



**United Nations**

Department of  
Economic and  
Social Affairs

**5** GENDER  
EQUALITY



**16** PEACE, JUSTICE  
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# Gender Equality in Public Institutions: Why Is It a Priority?

Promoting the Presence and Leadership of Women in Public Institutions at the  
National and Local Levels in Asia and the Pacific  
Regional Workshop, 22-25 April, 2024, Bangkok, Thailand

# Context: GENDER EQUALITY

- **Gender Equality** is integral to all efforts to expand people's choices, realize a just and sustainable world, and achieve the vision of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).
- **Gender Equal Governance** is essential for effective, inclusive and accountable public policymaking; and implementation and delivery of higher quality public services.
- **Gender Equal Governance** requires both women's equal leadership and participation in public institutions, including at the decision-making levels.

# Rationale: GENDER EQUALITY in PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS



Women have the **right to participate** in public decision-making

*Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Beijing Platform for Action, ECOSOC, UNDP Gender Equality Strategy*



Public institutions should be **representative** of society and tap into the **full potential** of the workforce



Women's **equal** participation in decision-making including in public institutions **contributes to development**

# Rationale: GENDER EQUALITY in PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

**Gender equality** is at the core of an inclusive, effective and accountable public administration:

- i. **Gender equality** is enshrined in national laws starting from the constitution
- ii. **Gender equality** institutionalized across all levels and in all sectors of public administration improves government function by making public policies more responsive and accountable to diverse public interests; increases the quality of public services; and, consequently, promotes citizens' trust and confidence in their government
- iii. **Gender-equal public administration** legitimizes commitment to gender equality elsewhere by demonstrating governments' commitment to gender equality and provides a model for other workplaces
- iv. As the largest employer of women in many countries, **public administration** has great potential to ensure women's right to equal and full employment and public participation

# GENDER EQUALITY IN DECISION-MAKING in PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

## Why Does Gender-Inclusive Decision-Making in Public Administration Matter?

Asserts women's right to participate in public life

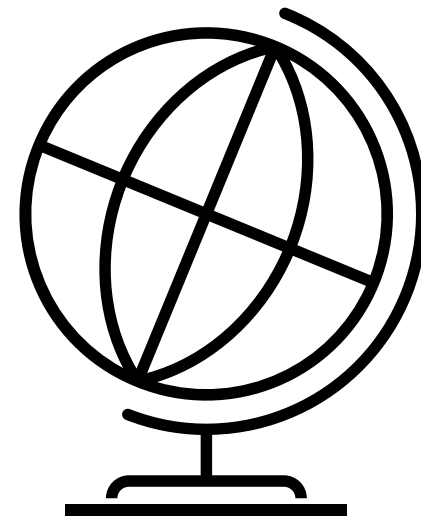
Sends powerful signals to other institutions and to individuals in society

Takes both women's and men's interests and perspectives into consideration

Improves the quality of decision-making processes and outcomes

**Source:** *Gender Inequality Research Lab (GIRL) at the University of Pittsburgh.*

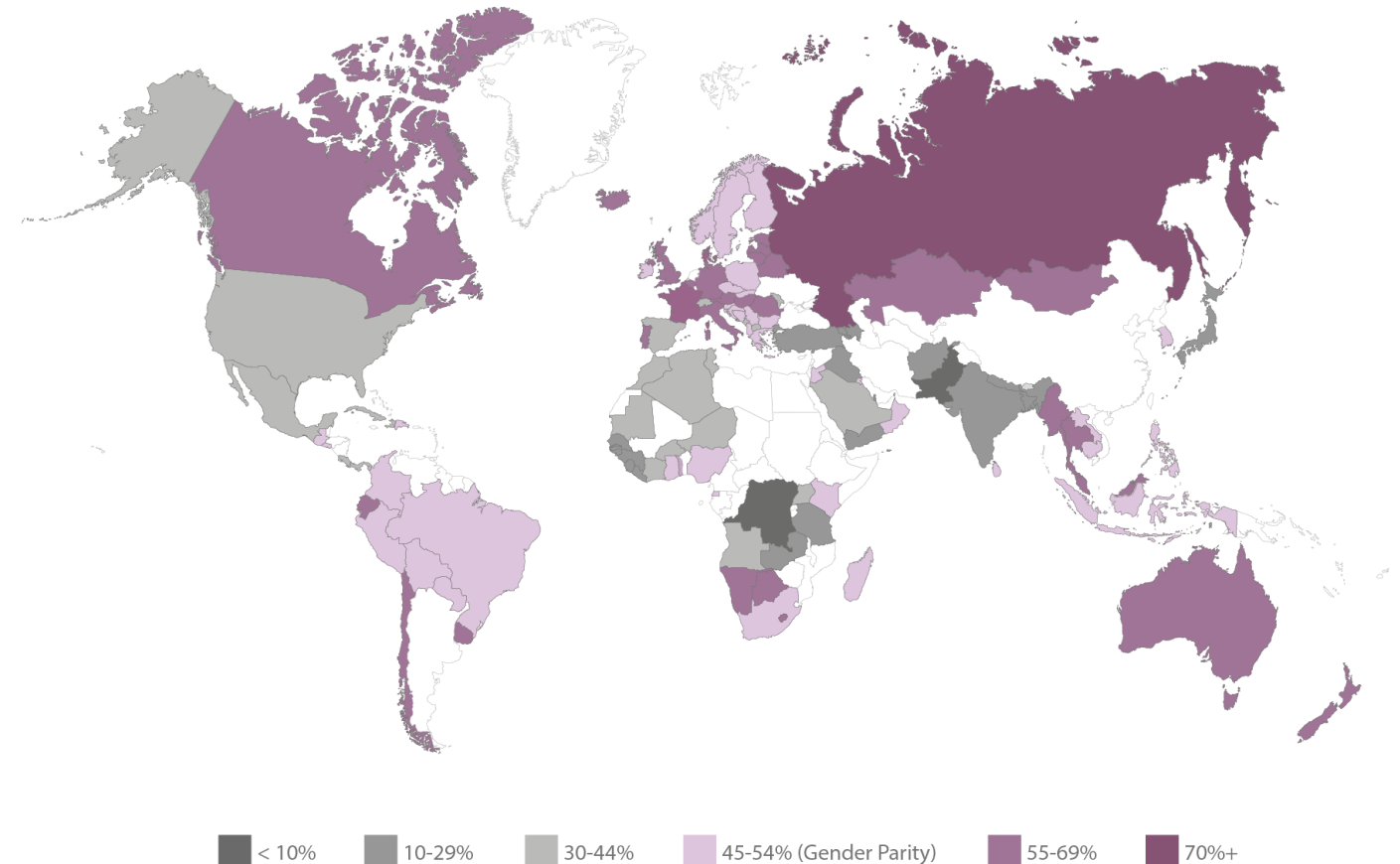
WHAT DO WE KNOW  
ABOUT THE STATUS OF  
GENDER EQUALITY IN  
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS  
GLOBALLY?



# WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

## Percentage of Women Employees in Public Administration in 139 Countries

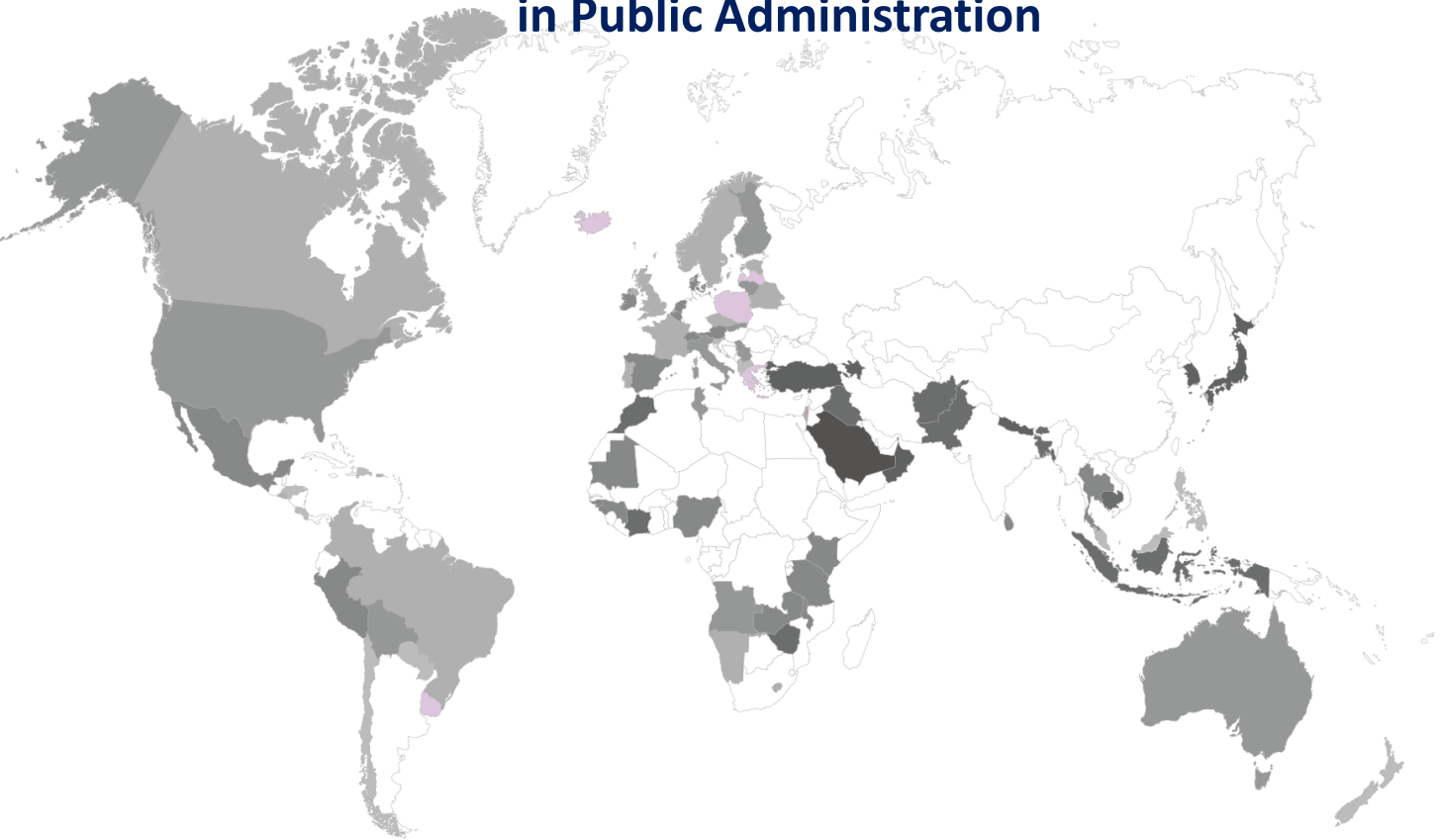
- Average: **46% women**
- **32%** of countries at or near gender parity
- Ranges from **6%** to **77%** across the globe



# WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

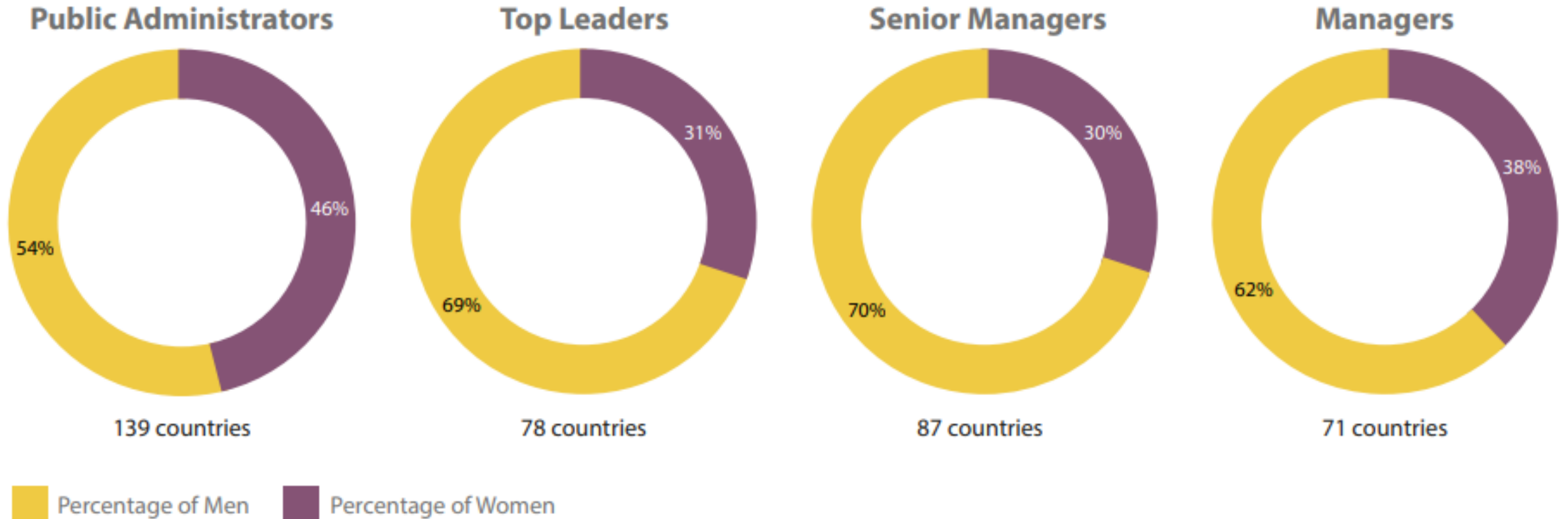
Percentage of Women Senior Managers  
in Public Administration

- Average: **30% women**
- Only **5 countries** exceed **50% women**
- Ranges from **1% to 54%**

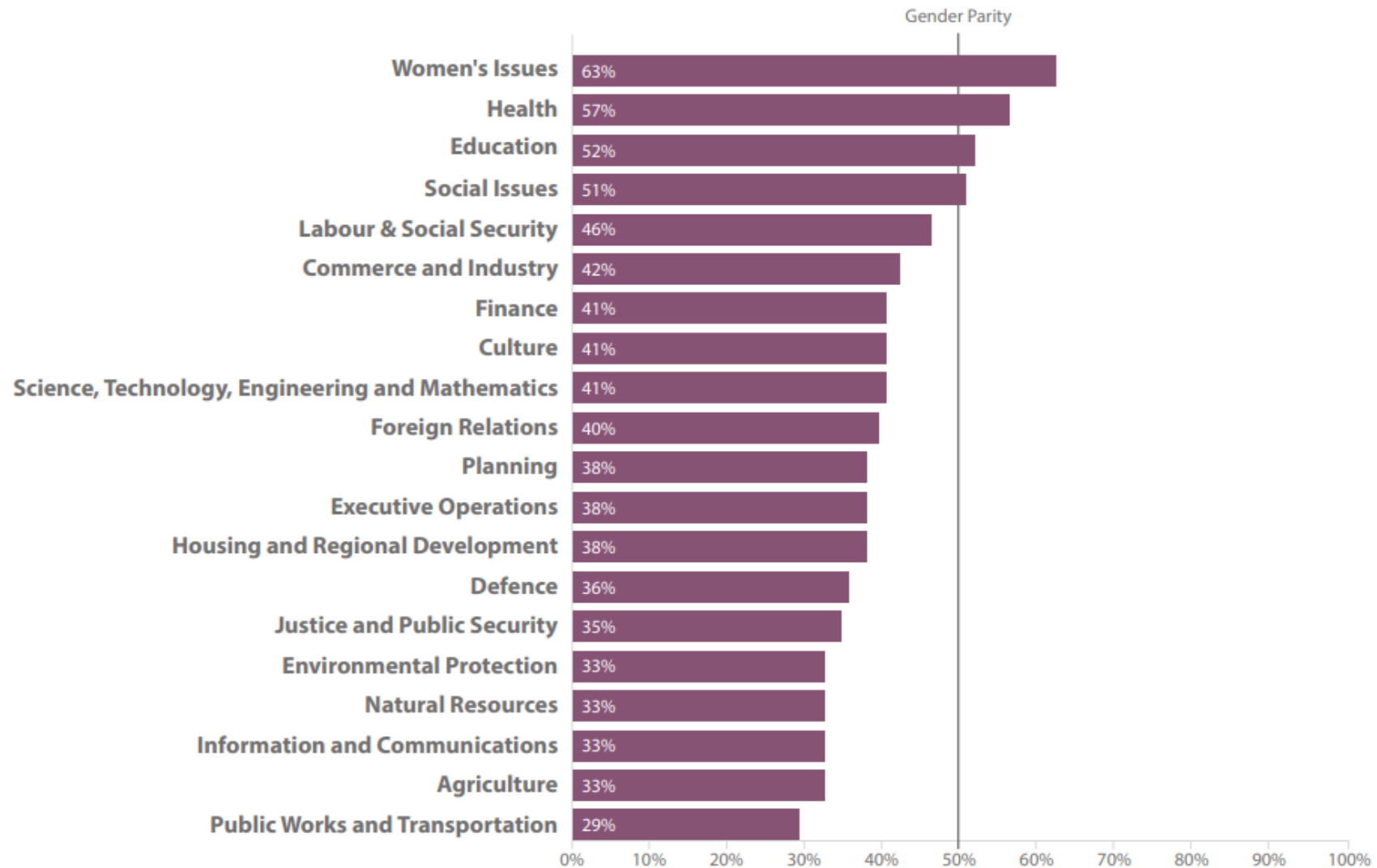




# WOMEN'S SHARE of DIFFERENT LEADERSHIP POSITIONS in PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS



# WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS ACROSS DIFFERENT POLICY AREAS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS



WHAT ARE THE  
POTENTIAL CAUSES  
FOR SUCH GENDER  
GAPS IN PUBLIC  
ADMINISTRATIONS?



# BARRIERS TO GENDER EQUALITY in PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION



## **Legislation, policies and processes**

Gender-blind legislation and organizational policies; implementation & accountability mechanisms lacking, or not successful, in addressing gender specific barriers and challenges (e.g., equal pay laws may tackle gender pay gaps but may fail to address unequal access to promotion opportunities)



## **Institutional Culture and Gender Stereotypes**

Glass walls and glass ceilings in public administration can strengthen institutional stereotypes and lead to further gender inequalities (e.g., biased views that women like to work in feminine policy areas; and/or do not have leadership assets)



## **Access to Leadership Training and Capacity Building**

Design & selection criteria for leadership training and capacity building opportunities may inadvertently discriminate against women's participation (e.g., lack of consideration for participant responsibilities such as childcare and safety, results in inadequate location, timing, modality and frequency, and treats these necessities as 'extra costs').

HOW COULD WE  
EFFECTIVELY ADDRESS  
THESE GAPS?



# GEDER EQUALITY ACTION PLANS

- **Gender equality in public administration** as a right embedded in constitutions and other national legislation.
- The promotion of women's equal leadership and participation in public administration at the national and subnational levels benefits from an intentionally designed, nationally owned and implemented, and carefully monitored **gender equality action plan**.
- To achieve their intended effect, **gender equality action plans** for public administration identify and address country-specific barriers to gender equality through policy prioritization based on sex-disaggregated data and analysis.

# KEY TERMS and CONCEPTS

- **Gender equality:** the equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of women and men, and girls and boys; a condition under which the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men
- **Gender parity:** equal numbers of men and women in positions
- **Gender mainstreaming:** the systematic incorporation of gender into all government institutions, decision-making processes and policies
- **Gender-disaggregated data:** data collected with gender in mind and separated into categories based on gender (e.g., 'women' and 'men')
- **Gender-equal governance:** a system where both men and women have equal representation and influence in decision-making, aiming to eliminate gender discrimination and promote equity
- **Gender-responsive governance:** gender-responsive governance systems recognize and advance women's participation and leadership in governance and pursue opportunities to advance gender-responsive public policies and services that deliver for all citizens
- **Gender-inclusive decision-making:** gender balance and diversity in decision-making positions and a gender-sensitive approach to data analysis, decision-making processes and policy outcomes

# KEY TERMS and CONCEPTS

- **Public institutions:** refers to government at all levels and in all dimensions, and the services they offer
- **Public administration:** the set of executive branch public institutions (at the central/national, regional and local levels) responsible for planning, coordinating and controlling government operations and implementing government policies
- **Public service:** includes all elected and appointed positions such as legislators and judges, and the military in addition to all public administration entities serving at the executive branch
- **Civil service/servants:** the body of government employees who work for public institutions and government agencies
- **Decision-making positions:** jobs or occupations within public administration that come with the authority to make decisions and lead the development, interpretation and implementation of government policies; including top leaders, senior managers and managers





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THANK YOU