

# Leadership for Inclusion:

What skills and qualities do parliamentarians need to be able to promote inclusive change?

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## Executive Summary

## Executive Summary

Strong democracies need legislation and policies which recognise, measure and plan for the specific needs of, and impacts on, all citizens. In particular for people who have been, and are minoritised and marginalised, legislation and policy are needed that improves and secures their rights. However, political leadership is essential for inclusive legislative change to be successfully realised. We define inclusive legislative change as legislation and policy which has explicitly recognised, measured and planned for the specific needs of, or impacts on marginalised groups, and improves and/or secures the rights for these groups. Whilst the scope of inclusive legislation is broad, in this report we look at gender, LGBTQ+ and disability related legislation and rights. Research has demonstrated the structural barriers to progress for inclusive change at the institutional level (e.g., evidence, resources, etc). However, there is far less evidence on the skills and qualities that political leaders utilise to support inclusive legislative change, particularly at the parliamentary level.

### Therefore, this research asks:

- ❓ Are there specific skills and qualities that parliamentarians utilise that enable them to mobilise for, and achieve, inclusive change?
- ❓ How are these skills and qualities utilised in this process?
- ❓ Do these factors change depending on the structural environment that political leaders are situated in?
- ❓ How can these skills and qualities be supported and sustained?

Through thirty-one interviews with parliamentarians and former parliamentarians and twenty supplementary interviews with civil society actors and academics who were involved in six case studies of successful inclusive legislation, our research identified five key skills and three qualities which are utilised by parliamentarians to support inclusive legislative change. It is important to differentiate between skills (S) and qualities (Q), as whilst skills can be learned and developed, qualities are more difficult to cultivate, and so recommendations for parliamentarians may differ as a result.

The first five we categorise as essential, having been mentioned in two thirds of the interviews.



### Collaborator (S)

The ability to collaborate across political ideologies and boundaries. Recognise the shared responsibility for inclusive legislative change to ensure that legislation gets enough votes to succeed.



### Strategic thinker (S)

Being knowledgeable about the institutional and societal barriers to legislation. Carefully plans how to overcome these utilising and unifying the contributions of a wide range of stakeholders. Having a political mindset to frame the legislation in response to potential opposition.



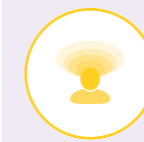
### Focused (S)

Maintaining commitment and conviction to translate motivation and vision into legislative change. Demonstrating determination and patience when the legislative process is lengthy and complex.



### Relationship builder (S)

Genuinely reaching out to, and working with, affected communities Engaging with empathy to ensure that the legislation developed is appropriate and comprehensive. This process is strengthened by being an active and respectful listener (Q).



### Open to learning (Q)

Recognising where others' expertise is needed. Being open to learning from other actors whose knowledge is essential to ensuring the legislation is well designed, and has its intended effect.

The second three are important, but potentially more contextually specific, as they were mentioned in fewer interviews.



### Trustworthy (Q)

Demonstrating integrity and authenticity which results in trust from communities and other parliamentarians. Being genuine in their intention with the legislation, which gives leaders legitimacy to act on behalf of these groups during the legislative process.



### Creative (S)

The ability to make creative use of existing resources or institutional structures to successfully introduce inclusive legislation. Being flexible and adaptive when alternative opportunities are not available.



### Self-aware and reflective (Q)

Being committed to thinking critically about their engagement with inclusive legislation. Dedication to their own development as leaders, both as part of legislative processes and beyond.



These key skills and qualities were identified as being vital for parliamentarians' ability to successfully support inclusive legislative change processes, particularly as introducing inclusive legislation is rarely a straightforward and linear process. This paves the way for organisations seeking to strengthen democratic institutions and processes to supplement institutional and outcome-focused support with a range of individual-level interventions. Through comparing the experiences of those interviewed it is clear that:

- Most parliamentarians do not receive training to support them to develop the skills they need for legislative work when they enter parliament. Given the complexities involved in the introduction of inclusive legislation, the lack of these skills may create additional challenges during these processes.
- Leaders need opportunities to develop and strengthen skills, which may be through action learning, building coalitions to learn from the experience of those with expertise required to develop meaningful legislation, or mentorship.
- The critical skill of being collaborative is essential for addressing complex, adaptive problems that are likely to arise in inclusive legislative processes.

To address this, we make the case for recognising the influence of the enabling environment, motivations and incentives, as well as encouraging those with the required qualities and skills to enter politics. However, it is also important to support existing political leaders to strengthen their leadership in these areas. Therefore, we recommend a two-pronged approach.

This first strand of action will require engagement with political parties who represent the primary pathway into political leadership in the majority of contexts. However, political parties have also historically been, and continue to create, barriers to inclusive participation in political leadership.

## 1 Supporting those with these key skills and qualities to enter political leadership roles

- **Prioritise shifts in the wider enabling environment to support the emergence of more leaders** with the experience, skills and qualities required to support inclusive change. This requires not only making parliaments more inclusive spaces, but also encompasses addressing the resource disparities in access to leadership and providing mentorship and training.
- **Systematic and proactive outreach to encourage people who are likely to have or are able to develop the skills required for inclusive legislative change to enter political leadership roles.** This should include targeting those who already have the skills and qualities that are useful for inclusive change, such as civil society leaders and activists. There should also be a concerted effort to engage members of minoritised and marginalised groups, or the 'prototypical' stakeholder leaders for inclusive legislative change.

## 2 Engagement with existing political leaders

- **Contextualised political leadership training** - understanding the institutions in which leadership is situated is essential for honing and developing strategic thinking and creativity in relation to inclusive legislative change.
- **Peer to peer political skills and experience sharing** - the development of a global coalition of parliamentarians interested in promoting inclusive change would provide an opportunity for cross-party international experience sharing to strengthen understanding of how to support inclusive legislative change, whilst fostering collaboration.
- **Targeted political leadership resources** - there is need for targeted resources and tools to support political leadership development. This will be essential for parliamentarians seeking to develop their skills privately as well as to support specific political leadership training.
- **Development and strengthening of key skills and qualities** - qualities such as empathy, active listening, self-awareness and creativity need to be given stand-alone focus in work to support parliamentarians internationally to strengthen them.
- **Community mentorship** - two-way mentorship between communities (such as civil society leaders and activists) and parliamentarians should be developed to ensure the involvement of those with the required expertise and experience. This would strengthen parliamentarians' understandings of the lived realities of citizens whose lives are affected by proposed legislation and improve its development.



# Introduction

## Introduction

Strong democracies need legislation and policies which recognise, measure and plan for the specific needs of, and impacts on, all citizens. In particular for people who have been, and remain minoritised and marginalised, legislation and policy are needed that improves and secures their rights.<sup>1</sup> To ensure this is the case, legislation needs to be inclusive. We define inclusive legislative change as legislation and policy which has explicitly recognised, measured and planned for the specific needs or impacts on marginalised groups, and improves and/or secures the rights for these groups. Whilst the scope of inclusive legislation is broad, in this report we look at gender, LGBTQ+ and disability related legislation and rights. Research has demonstrated the structural barriers to progress for inclusive change at the societal level, including norms, biases and stigma, and at the institutional level, such as insufficient evidence or resources<sup>2</sup> and has shown that introducing inclusive legislation is rarely a straightforward and linear process.<sup>3</sup>

Additionally, successful inclusive legislative change requires motivated and committed political leaders who mobilise to introduce the legislation and work to ensure that it is passed and implemented effectively.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, to better understand how inclusive legislative change can be supported, it is fundamental to focus on the political actors involved. Indeed, other research with a focus on defending civic and political space has also focused on the need to move beyond structural factors to focus on incentives that motivate individual legislators.<sup>5</sup>

There is important literature exploring how leaders influence positive change: what motivates them, how they act, and what strategies they use.<sup>6</sup> However, these perspectives do not fully capture the role and changing nature of political leadership, particularly personal and performance factors. In the existing literature, there are a number of perspectives on how to best examine how leadership skills are acquired and utilised, including approaches from organisational psychology, sociology of work or a focus on

the background characteristics of leaders.<sup>7</sup> Understanding skills and qualities is essential, because they affect the choices that leaders make; researchers have emphasised the importance of studying leader agency, and the interaction between structures and agency by exploring how leaders put their skills and resources to use.<sup>8</sup> However, there remains comparatively little attention afforded to the skills and qualities that political leaders draw on to support inclusive legislative change, particularly at the parliamentary level. Additionally, as some of the skills needed for inclusive change may differ from work on other forms of legislation, this research takes a leader-centered approach. A leader-centered approach emphasises the key characteristics and life histories of leaders and enables the exploration of how personal factors shape leaders' ability to initiate and support inclusive legislative change.<sup>9</sup> It will also be important to consider whether the relative importance of these factors change depending on the structural environment in which leaders are situated.

Therefore, this research asks:

- ? **Are there specific skills and qualities that parliamentarians utilise that enable them to mobilise for, and achieve, inclusive change?**
- ? **How are these skills and qualities utilised in this process?**
- ? **Do these factors change depending on the structural environment that leaders are situated in?**
- ? **How can these skills and qualities be supported and sustained?**

Legislative change, whilst important, is not necessarily transformative. It needs to be implemented properly, and it needs to be accompanied by wider cultural and social transformation, which addresses the direct issues faced by minoritised and marginalised communities.<sup>10</sup> However, inclusive legislation is an important first step in this process as it pledges protection for individual's rights in law. In exploring and considering the skills and qualities which support leaders to succeed in introducing inclusive legislation, we hope to be able to build awareness into work with parliaments and parliamentarians related to the broader performative context of what is required for inclusive change to be realised. Specifically, through this research we hope to consider in more depth how leadership might be supported,<sup>11</sup> and programmes designed which recognise and strengthen skills and qualities that might more effectively stimulate and sustain parliamentarians' work on inclusive legislation.

### Approach to the Research

This research utilises a leader-centered approach, to explore the key skills and qualities of leaders, foregrounding actors and their 'inner lives' to better understand how their personal attributes may motivate and support them to initiate inclusive change.<sup>12</sup> Our research approach utilises in-depth life history interviews that enable individuals to discuss not only themselves and their lives and experiences, but also the social, economic and political spaces that they inhabit.<sup>13</sup> This is important, as the skills and qualities needed by parliamentarians may change depending on the structural environment in which leaders are situated.

Furthermore, to be able to understand whether the skills and qualities needed for inclusive legislative change are consistent across types of legislation, we aimed to focus on parliamentarians who had worked on legislation in three broad areas: gender-based violence, LGBTQ+ rights, and disability rights. It is important to emphasise that parliamentarians interviewed were not necessarily working on legislation in all of these areas, nor will they work on more than one of these areas of inclusive legislation, although some were working on more than one of these legislative areas. The processes and stakeholders will differ depending on the area of legislation but examining more than one form of legislation is important to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the skills and qualities required for political leaders to best support inclusive legislative change. However, we do not seek to claim that the skills and qualities that are effective in one of these areas will necessarily work in another.

In order to more extensively explore the skills and qualities needed for inclusive legislative change, we also considered it important to explore these within different contexts, with political leaders from different backgrounds (e.g., activists, lawyers, local government), at different stages (e.g. new MPs and long-standing MPs), working at different levels (e.g. governing

party, opposition, national level, state level) and on different forms of inclusive legislation (gender-based violence, LGBTQ+, disability). Therefore, we sought as representative a sample as possible, taking a "most different" approach which allows us to generalise about similarities that occur across different contexts and areas of inclusive legislation.<sup>14</sup> However, we recognise that there will be aspects of each of these experiences that are contingent on contextual social and political spaces, which we explore further in our analysis.

We used a purposive sampling approach, using existing networks, working with parliamentarians for recommendations and contacting those who have been directly involved in inclusive legislative change. Overall, 31 in-depth interviews with parliamentarians or former parliamentarians in 22 countries were conducted in English, French, Spanish and Russian. The number of interviews reflects theoretical saturation, the point at which new themes, dimensions or relationships did not emerge.<sup>15</sup>

Each of these parliamentarians' legislative experiences is worth understanding and documenting in their own right. However, in addition to these individual interviews, we extended six of these to focus in-depth on a case study of successful legislative change, interviewing further stakeholders in these processes. For each of these six case studies, interviews with the additional stakeholders (20 further interviews) were accompanied by media sources, Hansards and other reports and articles which substantiated and triangulated the information provided by political leaders. This approach builds on the approaches utilised by other leader-centered political science research to combine in-depth interviews with secondary data that is publicly recorded.<sup>16</sup> It is also designed to best support our aim to create guidance tools or a framework for supporting parliamentarians in practice, as it allows us to identify those skills and qualities in context.

### Parliamentarians and Inclusive Legislative Change

From the thirty-one interviews conducted, the majority of interviewees emphasised that their motivation for entering political leadership roles was also linked to the desire to promote inclusive legislative change. For some, this desire began from a young age: **"My dream to become a politician started in the 10th grade... I am the first MP with a disability in my country."**<sup>17</sup> However, a number of interviewees reflected on the fact that they had never considered politics as a career path or as a desire: **"I would consider myself an accidental politician. Unconsciously, I realised that I didn't have a voice of my own on national issues... I was aware that the voices from a woman's perspective were very silent."**<sup>18</sup> Their involvement in politics was driven by their growing realisation of the power of political leadership to create change. However, in spite of whether they consider their entry to political leadership was 'accidental' or 'purposeful', parliamentarians interviewed tended to come from two main backgrounds: either working in civil society and activism or within the legal profession prior to entering parliament. Those who had a background in law referred to their understanding of the importance of legislation to shift the responsibility of human rights to the state, and those who had a background in civil society spoke about how this experience had illuminated the need for better legislation to protect and support minoritised and marginalised groups.

Figure 1

■ = Map of Interviewee's Country Location



Although many had similar backgrounds prior to entering parliament, we interviewed political leaders in 22 countries (see Figure 1), with at least one politician interviewed in the following geographical areas:<sup>19</sup> Northern Africa (Tunisia); Eastern Africa (Malawi; Zimbabwe); Western Africa (Nigeria); the Caribbean (Jamaica); Central America (Belize); South America (Argentina; Chile); Northern America (Canada); Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan); Eastern Asia (Republic of Korea); South-eastern Asia (Cambodia; Indonesia; Malaysia; Philippines); Southern Asia (Afghanistan; Pakistan); Northern Europe (Denmark; UK); Southern Europe (North Macedonia) and Oceania (Australia; New Zealand).

We were therefore able to capture the experience of parliamentarians in a diverse range of contexts and institutional settings.

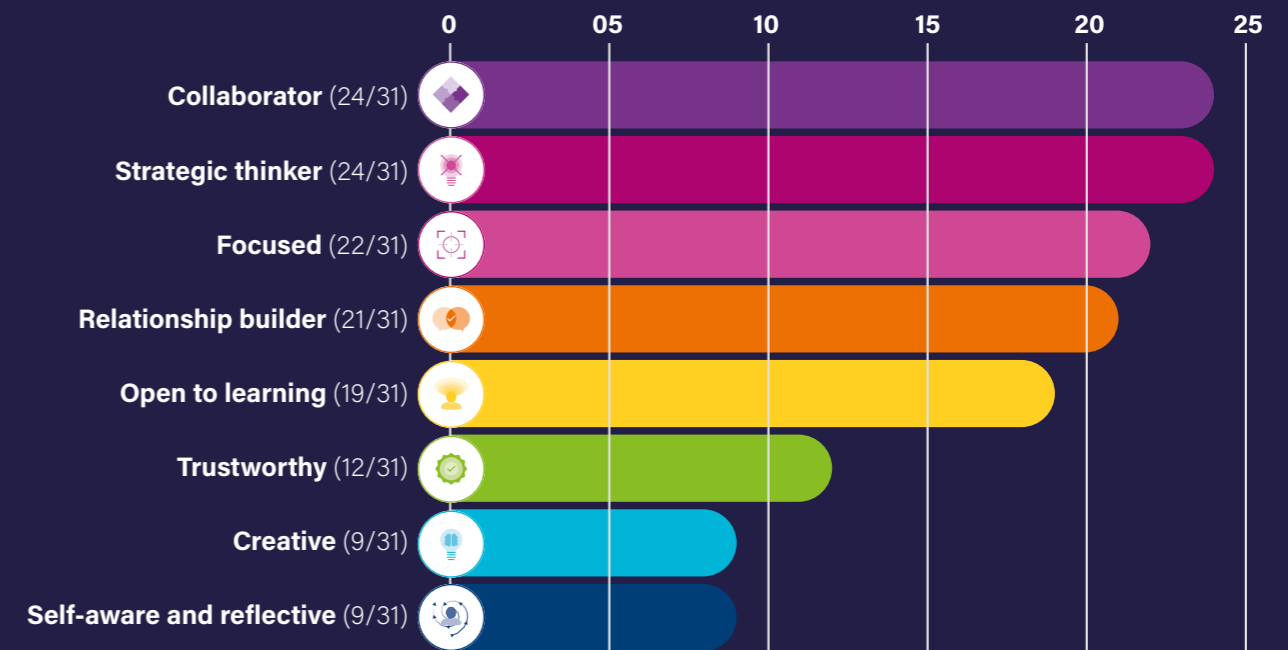
### Skills and qualities for inclusive legislative change

In spite of different contexts, institutional settings and types of legislation that they were involved in, eight skills and qualities were consistently mentioned in the interviews. There are five essential skills and qualities that were mentioned as having been utilised in two thirds of interviews or more and can therefore be considered fundamental for politicians working on inclusive legislation. There are three further important skills and qualities that were mentioned in multiple interviews, and thus may be considered important for political leaders in working on inclusive legislative change. Figure 2 shows these key skills and qualities, and how often they were noted in the interviews with parliamentarians.

Being a collaborator was mentioned in 24 interviews across 17 countries, whilst the skill of strategic thinking, also mentioned across 24 interviews was present in interviews from 20 different countries. Being focused, and a relationship-builder noted in 23 and 22 interviews respectively were also acknowledged across the majority of

Figure 2:

Key Skills and Qualities required for Inclusive Legislative Change identified from 31 interviews



country contexts (18 and 19). Relationship building was mentioned in all interviews with parliamentarians who had worked on legislation related to LGBTQ+ rights, perhaps reflecting the lower levels of representation of members from this community within legislatures worldwide. Whilst issues related to gender-based violence might relate to the personal expertise of women parliamentarians, it may be that for those who are working on legislation for LGBTQ+ rights, the importance of building relationships with communities and listening to ensure that the legislation was developed based on their experience and expertise was particularly fundamental.

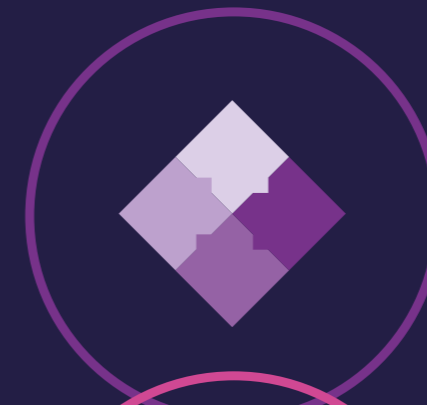
Trustworthiness was referred to in 12 interviews and nine country contexts, while creativity and self-awareness and reflection were each referred to ten interviews and ten country contexts. These therefore represent important skills, but perhaps skills that are more contextually specific. One factor that was also common to all country contexts was parliamentarian's overarching reluctance to speak directly about their own skills and qualities, with many preferring to speak about themselves as part of a team. This has also been noted in similar research

which asked parliamentarians to reflect on their own skills and qualities.<sup>20</sup> Their motivation for leadership to pursue inclusive change may have contributed to their unwillingness to centre themselves, even in interviews about their own experience and work. In spite of this, many alluded to, or directly mentioned the skills and qualities that they utilised in their experience of working for inclusive legislative change.

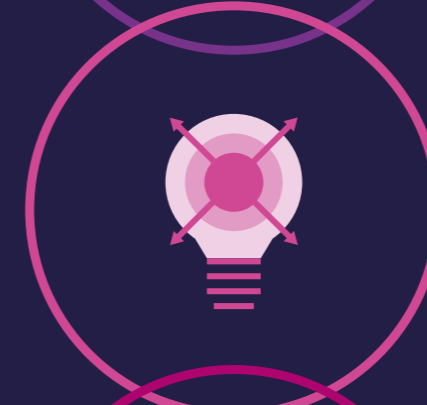
It is thus important to explore these key skills and qualities in more depth to understand how these are conceptualised by parliamentarians. It is also important to consider the choices that leaders make to demonstrate how their skills and qualities operate and take effect in different contexts and therefore we explore how skills and qualities were utilised in different processes of inclusive legislative change. Overall, it is worth underlining that these skills and qualities are political; they are required to adapt and work within deeply entrenched power structures and bureaucratic norms that are shaped by political dynamics. They are essential for thinking and working politically, which encompasses engaging with political context and the characteristics of external actors as well as recognising individual behaviour.<sup>21</sup>



# Five Essential Skills and Qualities



**Collaborator**



**Strategic thinker**



**Focused**



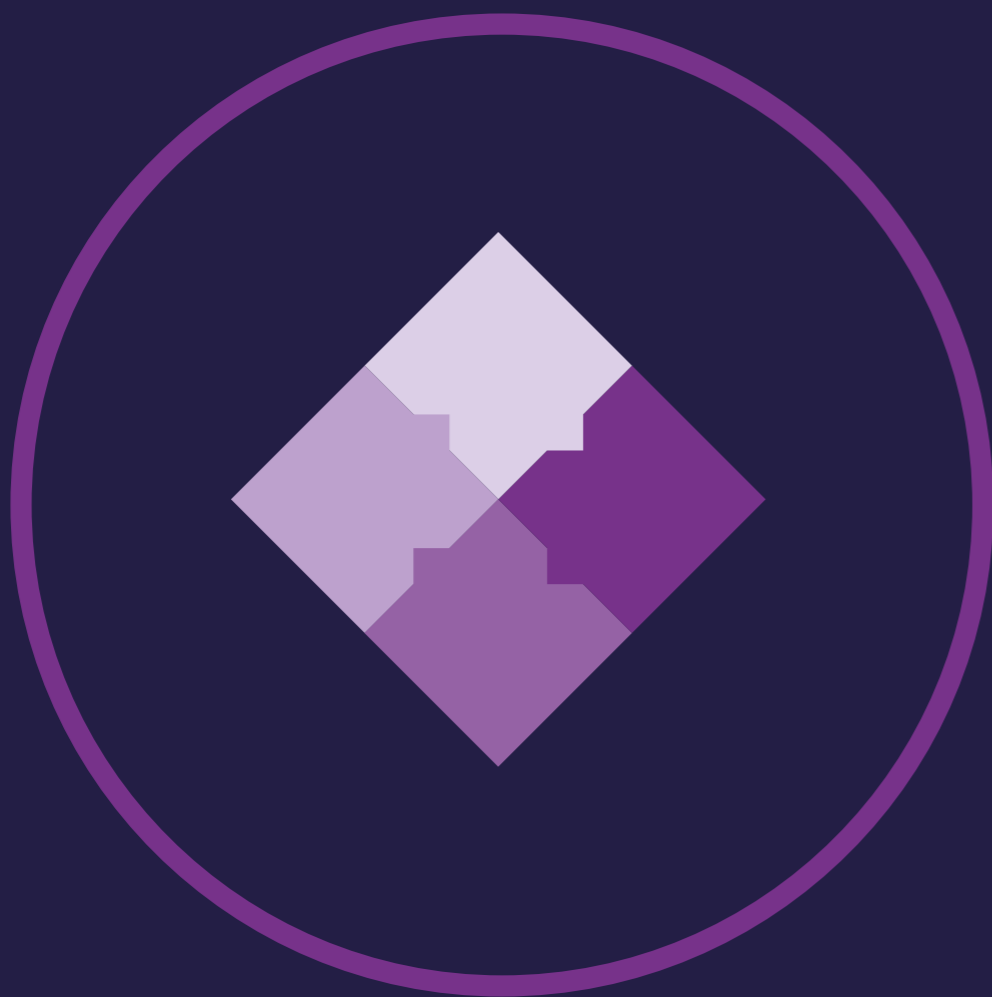
**Relationship builder**



**Open to learning**

# Collaborator

The ability to collaborate across political ideologies and boundaries. Recognise the shared responsibility for inclusive legislative change to ensure that legislation gets enough votes to succeed.



The ability to work collaboratively and reach out across political divides was the most commonly mentioned skill, referred to directly by 24 interviewees. Collaboration was referred to as encompassing the spirit of working as a team and putting the legislation before your personal position, as well as the ability to compromise and negotiate utilising rational arguments and persuasion. It is about striking deals with unusual suspects as “reforms are not made by reformists alone”<sup>22</sup>, and so can often be a complex and contentious process. It was considered particularly important when the proposed legislation was considered controversial or had large or active opposition. There were four core reasons provided as to why being a collaborator was essential for the passage of inclusive legislative change: to persuade those sceptical of the legislation itself, to ensure the introduction of this legislation, to ensure the passage of this legislation and to change the wider conversation surrounding the issue.

Firstly, being collaborative was vital to overcoming the challenges related to opposition to the legislation itself, particularly in cases where the legislation was considered to be controversial. For example, collaboration was noted in Pakistan as being utilised during the push for legislation on Anti Honour Killing, as there was initially great resistance from some politicians: **“One of the most important things is to reach out to opponent political parties to discuss with them... A sticking point was that the Council of Islamic Ideology had rejected DNA tests as evidence in rape cases. My party advised me to seek personal meetings with leaders of the religious parties to address any concerns they had about these clauses.”**<sup>23</sup>

Cross-party personal meetings meant that those opposing the bill were able to question the parliamentarian who was proposing it, and this opportunity to negotiate and explain the important aspects of the legislation prior to the public debate in the parliament was considered essential to its ability to succeed.

Secondly, collaboration was present in all situations where a parliamentarian was in an opposition or minority party as the support of other parties was required to introduce the required legislation. For example, Jessie Majome, as an opposition member of the

National Assembly in Zimbabwe reflected on the challenges she faced in personally bringing in legislation to tackle child marriage:

**“I needed to amend the marriage act to insert a minimum age of marriage, but I was a backbencher. Initially I thought I would do a private members’ bill, but the constitution makes that difficult. So, I thought, why don’t I persuade the Minister to do this?”**<sup>24</sup>

In this case, it was considered that the most effective way to move forward with this area of legislation was to work with members of the ruling party in parliament to introduce government legislation on this issue. She also worked with other parliamentarians across all parties to build pressure on the government to act, moving a motion on the Unlawful Practice of Child Marriage which was signed by 70 Zimbabwean male MPs. This willingness to work as a team led to the introduction of the Government’s Marriages Bill in 2019.<sup>25</sup>

Thirdly, even when parliamentarians were able to introduce the legislation themselves, either as a government, opposition or private members’ bill, they considered that strong cross-party relationships were particularly important if a parliamentarian did not have the numbers within their own party for it to pass. For example, Sarah Elago MP, the youngest women lawmaker in the

Philippines, has authored 426 bills during her time in Congress, but she stressed that: **“you have to be open across party lines, because to get the numbers you need to get a Bill passed in Congress, you have to have the vote of the majority...”**<sup>26</sup> In this way, being a collaborator encompassed recognising that you are part of the movement, and not THE movement, as working cross-party might mean that one is not recognised as being the key mover or parliamentarian involved in the legislation: **“I am someone who does not have preconceived political judgements... My main task is to find leaders and join forces. I don’t mind sharing leadership.”**<sup>27</sup> A common refrain among parliamentarians interviewed was that if you are happy not being the sole mover or getting credit for the legislation, you can be more effective in bringing other parliamentarians on board.

Finally, the importance of being a collaborator was strongly linked to changing the conversation and influencing social norms beyond the legislation itself. As noted in **Case Study 1**, working across political divides was important for ensuring that work for inclusive legislation was not siloed as being an ideological issue. It was considered crucial to work across party boundaries to be able to negotiate with and accommodate difference in order to achieve legislative and societal change. In order to do this, leaders must effectively navigate between different cultural expectations and ideologies. Previous research has argued that this involves cultivating a shared identity and narrating a shared reality in order to overcome potential cultural barriers to collective action.<sup>28</sup>

**Case Study 1:**  
Tunisia – Organic Law No 2017-58 on the Elimination of Violence Against Women

Since independence in 1956, there have been multiple actions to ensure women’s rights in Tunisia. For example, five days after independence, although women didn’t get the right to elect members of the National Constituent Assembly, they did get right to vote in the first municipal elections. The right of women to vote was then consolidated in the constitution of 1959 and the country’s first female parliamentarian Radhia Haddad was elected that year. Subsequently, Article 46 of the 2014 constitution enshrined a commitment to gender parity and ending violence against women.<sup>29</sup> The law on the Elimination of Violence Against Women was part of the mobilisation to implement these provisions. An initial draft law was authored in 2014 by a group of experts and civil society organisations, including the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women, but this law was side-lined by the government. In 2015, the Minister of Women’s Affairs assigned a new team to adapt the text and this was submitted to parliament in July 2016.<sup>30</sup>

The law was discussed in the committee from 2nd February -21st June 2017, with 31 hearing sessions. The draft of the legislation changed a lot from that submitted by the Minister of Women Affairs, as the committee actively engaged with civil society organisations and other experts.<sup>31</sup> Some parliamentarians played an important role in engaging with these groups: “I had a lot of experience and associations with networks for women’s rights... during the legislature of 2014 and 2019 I did a lot to try and create links between civil society and parliament.”<sup>32</sup> The engagement with women who had experienced violence, as well as experts who had knowledge about the how the law would be implemented was fundamental to the drafting process.<sup>33</sup>

However, there were some challenges. For example, some considered that the Draft Law

violated the right to freedom of expression and privacy,<sup>34</sup> due to one aspect that referred to the criminalisation of satire about women.<sup>35</sup> There were also discussions about specific issues, including marital rape, and the area of the penal code which states that if someone rapes a girl under 18, but subsequently marries her, they will not be imprisoned. Finally, the financing of the provisions to support women who experienced violence, such as establishing safe houses and special police were contentious: “some considered that the law was too optimistic and it may not be possible to implement some of its components because of their high financial costs,”<sup>36</sup> but others thought including these was important to ensure the government took these provisions seriously.

There was also a need for strong collaboration among parliamentarians, and particularly cross-party work: “At the beginning, it was a barrier to reach a consensus with women who do not have the same political opinions. There are conservative parties, like my party, and there are parties that are liberal...but then we got together and started with the principle that women’s rights are beyond party-political ideologies and we are going to seek a common ground.”<sup>37</sup> This approach was supported by others involved, who reflected on the fact that women parliamentarians who were usually politically opposed worked strongly together across party lines to open the door for this legislation.<sup>38</sup>

Collaborative cross-party work was essential for the success of the legislation, as one of the major challenges was ensuring that it was not seen as being part of an ‘international agenda’: “There was a lot of discussion that this agenda is against religion and will change Tunisia.”<sup>39</sup> Legislators in parties with religious underpinnings, such as Ennahdha, played an important role in convincing people that the legislation was not against religion: “religion denounces discrimination.... We shared Qur’anic texts to convince people.”<sup>40</sup> Parliamentarians played a key role talking to people to reassure them of

the importance of this legislation and “that this is something that is good for everybody.”<sup>41</sup> The final law was debated in the plenary session for 14 hours and adopted on 11th August 2017.<sup>42</sup> All 145 MPs present voted yes, and there were no abstentions or objections, which was unusual as even the constitution did not get that level of consensus. The success of this legislation, the culmination of numerous drafts and a years-long struggle by civil society activists,<sup>43</sup> is part of a long process and commitment to gender equality “that now concerns the state.”<sup>44</sup> However, the fact that there were no abstentions or objections is a clear indication of the collaboration of parliamentarians to come together to ensure that this law was introduced and that all legislators were on board. The law is considered groundbreaking because it focuses on prevention and contains broad-sweeping provisions covering the many types of gender-based violence including political violence.<sup>45</sup> However, there have been critiques of the implementation of this law<sup>46</sup> and the Committee on Individual Liberties and Equality have made it clear that there need to be further legislation to address gender equality, such as equal inheritance.<sup>47</sup>

.....

As **Case Study 1** elucidates, collaboration among women parliamentarians was fundamental to the passage of legislation to tackle gender-based violence. However, there is a gap between willingness to work together, and the ability to achieve this. Parliamentarians interviewed also shared a number of strategies that they used initially to collaborate, overcome cross-party divides and to start to work as a team. The most commonly noted approach was to handle this networking with respect for people's perspectives and ideas, even if they did not align with their own. For example, during work on a piece of legislation that had strong opposition from religious groups, one parliamentarian explained how they had utilised their collaboration skills: **"I needed to be able to sit in the middle of some deeply held beliefs. I think that it is by showing respect to all sides, rather than just seek to drive through policy change."**<sup>48</sup> It was also noted that often approaching people in smaller groups, as individuals, was a strong way to build connections: **"I approach people one by one, or in small groups. For me that is a good technique, because when you have 30-50 people, especially people who are not convinced, it is not that easy to pass on your ideas to a big group..."**<sup>49</sup> Other strategies were to pay close attention to what other parliamentarians have said on these issues, and then meeting them face to face, building personal connections outside of the institutional setting of parliament. Furthermore, having the ability to create a shared purpose, or identify shared values, potentially through informal meetings has also been noted in the literature as being important for galvanising support for inclusive legislation.<sup>50</sup>

A number of parliamentarians spoke of the importance of long-standing cross-party groups as having built up their skill as a collaborator, particularly when these groups are focused on particular legislative issues or thematic agendas. These cross-party groups operate as collectives, composed of a diverse set of political actors who attempt to align their interests or preferences for a specific agenda or goal.<sup>51</sup> For example, Maja Morachanin MP referred to the collaboration of the pre-existing inter-party parliamentary group of MPs working on LGBT+ issues as having been important in working on anti-discrimination legislation.<sup>52</sup> The skill of being a collaborator also required the presence of other key skills. Working for inclusive change necessitates a complex process of negotiating and cooperating over the core values and ideas that shape society.<sup>53</sup> **"You have to have the capacity to negotiate, because in these days the subjects are diverse, there are a lot of points of view, so you must have the ability to reason and analyse and negotiate with others."**<sup>54</sup> It also requires the absence of certain qualities, as pushing for change as a team may require leaders to be flexible and accommodate ideas that differ from their own. For example, when asked about which qualities may not support collaboration, one parliamentarian identified stubbornness, **"anyone who is stubborn about their views or think they know best. Anyone who doesn't have respect for the point of view of the other person."**<sup>55</sup>



**I needed to be able to sit in the middle of some deeply held beliefs. I think that it is by showing respect to all sides, rather than just seek to drive through policy change"**

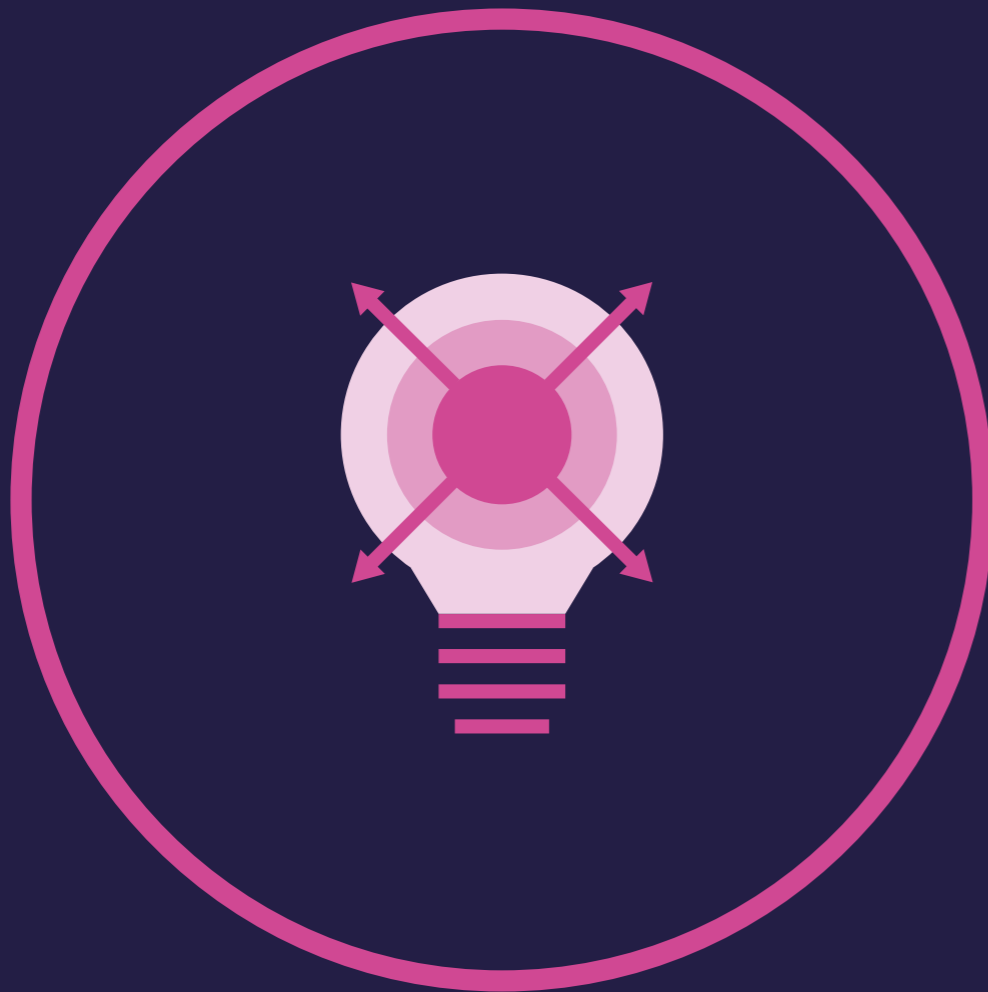
Interview with MP, UK

The quality of being a collaborator may cause political challenges for parliamentarians, and meant that in some cases, individuals needed to sacrifice other political goals, or had to utilise their political capital in order to secure the passage of inclusive legislation. When explaining this in relation to the Gender Identity Law in Chile, former Senator Lily Perez noted that she **"knew I was going to lose a lot of votes and support, but I had good public support and so it became my mission... I knew I had political capital, which I could use for this cause. But it was politically draining for me, because I had to leave my party."**<sup>56</sup> Another parliamentarian spoke of the isolation she felt in moving a piece of inclusive legislation that was not supported by the majority of her party. However, she argued that this had cemented the necessity of collaborative working and the importance of building extremely strong relations with members of other political parties.

The importance of working collectively aligns with substantial research that has argued that developmental and transformational leadership is a collective process, involving interaction and negotiation between multiple leaders.<sup>57</sup> However, being a collaborator is not a simple skill to learn; it requires pragmatism, particularly in politics where being seen to work cross-party and as a team are not always skills that are valued or factored into effective political leadership, especially within party structures. The extent to which a politician is able to engage in collaborative work depends on the issue, as well as their degree of public exposure in the work they carry out on it, which is always negotiated in terms of their electoral support. It will also depend on their motivations for inclusive change, as it may result in a cost to their political careers. This is explored in more detail below, when discussing trustworthiness. Most current political leadership training takes place within political parties rather than between politicians across political divides. However, based on the need to foster teamwork, cross-party leadership training may better strengthen collaboration skills for political leaders.

# Strategic thinker

Being knowledgeable about the institutional and societal barriers to legislation. Carefully plans how to overcome these utilising and unifying the contributions of a wide range of stakeholders. Having a political mindset to frame the legislation in response to potential opposition.



Working on inclusive legislation of any sort, but particularly if this legislation is deemed to be controversial, requires strategic thinking. As evidenced in **Figure 2**, this was the other skill most commonly noted as being utilised by members of parliament. Strategy requires developing a plan from where you are, to where you want to be. It must involve a political mindset that can determine how to solve problems collaboratively, as well as managing and adapting, and creating new opportunities within existing institutional and societal contexts.

There were two key aspects of strategic thinking that were commonly present in parliamentarians' explanations about how they had utilised this skill during legislative processes. Firstly, the importance of framing the legislation, such as it being about ensuring rights, as being the state's obligation: **"As part of the state, we have a responsibility to protect all our citizens. We don't get to choose, so that is the kind of framing and lens I use."**<sup>58</sup> However, in other cases, it was considered that this approach wouldn't work, as those who didn't support the legislation may not identify with the same concept of universal citizen rights. In Cambodia, for example, the parliamentarian involved felt that strategically the argument for legislation to tackle gender-based violence would be more persuasive if underpinned by the language of protecting the family and culture.<sup>59</sup> Overarchingly it was considered that strategic thinking about the framing of legislation required understanding who you were trying to persuade, and what issues mattered to them. In one example, the parliamentarian's strategy was clear: **"I went to business leaders and countered their arguments with the evidence and communications. You have to do your homework, get your research and develop clear messages and have a sense of understanding of who you're trying to influence and what the messages are to get to those people."**<sup>60</sup> Additionally, in others' experiences, thinking strategically meant recognising that it was better to conceptualise the issue in a broader way. For example, in Nigeria it was mentioned

that presenting legislation that encompasses violence against all people may garner more support than framing legislation primarily as addressing violence against women.

Secondly, strategic thinking was associated with the way in which the legislation was communicated and with whom it should be communicated with: **"You have to be very well-targeted with your messages and you have to think about who you are trying to convince."**<sup>61</sup> Strategies to elicit change need to be tailored from within and according to local context. They also need to relate to the electorate in meaningful ways: **"Research shows that the difference in communicating 5 million, 15 million and 1.5 billion is very little. You need to say, 'this new fund is going to help 1000 people instead of 100.' You can relate to 1000 people...A symbol without substance is just empty rhetoric, and substance without a symbol isn't going to be remembered. When we raised the pride flag on Parliament Hill, it was both symbolic and substantive."**<sup>62</sup> A further strategy of communication that was present in the majority of parliamentarians' experiences of working on inclusive legislation was the importance of thinking long term and **'rolling the pitch'**<sup>63</sup>, or preparing people for what you are going to do, ensuring that there is transparency about the aims of the policy and the implications of the policy: **"I tried hard to get psychiatrists, doctors, psychologists, sociologists, people from a scientific standpoint, because science is well respected within the centre-right. This could rationally explain to those who**

lacked knowledge about the experience of a trans person... people insisted that it was an ideology of gender that is linked to Marxism and refused to understand that it is a human rights issue. So, my strategy was to come out in all media outlets to educate as many people as I could.”<sup>64</sup> **Case Study 2** provides strong examples of the strategic thinking skills that were utilised to develop careful framing and communication strategies to support the Campaign for Equal Marriage in New Zealand.

**Case Study 2:**  
New Zealand Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Bill (2013)

This legislation came from the culmination of a long history of legislative action for the rights of LGBTQ+ people and arose partly as a result of the global shift in the conversation on marriage equality. All those interviewed referred to Barack Obama’s statement of support for same-sex marriage and how this was considered to have influenced Prime Minister John Key’s decision to verbally support same sex marriage, although it was not a priority for his party.<sup>65</sup> At this point it was considered, that although the government would not put forward this legislation, that if the legislation could be put before parliament, it would have a good chance of being successful.

Opposition MP Louisa Wall, supported by her mandate from her constituents, commitment from her party, and her role as Chair of Labour’s Parliamentary Rainbow Caucus,<sup>66</sup> began to draft this legislation to submit to the Members’ Ballot. She consulted with Justice Thomas, who was the dissenting Judge in the New Zealand’s Court of Appeal ruling on an application brought by three lesbian couples. He found that the Marriage Act 1955 was discriminatory,<sup>67</sup> and helped to determine how the Marriage Act needed to be amended. According to minority former Green Party MP Kevin Hague, who also submitted a bill on marriage equality, “really that was the obstacle, actually getting the bill drawn, because it was not going to be a government bill.”<sup>68</sup>

After Wall’s bill was drawn on 26th July 2012, she and Kevin Hague agreed to work together.<sup>69</sup> Both MPs had a reputation for teamwork and created a cross-party group for marriage equality to get different political parties involved.<sup>70</sup> As Louisa Wall was at the time an opposition MP, and the governing coalition had a working majority of seven, the ability to build relationships across all parties was particularly important during the first reading, as parliamentarians aimed to ensure that there was no ‘de facto’ position from any party: “I e-mailed people before the first reading... I invited them to come and talk to me... my door was always open.”<sup>71</sup> On 29th August 2012, the bill passed the first reading with 80 votes to 40 and moved to the Government Administration Select Committee for further consideration and public input.

Strategic planning was a core part of the campaign: “we basically used a Likert scale, who is strongly supportive, who needs to be bolstered, who could go either way and who is so strongly opposed that there is no point putting effort in. We made sure we had multiple points of triangulation and set about a plan to figure out what arguments or evidence or persuasion they would need.”<sup>72</sup> Activists referred to Hague’s strategic and analytical approach as having been an important skill utilised throughout,<sup>73</sup> including in determining how to manage public submissions, and then carefully utilising these to promote the framing of the legislation as being about love, equality and respect.<sup>74</sup> This framing of the legislation, to ensure that the state provides equal opportunity to marry, was also outlined in Louisa Wall MP’s speech during the first reading.<sup>75</sup>

All parliamentarians stressed the importance of engaging with community groups, but that “having credibility with the groups outside parliament was important. Our coordinated campaign with an inside strategy and outside strategy wouldn’t have worked if we hadn’t been trusted by the people outside Parliament.”<sup>76</sup> However, this trust also needed

to go both ways, with campaigners stating that parliamentarians needed to trust that the community know what they are doing, be humble and open to engagement, whilst putting the issue before party politics.<sup>77</sup>

Whilst the strategy within parliament to attract widespread support was effective, the main challenge to the legislation came from outside, particularly from religious groups. Louisa Wall MP noted her commitment to actively speaking to those that might be against the legislation, meeting with people in the regions, Pacific community leaders who in addition to religious leaders (on the whole) were mostly opposed: “there was no rule book. I went everywhere and anywhere... I went and talked about those fundamental principles that underpinned the bill... if they said something provocative, I didn’t react... I didn’t give them that space, I just continued to focus on the principles of the bill.”<sup>78</sup> Wall’s communicating skills were noted by fellow parliamentarians and activists alike, particularly her charismatic leadership style<sup>79</sup> and her consistent messaging of the legislation being about equality.

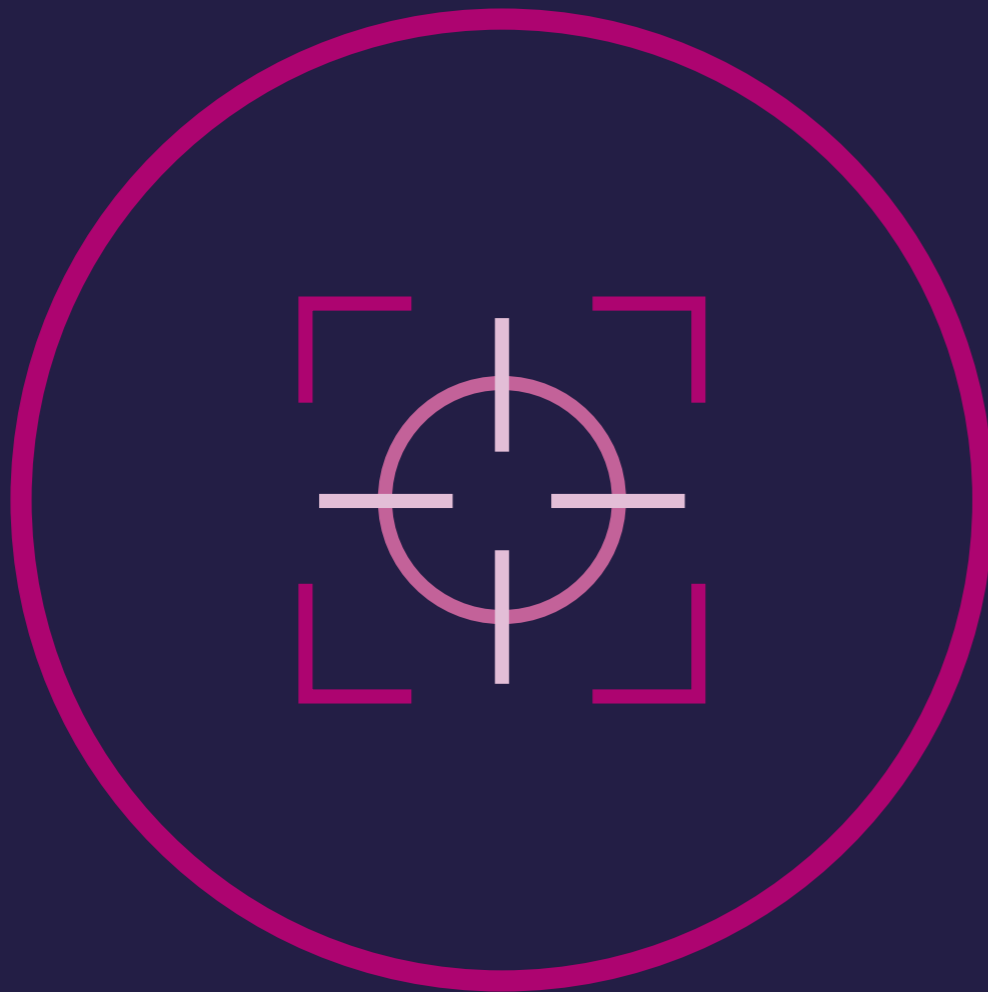
The committee reported back on 27th February 2013, recommending that the bill proceeded with amendments, passing the second reading on 13th March 2013. However, as a Private Member’s Bill, progress relied on cross-party work to commit to ensuring that the Bill had the smoothest possible path through the House, including parliamentarians taking short speaking slots to ensure that a whole stage of debate was able to take place in one evening.<sup>80</sup> During the final reading, it was clear that the framing of the legislation as being about equality and love had persisted through multiple speeches from MPs in numerous different parties.<sup>81</sup> “This was a really good sign of the ability to bridge people’s thinking in areas where the impact of this bill would be huge.”<sup>82</sup> The bill passed on 17th April 2013 with 77 votes in favour, to 44 opposed.

Finally, one other aspect of thinking strategically was related to the timing of introducing legislation. As noted in **Case Study 2**, Obama’s statement on equal marriage played an important role in encouraging the support of key political actors, but parliamentarians also mentioned the importance of introducing legislation early on in the parliamentary term: **“in the first or second year when nobody is thinking about elections but engaging with other things. The trick is to do those changes at the very beginning, but to do this, we need a group of parliamentarians who are aware and ready.”**<sup>83</sup> Related to understanding and working strategically within the parliamentary institutions, it was also considered that knowing the rules and regulations of parliamentary practice is fundamental to be able to adapt strategy depending on how it is working.

Therefore, strategic thinking centres on having a political mindset that understands the context in which the legislation is being introduced, the quality of emotional intelligence of the leaders driving change and understanding how the legislation should be framed to convince those who may oppose it. Alongside this is the requirement to be able to communicate on the basis of that contextualised awareness of what will drive key actors, role-players and stakeholders to support and effect legislative change.

# Focused

Maintaining commitment and conviction to translate motivation and vision into legislative change. Demonstrating determination and patience when the legislative process is lengthy and complex.



Previous literature on organisational and business leadership argues that the primary task of leadership is to direct attention, and that in doing so, leaders must be focused.<sup>84</sup> Those in politics are often required to become experts on multiple policy areas at once, and so focus is a skill that can be particularly useful in supporting parliamentarians to achieve their goals for specific areas of legislative change. Indeed, multiple parliamentarians noted how they felt that it was important to pick a few areas of focus to maintain commitment and dedication to: **“A lot of people come into political leadership roles and don’t have a clear focus about what they want to achieve in those spaces. I had clear goals, clear changes that I wanted done... I am a very determined person”**<sup>85</sup> However, having a clear goal and sticking to it also required a number of other key qualities, including conviction and determination: **“I think the most important skill is that you have to believe in something and feel responsible to do something.”**<sup>86</sup>

Being focused also requires determination and patience in the face of opposition to the legislation. In one case, a parliamentarian explained how essential her focus was to her continuing work on inclusive legislation in spite of slow progress: **“The Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Expression Equality Bill continues to face stiff opposition... In the 17th Congress, the bill reached its second reading. This was three whole years of interpellation and debates, only for it to go back to square one in the 18th Congress... As a proud ally, I will not stop fighting for the passage of this bill.”**<sup>87</sup> Determination is also required when there are institutional barriers to process, as was the case in **Case Study 3** when an election meant the legislative process had to begin from scratch.

### Case Study 3: Indonesia – Law on Disabilities No. 8 (2016)

Progress on the rights for persons with disabilities from the human rights perspective in Indonesia has been gradual.<sup>88</sup> Indonesia’s previous law on persons with disability was enacted in 1996 and utilised the charity-based and medical models of disability.<sup>89</sup> However, advocacy from Disabled Persons’ Organisations (DPOs) has been fundamental in passing (2006) and ratifying (2011) the UN Convention on the Rights for Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).<sup>90</sup> This ratification strengthened the disability movement, who built coalitions with members of parliament to propose new national legislation: “as the political parties do not have distinctive ideologies with regards to policy, the strategy was to use personal connections, to build trust and relationships.”<sup>91</sup> A working group of leading disability activists also designed a first draft of the disability legislation and lobbied for it to be proposed as a priority bill in 2009-2014.

The election in 2014 de-railed this process, requiring focus and determination from DPOs, as they "...had to start our advocacy from scratch with new MPs."<sup>92</sup> Eventually, the disability rights bill was put forward as a priority bill in 2015. Once the Bill was under consideration, it fell to the Deputy Chair of Commission VIII Ledia Hanifa MP from the Prosperous Justice party; she had strong personal relationships with disability activists as a result of her experience working in civil society.<sup>93</sup> During the planning and preparation stage of the legislation process, activists worked to convince parliamentarians to discuss their draft of the legislation first, which was supported by research and by activists from around the country.<sup>94</sup> Parliamentarians, including Hanifa, advocated for this draft that was underpinned by a rights-based approach.<sup>95</sup> Activists noted how "a few parliamentarians told us 'you are experts, we want to learn more from you.' That is not a quality all parliamentarians have."<sup>96</sup> Commission VII agreed to utilise the draft proposed by disability activists, arguably acknowledging their expertise and experience on these issues.

However, during these discussions there were some challenges, due to the need to adapt and update the draft to include government regulations and articles.<sup>97</sup> The key debate was around the leading role of the Ministry of Social Affairs in implementing the legislation, which was considered by activists to distort the 'holistic approach' in the UNCRPD in which disability issues are regarded as cross-sectoral.<sup>98</sup> So, "there was a conflict of interest between us disability groups and the government, because they thought setting up a new ministry will be costly."<sup>99</sup> Key parliamentarians with a deep understanding of disability rights were able to mostly resolve this issue, but this required compromise as activists still wanted there to be an independent commission in charge of implementing the legislation, instead of the Ministry of Social Affairs.<sup>100</sup>

Once the draft legislation was put forward to the parliament many noted that because

disability is seen as a neutral, non-political issue, there was little concern about objections from parliamentarians.<sup>101</sup> However, the issue was that the "government doesn't really know about disability or have commitment in the budgeting processes."<sup>102</sup> Therefore, it was very important to convince the government and the importance of persons with disabilities demonstrating in front of parliament and making petitions could not be overstated.<sup>103</sup> Additionally, the focus and conviction from Commission VIII was noted as being essential for the successful passage of this legislation: "We were very grateful even until now for Ledia and her other colleagues in the commission. Her very strong commitment to finish the discussion of the disability was one of the strongest factors to finish this."<sup>104</sup> On March 17th 2016, the draft law on persons with disabilities was passed into legislation by the Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat (DPR),<sup>105</sup> but activism continued to ensure that the legislation is implemented correctly, and includes participation of DPOs.

..... Academic research tends to break leadership down into two sets of behaviours, task-oriented and relationship-oriented.<sup>106</sup> It is clear that task-oriented behaviour will be supported by being focused, as this means that you are unlikely to give up on your work towards a specific goal: **"You've got to focus...You have to be persistent; you have to be relentless, and you have to shake yourself up, dust yourself off, and the next day say 'Okay, I'm going to work on this from a different angle.'"**<sup>107</sup> However, as a politician, maintaining focus, determination and patience requires both task-orientated and relationship-oriented behaviours as any legislative outcome requires a representative majority supportive of the outcome. Specific political leadership training methodologies should therefore be developed that navigate the unique nature of political success which demand focused relationship building in order to succeed yet in a form that differs dramatically from standard leadership training approaches.



**You've got to focus...You have to be persistent; you have to be relentless, and you have to shake yourself up, dust yourself off, and the next day say 'Okay, I'm going to work on this from a different angle.'"**

Randy Boissonnault MP, Canada



# Relationship builder

Genuinely reaching out to, and working with, affected communities. Engaging with empathy to ensure that the legislation developed is appropriate and comprehensive. This process is strengthened by being an active and respectful listener.



Relationships are considered to be the building blocks of collective action for inclusive legislative change. Relationship building is a skill that requires openness to engagement and listening to communities and in particular the ability to listen to people's stories and experiences with empathy and humility: **"One of the things you really have to do if interested in building alliances and working with others is to listen. As politicians, we talk a lot, but we don't always listen enough to those who we are talking with."**<sup>108</sup> The importance of being able to build relationships, and particularly listening to people, was mentioned explicitly in the experiences of 21 parliamentarians who had successfully introduced inclusive legislation. Additionally, it was highlighted by every activist and civil society actor that we spoke to for ensuring that the legislation that was developed truly had the best interests of the relevant community at its centre: **"I have been working with members of the civil society in the field of human rights with disabilities. It is very symbolic that they call me the 'comrade' of the National Assembly. Being able to act with them like a team is the greatest force for legislation."**<sup>109</sup>

One of the first reasons why being able to build relationships is essential is that it can provide motivation, infuse meaning into a parliamentarian's work, and can support their commitment to it: **"We should really listen more than talk... For example, the LGBT community, their stories, their personal stories – when you hear someone having an everyday problem in their life, you can't say 'I don't care.'"**<sup>110</sup> Listening was equally mentioned as being present, in the majority of interviews, and it was considered a key quality that would facilitate and support the ability to build relationships: **"If you aren't empathetic, you can't help others... the more we empathised, the harder we worked."**<sup>111</sup> Research has shown that active listening combined with empathy is key to building relationships and to understanding others' perspectives, requiring leaders to be informed by all verbal and nonverbal cues.<sup>112</sup> Being able to empathise, or seek to understand the world from another person's perspective, leaders are more likely to be galvanised to act in their best interest.

The ability to build relationships was also crucial to ensuring that the legislation developed was appropriate and aligned with the perspectives of those that it sought to support. This was particularly important if the parliamentarian did not have personal experience of these issues, as explained by a former senator in Pakistan in relation to their work on the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act: **"Inclusive legislation is not possible for any member of parliament without having critical inputs with communities outside of parliament, such as civil society activists, specialist groups and NGOs and activists who have spent a lifetime working on these particular issues... No amount of book knowledge, articles or discussions will help as much as when you reach out to these communities."**<sup>113</sup> Case Study 4 illuminates the necessity of building relationships with the communities the legislation seeks to support and solidify rights for, particularly when the parliamentarians would benefit from greater knowledge and awareness about the issues this community are facing to develop the most comprehensive draft of the legislation.

**Case Study 4:**  
Pakistan - Transgender people  
(Protection of Rights) Act (2018)

The legacy of colonial practices of criminalisation, exclusion and marginalisation of gender diverse people were folded into the State structure in post-colonial Pakistan.<sup>114</sup> The first action which explicitly recognised rights of transgender people in Pakistan was in the Constitutional Petition No.43 by the Supreme Court in 2011.<sup>115</sup> This was followed by a Private Members' Bill introduced in the Senate on January 9th 2017, subsequently referred to the Senate Functional Committee on Human Rights for Review. However, civil society organisations strongly opposed this draft bill as "these prohibitions are generalised in the nature and provides no specific protection to the transgender community" and it was also deemed to be an exact copy of a bill being considered in India.<sup>116</sup>

Fundamental to the progress of the Bill, which fell to a taskforce headed by Senator Rubina Khalid of the Pakistan People's Party, was the active engagement from transgender rights activists: "our top concern was that the Bill was more about regulation of trans bodies, rather than providing them the basic right of self-determination and protection from violence."<sup>117</sup> The draft Bill proposed creation of a District Screening Committee that would provide a certificate to affirm an applicant's transgender identity after medical assessment.<sup>118</sup> After several weeks of grassroots mobilisation, a group of activists presented an alternate draft to Senator Farhatullah Babar who "was very receptive and open to hearing from us. He invited us to speak to parliamentarians."<sup>119</sup> The legislators considered that this "helped to improve understanding of the issues and served as motivation for the legislation"<sup>120</sup> and supported the draft proposed by this group.

Activists remained engaged throughout the process, working closely with legislators and other stakeholders: "there would be this

connection built where all the state departments would feel like they were part of the process. The priority was to get a draft that was most accepted by every side in the process."<sup>121</sup> As explained by Senator Khalid: "I don't like wasting time, so all the relevant stakeholders were called in to participate in the process and together we went through [the legislation] clause by clause."<sup>122</sup>

However, once the draft was developed, there were a number of challenges. The Pakistan People's Party did not have an overall majority in either House and whilst they were the largest party in the Senate, they only had 46 seats in the National Assembly (out of 342), so the Bill's passage was not certain: "It was a matter of creating an atmosphere in which a minority could move work on legislation which would then be accepted and passed in both houses."<sup>123</sup> The key resistance was from the religious right. Therefore, the strategy was to actively engage all political parties, including a female parliamentarian from one of the largest religious parties. Senator Khalid utilised her strong connections with parliamentarians, "and then portrayed the image in the media that everybody supports this bill."<sup>124</sup> Overall, the strategy to get the bill passed was ensuring that it was not associated with any hint of controversy and highlighting that the Bill would support an oppressed community facing violence.<sup>125</sup>

In spite of this strategy, negative press coverage did threaten to derail the legislative process. At this point, legislators and activists met with the Council of Islamic Ideology. Activists spoke powerfully about the right of self-determination, utilising the language of the Council, accompanied by literature on Islamic jurisprudence, and using religious metaphors to explain the importance of the legislation: "When the activists in the room spoke about their lives so passionately, I had goosebumps, I was tearing up, and that made the biggest difference... The Chairman of the Council individually thanked every activist, and once the Council was on board, it changed the tide."<sup>126</sup>

With the support of the Council of Islamic Ideology, the final step was to ensure the Bill passed both Houses. After passing in the Senate, it was a race against time in the National Assembly as the parliamentary session was coming to an end and so legislators had to remain focused: "We had to go and convince the Speaker to designate one more day as a Private Members' Day. That was unprecedented... It was the last piece of legislation passed!" It also required the leverage of personal relationships: "You have to get to know who the key players on the other side are. If you're able to convince A, B and C, then the rest of the House can be carried.

This is something you learn over time – I've been in the National Assembly for 32 years."<sup>127</sup> The Bill was passed on 8th May 2018 and signed into law on May 18th, 2018.<sup>128</sup>

Those involved considered that relationship-building was a fundamental factor in the success of the Bill: "It was made possible by consensus building and involving all stakeholders."<sup>129</sup> In particular, the importance of the input and engagement of Pakistan's transgender community and activists cannot be overstated. However, whilst this is an important recognition of rights, and ensures the enabling legislative framework, implementation has to be carefully secured and monitored, and there is still work to be done to ensure that these rights are built on in the future.<sup>130</sup>

There were a number of ways in which parliamentarians utilised their relationship building to support the process after the legislation had been drafted. In many cases, this was connecting those they had built relationships with to other parliamentarians, creating and opening space for them to be heard by more political actors: **"The advantage of being an MP is that it allows me to bring NGOs into parliament. Together with the NGOs, we are trying to push for a Sexual Harassment Act which is long overdue... But you have to connect with those who are actually affected."**<sup>131</sup> Being able

to bring these relationships into the legislative process is also important for the progress of the legislation, particularly in persuading other parliamentarians with insufficient knowledge or commitment to the cause: **"I think so much of the fact that we were successful is down to the testimony and the bravery of those women [survivors of stalking] and the parents of women who died... We talked to all of them in advance of the evidence sessions and afterwards we checked in with them; empathetic listening was essential to making these connections and building up trust."**<sup>132</sup> In this example, during the Stalking Law Reform in the UK, relationship building underpinned the success of the legislation. Strong relationships had to be built ahead of time, and empathetic listening ensured that communities' involvement in the legislative process was supported and that the process of sharing their experiences translated into wider support for the legislation.

Successful politicians are well-versed in the art of building relationships. The nature of a parliamentarian's role forces them to acquire and develop the skill of forming alliances and relationships with citizens in order to stay elected. Yet, it should not be assumed that parliamentarians develop this skill in its most sincere form. Indeed, it may not be underpinned by the quality of being a good listener, as politicians have very limited time and as such are forced to listen strategically. When seeking to put forward and promote inclusive legislation political leaders need to be able to harness the qualities of listening actively, paying attention, holding judgement, reflecting, clarifying, summarising and sharing. We also need political leaders to harness empathetic listening which involves showing willingness to listen, understanding of the spoken language, and understanding of the unspoken message. In particular, there is a need to devise a leadership training programme that refines the development and application of these qualities to the realities of the skills needed for political life and time-limited nature of the political context.

## Open to learning

Recognising where others' expertise is needed. Being open to learning from other actors whose knowledge is essential to ensuring the legislation is well designed, and has its intended effect.



A willingness to learn is a key quality that can support parliamentarians to work for inclusive legislative change. An openness to learn has been associated in the literature on leadership with a 'growth mindset';<sup>133</sup> those that take this approach are committed to developing their own knowledge and are willing to take risks in order to improve. Previous research that explored enabling factors for transformational leadership considered the ability to seize opportunities as being an important skill.<sup>134</sup> Those we interviewed affirmed this was an important quality present in their experiences of inclusive legislation, and mentioned that eagerness to take opportunities to learn from experts, and those with the experience of the legislative area that you are working in had been essential in ensuring that legislation was effectively developed: **"My training in the peace movement and in the progressive community in general has taught me the importance of consulting stakeholders and experts. Their involvement in the crafting of legislation is necessary to come up with a law that is truly responsive to the needs of those for whom it was intended."**<sup>135</sup> Many other parliamentarians noted how much they had learnt from their previous experiences of activism or from working in civil society organisations or local authorities about how to develop policies to support members of marginalised communities. The more politicians know about the reality of life for those affected by the legislation, the more eager they were in deploying whatever skills were necessary to affect legislative change.

Being open to learning was referenced when parliamentarians discussed their experience of institutional training that was available, as it provided insights into the resources that may be required for them to proceed with their legislative agenda: "The Institute of government put on a morning for new Lib Dem Ministers... [former UK deputy prime minister] Michael Heseltine said 'you're going to be run off your feet... so focus on one or two things that you want to drive through'.. I walked back to the Home Office and same sex marriage popped into my head as unfinished business..."<sup>136</sup> As this example elucidates, this parliamentarians' openness to learning from those with existing experience of political leadership provided essential advice for taking forward legislation on equal marriage. Mentioned by numerous interviewees was the absence of support many of them had in working on legislation. For example, some noted the fact

they did not have a parliamentary office and that there was a lack of party expertise on the legislative area they were focused on. Therefore, many relied on support from civil society and academia to bridge the gap in expertise required for preparing and introducing the legislation.

Others also noted how they had similarly benefited from being willing to learn from parliamentarians and institutions that had previous experience of introducing inclusive legislative change: **"I got involved with Parliamentarians for Global Action, particularly with their programme on LGBT inclusiveness, and that's where I really credit a lot of my education and that's what I call it, an education – as an ally, as a parliamentarian."**<sup>137</sup> An openness to learning was also considered to be an important quality that could strengthen the legislation that

parliamentarians were motivated to introduce, either through peer learning through global networks, or from engaging with experts. **Case Study 5** demonstrates that an openness to learn from experts who have worked on these processes before led to the development of open consultations to include the perspectives of key stakeholders who would be involved in the implementation of the legislation.

**Case Study 5:**  
Nigeria - Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act

The Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act was the culmination of a long-running campaign since 2001 for comprehensive legislation to address issues of violence against women and girls in Nigeria. However, at this time: “most legislators associated it with gender equality, and didn’t want to hear about it, so it transformed from the initial violence against women prohibition bill to the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Bill. We had to give a little and say, ‘ok let it be all embracing, all encompassing.’”<sup>138</sup> However, even when the Bill was put forward, its passage took more than 12 years,<sup>139</sup> and required strong advocacy and sensitisation of relevant stakeholders, legislators, the executive and the general population by a group of approximately 55 women’s rights and human rights organisations.<sup>140</sup>

The major challenges were a lack of acceptance, and difficulty securing allies in the legislature; the process was spread over the life of four assemblies and “when you have an ally not getting re-elected, you have to identify a new one... It was so frustrating, but we were determined.”<sup>141</sup> This determination culminated in success; on May 25th 2015 the VAPP Bill was passed into law at the Federal level, providing a legislative and legal framework for the prevention of all forms of violence against vulnerable persons, regardless of gender, but with particular focus on women and girls. However, many of the states’ assemblies are yet

to pass the bill to make it part of state laws.<sup>142</sup>

In Oyo State, for example, in 2020, the process to introduce the VAPP Bill had only just begun: “The legislation came at the right time, as violence was increasing due to COVID-19 lockdown.”<sup>143</sup> The Bill was introduced by Honourable Olawunmi Oladeji, the only woman member of the Oyo House of Assembly, and also the only member of her political party in the House.<sup>144</sup> Having sponsored and successfully introduced the child sexual offences bill in 2019, she noted that “thousands of women and children are still being subjected to inhuman and unacceptable abuse in the hands of male and female counterparts.”<sup>145</sup> However, legislation being brought to the House does not mean it will necessarily pass: “In the State assembly, many laws do not get past the first or second reading.”<sup>146</sup>

Before the first reading, it was important to galvanise support from other members of the legislature, particularly as Oladeji was sponsoring the bill as a minority party member: “I explained to [the other legislators] if they wanted to be a co-sponsor, I am ready to share the role!”<sup>147</sup> She was able to secure the support of the Speaker of the House before going to the Director of Legal to get the Bill drafted and presented. She took an active approach to encouraging her fellow legislators to support the bill: “I went from one office to another office telling them the reason behind this bill, that they need to allow this bill to see the light of the day.”<sup>148</sup> She recognised the strategic need to ensure that legislation was seen as something that looked after both men and women, and highlighted this to persuade people to vote for the bill and to ensure it passed the first reading.<sup>149</sup> Other stakeholders noted Oladeji’s skill in building personal relationships: “She was very instrumental to the process using her personal connections with other members of parliament, lobbying them and ensuring that the discussion of the Bill was on the agenda of the parliament.”<sup>150</sup>

In the next stage, Oladeji worked with the

Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), to enable robust discussion and broader stakeholder input into this bill. Together, “we convened knowledgeable and informed stakeholders to discuss the bill and also to take critical look at it and make proposals to strengthen the bill.”<sup>151</sup> These sessions included civil society organisations, women’s organisations, youth-focused organisations, religious and traditional leaders and academics. Oladeji “was at all stakeholder meetings and was open and receptive to engage.”<sup>152</sup> This was essential for bringing stakeholders and political leaders onto the same page and enabled her to go back to parliament and debrief her colleagues on these inputs.<sup>153</sup>

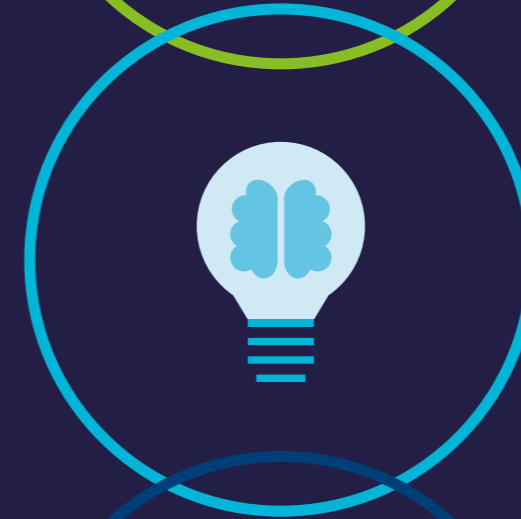
At the third reading in December 2020, the Bill was passed by the State Assembly, and the legislation was assented on 26th February 2021; however, Oladeji explained that the next phase is to embark on sensitisation and awareness campaigns.<sup>154</sup> During the campaign for VAPP at the federal level, activists considered that legislators needed to have strong advocacy skills, but also to see themselves as having a critical role in making society violence-free longer-term.<sup>155</sup> Having this long-term passion was essential to raising awareness. Whilst the public hearings were going on, media advocacy was being conducted by Oladeji and WFD, who used their knowledge of the local terrain, and of the legislation to create awareness: “you need to engage the public, get to the grassroots level, get the message to them about what the law entails”<sup>156</sup> as this is essential for the legislation’s successful implementation.

This eagerness to learn and bring in those in who had most expertise on the area covered by the legislation was essential to exploring how to integrate it within the wider social and institutional frameworks: **“Parliamentarians must fully understand that international legal framework... You have to understand all the aspects that relate to this law... I even consulted historians to help me, to have a whole history of the liberation of women.”**<sup>157</sup> Therefore, it is clear that being eager to learn is a quality that was present prior to the introduction of the legislation and must be consistent throughout its development in order to ensure that legislation is comprehensive and will be effective. However, developing this quality will not come from leadership or behavioural research and as such is probably the hardest personal quality to integrate into political institutional development. For this to be nurtured, a high degree of exposure to the knowledge held by experts and the realities of those citizens whose lives are affected is needed; we recognise that this usually goes hand-in-hand with both the nature of the individual politician and their political profile and portfolio.

# Three important skills and qualities



**Trustworthy**



**Creative**



**Self-aware and reflective**

# Trustworthy

Demonstrating integrity and authenticity which results in trust from communities and other parliamentarians.

Being genuine in their intention with the legislation, which gives leaders legitimacy to act on behalf of these groups during the legislative process.



Being trustworthy is not often associated with politicians, at least from the perspective of the general public.<sup>158</sup> In addition, trustworthiness is conceptually challenging, as it is generally a quality that is highly subjective, and ‘in the eye of the beholder.’ Therefore, it is beneficial to recognise that this is about the perception of trustworthiness. Important research about the active process whereby leaders cultivate their identity and persuade followers of their legitimacy, which involves the legitimacy claims that leaders make, and how they are received and evaluated, provides insights into the multiple aspects of trustworthiness that need to be considered.<sup>159</sup> Trust indicates a belief in the reliability, truth or ability of someone or something, and is often referred to as a type of social and political ‘glue.’<sup>160</sup> Trust within politics is conceptually challenging, however, it generally refers to citizens’ belief that their own interests would be attended to, which is important for the functioning and survival of democracies. However, in spite of conceptual challenges, twelve parliamentarians mentioned trustworthiness as being a key quality they felt that they had utilised during their experiences of successfully introducing inclusive legislation. The way in which trust was present in these processes was related to whether parliamentarians felt that marginalised communities believed that they were working in their best interest as part of the legislative process: **“You don’t necessarily have to be a member of the community, but obviously it matters, because you do need to have credibility within the community.”**<sup>161</sup> Being trusted by the community that you were working with, and for, was considered to be extremely important particularly when the legislative process became challenging, or when compromises needed to be made in order to ensure that the legislation passed. Often, parliamentarians considered that being trusted by communities was as a result of their authenticity or their convictions: **“You have to be consistent. You have to take risks and publicly defend your convictions so that people can trust you.”**<sup>162</sup>

Secondly, parliamentarians emphasised how they had needed to be considered trustworthy by other parliamentarians to facilitate collaboration and coordination for legislative processes. For example, being trusted meant that people were more likely to meet you and discuss their reservations or concerns about the legislation, giving you an opportunity to persuade them: **“There were people with specific influence who I was able to have off the record conversations with. It is valuable to recognise the importance of holding that confidentiality, actually building that trust to have those conversations that you’re not going to use publicly.”**<sup>163</sup> Another parliamentarian also pointed to her record working on legislation and on similar issues, which she believed had meant that moderate members of her party trusted her to make the right decisions, particularly when there were disagreements about certain aspects of the legislation.

Finally, trust was mentioned in the way that politicians should also trust that the communities that they are working with know best. Baroness Featherstone reflected on her experience working with disability organisations and activists, and noted how they were mistrustful, because their inclusion in legislative processes had often been tokenistic. Therefore, there **“has to be a genuine sense of togetherness about it and a willingness to take on their ideas, rather than your ideas.”**<sup>164</sup> The importance of trust in collective action for inclusive change has been noted in other research;<sup>165</sup> however, in many ways, trustworthiness is the least simple quality to cultivate, as it is so strongly underpinned by perceptions of authenticity and genuineness. However, communication and consistency are also a considerable part of this, and for this reason many politicians and political parties invest considerable resources in enabling the parliamentarian to sculpt their message in ways that show their sincerity and authenticity. Our contention is that successful inclusive legislation is only possible when political leaders are close to the cause and naturally channel this into their messaging. As such political leadership training needs to begin with the politician interrogating their motivations for change.



**You have to be consistent. You have to take risks and publicly defend your convictions so that people can trust you.”**

Interview with an MP

# Creative

The ability to make creative use of existing resources or institutional structures to successfully introduce inclusive legislation. Being flexible and adaptive when alternative opportunities are not available.



Creativity or 'thinking outside the box' has been defined as encompassing curiosity and imagination.<sup>166</sup> It was noted as being a quality utilised by parliamentarians in succeeding in introducing inclusive legislation in nine interviews. There were three main ways in which creativity was utilised. Firstly, creativity was considered to be important in thinking of ways in which legislation can address issues. Creativity can be an important step to gaining a more significant sense of the world that you are engaging in: **"I showed up looking for gaps and looking for things that needed to be done ... I issued a challenge to all ministers and parliamentarians to figure out how to do more with, and for, the LGBT community."**<sup>167</sup> In some cases, there is not an obvious piece of legislation that may tackle issues that a marginalised community are facing. Therefore, parliamentarians may need to be creative in thinking about how these issues could be addressed. For example, Randy Boissonnault spoke about his work to ensure that funding for LGBT groups was included in the Canadian national budget, by first targeting an existing international fund which didn't require going through a legislative process and then putting pressure on the government to ensure domestic organisations had similar access to funding.<sup>168</sup>

Secondly, creativity was referred to as being adaptive and flexible in order to succeed. In many cases this meant thinking of different approaches to getting legislation introduced into parliament, because of institutional barriers and structures. For example, Delyth Jewell spoke of her experience working at Westminster on the independent parliamentary inquiry into stalking law reform: **"I think we realised at the outset that an All-Party Parliamentary Group was not quite going to work, and there wasn't a format for what we wanted to do, so we thought 'let's just create it ourselves! If we build it, they will come, so let's go for it.'"**<sup>169</sup> This approach proved successful, as the Independent Parliamentary Inquiry into Stalking Law Reform led to legislation being introduced and passed in both Houses of Parliament in record time.

**Case Study 6** also demonstrates the way in which creativity was utilised as a way to put pressure on other legislative actors to act for inclusive legislative change, and to ensure that the legislation remained firmly on the agenda, through engaging with the media, and activists to keep highlighting the issue.





**law-making is not a passive act that happens out of the benevolence of government... it is a manifestation of the social and political conditions of the day. Albinism had transformed from a social to a political issue."**

Deprese Muchena, Amnesty International

**Case Study 6:**  
 Malawi – Amendments to the Anatomy Act and the Penal Code to Address Violence Against Persons with Albinism (2016)

In Malawi, people with albinism are targeted for their body parts by those who believe that they contain magical powers and bring good luck, which has resulted in abductions, killings and grave robberies.<sup>170</sup> This issue was taken up by members of parliament in early March 2015, as they raised the alarm about abductions in their constituencies and called for a national response.<sup>171</sup> "In the area I'm coming from, there was a lot of kidnapping and killing of persons with albinism, so I felt duty bound about it as a legislator to take this issue to parliament."<sup>172</sup>

However, 2016 was a pivotal moment, with the launch of Amnesty International's first report which focused on the lived experience of people with albinism in Malawi and the various gaps that exist in the legislation to protect people with albinism.<sup>173</sup> Additional advocacy focused on the criminal justice system, as there was no law, for example, which would capture cutting someone's hair or nails for ritual purposes.<sup>174</sup> The Association of People with Albinism in Malawi (APAM) also noted the gap in the penal code as not having suitable legislation to address violence against persons with albinism as a specific issue.<sup>175</sup> To raise awareness, activists presented a petition to parliament which called for an immediate stop to the end of the killings of persons with albinism<sup>176</sup> and targeted the relevant portfolio committee in parliament and individual members who resided in constituencies where attacks were prominent.<sup>177</sup> It was clear that two laws needed to be targeted with amendments, the Anatomy Act and the Penal code. Initially the parliamentary committee did not have adequate budget to consider these amendments, and so was supported with budget from the United Nations to examine the amendments required to existing legislation.<sup>178</sup>

However, it was considered that amending existing legislation would require the government's leadership, which may delay the process. Therefore, activists and parliamentarians needed to be creative to urge the government into taking the required actions: "we used a private members' bill motion to speed up these amendments."<sup>179</sup> This private members' bill was the result of collaboration between Esther Jolobala MP, activists and academics, "who assisted with the draft of this bill."<sup>180</sup> This was a highly politicised issue as Jolobala was an opposition MP but it aimed to serve as "a bargaining chip to expose the government as the ones not acting in the interests of persons with albinism."<sup>181</sup> Activists engaged with members of parliament, who continued to demand that the government take action: "even though the bill was politicised, I continued to stand up in parliament whenever I had the chance, coming up with questions and asking for explanations."<sup>182</sup> At first, this motion was not accepted, but after it was re-drafted the motion was moved, and there was considerable lobbying on the part of parliamentarians and activists and "it was supported by a lot of MPs."<sup>183</sup> It then became the responsibility of the Minister of Justice to come up with legislation.

The private members' bill was pulled at the point that parliament agreed to the amendments of the existing legislation: "the private member's bill was a backup. There are challenges to introducing a private members' bill, so it was better to revise what was already there and get it passed as soon as possible."<sup>184</sup> In particular the challenges with the private members' bill were related to resources, as members of parliament have to incur the cost on their own and do not have research assistance or legislative drafting assistance.<sup>185</sup> Therefore, it was considered that "the best way is to persuade the government to take forward the legislation."<sup>186</sup>

Overall, the coordination and creativity of concerned parliamentarians and civil society activists was essential: "you cannot achieve

anything if you are not networking with NGOs."<sup>187</sup> NGOs meanwhile continued lobbying the government by reacting to every death and every incident. This, combined with the pressure of the private member's bill changed the government's response: "law-making is not a passive act that happens out of the benevolence of government... it is a manifestation of the social and political conditions of the day. Albinism had transformed from a social to a political issue."<sup>188</sup>

This combined activism continued until the existing legislation was amended: "new parliamentarians became leaders for standing up at a time of pain for their constituents... this type of leadership took courage, which I define as the ability to do the right things for the right reasons."<sup>189</sup> The Anatomy Act Amendment bill was passed by the National Assembly almost 5 hours after Mulanje South legislator, Bon Kalindo led hundreds to present a petition related to the conviction of offences related to albino killings.<sup>190</sup> The Anatomy (Amendment) Bill 2016<sup>191</sup> and the Penal Code (Amendment) Bill, 2016<sup>192</sup> are important steps in providing the legislative underpinnings to ensure that there are practical provisions for tackling violence against persons with albinism.

Thirdly, creativity was referenced as an important skill that supported the advocacy that parliamentarians were undertaking to support the process of inclusive legislation. For example, Sochua Mu explained how she was creative in creating awareness about the draft law on Domestic Violence: **“The draft law on Domestic Violence refers to the women’s code of Cambodia, where there is an expression ‘men are gold, and women are a white piece of cloth!’ And women from civil society said, let’s change that proverb. So, we did a contest and came up with ‘men are gold, but women are precious gems’... we also gave it a symbol. That is the marketing side of me.”**<sup>193</sup> There may be pieces of legislation where creativity is needed to raise awareness of an issue to galvanise support, particularly if it is contentious. However, creativity can also be used to build up knowledge about an issue, or legislation that is being introduced: **“my creativity really helps me when I am raising issues. I opened a TikTok account and Instagram, and I make creative explanations so that the bill is going to stay in people’s memories.”**<sup>194</sup> This may increase the likelihood that citizens are aware of the legislation and can lobby and compel their representatives to vote for it. Creativity in communication, particularly on social media was particularly noted as having been utilised: **“It is not difficult for me to communicate my thoughts to others in various formats such as video, text, speech, drawing, and music. In the social media era, having the ability to easily communicate content directly to the public using a variety of media is a great help in maintaining interest in issues.”**<sup>195</sup>

For many reasons, creativity is not commonly associated with political leadership. In order to strengthen creativity, it is important to be vulnerable,<sup>196</sup> a quality that is not often rewarded in politics. Creativity is a quality that is also influenced by formalities and bureaucracies, which underpin politics, as creativity is considered to be most easily developed within environments without any rules or guidelines.<sup>197</sup> Again, toolkits and training to develop creativity are common within business and management<sup>198</sup>, but are less common within politics. However, in order to be able to adapt and create new opportunities one needs to understand the formalities and bureaucracies that political leadership operates in. Many interviewees referred to their lack of understanding of the political structures when they entered parliament and requirement to ‘learn as they went’, which inhibited their creativity. Therefore, a different type of induction training could support political leaders to better learn how to creatively overcome and adapt to structural challenges facing inclusive legislative change, including being creative with the institutional rules that govern their leadership. This should be provided in addition to it supporting parliamentarians to develop knowledge of the formal and informal ‘rules of the game.’



**my creativity really helps me when I am raising issues. I opened a TikTok account and Instagram, and I make creative explanations so that the bill is going to stay in people’s memories.**

Dastan Bekeshev MP, Krygyzstan

# Self-aware and reflective

Being committed to thinking critically about their engagement with inclusive legislation. Dedication to their own development as leaders, both as part of legislative processes and beyond.



Self-awareness as a concept varies, however it is most commonly defined as an inwardly focused reflective evaluative process in which individuals make self/standard comparisons with the goal of better self-knowledge and improvement.<sup>199</sup> Whilst the quality of being self-aware and reflective was not mentioned as often as other skills and qualities, there were numerous indirect references to this quality. For example, an Argentinian deputy mentioned the fact that participating in the interview for this research had given her a good opportunity to reflect on which skills she had utilised in the recent legislation to legalise abortion in Argentina. For others, they noted how they had reflected on previous experiences that had highlighted the skills that they needed to build: **“I organised a meeting in response to a woman who had been convicted for the murder of her husband after many years of being abused and the system failing to protect her... but didn’t know what to do next. That was a good lesson in recognising that I didn’t have all the skills to be able to do what I wanted to do.”**<sup>200</sup> Self-awareness and reflection are therefore key qualities in which one can consider in which ways other skills and qualities were used within the process of working on inclusive legislation. It can also support the identification of which skills parliamentarians need to work on developing, or whether they need to collaborate with others to ensure these skills are present during work for inclusive legislation.

Self-awareness and reflection were also noted as being important in continually checking whether the work that parliamentarians were doing on inclusive legislation was still in line with what was needed: **“We have to critically self-reflect, do some reflection and determine if what you are doing is right.”**<sup>201</sup> In this way, self-awareness is important for reflecting on your purpose as a political leader and was linked to being value-driven. For others, they mentioned how critically thinking about what they were doing had led them to realise their own previous ignorance and underpinned their commitment to continually engaging in learning from, listening to, and building relationships with marginalised groups. This supports the growing evidence on the importance of self-awareness in effective and transformational leadership in the human resources and organisational studies literature.<sup>202</sup>

Self-awareness and reflection were finally deemed to be important qualities for reflecting on a leaders’ approach to working on inclusive legislation: **“I would say self-awareness is important. Knowing when to push your membership to achieve this goal, when to encourage, when to challenge, when to demand... and also when to rest, when to accept progress and when to celebrate accomplishments.”**<sup>203</sup> Existing tools to support leaders’ self-reflection refer to the consideration of these steps<sup>204</sup> are mostly situated within resources on business leadership, there has been very limited focus on how parliamentarians can reflect on their unique position as political leaders. The potential of joining other parliamentarians, at the local, national and international level,<sup>205</sup> in a safe space for self-reflection may be an important way in which the challenge of finding time and support for reflection to support self-awareness.<sup>206</sup>

## Reflecting on Institutional and Contextual Factors – Which skills matter, where?

The core skills and qualities that support leaders to successfully act to introduce inclusive legislative change did appear across the majority of contexts. However, there were a number of important areas to mention about how the personal factors intersected with the institutional and structural contextual factors to influence the way in which these skills and qualities were needed or utilised.

Firstly, the type of inclusive legislation did influence the skills and qualities required. For example, disability legislation was most often referred to as being easy to galvanise cross party support for, as noted in **Case Study 3**, disability was 'non-controversial.' However, often it was considered that the majority of parliamentarians had very little existing knowledge of disability prior to working on this area of legislation. Therefore, the skill emphasised most commonly mentioned by parliamentarians and activists alike was the ability to build relationships with activists and organisations in this area. With legislation to address gender-based violence, there were some barriers to getting this legislation passed, particularly related to including comprehensive and appropriate funding for implementation. Generally, however, parliamentarians were considered to have more awareness of the key issues related to this area of legislation. Overall, relationship building of women parliamentarians working with experts, and those who could support the arguments for the need for this legislation and associated funding was considered very important, as was working cross-party in parliament to ensure it is passed. Finally, legislation on LGBTQ+ rights was considered most likely to face substantial challenges, particularly from religious based political parties, organisations and groups. Strategic thinking and relationship building therefore came through strongly as one of the most important skills for parliamentarians. This

strategic thinking would firstly deeply understand the issues that the legislation needs to address, as well as parliamentary processes, then strategically frame and communicate this in a way to counteract the arguments from those opposing the legislation.

Secondly, the resources available to parliament may also have affected the skills and qualities required by parliamentarians. In Australia, **focus** was required due to the fact that there were limited resources to support independent legislators with the drafting process: **"We adjourned, and I worked all over the summer to draft up legislation."**<sup>207</sup> When the process and the resources provided are not institutionalised, it is likely to require strong conviction, focus, dedication and patience in the process of getting the legislation introduced. **Case Study 6** also demonstrates how limited access to research or funding to support the drafting of legislation meant that creativity was needed to consider alternative routes for change, alongside the openness to learning and engaging with experts, who may be able to support the drafting process.

Thirdly, whether those driving the legislation were in government, or opposition, and how large the governing party's majority was in parliament affected the ease of working on inclusive legislation: "one part of being in opposition is that the likelihood of introducing private members' bills is not very high, in fact, it is very rare that it gets past the necessary stages."<sup>208</sup> Although in three of our case studies (2, 3 and 4), opposition members were able to introduce and succeed in the legislative processes, generally it was considered that if a political leader was a member of the opposition it would be much harder for them to introduce the legislation in the first place, and that extensive cross-party collaboration would be required to get the numbers for it to pass. The ability to be a collaborator was therefore essential, although in some contexts the political culture affected the ability to develop and utilise this skill: **"We have a dominant two-party culture... it is bad for building partnerships."**<sup>209</sup>

Fourthly, there was a role that international frameworks or global events played in supporting progress for inclusive legislative change and affected the skills and qualities most utilised by parliamentarians. For example, in **Case Study 2**, Obama's support for marriage equality was widely referenced as having influenced both the introduction, and the success of the Marriage Amendment Bill in New Zealand. When there was an influence from a global movement for change, strategic thinking was an essential skill that was utilised in the process; for example, framing the legislation in relation to the need to be in line with global progress on this issue. In **Case Study 3**, Indonesia's ratification of the United Nations Convention on Rights for Persons with Disabilities strengthened the call for updated appropriate national legislation. As the disability movement had been key actors in the process of ratifying this framework, it was particularly critical for parliamentarians to be open to learning from their expertise in this process. However, international influences could also hinder the process of the legislation, such as in **Case Study 1**, where it was considered important to avoid the framing of the legislation to end violence against women in Tunisia as being externally imposed. Again, this required strategic thinking that mapped the potential resistance to the legislation and worked to change the communication strategy to ensure that the legislation was contextually driven, and that there was ownership by women's rights organisations within the country.

Political ideologies and strong social and cultural norms were also large barriers to these processes which varied in each context. For example, in numerous countries, parliamentarians noted the challenge that religious beliefs posed to their work on this legislation, alongside deeply entrenched political ideology: **"I was part of a centre-right group that still suffers from a lot of cultural misogyny, a strong homophobia and a lot of ignorance in relation to trans rights... Politically it was a very difficult path, with a lot of tensions and political difficulties."**<sup>210</sup> These challenges

require a number of the aforementioned skills, namely focus and patience when the process takes longer than desired, as well as being able to work cross-party to persuade people from all parties, with different ideologies and values.

Finally, a big barrier was related to how social and cultural norms influenced the ability of individual parliamentarians to mobilise support for legislation from the public, and for this to apply pressure on parliamentary colleagues. Parliamentarians noted the abuse (including sexism and racism) they faced for working on inclusive legislation: **"The right wing said a lot of ugly things about me... It changes the debate when it close to your identity, your ethnicity... Political arguments are not a problem for me at all – I more or less get high on that! But when people are personal, it is challenging."**<sup>211</sup> The personal pressure and impact that this had on parliamentarians is therefore important to mention; whilst political leaders are rarely acting alone, there are likely to be large personal and professional impacts of working on inclusive legislation. Therefore, it is important to better consider the mental health and wellbeing of leaders involved in these processes. This also underlines the importance of considering parliamentarians' identities as a key factor that shapes the skills and qualities required during the introduction of inclusive legislation.

## Identity of the Leader – Under what conditions do leaders emerge with these skills and qualities?

It is also pertinent to consider the role that parliamentarians' identity and experience to explore whether these skills and qualities are associated with certain kinds of backgrounds and under what conditions leaders emerge with these skills and qualities. The 'social identity theory of leadership' suggests that leaders' identities have an important impact on their ability to navigate and negotiate social change.<sup>212</sup> This theory suggests that people look for leaders who reflect the characteristics of the group they belong to, so-called 'prototypical leaders' or that leaders are affected by the degree to which they promote "a shared sense of social reality that reflects what the group believes, values and sees as appropriate and important."<sup>213</sup> These leaders often receive a level of trust based on their identity. Therefore, one of the first considerations about leaders' identity is the fact that their ability to be a strong relationship builder and to be perceived as trustworthy may be influenced by whether their experiences and identity aligns with the group with those with whom they are seeking to build relationships. As noted above: **"You don't necessarily have to be a member of the community, but obviously it matters, because you do need to have credibility within the community."**<sup>214</sup> Many of those who participated had direct experience of the issues that the legislation they were working on sought to address, either directly or through family members, which likely influenced the perception of whether they were a prototypical leader, and thus their skill of being able to build relationships. Having first-hand experience of these issues also likely influenced parliamentarians' focus.

Our purposive sampling technique meant that we did not seek a representative sample, and thus we cannot claim that our sample reflects the reality of all parliamentarians who are committed to, and successful in working on inclusive legislation. However, it is interesting to note that out of the 31 parliamentarians interviewed, 26 were women, and five were men. Previous research has argued that women lead with a different, more collaborative and more inclusive leadership styles.<sup>215</sup> Therefore, it could be argued that women leaders may be more likely to enter leadership roles with strong collaborative skills, which are essential for work on inclusive legislation. However, all men interviewed emphasised the importance of collaboration, and their ability to work collaboratively. Thus, leaders of all genders can have the necessary skills, including as a collaborator, to work towards inclusive legislative change, but this does highlight the need to support those who have been afforded less opportunities to enter political leadership positions, as they may be more likely to already have many of the skills and qualities that would support inclusive change.

Individuals' previous experience prior to their political leadership role also had an important influence on their skills and qualities. For example, a number of those interviewed who had prior experience in local politics, noted this space as somewhere where they had needed to be creative when faced with limited resources both for elections and for public resource distribution. They explained how this ability to 'think outside the box' had been useful when faced with barriers in their work for inclusive legislative change. As mentioned above, the most commonly noted background of parliamentarians interviewed was having previously worked in civil society organisations. Whilst these parliamentarians did not have distinctly different skills or qualities from others interviewed, many did mention how their experience of working in civil society or activism had meant they valued being open to learning,

due to having learnt that they could not hold all of the key information needed for promoting and mobilising for inclusive change themselves. As noted by Jan Logie, her experience in trying to organise a response to gender-based violence in New Zealand led her to realise that she didn't have all the skills to be able to achieve her goals, and therefore had recognised the importance of learning from others' expertise and experience. Additionally, many from a civil society background explained how their relationship building skills had come from previous experience working with communities and activists on campaigns related to social justice and equality. Finally, one interesting reflection was from Maja Morachanin MP, who, having trained as a doctor, noted that this training had strongly emphasised and required practice in careful and respectful listening to patients' concerns and putting what you had heard into practice. Therefore, it is evident that previous experience may provide the conditions through which future leaders can develop and hone useful skills and qualities.

Additionally, individuals' experience as political leaders prior to their work on inclusive legislation enabled the development of important skills and qualities. Those who had experienced previous unsuccessful attempts to introduce inclusive legislation often mentioned having developed their strategic thinking skills: **"There's nothing magic or secret about our approach to strategy, my observation about what had gone wrong previously was that we didn't have a strategy, just tactics."**<sup>216</sup> Furthermore, having previously been unsuccessful in introducing inclusive legislative change was noted by many as having galvanised them at their next opportunity, increasing their focus and determination. Finally, leaders also noted how their active involvement in parliamentary committee work had been an important space for them to build up their skills as a collaborator. For example, the four parliamentarians from the UK reflected in their interviews on how their experience in the Women and Equalities

Select Committee had supported their ability to collaborate with those they did not align with politically, as they had practice in reaching out across parties, building a shared vision for change, and compromising where necessary to make progress. Therefore, there are likely existing political leaders, with important skills that could be harnessed by their inclusion in work towards inclusive legislative change.



**You don't necessarily have to be a member of the community, but obviously it matters, because you do need to have credibility within the community!"**

Louisa Wall MP, New Zealand

## Beyond Legislation

Inclusive legislation is essentially for underpinning the rights of all citizens and ensuring that the state is responsible for upholding these. Legislation can be important for driving cultural change. For example, one MP reflected on her involvement in legislation on same-sex marriage: **“I’ve never been involved in a campaign or piece of legislation before where you’ll be walking down the street and somebody will literally come up to you, tap you on the shoulder and say ‘Thank you, it changed my life, not because I want to get married, but because it shows that the society in which I live accepts me’... I think that shows how profound legislation can be in driving cultural change.”**<sup>217</sup> However, the case studies also clearly emphasise that whilst legislation is necessary, it is not sufficient and cannot itself be the end goal of inclusion. Political leaders acknowledged the need to ensure that implementation is comprehensive and that they work towards societal change as well.

Finally, parliamentarians and activists interviewed also emphasised the importance of institutions being more inclusive themselves. Although political representation does not necessarily lead to better outcomes for marginalised groups, it was considered that having better representation in parliament was an important step to working towards inclusive legislation: **“There is an urgent need right now to bring people with disabilities as members of parliament... Instead of being represented by non-disabled people, they need to represent themselves.”**<sup>218</sup> Parliamentarians also referred to this: **“Parliament is more capable of looking at issues if it is more representative [of communities]. It isn’t helpful that the structures that we have don’t react to the changing membership.”**<sup>219</sup> Extensive research has been conducted on the importance of making parliaments more inclusive, and this must also be a priority for those working on inclusive legislative change, as it would challenge the institutional and contextual barriers and make Parliament more responsive to the needs of members and citizens.<sup>220</sup>



**I’ve never been involved in a campaign or piece of legislation before where you’ll be walking down the street and somebody will literally come up to you, tap you on the shoulder and say ‘Thank you, it changed my life, not because I want to get married, but because it shows that the society in which I live accepts me’...**

Interview with MP, UK

# Conclusions and Recommendations

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The skills and qualities of parliamentarians outlined in this report are important for inclusive legislative change. Yet how they are developed and utilised will vary dependent on other factors beyond the nature of the legislation. As such, we aim not to create a definitive list of skills an effective legislator must have. We also recognise that there will be different ideas of what an effective legislator looks like depending on who you ask, what community a legislator is working with, and whether they want to create influence within the parliamentary process or in other spaces.<sup>221</sup> However, we make the case for recognising the influence of the enabling environment, motivations and incentives, as well as encouraging those with the required qualities and skills to enter politics. It is clear that interventions designed to ensure that leaders with these skills are able to access political leadership roles, and to support existing parliamentarians to develop and sustain these skills, are likely to play an important role in inclusive legislative change given the overwhelming evidence of their utility across multiple country and parliamentary contexts. Therefore, this report suggests that supporting parliamentarians to develop the skills and qualities required for work on inclusive legislative change requires a two-pronged approach:

The first strand of action will require engagement with political parties. Political parties play a fundamental role in supporting the selection and election of political leaders and represent the primary pathway into political leadership in the majority of contexts. However, political parties have also historically been, and continue to create, barriers to inclusive participation in political leadership.<sup>222</sup>


### 1 Supporting those with these key skills and qualities to enter political leadership roles

- Prioritise shifts in the wider enabling environment to support the emergence of leaders, in particular those with experience, skills and qualities required to support inclusive change. This requires making parliaments and political parties more inclusive spaces, but also encompasses addressing the resource disparities in access to leadership and providing mentorship and training to support diverse pathways to leadership.<sup>223</sup>
- Systematic and proactive outreach to encourage people who are likely to have the skills and qualities required for inclusive legislative change to enter political leadership roles. This should include targeting those who have had experience in areas where they will have useful skills and qualities for inclusive change, such as civil society organisations, but there should also be a concerted effort to engage members of minoritised and marginalised groups, or the 'prototypical' leaders for stakeholders in inclusive legislative change.

## 2 Engagement with existing political leaders

- **Contextualised political leadership training** - the majority of parliamentarians admitted to not receiving leadership training which is especially essential in the pursuit of inclusive legislative proposals. Understanding the institutions in which leadership is situated in is essential for honing and developing strategic thinking, creativity and relationship building in relation to inclusive legislative change.
- **Peer to peer political skills and experience sharing** – the degree of comparative experiences amongst those interviewed presents an opportunity for organisations such as the Westminster Foundation for Democracy to support cross-party national and international experience sharing. The provision of a global coalition of parliamentarians would reinforce knowledge of inclusive leadership skills, such as strategic thinking and creativity, and a greater understanding of how these support inclusive legislative change, whilst also fostering collaboration.
- **Targeted political leadership resources** – while there are a wide variety of resources that support leadership development and the skills and qualities mentioned in this report, these resources rarely speak to the specific context and requirements of political leadership, and especially those looking to promote inclusive legislation. Therefore, developing resources and tools to support political leadership development will be essential for parliamentarians seeking to develop their skills as well as to support specific political leadership training.
- **Political soft skills development** – many of the vital skills and qualities of effective leadership for inclusive change are associated with skills that politicians are not conditioned to develop. At the extreme, politicians learn not to trust and how to keep apart and above others. The nature of political office requires parliamentarians to preference skills of party-first strategic thinking and adversarial communication tactics, for example. Yet the ability to connect authentically, empathise, listen actively as well as the ability to demonstrate sincerity, self-awareness, emotional intelligence and understanding are vital to effective political performance. These therefore need to be given stand-alone focus in work with parliamentarians internationally.
- **Community mentorship** – given that politicians need a high degree of exposure to the knowledge of the realities of those citizens whose lives are affected by proposed legislation, there is a need for supported engagement between parliamentarians and civil society organisations and activists. Successful inclusive legislation is only possible when political leaders are close to the cause, and therefore two-way mentorship between communities and politicians would ensure this connection, strengthen each of their understanding both of the issues and of the processes and improve both the legislation developed and the likelihood of successful adoption. Organisations outside of politics need to be supported with funding, and connections to be able to develop and engage in these mentoring relationships. In addition, parliamentarians' work will be strengthened through engaging with others' expertise, such as academics and organisations with experience working on legislative issues in the area they are addressing.

Undertaking these interventions and facilitating these connections will enhance the ability of parliamentarians to develop and strengthen the skills and qualities required to work towards genuine inclusive change.



**Undertaking these interventions and facilitating these connections will enhance the ability of parliamentarians to develop and strengthen the skills and qualities required to work towards genuine inclusive change.**



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