

Empowering women and girls through full participation, including as elected representatives, goes beyond numbers. It means creating spaces where women and girls can express their needs and interests, and help shape the decisions that affect their lives. In March 2016, Canada launched a \$2 million project to support the Inter-Parliamentary Union Gender Equality in Politics program from 2016 to 2019. This will:

- support representative and accountable parliaments through increased participation of women,
- strengthen the decision-making capacity of women in parliaments, and
- increase the capacity of parliaments to implement reforms that benefit and empower women.

Political accountability also means informed and transparent budget preparation. Canada's Strengthening Democratic Governance project in Myanmar helped advance Myanmar's ongoing transition toward democracy by helping parliamentarians and parliamentary staff to enhance their knowledge about their roles and responsibilities in Myanmar's annual budget process.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE RULE OF LAW

The promotion and protection of human rights are essential in a democratic society. Human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. In 2015-2016, Canada provided support to Equitas – International Centre for Human Rights Education's project Strengthening Human Rights Education Globally. Canada's contribution helped human rights defenders, including children and youth, become agents of change. From 2014 to 2016, Equitas trained 310 human rights defenders from countries such as Haiti, Tanzania, Colombia and Senegal. These human rights defenders were trained to lead initiatives in human rights and human rights education, using international and human rights standards.

The rule of law is also key to development and economic prosperity. An impartial, accessible, equitable and independent justice system that protects the rights of all people without discrimination is at the heart of a well-functioning democracy.

Until very recently Ukrainian citizens were obliged to pay privately for legal advice and representation. For many, particularly marginalized populations, this meant that justice was unaffordable. This had a corrosive effect on citizens' trust in public institutions and the justice system. In 2015, with Canada's support the Ukrainian legal aid system was expanded to include 100 local legal aid clinics. These will provide free legal services to up to eight million prospective clients, thus improving their access to justice and increasing the protection of their rights. During 2015, more than 60,000 legal aid applications were registered.

In Panama and Honduras, Employment and Social Development Canada's Building Labour Law Compliance Capacities project helped governments, workers and employers to improve labour relations and practices through new tools and resources. New online services were launched by labour ministries for workers and employers to calculate benefits, minimum wage and overtime, and request labour inspections. Labour rights training and communication campaigns on women's labour rights, the eradication of child labour, and the minimum wage helped improve overall labour conditions.

The International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala is a UN-backed, independent investigatory commission supported by Canada and other donors. Over the past eight years, Canada's contribution of \$18 million to the commission has helped the Government of Guatemala investigate and prosecute organized crime and conduct criminal investigations.

IDRC-funded researchers in Guatemala and Colombia are leading the charge to provide Indigenous and peasant women with access to justice. IDRC support has helped build evidence on how the formal and community justice systems have failed sexual violence victims during and after armed conflict. It has brought together the Ke'quchi Indigenous women of Guatemala with Indigenous and peasant women from Colombia to share their experiences and discuss strategies to achieve justice. It also offered an opportunity for Colombia's younger generation to tell their mothers' stories through video, which empowered the women and spurred discussions among community Elders about how to address gender-based violence. In 2016, this has helped lead to the conviction and sentencing of two former Guatemalan army officials for crimes against humanity.