in

---

\(^1\) Wiltshire R., Bailey C., Desai C., et al (2012) Youth Masculinities and Violence in the Caribbean. CARICOM
decision-making, equality, justice and peace.

6. **Transformational Leadership** is a leadership approach that causes change in individuals and social systems. It is grounded in the principles and values of equality, equity, democracy, justice, non-violence and cooperation. CIWiL uses this framework to promote women’s understanding of the linkages between their leadership and action to address the fundamental challenges of the Caribbean.

7. The Beijing Platform for Action provides the standard of at least 30% representation of women in local and national governments in order to assure critical mass. Women make up 50% of the world’s population but rigidly assigned gender roles result in male domination in politics. Equal access to decision-making in political processes is a fundamental human right. Women have a right to equal access to hold public office without unreasonable restrictions. Numbers, though, are not enough. Transformational leadership is essential to achieve justice, peace, equality and environmental sustainability.

8. **Gender Equality in decision-making and leadership matters** particularly to the lives of the most vulnerable. The COVID-19 pandemic has given clear evidence that outcomes in countries led by women engaged in transformational leadership have been among the best in the world. The leadership of women in Germany, Taiwan, New Zealand, Iceland, Finland, Norway, Denmark meant the difference between life and death for citizens of their countries.

9. **Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment** are essential components of development and human rights. They are not just rights but are necessary for peaceful, prosperous and sustainable societies. This is recognized in Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG) 16: **Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels** and SDG 5: **Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls**.

---

2 [https://ciwil.org/transformational-leadership/](https://ciwil.org/transformational-leadership/)
4 Article 23 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 21 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Articles 7 and 8 the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and many other international human rights instruments.
5 UN General Assembly, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 21 October 2015, A/RES/70/1
10. As of January 2020, only 14 Commonwealth member states met the standard of at least 30% representation of women in Parliament\(^6\), with Rwanda ranking first with 61.3% representation. Regionally and across the globe 80% of parliamentarians are men. The Caribbean boasts high numbers\(^7\) of women leaders in the public sector but this has not translated to leadership roles in government. The capacity is there but barriers prevent women from transitioning from public service to government.

11. Research\(^8\) by the Commonwealth Secretariat in the Caribbean showed the following:

   a. Political parties are the greatest enablers of enhancing women’s political participation. Currently the structure of many political parties does not encourage women in leadership positions. Training with the women’s arms of political parties and targeted policies for the selection of women’s leaders can help improve participation.

   b. Constitutional and legislative quotas for women political candidates make an impact. In Guyana, for example, each political party must have at least one-third women on its list of candidates\(^9\). It must be noted that even as the number of women in parliament increases work must continue to ensure that this translates into policies that promote gender equality, accountability and transparency. This ensures that party politics become inclusive across the board.

   c. Women candidates face barriers like violence, unequal access to campaign funding and no formal support when transitioning from the public sector into governance. Resistance to gender equality the Caribbean remains a barrier as well. In 2016 the referenda in the Bahamas and in Grenada both proposing gender related advancements failed to pass. Spaces should be created to have conversations on progressive issues with Caribbean populations outside of raw politics.

---


\(^7\) The Commonwealth Secretariat, The Status of Women in Leadership Across the Commonwealth in Political and Civil Service, State-owned Enterprises and Private Sector Corporate Boards, Baseline Data Report, 2015, pg. 23

\(^8\) Ibid

\(^9\) Representation of People’s (Amendment) Act 2000 (Section 11B, Articles 5-7).
d. Gender justice is advanced through promoting judicial diversity. The more women in leadership that exist within the rule of law framework i.e. women magistrates and judges, the better it is for women to be in politics and governance.

Conclusion

Equal access to decision-making in political processes is a fundamental human right. The Beijing Platform for Action provides the standard of at least 30% representation of women in local and national governments in order to assure critical mass. Regionally and across the globe 80% of parliamentarians are men. The Caribbean boasts high numbers of women leaders in the public sector but this has not translated to leadership roles in government. Women candidates face barriers like violence, unequal access to campaign funding and no formal support when transitioning from the public sector into governance and a general resistance to gender equality. Constitutional and legislative quotas, conversation and training with political parties and judicial diversity are all means of promoting gender equality of removing these barriers.

ABOUT CIWiL: CIWiL is a flagship networking organization committed to advancing transformational leadership, and to increasing the numbers of women in leadership and decision-making in political and civic life, proportionate to the female population in Caribbean countries.

Conceptualised in 1998 CIWiL is a non-partisan and independent institution, established to monitor and strengthen the work of increasing women’s political participation in the region through advocacy, networking, research and capacity building.

CIWiL promotes and strengthens gender equality in the Caribbean by advocating for transformative politics and policymaking, supporting women in leadership and decision making as well as providing education, training and research.

Contact Us

1-868-345-9153

Website:
https://www.ciwil.org/

info@ciwil.org

Social Media