

Allies in Action

Being an effective ally requires taking action to address the root causes and consequences of gender inequality. Male parliamentarians can adopt a variety of practical strategies in their everyday legislative work in support of this pursuit. Below is a list of possible strategies with examples.

Consulting women to inform your legislative work

→ Meet with women's groups to seek their feedback on proposed legislative initiatives (not just those explicitly related to gender equality) and integrate the results of these discussions in your decision-making

Diversifying the pool of contributors called upon in public debates

→ Prioritise gender balance when inviting expert speakers for a meeting or conference, and recommend women when you see a gender gap in a programme

Taking leadership within your party to recruit more women candidates in the next elections

→ Encourage women you know to run for election at all levels, mentor and support potential candidates, and ensure your party is proactive in seeking to run a gender-balanced ticket

Making space for women to rise to decision-making positions in parliament

→ If you have influence in a situation where a woman is being overlooked for a leadership position, present her qualifications and nominate her

Applying the “[reversibility](#)” test to help detect gender bias

→ When commenting on a woman colleague or her work, consider whether you would say the same about a man

Promoting gender-inclusive workspaces

→ Create a culture among your staff that values healthy work-life balance and fosters equitable participation in meetings (for tips, see the “[Strategies for Chairing Inclusive Meetings](#)” tool available on the web portal referenced at the end of this document)

Advocating for laws and initiatives that expand women's rights

→ Co-sponsor legislative projects that will positively impact women and help build the political will necessary to pass them

Challenging gender stereotypes and bias in the media

→ If a woman candidate's appearance or personal life is raised during an interview you are participating in, emphasise the irrelevance of those topics and redirect the conversation to the policy issues

Addressing colleagues using gender-sensitive language

→ When speaking with or about colleagues, refer to them by their position (the Honourable Member/Senator, Madam Speaker, etc.) or their title (Ms. or Dr.) and last name, as these terms convey greater respect and formality than using “miss,” “young lady,” “girl(s)” or pet names

Drawing attention to women’s individual professional achievements

→ When discussing a colleague’s accomplishments, such as election to a given position, recognise her qualifications as the reason for her selection; avoid attributing any successes to relationships with powerful men (such as her husband, father, a former boss, etc.)

Being respectful of the need for all-women spaces

→ If the preference of members is for a caucus in parliament or a women’s group in your constituency to remain an all-women’s space, indicate your support and your interest in engaging in their activities if they ever deem it appropriate

Leveraging social media as a tool to broaden discussions on gender issues

→ Keep informed about the work of gender equality advocates and organisations, and share news and information of interest through your various online platforms

Applying an intersectional lens to legislative work, taking into consideration the diverse needs and experiences of women and men

→ Assess how policies, such as those to address barriers women face in obtaining decent employment, will differentially impact women in your constituency (e.g., young women, Indigenous women, disabled women, workers in the informal economy, part-time workers)

Encouraging colleagues to become allies

→ Regularly engage male colleagues in discussions about the benefits of gender equality to society and your parliament (for talking points, see the “[Making the Case for Gender Equality](#)” tool available on the web portal referenced below)

Recognising and celebrating diversity

→ Take advantage of local and international resources to expand understanding in your constituency about gender and sexuality

Treating mistakes as learning opportunities

→ Recognise that being a male ally will not always be comfortable or straightforward; be open to feedback and ask questions
