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Case Studies: What Happens When Women Lead?

When someone asks what is -- among all the things one could do to have an definitive social impact on impoverished, unjust societies -- a surefire strategy, what do you say? Chances are -- whether you focus your advocacy lens on universal human rights, corruption, microfinance, governance, or some other aspect of development -- that you highlight the importance of enabling women. In principle, there are few who would disagree with you. But how do you drive this case home? Rigorous case studies certainly help. The Initiative for Inclusive Security has compiled several of these comprehensive cases over the past three years as part of their [Rwanda project](#), released this week.

Rwanda provides a backdrop to conduct some impressive, dispositive research on the before and after impact of women in leadership:

With nearly half its parliament composed of women, Rwanda provides a compelling example of how women leaders helped rebuild society, 14 years after a genocide that left nearly a million Rwandans dead. The Initiative's comprehensive body of written work documents the significance of women's leadership following conflict. These papers reveal that women legislators have:

- Led parliament by drafting the only substantive bill to emerge from the legislative rather than the executive branch, a far-reaching law to combat gender-based violence;
- Spearheaded efforts to eliminate discrimination and enhance human rights protections; and
- Fostered cross-party and male-female collaboration through the Forum of Rwandan Women Parliamentarians, Rwanda's all-party legislative women's caucus, and by involving men in efforts to craft legislation.

As I understand it, the Initiative for Inclusive Security was founded on similar research that identified the positive effect once a quantifiable critical mass of women take on positions of leadership. It's much easier to understand how change happens when there are good examples that can be broken open and explored; the Initiative is doing we advocates a service with these cases -- let's take them up on the offer!

Posted by Josh Weissburg on April 11, 2008 12:15 PM | [Permalink](#)

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