

Symposium on Women's Political Participation

Symposium Organiser:

Founded in 2007, Transparency Maldives (TM) is the national contact of Transparency International (TI) in the Maldives. TM is a non-partisan organization that promotes collaboration, awareness and other initiatives to improve governance and eliminate corruption in the Maldives. Since its inception, TM has undertaken research, advocacy, outreach and awareness raising and capacity building initiatives on a range of areas including electoral reform, right to information, freedom of association, migrant worker rights, climate finance integrity, women's political participation, civic education and local governance.

About the Symposium:

Anecdotal evidence suggests a high level of participation of women in grassroots political activities. However, a number of impediments including structural issues, social norms, and a lack of political will mean women are unable to attain high political offices and are excluded from leadership roles in politics. For example, the newly elected 87-member parliament comprises of only 4 women MPs. The Maldives is amongst the two countries ranked at 184 out of the 193 countries highlighted in the Inter-Parliamentary Union's index of parliaments in terms of gender balance

According to a 2015 IFES study on women's participation in politics, structural and social issues such as lack of full-day child-care mechanisms, social stigma for women campaigning as candidates, social norms of women as homemakers, limited mobility, difficulty in accessing resources, and a lack of public speaking and campaign management capacity are amongst the reasons identified as some impediments to participation of women in political processes. Further exacerbating the challenges is that women are viewed as less electable by political parties.

Therefore, the goal of the two-day symposium, which will be held from 28-29 April 2019, is to bring together women MPs, women candidates who contested in the 2019 Parliamentary Election, women councillors, WDCs, political parties, government stakeholders, civil society, journalists, and women's rights activists to:

- Better understand the nuances of the challenges faced by women and explore methods to overcome these challenges;
- Launch a cross-party women's coalition with a view to increasing women's participation in politics.

By bringing together multiple stakeholders, **TM hopes to conclude the symposium with the creation of a 5-year multi-sectoral plan to address gender imbalances in power and increase women's political participation.**