



## **Gender Equality within the Partnership of Democratic Governance and Human Rights**

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In most countries special laws exist guaranteeing citizens' participation in Governance, especially at municipal level. But the participation of particularly women, young people, the minority communities and the civil society in issues of governance at national, departmental and municipal levels is not really valued.

Multiparty politics, free and fair elections, freedom of association opportunities for a greater participation by men and women in public life exist in most African countries. Nevertheless women are still not able to enjoy the full right to participating actively in governance. At the same time most elections are still characterized by violence which discourages women from participating, although progress has been made in administering free and fair elections.

There are various reasons, why women are not adequately represented in African Governments.

The unequal power relationships in the private sphere are reflected in the public sphere with society still looking down on women entering politics. In addition there are no adequate facilities and resources to prepare women to pursue politics.

Furthermore many political parties' structures are restricting women candidates. Female candidates only come from the women's wing of the party, not from the main wing which is seen as a man's branch.

Inequalities are perpetuated by deep-seated beliefs of gender inequality in our societies that can be uprooted with political will and widespread action to combat these inequalities.

The Joint Africa-EU Strategic Partnership should enhance the elaboration of gender-aware and pro-poor poverty reduction strategies which result in higher growth-rates and enhanced human development. The Joint Partnership can also be a chance to provide gender-equality, but actors have to move from beautifully worded documents and elaborate conferences to real contextualized action. They have to gear towards real positive impact on poverty reduction based on different realities.

"Gender equality and the empowerment of women" is the Goal 3 of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and a cross-cutting issue across all the MDGs. That means that trying to achieve the MDGs without promoting gender equality at all levels (within Africa and in the Africa-EU Partnership) will also decrease the chances of achieving the other goals.