Women MPs of the world conference: strengthening visibility, driving change

Thursday 8 November 2018, House of Commons, Westminster

Group E: Promoting women’s economic empowerment
Committee Room 9

This session will look at how MPs can promote economic empowerment for women.

Objectives
Share insights and experience of what legislative tools, wider strategies and policy measures have worked across the world to tackle the barriers women face.

Key questions for discussion
What policy measures and legislative tools are needed to:

- Ensure equal access to education and skills and that women and men are not held back by social attitudes in the career choices they make?
- Help parents to share work and caring responsibilities equally relieving the unpaid care burden faced by women?
- Support women and men to enter and progress in the labour market according to their talent and ambition?
- Support women as leaders and decision-makers: in public life, business and as female entrepreneurs?
- Promote financial inclusion?
- Bring women’s voices into policy making?
- Make progress towards meeting SDG Goal 5 through economic empowerment for women?

What role have elected women in your legislature been able to play in progressing such measures/tools?
Please bring examples from your country, highlighting the successes as well as the learning that can be shared.

Women’s economic empowerment means women having (i) the ability to succeed and advance economically and (ii) the power to make and act on economic and related decisions. If girls and women were operating at their full potential and playing an identical role in labour markets to men’s, then an estimated $28 trillion could be added to global GDP by 2025.1 However, all women are facing structural inequalities around their labour market participation at every stage of their lives. The global gender pay gap could take over 200 years to close. Women bear disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care work, are much more likely to work part-time and in lower-paid sectors. The UN High Level Panel has identified seven drivers of change to accelerate women’s economic empowerment around the world – and specific suggestions about proven and promising actions:

a. Tackling adverse norms and promoting positive role models
b. Ensuring legal protection and reforming discriminatory laws and regulations
c. Investing in care
d. Building assets – digital, financial and physical
e. Changing business culture and practice
f. Improving public sector practices in employment and procurement
g. Strengthening visibility, collective voice and representation

Supporting women and girls to be economically empowered is fundamental to gender equality, poverty reduction, and inclusive economic growth. There is no silver bullet – girls and women face multiple barriers to contributing equally to the economy and achieving their potential. We have come some way but structural inequalities persist. This session will explore global and nation-specific solutions including: challenging the gender stereotypes that prevent girls and women from getting an education; workplace policies and cultures including violence and harassment; targeted support for those least able to access and progress in the labour market; social policy issues such as addressing unpaid care; and equal representation in public life.

Additional reading
‘The gender pay gap in the UK: children and experience in work’, Dias, Joyce, Parodi (Feb 2018)
https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/10358
UK gender pay gap reporting portal https://gender-pay-gap.service.gov.uk/
UN High Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment http://hip-fee.unwomen.org/en/reports-toolkits
https://www.thegenderequalitycharter.com/gec-video-wall

1 McKinsey, 2015