Gender Equality in Elected Office in Asia Pacific:

Six Actions to Expand Women's Empowerment

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Foreword

Women's participation and contribution to politics are prerequisites for human development and democratic governance. While the Asia-Pacific Region is home to two-thirds of the world's population and has exhibited enormous economic progress in recent decades, gender equality in politics is still a distant reality for many countries in the region. Globally, the Asia-Pacific region is second from the bottom on women's political participation, with women holding on average only 18.2% of legislative seats.

Promoting increased women's political leadership and gender equality is a developmental issue, a human rights issue and also a moral obligation. More inclusive parliaments also have the capacity to strengthen civic engagement and democratic participation among its citizens. Within the Asia-Pacific, as is the case globally, it is vital to remove barriers to women's entry into the political realm and erase all forms of sex discrimination to unleash the potential of women and to reap political, social and economic dividends. A political system where half the population does not fully participate limits the opportunity for men and women to influence and benefit from political and economic decisions.

UNDP is fully committed to promoting gender equality and empowering women by supporting the goal of thirty percent of women holding parliamentary seats globally. Among all Asia-Pacific member states, the proportion of women in national parliament has gradually risen on average by about 0.5% per annum since 1995. At the current rate of progress, this UN Millennium Development Goal target will not be reached globally before 2025, and long beyond that in many countries. In addition, if maintained at this pace of change, without any further active intervention, actual gender parity in Asia-Pacific national legislatures will only be achieved more than half a century from now.

The UNDP publication Gender Equality in Elected Office in Asia-Pacific: Six Actions to Expand Women's Empowerment provides an overview of women's political representation in Asia-Pacific member states, and reviews the impact of

a series of six fast-track institutional reforms which can contribute towards the attainment of gender equality in elected office. These six "windows or opportunity" include an examination of legally binding quotas, constitutional rights, political party recruitment, capacity building initiatives, parliamentary reform and political party recruitment. The six-step action plan is structured so national policy makers and practitioners working to increase women's political involvement can select one window of opportunity to expanding women's political participation most relevant to their specific context.

The action plan is targeted to countries in the Asia-Pacific that wish to identify strategies relevant to their national context for achieving political equality. It has relevance for a wide range of stakeholders including political parties, parliament, government ministries, civil society and international organizations and development agencies that provide programming support for women's political participation.

While the six-point action plan provides guidance to how political equality can be realized women must step forward and take their rightful place in decision-making. With access to established networks of influence, resources, role models, mentors and family and community support, women's participation in the political arena will be more likely to become a reality for the Asia-Pacific Region.

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Executive Summary

The goal of equal participation for women and men in decision-making roles is essential to achieve social justice and women's empowerment, to deliver development goals, and to strengthen the legitimacy of democratic bodies.

The international community has repeatedly stressed the need to ensure equal rights of men and women. The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women (1995) committed the world's government to removing obstacles facing women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural, and political decision-making.[1] The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) reinforced this commitment. Accordingly, member states have pledged to take all actions necessary for promoting equally effective participation of men and women in all governance institutions, including elected and appointed bodies, in the judiciary and civil service. The equal enjoyment of human rights is essential for women to participate fully in all spheres of public and private life, and to be empowered as citizens, activists and leaders.

Women's leadership is also essential for inclusive, equitable and sustained development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The Asia-Pacific region continues to confront major challenges in actualizing gender equality in education and the labor market, in social policies, healthcare, and reproductive rights, as well as in the home and care of dependents.[2] Some issues face women and men equally. However, women of all ages are particularly vulnerable to problems arising from lack of access to land, credit and decent paid work, poverty within single parent households, gender-based violence, female infanticide, sex trafficking, lack of marital and inheritance rights, access to justice as well as the challenges of sexual assault and rape in war-torn societies. Development cannot be effective if decision-making excludes 51% of the world's population. Women in decision-making roles also have a voice in the policy agenda.[3] In seeking to address complex challenges, the inclusion of women's voices in public policymaking processes broadens the range of diverse experiences, outlooks, and talent brought into deliberations. Legislative bodies with members drawn from diverse backgrounds and outlooks are generally more innovative, identifying novel solutions 'outside the box' to tackle complex

problems. Policies like paid parental leave, child care, family friendly workplaces, and village development priorities, are given higher priority when women actively advocate these issues in policy debates and decision-making processes. Evidence from India suggests that where women leaders have a strong presence on local councils, they are likely to use their weight to support investments in areas like water and sanitation, which are critical for human health and development.[4]

Lastly, parliaments which reflect all sectors of society are also symbolically important for the legitimacy and democratic quality of representative bodies. Inclusive parliaments have the capacity to strengthen civic engagement and democratic participation among citizens. Female leaders also serve as role models who retain the ability to mobilize grassroots women as voters, party members, and political activists.[5] The empowerment of women in elected office can thus broadly strengthen democratic participation.

For all these reasons, the United Nations has targeted achieving gender equality and women's empowerment in elected office. The proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments is a common yardstick used to judge progress towards these goals. This has been adopted as one indicator to monitor how far the world's governments achieve Millennium Development Goal 3, promoting gender equality and empowering women.[6] Yet the record of women in high-level decision-making offices demonstrates continuing challenges in achieving this target. Around the world, women hold 19.6 percent of seats in single/lower chambers of parliament (in December 2011), compared to 11.3 percent in 1995. This represents steady progress yet only two dozen countries worldwide have achieved the 30 percent target for women in decision-making positions set by the 1995 Beijing Platform. Only eight national parliaments have

reached the 40-60% zone of parity. Despite advances, discrimination against women persists in law, electoral nomination and voting practices. Many countries have now developed initiatives designed to overcome barriers to gender equality but effective implementation and enforcement remains a significant hurdle.[7]

In comparison, within the Asia-Pacific region, by late-2011 women constitute one fifth (18.3%) of all members of national parliaments in Asian states, up from 15% in 2000. The Pacific region, where women constitute on average only 13% of all national parliamentarians, lags behind the world average.[8] From the 13 Pacific parliaments represented in the Pacific Islands Forum[9], there are only 17 women out of 485 parliamentarians. Moreover, major contrasts persist among Asia-Pacific nations. Today, women comprise one quarter to one third of all MPs in the lower house in New Zealand (34%), Nepal (33%), Timor-Leste (29%) and Viet Nam (24%). By contrast, however, there is only one woman member in the parliaments of Tonga[10], the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea. Not a single women representative currently sits in the lower house in the Nauru, and the Federated States of Micronesia. Women's representation in the Pacific Island states, excluding Australia and New Zealand, is the lowest in the world, even lagging behind the Arab region.

Legislative careers in local, regional and national bodies also serve as pipelines to higher leadership. Worldwide, there are few women in top decision-making posts as an elected Head of State or Government. Currently, in 195 states around the globe, only 15 (5%) are headed by a woman. In Asia, however, women have held many top leadership positions. For example, some of the most well-known are: Sheikh Hasina Wajed and Begum Khaleda Zia in Bangladesh, Aung San Suu Kyi in Burma, Sonia Gandhi in India, Megawati Sukarnoputri in Indonesia, Wan

Azizah Wan Ismail in Malaysia, Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan, Corazon C. Aquino and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo from the Philippines, and Chandrika Kumaratunga in Sri Lanka. These leaders were often able to rise to president, prime ministerial and opposition leader roles due to family and dynastic connections, as the widows or daughters of former government and opposition leaders.[11] Nevertheless, many Asian countries led by women have not achieved equivalent gains at lower ranks of government and parliament. On average, women are less than 10 per cent of ministers in Asia- Pacific (excluding Australia and New Zealand) and women comprise only 20 per cent or more of cabinet in Mongolia, Nepal and Timor-Leste.[12] Political parties with a dearth of women in elected office at sub-national and national levels encounter difficulties appointing women into higher office as ministers, party leaders, or heads of state and government.

Explaining gender disparities in elected office: development, culture and institutions

Why do these contrasts persist among Asia-Pacific countries? The region is highly diverse, the fastest growing in the world, while at the same time it is home to half of the world's poor: a region that houses countries experiencing economic transition (China, Mongolia, Viet Nam), two of the world's largest economies (China, India), middle income countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam), and countries facing or recovering from conflict (Afghanistan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste). In terms of health status, educational attainments or employment opportunities, a girl born in South Asia today still has very different life chances compared to her counterpart in East Asia.[13] Asian-Pacific societies have diverse religious faiths, divisions by ethnicity, race, caste, income and class as well as unique historical cultural traditions and colonial backgrounds. Countries also differ in vulnerability to humanitarian

and natural disasters arising from threats such as floods, tsunamis, cyclones, fires, volcanoes, and earthquakes.

Therefore, Asia-Pacific states have varied economic and social contexts and they face equally diverse development goals. No single solution fits every context; nevertheless these societies share some common challenges in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.

Development

One common explanation for the scarcity of women politicians emphasizes the impact of *human development*. Compared with men, women in many developing countries typically have lower levels of education, literacy, and participation in the paid labor-force.[14] Development generally expands women's schooling and health, reducing fertility rates and thus time spent on childcare. It is vitally important to expand human development. Yet societies can experience substantial growth in per capita GDP, as well as improvements in girls' school enrolment, women's labor force participation, and life expectancy -- all important developmental goals -- without necessarily experiencing equivalent gains for women's empowerment in decision-making positions. This is reinforced by the findings from the 2011 Global Gender Gap Report. In Japan, for example, one of the most affluent post-industrial societies in the world, women remain only 11.3% of the Diet[15] (ranking 106th worldwide in Dec 2011), and roughly 8% of representatives in local and regional bodies.[16] Similarly in the Republic of Korea, women comprise only 14.7% of the parliament (ranking 87th worldwide in Dec 2011). By contrast, in Afghanistan, one of the poorest societies in the world, women are 28% of the Wolesi Jirga (ranking 30th worldwide in 2011). Currently the highest proportion of women in parliament (56.3%) is found in Rwanda, one of the least developed nations.

Figure 1 *The constraints of gender-related development*

Figure 1 The constraints of gender-related development

Asia-Pacific

- Pacific
- Eastern Asia
- Southern Asia
- South-Eastern Asia
- Australasia

Notes: Gender related development measures achievement in the same basic capabilities as the Human Development Index, including in longevity, educational attainment and per capita income, but it takes note of inequality in achievement between women and men.

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, Women in National Parliaments (October 2010); Human Development Report 2007 United National Development Programme http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/indices/gdi_gem/.

The broader picture can be compared by using the UNDP Gender-related Development Index (GDI). This index measures achievement in the same basic capabilities as the Human Development Index, including longevity, education and literacy, and per capita GDP, but takes note of inequality in achievement between women and men. Figure 1 demonstrates the absence of any systematic relationship between the Gender-related Development Index and the proportion of women in elected office in the Asia Pacific region. It therefore appears that human development, on its own, is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition to guarantee women's representation among Asia-Pacific states.

Figure 2 · Democratization and women's representation

Asia-Pacific

- ● Pacific
- ● Eastern Asia
- △ Southern Asia
- ◇ South- Eastern Asia
- + Australasia

R^2 Linear = 0.152

Notes: The level of liberal democracy is measured by the summarized Freedom House measure of civil liberties and political rights 2010, standardized to 100-pts.

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, Women in National Parliaments (October 2010); www.freedomhouse.org
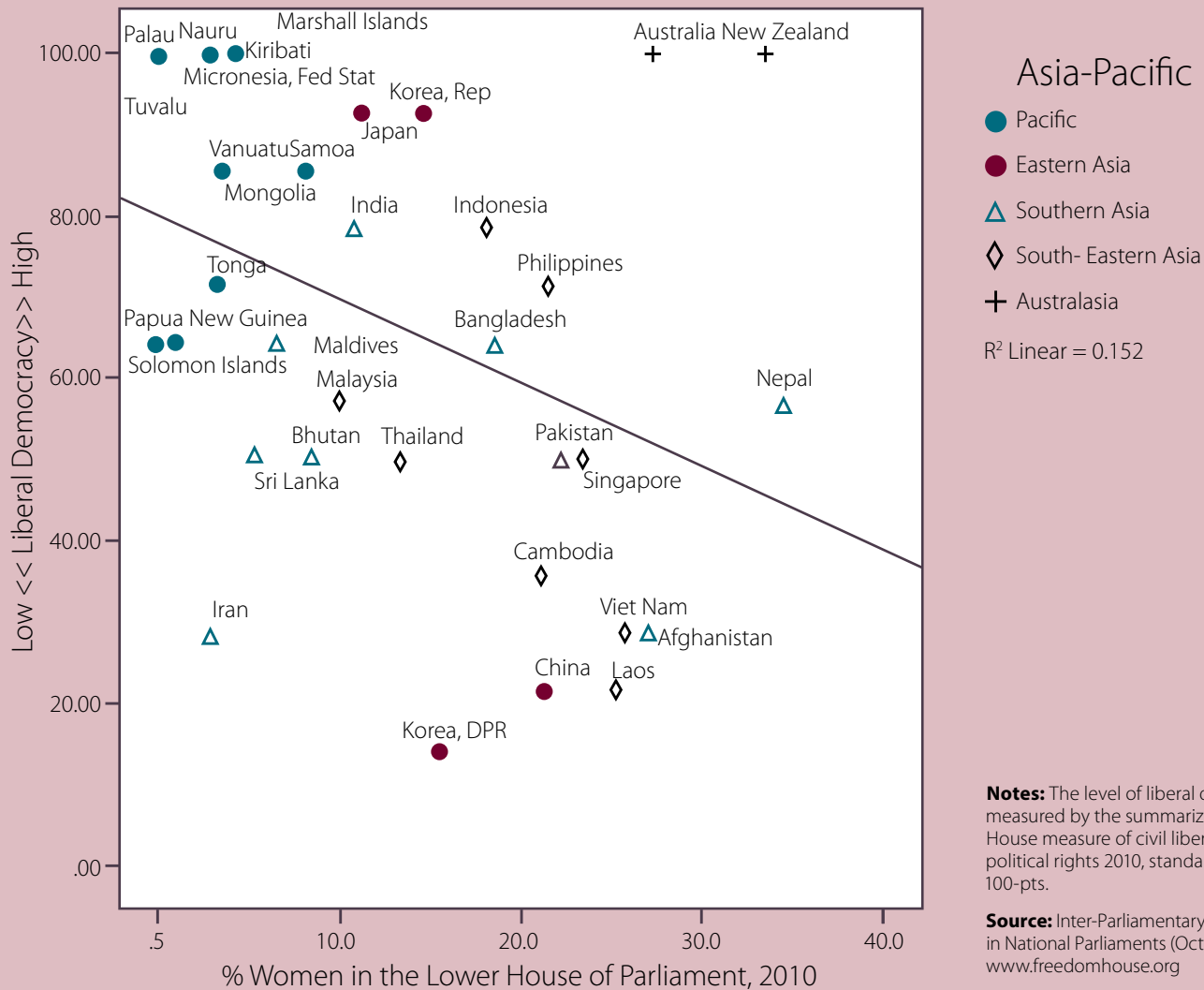
Democracy and democratization

The process of democratization is often assumed to strengthen gender equality, expand opportunities for women to mobilize and organize, improve party competition in free and fair elections, and strengthen human rights. Nevertheless the picture is complex and at the same time the process of adopting a new democratic constitution and electoral system can lead to the abolition of legal quotas and reserved seats. The number of women in elected office has thereby fallen in many former Soviet states, such as Mongolia, immediately following the regime transition, just at a time when parliaments are becoming more independent and powerful.[17]

As illustrated in Figure 2, there is a negative relationship in Asia-Pacific between the proportion of women in the lower house of parliament and levels of liberal democracy in each country, as measured by Freedom House. Processes of democratization are vitally important but in the short-term, at least, the transition to democracy does

Figure 3   *The constraints of traditional cultural attitudes*
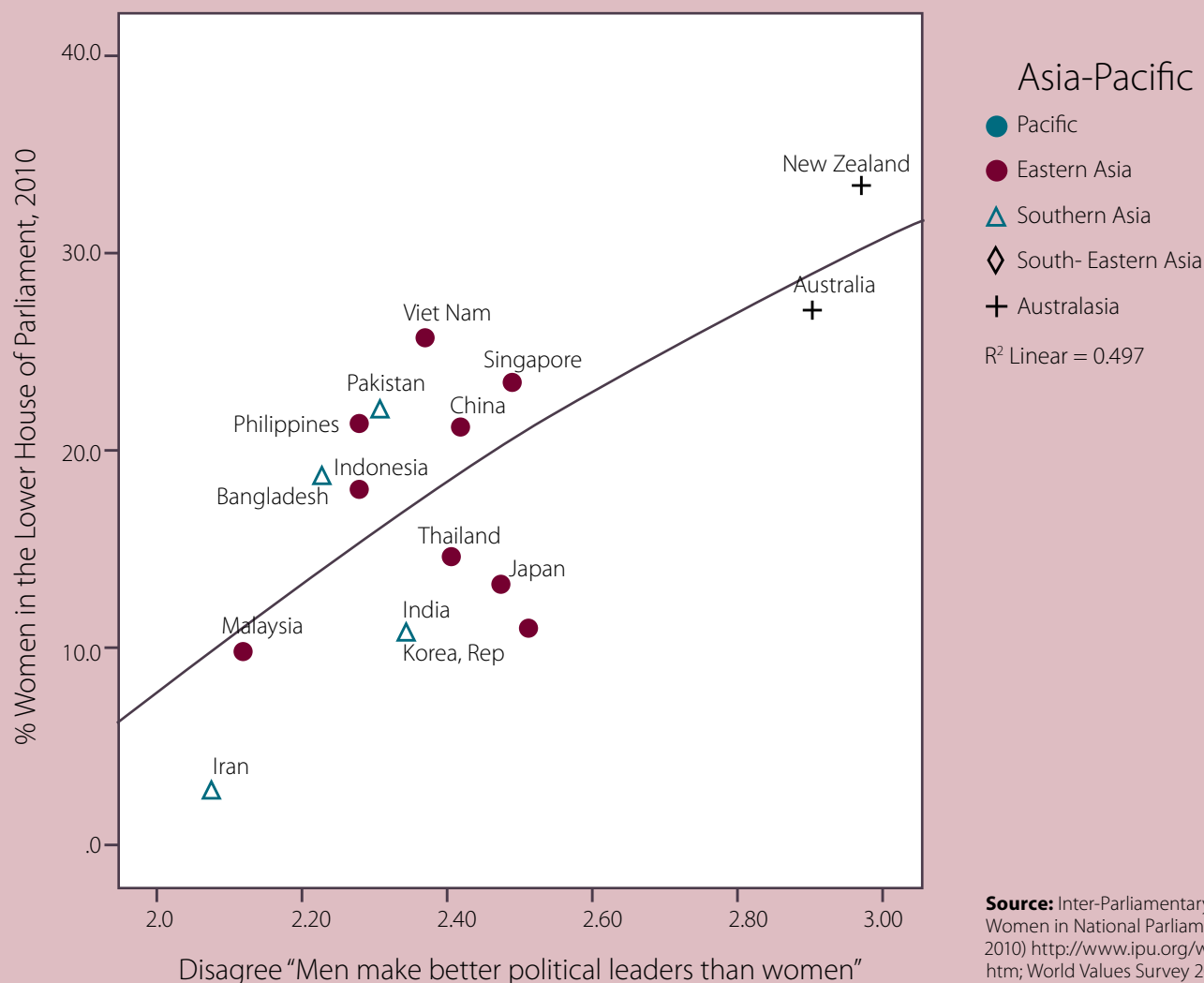
Asia-Pacific

- ● Pacific
- ● Eastern Asia
- △ Southern Asia
- ◊ South- Eastern Asia
- ✛ Australasia

R^2 Linear = 0.497

not, by itself, automatically strengthen the representation of women; rather the reverse can be observed.[18] Thus the one-party Communist states of China and Viet Nam have more than twice as many women in their national legislatures than the democratic states of India and the Republic of Korea.

Culture

Traditional *cultural attitudes and values* can also serve as important constraints for achieving gender equality in any

society, through deterring women from seeking elected office (on the supply-side) or else discriminating against their adoption by gate-keepers (on the demand-side). Culture refers to the norms and values predominant in any society. Culture thus determines attitudes towards sex roles. Some societies (or factions of societies) believe the role of women and men should be strongly differentiated, with women primarily responsible for care of the home and family, while men adopt traditional breadwinner and leadership roles. By contrast, in more egalitarian cultures,

Figure 4   *Stages in the candidate selection process*
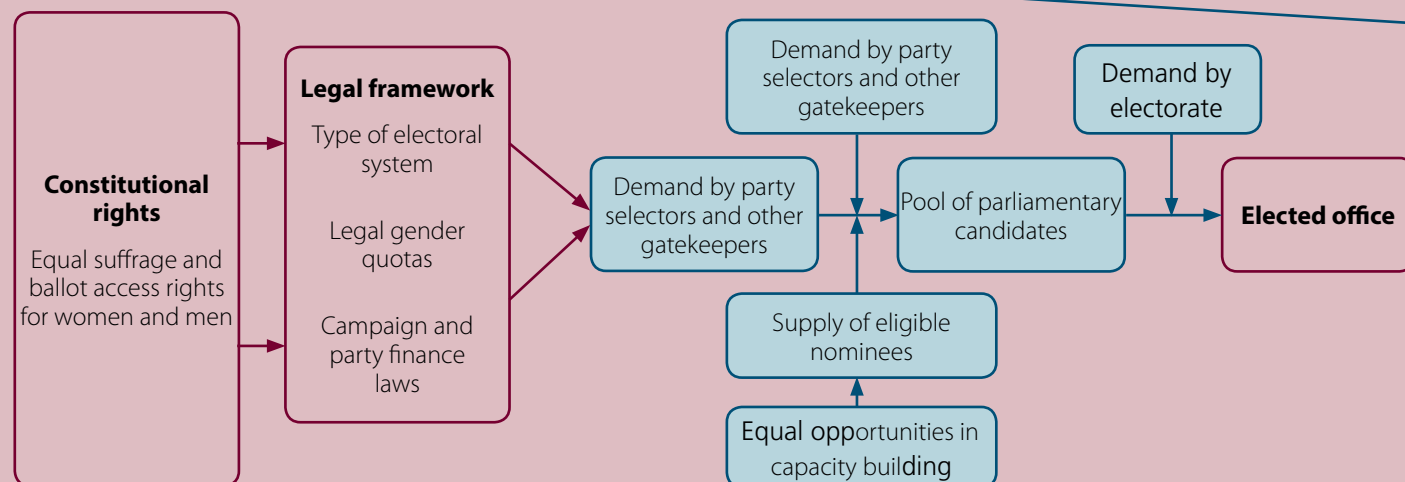
sex roles are regarded as more interchangeable. Cultural values are most commonly measured by social surveys.

A substantial body of evidence confirms more women are usually elected in societies with relatively egalitarian attitudes towards the roles of women and men.[19] As shown in Figure 3, traditional cultural attitudes towards women in politics continue to prevail in many Asia-Pacific states. Hence, a clear relationship between cultural attitudes and the success of women in parliament exists. The data available amongst Asia-Pacific societies from successive waves of the World Values Survey demonstrates considerable cross-national variations in attitudes towards gender equality, in politics as well as in the workplace and the home, even among countries with similar levels of economic development and shared cultural traditions.[20]

Mass media and formal education both contribute towards shaping cultural values, as discussed later in this

report, and they can both play a role either reinforcing or challenging gendered stereotypes. Generational shifts and education are gradually encouraging the spread of more favorable attitudes towards gender equality in post-industrial societies. Yet even though important, it remains difficult to transform deep-rooted cultural norms and values, at least in the short-term.

Institutions

By contrast, the *institutional context* -- especially the process of recruiting candidates for local and national elected office -- is the arena most amenable to fast-track reforms. Institutions refer to the constitution, laws, and formal regulations which govern processes of candidate nomination, appointment and election to decision-making bodies. This focus also compliments efforts to strengthen the institutions of democratic governance at national, regional, and local levels.

CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT Guarantee equal citizenship rights for women and men, including rights to the voting suffrage and to candidate nomination.

ELECTORAL SYSTEM Reform the type of electoral system; proportional representation with large mean district magnitudes maximizes opportunities for women.

LEGAL QUOTAS Review laws regulating candidate recruitment processes for all parties; the uses of reserved seats for women members or gender quotas for candidates generally expand women's representation.

PARTY RULES AND RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES Review internal candidate recruitment process within specific parties; fast-track strategies designed to achieve gender equality for nominated candidates are implemented through quotas and targets specified in party rulebooks and regulations.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT Strengthen the skills and resources of women for elected office, with initiatives by parties the media, and NGOs, including knowledge networks, mentoring programs, skills training, and funding for women candidates.

PARLIAMENTARY REFORMS Reform the rules and internal procedures, including the facilities and working conditions provided for members, such as those determining the hours and days of sitting, the principles used for recruitment to leadership positions, and the provision of childcare facilities.

Action Plan Interventions

Figure 4 outlines the sequential stages in candidate recruitment, starting from the broad context of constitutional rights through the successive steps to entry into elected office. Figure 5 identifies an Action Plan with a series of six fast-track institutional reforms which can contribute towards the attainment of gender equality in elected office in Asia-Pacific.

(i) CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS: Political rights and civil liberties for women embodied in the national constitution establish the broadest context for gender equality. This is especially true for voting rights, the right to hold public office, and the right to exercise public functions, removing any residual forms of sex discrimination or limits to equal citizenship.[21]

(ii) ELECTORAL SYSTEMS AND PARTY LAWS: In turn, laws governing elections and political parties regulate nomination and election processes used for national, supra-national, and sub-national elected office. The most important laws concern the type of electoral system used in any contest, whether proportional representation, mixed, or majoritarian, each providing different incentives and opportunities for the party selectorate engaged in candidate recruitment. Other features of electoral law shaping women's representation include the use of reserved seats, the use of open or closed party lists, the average size of district magnitude (the number of members returned per constituency), the provision and allocation of party, candidate, and campaign funding, the use of incumbency term limits, ballot access nomination rules, and threshold requirements shaping opportunities for minor parties and independent candidates. One infrequently recognized issue especially important for women's representation in the Pacific region, also open to constitutional and electoral reform, concerns the size of parliament. In general, smaller legislatures usually contain lower proportions of women members.

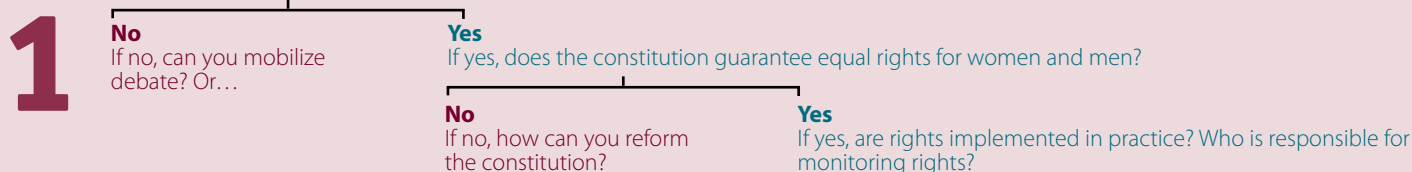**Figure 6** *TRAJECTORIES OF CHANGE, SELECTED SOCIETIES 1990-2010*
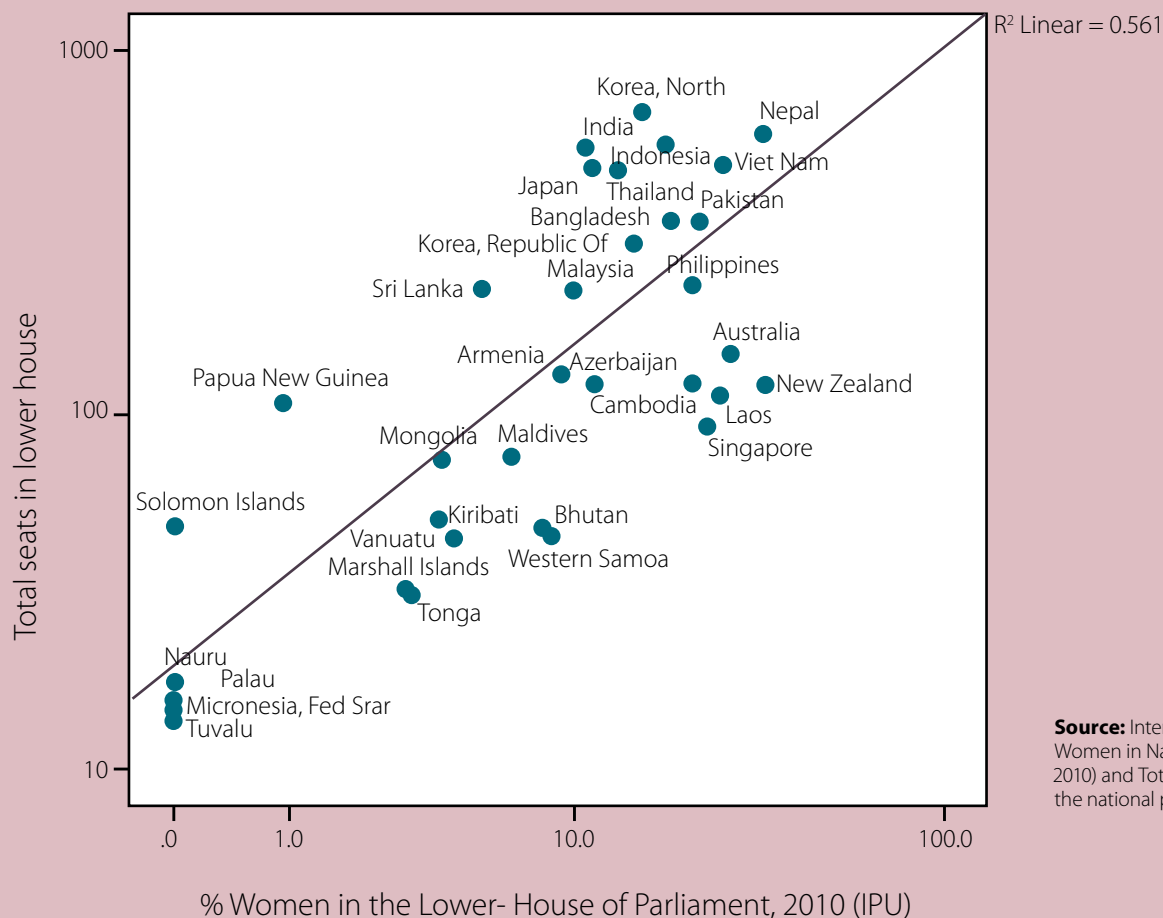
Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, Women in National Parliaments (October 2010) and Total seats in the lower house of the national parliament.

(iii) LEGAL QUOTAS: During the last decade, particular attention has been paid to the use of reserved seats and legal candidate quotas designed to fast-track women's nomination and election to legislative office, as well as recruitment for the civil service and judiciary. These measures vary in the level of women's representation they require, whether they specify any placement provisions, which institutions – if any – monitor their implementation, and whether they include any penalties for non-compliance.

(iv) PARTY RULES: In addition, political parties have their own informal norms, internal rules and standardized procedures for the recruitment and selection of candidates for elected office. Effective party strategies designed to increase recruitment of women include voluntary adoption and implementation of party-specific gender quotas, informal targets, and other positive action mechanisms at all levels of office, including internal party positions.[22]

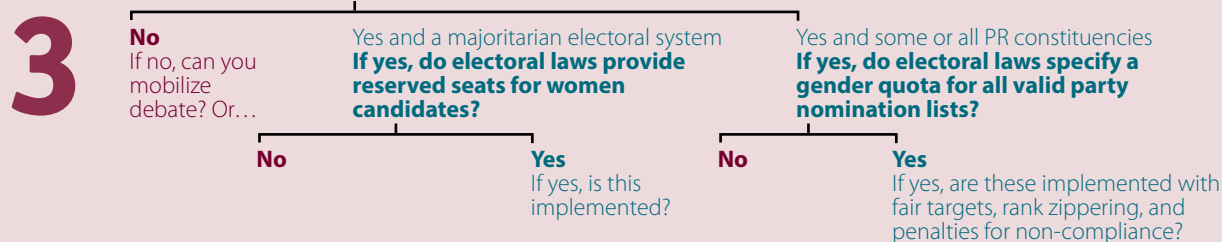**Figure 7**   *Stages in the candidate selection process*
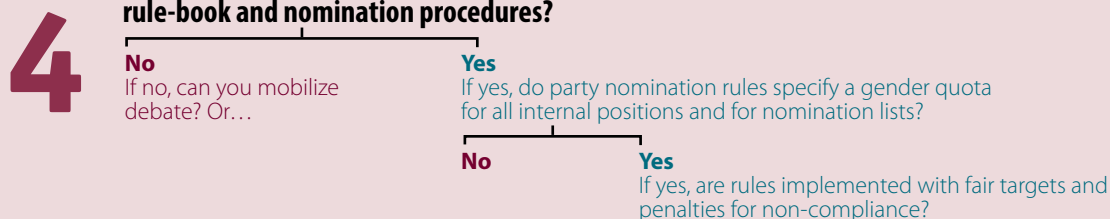
1

Step 1. Is constitutional reform under debate?

No
If no, can you mobilize debate? Or…

Yes
If yes, does the constitution guarantee equal rights for women and men?

No
If no, how can you reform the constitution?

Yes
If yes, are rights implemented in practice? Who is responsible for monitoring rights?

2

Step 2. Is reform of your electoral laws under debate?

No
If no, can you mobilize debate? Or…

Yes
If yes, can you encourage electoral laws which use proportional representation (PR) for all or some constituencies?

No
If no, how can you mobilize electoral reform?

Yes
If yes, what proportion of seats use PR and what is their average district magnitude (members per district)?

3
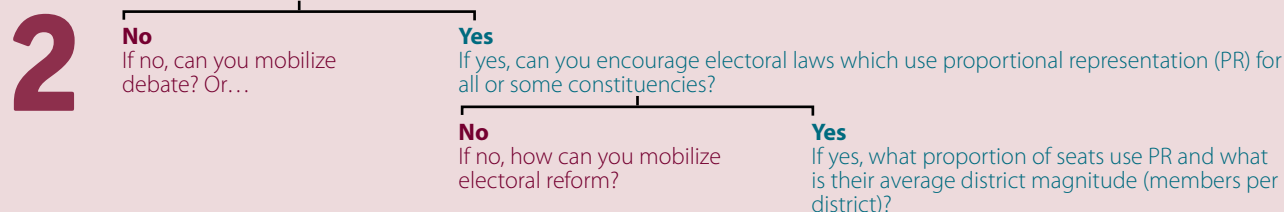
Step 3. Is the adoption of a gender quota law under debate?

No
If no, can you mobilize debate? Or…

Yes and a majoritarian electoral system
If yes, do electoral laws provide reserved seats for women candidates?

Yes and some or all PR constituencies
If yes, do electoral laws specify a gender quota for all valid party nomination lists?

No

Yes
If yes, is this implemented?

No

Yes
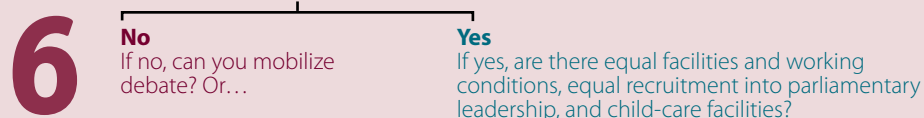If yes, are these implemented with fair targets, rank zippering, and penalties for non-compliance?

4

Step 4. Is your own political party debating reforming its internal constitution, rule-book and nomination procedures?

No
If no, can you mobilize debate? Or…

Yes
If yes, do party nomination rules specify a gender quota for all internal positions and for nomination lists?

No

Yes
If yes, are rules implemented with fair targets and penalties for non-compliance?

5

Step 5. Are there debates about ways to expand the capacity and skills of aspirants and candidates for elected office?

No
If no, can you mobilize debate? Or…

Yes
If yes, are there knowledge networks, training institutions, mentoring programs, and campaign funding subsidies for candidates?

6

Step 6. Is parliamentary reform under debate?

No
If no, can you mobilize debate? Or…

Yes
If yes, are there equal facilities and working conditions, equal recruitment into parliamentary leadership, and child-care facilities?

(v) CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT: Multiple actors can contribute towards capacity development, including international agencies, women's ministries, government gender equality commissions, equal opportunity agencies, political parties, and women's groups and networks in civil society. A diverse range of initiatives are designed to build the capacity of the pool of potential women leaders in the pipe-line, to strengthen the skills, experience, and knowledge of women once they enter elected office, as well as address broader issues of institutional capacity-building. These interventions can be categorized in terms of three distinct but overlapping threads: *equal opportunity initiatives* (candidate training, recruitment initiatives, and knowledge networks), *initiatives to combat stereotypes and raise awareness* (monitoring and reporting the number of male and female candidates for elected office by national statistical offices, diversity audits, media campaigns and citizen education), and *political party initiatives* (party action plans, women's sections, fundraising, and women's parties). Candidate training, in particular, is often one of the most popular strategies in the run up to elections, although its effectiveness depends upon many conditions such as frequency and duration of training sessions, type of skills and knowledge transmitted, and the target group.

(vi) GENDER-SENSITIVE PARLIAMENTS: Lastly, legislative bodies are organized around a set of standardized rules, operating procedures, and institutional facilities which may generate obstacles to the equal inclusion of women in all decision-making and leadership roles. Elected bodies should review their internal procedures to insure inclusion of gender-sensitive policies, such as considering mainstreaming gendered policy issues, the hours of parliamentary sitting, the recruitment of leadership positions within the legislature, and the provision of childcare and maternal facilities.

When selecting interventions designed to strengthen gender equality in elected office, no single 'one-size-fits-all' solution is suitable for all national contexts. There is no set sequence of stages. Instead, the most effective strategies expanding opportunities for women in elected and appointed office depend upon specific local conditions. The decision tree in Figure 7 identifies key options but it is up to national stakeholders to determine the most effective opportunities for reform.

Thus states in the early stages of peace-building, for example, emerging from deep-rooted deadly conflict, or transitioning away from autocracy, have an important opportunity to incorporate women's rights into new constitutional agreements. Through this process, countries such as Nepal, Timor-Leste, and Afghanistan have leaped ahead of other nations in the region in terms of women's representation within national parliaments.[23] Similarly, states implementing major electoral reforms, or establishing new local and regional bodies for decentralized governance, can incorporate effective provisions for women's representation as part of this larger reform process.[24]

Where constitutional arrangements are more settled, opportunities for reform may arise through campaigns favoring the adoption of legal quotas, reforms within specific parties concerning internal rules for candidate recruitment, the launch of capacity development initiatives for prospective candidates, and changes to the rules and procedures affecting elected bodies. Even in the absence of National Action Plans, political parties can develop and publish their own Party Action Plans designed to ensure gender equality in elected office, with clearly-specified performance targets and goals.

To provide an assessment of opportunities for enhancing women's political participation across the region, this report sets out the general picture of women's representation in Asia-Pacific member states and reviews the impact of each of these institutional strategies in the Action Plan. Evidence is derived from cross-national comparisons among Asia-Pacific states, from public opinion surveys, and from 'before' and 'after' case-studies. The study focuses in particular upon selected exemplars illustrating the positive impact of each of these factors, illuminating how measures were introduced and why some strategies have proved more successful and effective than others. The study concludes by considering future steps for implementing these strategies.

Trends in Women's Representation in Elected Office in Asia-Pacific


Chadari Foundation

Understanding the impact of these various types of interventions requires benchmarking general patterns and observable trends both worldwide and within the Asia-Pacific region.

The most straightforward indicator of progress towards gender equality in political representation comes from comparing the proportion of women currently elected to the lower house of the national parliament in each country (as of late-2011). When interpreting the historical data, however, some caution is necessary. The number of women in elected office is not equivalent to women's empowerment, by any means. Legislative bodies vary greatly in their functions, powers and roles. Hence parliaments lack independence in countries such as Laos, Bhutan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.[25] The inclusion of women may only be a token gesture where legislatures, congresses, and national assemblies are weak 'rubber-stamp' institutions and where members lack the capacity to check and scrutinize the executive or to propose legislation. Even in largely ceremonial assemblies, however, the inclusion of women has some symbolic importance, providing women members with experience in office.

As Table 1 and Figure 8 illustrate, the forty countries located in Asia-Pacific display striking contrasts in women's representation in the lower house of national parliaments in 2010. Since this data was recorded, there have been six elections in the Pacific resulting in minor changes to numbers. Leading countries in the Asia-Pacific region are New Zealand and Nepal, where women comprise one third of all members of parliament. Women make up over one quarter of parliamentarians in Timor-Leste, Afghanistan, Australia, and Laos, and in Vietnam, women constitute 24.4% of Parliamentarians since May 2011. However, no single pattern can be clearly identified. Instead, leading societies for women's representation in the region vary substantially in their levels of socioeconomic development, experience of democracy, cultural heritage and regional locations. By contrast, in 2010 a clearer pattern emerges among countries where gender disparities are most extreme as these are nearly all Pacific island states with relatively small national assemblies. The challenge is greatest in the Solomon Islands, Nauru and Micronesia as no women are currently elected to these national parliaments. Similar cross-national contrasts can be observed for other indices of gender equality in elected and appointed office such as the proportion of women

Figure 8 **The proportion of women in the lower house of parliament, asia-pacific 2010**
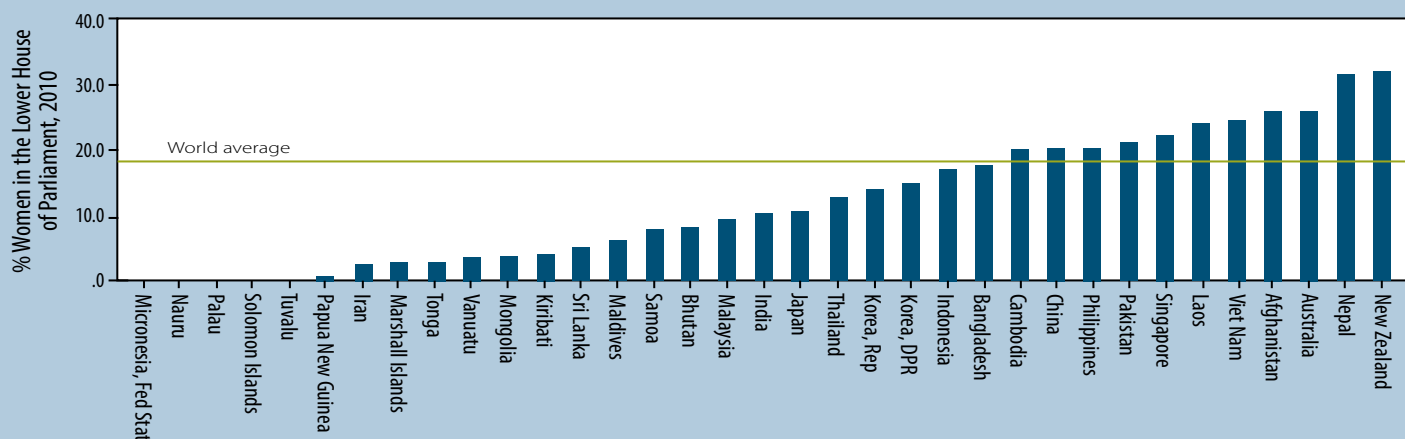
Source: Inter-Parliamentary - 'Women in Parliament' database 2010, http://www.ipu.org
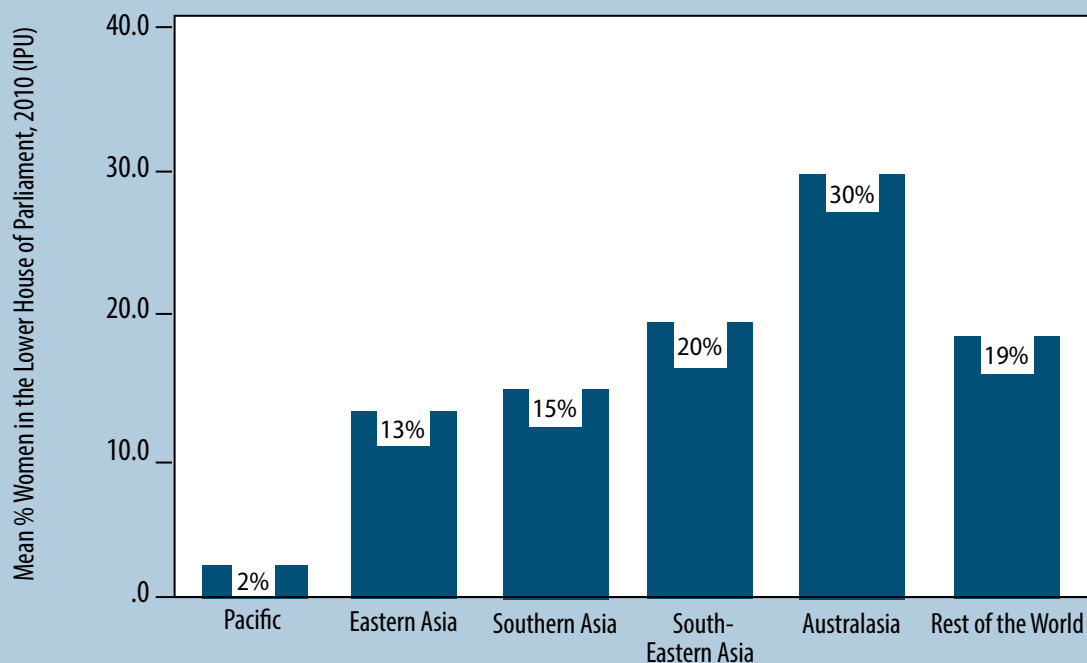
serving in the lower house being significantly associated with the proportion holding ministerial office, as well as women representation in the upper house in countries with bicameral legislatures.[26]

Figure 9 illustrates contrasts the average proportion of women in the lower house broken down by Asia-Pacific sub-regions. The comparison clearly and effectively demonstrates the lagging position of the Pacific states, where women members comprise on average only 2% of the lower house. Clearly this situation requires urgent attention. Eastern and Southern Asia also lag behind the global average, although South-Eastern Asia performs stronger, and the two established democracies in Australasia record the highest level of women's representation.

What has changed over time? Turning to long-term trends in women's representation in the lower house of national parliaments by Asia-Pacific sub-regions, illustrated in Figure 10, there are contrasting trajectories of change. Eastern Asia displays steady incremental growth during

the era since the end of World War II, albeit from a low base and at a slow pace of growth. In Southern Asia there is modest growth for many years prior to a dramatic rise during the 1990s. South-Eastern Asia shows a more dramatic change while Australasia displays a flat profile during earlier decades and then a dramatic rise since the 1980s. The proportion of women in parliaments in the rest of the world outside the Asia-Pacific region remained at 5% or less during the 1950s and 1960s, rising glacially by one or two percent per decade until a sharp jump upwards in 2000. If an increase in the proportion of women in elected office worldwide is maintained at the level evident since 1985 (0.20% per annum), without any policy intervention, a simple linear projection estimates it will take more than a century and a half for women parliamentarians to achieve parity with men. Despite important gains over time, women currently remain only a fifth of all legislators worldwide. This indicates that most countries are still far from the pledge demanding equality for women and men in decision-making positions made by the UN Beijing Platform more than a decade ago. Women also continue to lag behind in other elected and

Mean % Women in the Lower House of Parliament, 2010 (IPU)

Pacific: 2%
Eastern Asia: 13%
Southern Asia: 15%
South-Eastern Asia: 20%
Australasia: 30%
Rest of the World: 19%

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union 'Women in Parliament' database 2010, http://www.ipu.org

appointed positions of political leadership, as heads of state and government, ministers, parliamentary speakers, and party leaders.[27] Women in elected office are in the pipe-line for higher leadership positions, and thus election to national parliaments has important consequences for gender equality in other key decision-making roles.

The sub-regional averages, however, also disguise some of the dramatic contrasting trajectories of change experienced by some countries during the last two decades (see Figure 11 and Table 1). Hence if we just contrast the position in 1990 and 2010, it is apparent that many of the societies illustrated have seen steady or even sharp progress in women's representation, notably gains in New Zealand, Nepal, Laos, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

However, not all societies experienced similar rates of progress. Indeed it is most striking that Mongolia, which made progress in democratization during these years, saw the number of women in office plummet from 25% (under Communist one-party rule) down to just 4 percent. Dramatic short-term change is indicative of the impact of fast-track policies, notably the introduction (or abolition) of effective gender quotas or other institutional reforms. As discussed later in this report, among the Asia-Pacific countries with the highest proportions of women in parliament in 2010, ranked at the top of Table 1, most had constitutional, legal or party quotas. By contrast, among the twenty Asia-Pacific countries lagging behind in growth, at the bottom of Table 1, none had implemented quotas.

Figure 10 *Trends in women's representation, 1945-2010, sub-regions*
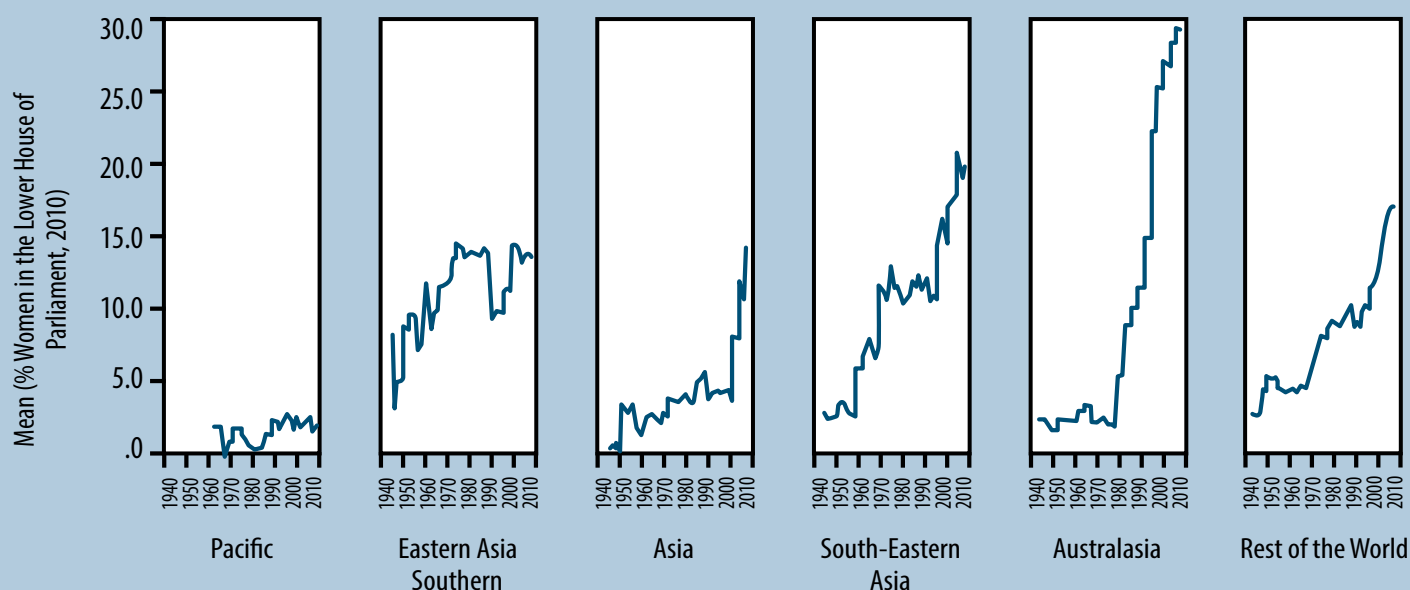
Note: The proportion of women in the lower or single house of parliament, 1945-2008
Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union 'Women in Parliament' database

Women in sub-national governments

The representation of women in sub-national government is also important because of the role of local and regional bodies in delivering community services and because local or regional representation can function as a pipeline for national leadership. Table 2 compares the proportion of women in rural, urban, district, regional and national legislatures. Information remains incomplete but the general picture confirms both the varied situation across Asian-Pacific nations and also that the under-representation of women is not simply confined to the national level. For example, women fare particularly poorly across all levels of government in Sri Lanka, Thailand and Japan. By contrast, due to the implementation of reserved seats, as discussed later in this report, women do better in sub-national than national elections in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

Gender gaps in voter turnout

Crucially, gender inequalities in elected office at all levels are far greater than the size of any residual gender gaps in voting throughout the electorate. Table 3 displays patterns of women and men's reported voter turnout in recent national elections, derived from the Asia-barometer survey and the World Values Survey. The table demonstrates that gender gaps in grassroots participation continue to be evident in many countries, although on average women's reported voting turnout

Figure 11 *TRAJECTORIES OF CHANGE, SELECTED SOCIETIES 1990-2010*
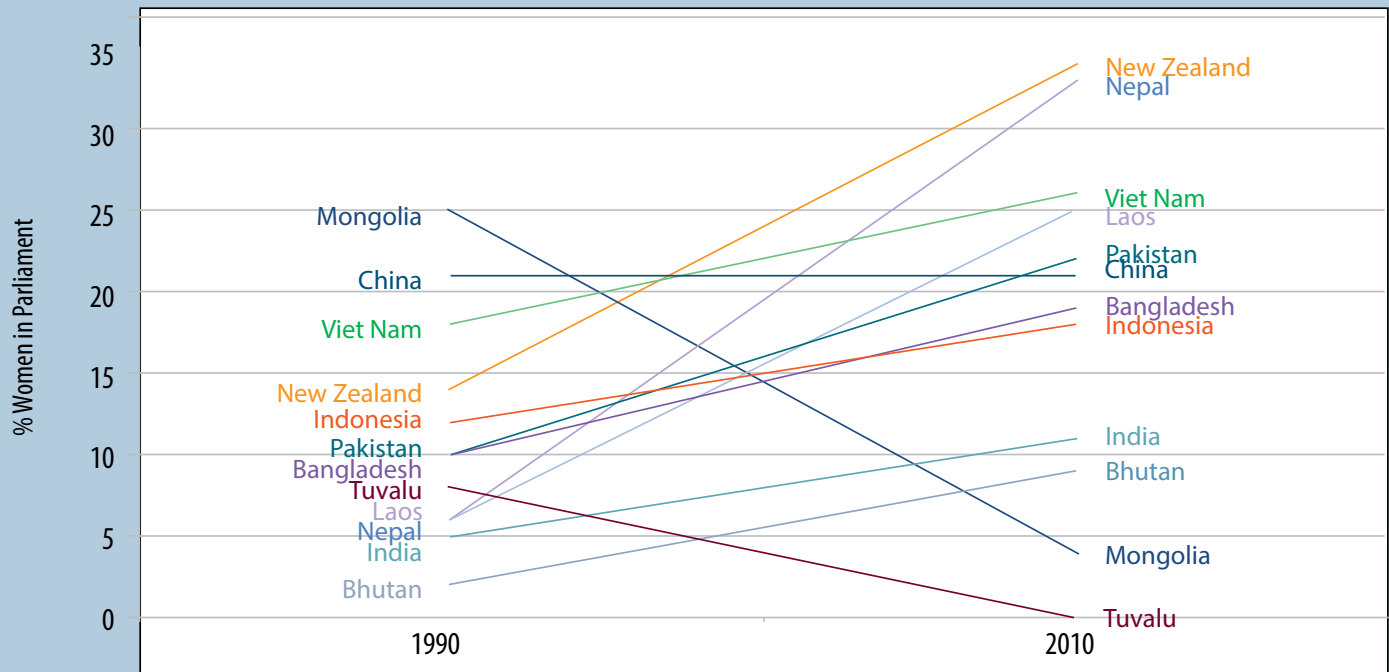
Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union 'Women in Parliament' database

is usually only 3 percentage points behind that of men. The gender gap in turnout according to both surveys is particularly large in places such as Vietnam (although Government data states that there is a 99% turn-out), Japan, the Republic of Korea, shrinking in size to become statistically insignificant and even reversing in a few other societies. Broader comparison of longitudinal evidence over successive elections suggests the size of any turnout gap may have gradually shrunk or even reversed in many countries worldwide.[28] Thus the size of residual disparities in legislative offices cannot be attributed directly to lack of voting turnout among women in the electorate.

Gender gaps in party membership and activism

There is some evidence indicating gender gaps in participation are larger in more demanding forms of activism. A comparison of reported active and passive membership among political parties across several Asia-Pacific states is shown in Table 4. This reveals more substantial gender gaps in a few cases. Notably, many women report not joining a party in Bangladesh, Viet Nam, India and Indonesia. In other states, especially the post-industrial societies of Australia and New Zealand, the gender gap in party membership is small and insignificant. Therefore there is firmer ground for the claim that women are often, although not always, less active as members within political party organizations. This residual disparity may continue to limit the number of women who are on the pipeline for nomination by party selectors.

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	Change	Reserved seats	Legal quotas	Voluntary party quotas
Table 1						**% Women in Lower House of National Parliaments, Asia-pacific 1990-2010**			

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	Change	Reserved seats	Legal quotas	Voluntary party quotas
New Zealand	14	21	31	28	34	+20			
Nepal	6	3	6	6	33	+27	Yes		
Timon-Leste				25	29			Yes	
Afghanistan	4				27		Yes		
Australia	6	10	22	25	27	+21			Yes
Viet Nam	18	19	26	27	26	+8			
Laos	6	9	21	23	25	+19			
Singapore	5	4	4	16	23	+18			
Pakistan	10	2	17	21	22	+12	Yes		
Taiwan					22		Yes		
Cambodia		6	7	10	21				
China	21	21	22	20	21	0		Yes	
Philippines	9	9	11	15	21	+11	Yes		Yes
Bangladesh	10	11	9	2	19	+9	Yes		
Indonesia	12	12	8	11	18	+6		Yes	Yes
Korea, DPR	21	20	20	20	16	-5			
Korea, Rep	2	2	4	13	15	+13			Yes
Thailand	3	6	5	7	13	+10			Yes
India	5	8	9	8	11	+6			Yes
Japan	1	3	5	7	11	+10			
Malaysia	5	8	10	9	10	+5			
Bhutan	2	0	2	9	9	+7			
Samoa		4	8	6	8				
Fiji		4	11	9	7				
Maldives	6	6	6	5	6	0			
Sri Lanka	5	5	5	5	5	0			
Kiribati		0	5	5	4				
Mongolia (*)	25	4	8	7	4	-21			
Vanuatu	4	2	2	4	4	0			
Marshall Islands		3	3	3	3				
Myanmar					3				
Tonga		3	0	0	3				
Papua NG		0	2	1	1				
Brunei					0				
Micronesia		0	0	0	0				
Nauru		6	0	0	0				
Palau		0	0	0	0				
Solomon Is.		2	2	0	0				
Tuvalu		8	0	0	0				
Total	**8**	**6**	**8**	**9**	**13**	**+5**			

Note: It should be noted that in 2012, Mongolia also introduced a 20% legal quota policy in the new Electoral law although with no penalties for compliance and no ranking requirement.

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union 'Women in Parliament' database http://www.ipu.org

Table 2 *% Women in SUB-NATIONAL LEGISLATURES, Asia-pacific, Oct 2010*

	Rural	Urban	District	Regional	National	Reserved seats or legal quotas at subnational level
Afghanistan				30	27	Reserved seats
Australia		28		28	27	
Bangladesh	23	25	34		19	Reserved seats
Bhutan					9	
Brunei					0	
Cambodia	15		13	10	21	
China	22	48			21	
Fiji					7	
India	37		37	37	11	Reserved seats
Indonesia			12	14	18	Legal quotas
Iran					3	
Japan	8	12		8	11	
Kiribati	4	0			4	
Korea, DPR					16	
Korea, Rep		22		15	15	Legal quotas
Laos					25	
Malaysia					10	
Maldives					6	
Marshall Is					3	
Micronesia					0	
Mongolia			28	16	4	
Myanmar					3	
Nauru					0	
Nepal					33	Reserved seats
New Zealand				29	34	
Pakistan	31		33		22	Reserved seats
Palau					0	
Papua NG					1	Reserved seats
Philippines	30				21	Reserved seats
Samoa					8	
Singapore					23	
Solomon Is.		5		3	0	
Sri Lanka	2	3		4	5	
Taiwan					22	
Thailand	13	13		13	13	
Timon-Leste					29	Reserved seats
Tonga	1				3	
Tuvalu	8				0	
Vanuatu	8			0	4	
Viet Nam	20			24	26	Legal quotas
Total average	**16**	**17**	**26**	**17**	**17**	

Source: UNDP. 2010. *Women's Representation in Local Government in Asia-Pacific, 2010.* Bangkok: UNDP.

Nation	% Men	% Women	Voting gender gap
Asia-Barometer (AB)			
Vietnam	90	81	-9
Japan	89	82	-7
Republic of Korea	71	65	-6
China	69	67	-2
Mongolia	88	85	-3
Indonesia	91	89	-2
Singapore	63	61	-2
Malaysia	60	59	-1
Thailand	87	87	0
Philippines	80	81	+1
Taiwan	82	83	+1
Average AB	**79**	**76**	**-3**
World Values Survey (WVS)			
Japan	80	72	-8
Republic of Korea	79	74	-5
Viet Nam	94	90	-4
India	93	90	-3
Malaysia	55	52	-3
Indonesia	92	90	-2
Thailand	95	94	-1
Australia	96	95	-1
Taiwan	74	77	+3
Average WVS	**84**	**82**	**-3**

Table 3 **Gender gaps in voting turnout, ASIA-PACIFIC**

Note: Reported voting turnout in last national election by sex

Source: Asia-Barometer; the World Values Survey 1981-2007

Constitutions

What accounts for remarkable cross-national contrasts in gender inequalities in elected office? Many attempts to explain these patterns have focused on political institutions. There is robust evidence indicating that legal frameworks and procedures matter. Moreover, these 'rules of the game' are also open to effective policy interventions and reform. For example, constitutions can determine women's empowerment directly through limiting women's rights as citizens and indirectly by establishing the type of electoral system and the number and level of legislative offices filled by elections or appointment.

At the most fundamental level, constitutional provisions ensure women's civil rights, including voting and holding public office irrespective of sex, as well as recognizing a wide range of other fundamental freedoms to prevent discrimination against women, such as those concerning property and inheritance rights, land rights, citizenship qualifications, and marital rights.[29] The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, enshrines "the equal rights of men and women", and these commitments were further amplified in the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), endorsed by 189 UN member states.[30] Other important international treaties include the 1966 Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which has been ratified by just over half (24 out of 40) states in the region, although only by Australia, New Zealand, the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea in the Pacific. Reflecting these international agreements, all national constitutions or Basic Laws in Asia-Pacific states grant women full citizenship on equal terms to men, with the right to stand for elected office and to cast a ballot.[31] Nevertheless, formal rights for women on paper may well fail to be implemented in practice. Moreover processes of constitutional change can provide a critical opportunity to strengthen equal rights – although changes may also reflect strict religious values which reduce women's rights, such as those to inheritance, divorce and land ownership. Constitutions can also specify the use of reserved seats for women and minorities, as discussed in section V of this report.

Table 4 **Mixed gender gaps in party membership, asia-pacific**

	Active member			Inactive member			Not a party member		
	Men	Women	Gap	Men	Women	Gap	Men	Women	Gap
Bangladesh	17	3	-14	11	5	-6	72	92	+20
Viet Nam	21	7	-14	3	2	-1	77	92	+15
India	17	8	-9	31	27	-4	52	65	+13
Indonesia	7	3	-4	15	9	-6	79	89	+10
China	9	4	-5	10	5	-5	82	91	+9
Taiwan	3	1	-2	10	5	-5	87	93	+6
Malaysia	7	3	-4	20	18	-2	74	79	+5
Philippines	5	2	-3	5	4	-1	91	94	+3
Japan	3	1	-2	4	3	-1	93	96	+3
Republic of Korea	3	1	-2	7	5	-2	91	94	+3
Thailand	7	6	-1	11	10	-1	83	84	+1
Australia	3	1	-2	6	7	+1	91	92	+1
New Zealand	2	2	0	12	13	+1	86	85	-1
Total average	**8**	**3**	**-5**	**12**	**9**	**-3**	**81**	**88**	**+7**

Note: Reported party membership by sex

Source: World Values Survey, 1981-2007

Electoral Systems

Beyond the principles of women's rights and the use of reserved seats contained in the constitution, women's representation is also shaped by the '*electoral system*'. Multiple aspects of electoral law are important and the most basic features involve the *ballot structure*, determining how voters can express their choices; the *electoral threshold*, or the minimum votes needed by a party to secure representation; the *electoral formula*, determining how votes are counted to allocate seats; and the *district magnitude*, referring to the number of seats per district. Electoral systems are categorized in this study into three primary families – majoritarian, combined, and proportional – each with many subsidiary types. The *Majoritarian* formula includes First-Past-the-Post, Second Ballot, the Block vote, Single Non-Transferable Vote, and Alternative Voting systems.[32] *Mixed* (or *combined)* systems incorporate both majoritarian and proportional formula in elections to the same body while *proportional formula* includes Party Lists as well as the Single Transferable Vote systems. Table 5 displays functioning electoral systems in Asia-Pacific, with few nations using proportional representation systems.

The idea that electoral systems matter – in particular that more women are usually elected to parliament under party list proportional representation (PR) than under majoritarian electoral systems – has been confirmed by a series of studies since the mid-1980s. This pattern has been established in research comparing both established democracies and also in a broader range of developing societies worldwide.[33] The proportion of women elected under mixed or combined systems usually falls somewhere between pure majoritarian and PR systems.[34] Within PR electoral systems, district magnitude has commonly been regarded as a particularly important factor, with more women usually elected from larger rather than smaller multimember constituencies.

The comparison in Table 6 illustrates how few proportional list electoral systems are used within the Asia-Pacific region, but the countries which do use them (Cambodia, Timor-Leste, Indonesia and Sri Lanka) have generally seen a rise in the proportion of women in parliament during the last decade. In 2010, within the region, women were on average 8 percent of MPs in majoritarian systems, 16.3

	Year of Constitution or constitutional amendment	Clause	Sub-national governance	Lower house of parliament	Upper house of parliament
Afghanistan	2004	Article 83, Ch. 5	X	X	X
Bangladesh	2004a	Article 65, Ch. 3	X	X	
India	1993		X		
Pakistan	2002b	Article 51(1,3)	X	X	X

Table 5 *Constitutions provisions for RESERVED SEATS in parliament*

Source: National constitutions.

a   Earlier constitutional provisions also reserved seats for women in parliament in 1972, 1978, and 1990, but each policy expired after 10-15 years.

b   Earlier constitutional provisions also reserved seats for women in parliament in 1954, 1956, 1962, 1970, 1973, 1981, and 1984.

percent in mixed systems, and 14.8 percent of members in PR systems.

The main reason used to explain greater success of women under PR (and the proportional ballot in mixed systems) is that under these rules, each party presents the public with their collective list of candidates for each multimember district. As such, parties have an *electoral incentive* to maximize their collective appeal in party lists by including candidates drawn from all major social cleavages in the electorate. Multimember districts encourage collective party accountability for the complete list of candidates. Where parties have to nominate a slate of candidates for a multimember district, the exclusion of any major social sector, including women, could signal discrimination, and could therefore risk an electoral penalty at the ballot box.

By contrast, in first-past-the-post systems, parliamentary candidates run within each single member district. Where the selection process is in the hands of the local constituency party, this creates minimal incentive for each particular constituency to pick a ticket that is 'balanced' at the district or national level. Local party members often want a representative who will maximize their chances of winning in that constituency, irrespective of the broader consequences for the party or parliament.[35] Selection of the default option – a candidate reflecting characteristics and qualifications of previous MPs - may be expected to predominate in many cases, as the rational vote-maximizing strategy designed to minimize electoral risks.

The type of electoral system is also related to *patterns of incumbency turnover*. One major barrier to the entry of new candidates is elected officials are often returned over successive contests due to the advantages of greater familiarity and name recognition, higher levels of media attention, as well as access to the financial and organizational resources that accompany legislative office.[36] In many contests, the key challenge facing women challengers in the pipeline to legislative office is not just becoming nominated per se, but also contesting a winnable seat in single-member districts or being ranked near the top of the party list of candidates in PR systems. A comparison of election to the lower house of the national parliament in twenty-five established democracies from 1979-1994 found that on average about two-thirds of all incumbents returned from one general election to the next, including 66% in PR electoral systems and 70% in majoritarian elections.[37] In Britain, for example, the massive turnover in MPs following the Labour Party's landslide victory in 1997, coupled with the use of positive action placing women in target seats, doubled the number of women in the UK House of Commons overnight. As incumbents, women Labour MPs were reelected in the 2001 British general election, despite the original positive

Table 6 · Electoral systems for the lower house, Asia-Pacific

Country	Electoral System	Electoral type	Tiers	Legislature Size (directly elected)	Electoral System for President
Afghanistan	SNTV	Other	1	249	TRS
Australia	AV	Plurality/Majority	1	150	-
Bangladesh	FPTP	Plurality/Majority	1	345	-
Cambodia	List PR	PR	1	123	-
Cook Islands	FPTP	Plurality/Majority	1	24	-
Timor-Leste	List PR	PR	2	88	TRS
Fiji	AV	Plurality/Majority	2	71, 71	-
India	FPTP	Plurality/Majority	1	543	-
Indonesia	List PR	PR	1	550	TRS
Kiribati	TRS	Plurality/Majority	1	40	FPTP
Korea, DPR	TRS	Plurality/Majority	1	687	-
Korea, Republic of	Parallel	Mixed	2	299	FPTP
Laos	BV	Plurality/Majority	1	109	-
Malaysia	FPTP	Plurality/Majority	1	219	-
Maldives	FPTP	Plurality/Majority	1	77	TRS
Marshall Islands	FPTP	Plurality/Majority		33	-
Micronesia, Fed.	FPTP	Plurality/Majority	2	14	-
Mongolia	MMP	Mixed	1	76	TRS
Myanmar	FPTP	Plurality/Majority	1	485	-
Nauru	BC	Other	1	18	-
Nepal	Parallel	Mixed	1	205	-
New Zealand	MMP	Mixed	2	120	-
Niue	FPTP	Plurality/Majority	2	20	-
Pakistan	Parallel	Mixed	2	342	-
Palau	FPTP	Plurality/Majority	1	16	TRS
Papua New Guinea	AV	Plurality/Majority	2	109	-
Philippines	Parallel	Mixed	2	260	FPTP
Pitcairn Islands	BV	Other	1	6	-
Samoa	FPTP	Plurality/Majority		49	-
Singapore	PBV	Plurality/Majority		84	FPTP
Solomon Islands	FPTP	Plurality/Majority	1	50	-
Sri Lanka	List PR	PR	2	225	SV
Taiwan	Parallel	Mixed	2	113	FPTP
Thailand	Parallel	Mixed	2	500	-
Togo	TRS	Plurality/Majority	1	81	TRS
Tonga	BV	Plurality/Majority	1	9	-
Tuvalu	BV	Plurality/Majority	1	15	-
Vanuatu	SNTV	Other	1	52	-
Viet Nam	TRS	Plurality/Majority	1	498	-

Key: FPTP First-past-the-Post plurality single member; AV Alternative Vote; SNTV Single Non-Transferable Vote; BV Block Vote; TRS Two round or 2nd ballot system; Parallel Mixed Independent; MMP Mixed Member Proportional or combined dependent; List PR List Proportional Representation; PR Proportional representation.

Source: Electoral System Design, International IDEA http://www.idea.int/esd/world.cfm

action strategy already being discontinued. In the United States, studies have established that from 1998-2000, women challengers were more successful in states where term limitations expanded opportunities for open seats, although this effect is reversed in states like California where many women were already incumbents.[38]

As discussed further below, *party list PR also facilitates the use of positive action* designed to boost women's representation, as exemplified by legal or party gender quotas in candidate selection procedures. Positive action strategies can also be used under majoritarian electoral systems as well, but it can be harder to implement within single member districts than within party lists.[39] For all these reasons, PR systems are likely to be more 'women-friendly' than majoritarian electoral systems. These qualities are also present in 'combined' or 'mixed' electoral systems. Hence, women in New Zealand have proved more successful gaining office via party lists rather than single member districts.

Other factors accounting for national contrasts include: additional features of electoral system design such as mean district magnitude (the average number of candidates per electoral district), electoral formula proportionality as well as party competition and party ideologies. In general, leftwing parties (Socialist, Social Democratic, Labour, Communist, and Green parties) are generally more sympathetic towards positive action strategies designed to achieve gender equality.[40]

Reserved Seats and Legal Quotas

Broad attention to the importance of electoral institutions has led to efforts for revising existing constitutions and electoral laws in order to incorporate reserved seats and legal quota regulations for women's representation.[41] These measures have become an increasingly popular solution to the problem of women's under-representation, appearing in more than 100 countries worldwide.[42] Initiatives differ in terms of whether they are implemented through *reserved legislative seats* for women and/or minorities filled by direct election, indirect election, or appointment, *legal gender quotas* (applying to candidates in all parties in any country), or whether they are *voluntary party gender quotas,* discussed in the next section of the report (adopted by specific parties in their rule books and internal procedures for candidate selection and nomination). Table 7 shows the specific quota policies used by countries in the Asia-Pacific region).

Reserved seats

A dozen states worldwide have enshrined reserved seats for women in elected office for the lower or upper houses of parliament into national constitutions or Basic Laws. This strategy has most commonly been adapted in elections using single member districts. The experience in Asia-Pacific has been mixed, however, with major differences in women's empowerment resulting from reserved seats filled by appointment, indirect election, or direct election, as well as contrasts in the targets or levels set, and the way that any provisions have been implemented. The most effective policies make constitutional provisions reserving a fair number of legislative seats for women at local, regional and national levels. The specific constituencies are determined at random by the electoral management body and rotated with every contest. Positions are determined through democratic processes, where women candidates representing different parties and independents compete with each other through a process of direct competitive elections, where the outcome is decided by voters as opposed to being allocated by patronage appointments determined by leaders, parties, or parliament.

	% Women in parliament, 2000	N. countries	% Women in parliament, 2010	N. countries
MAJORITARIAN/PLURALITY	7.9	23	10.5	21
First-past-the-post	5.4	9	10.5	8
Block vote	6.8	4	8.7	4
Alternative vote	8.8	4	9.4	3
2nd Round	14.7	4	12.4	4
MIXED	7.9	9	16.4	8
Mixed independent	6.0	10	14.0	9
Mixed dependent	30.8	1	33.6	1
PROPORTIONAL	6.7	3	14.8	3
Single non-transferable vote	1.9	1	3.8	1
PR List	6.7	3	14.8	3
NONE				
No elected legislature	7.9	3	14.9	2
Total	**7.8**	**39**	**12.4**	**35**

Table 7 — Electoral systems and women's representation, Asia-Pacific

Note: For the classification of electoral systems, see Table 6

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union 'Women in Parliament' database http://www.ipu.org/

Reserved seats at national and/or sub-national levels have long been used in several South Asian states, including Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Reserved seats first emerged in the 1930s, but have become especially popular more recently in countries using single-member district majoritarian electoral systems, although they can be used with other types of electoral systems as well. Early policies reserved a limited number of seats for women, but recent measures have often entailed more generous provisions.[43] An important distinction exists between reserved seats implemented through top-down appointment and indirect election by parties or other members of parliament, where nominees owe their position to patronage support versus reserved seats fulfilled by popular and competitive direct elections, where representatives gain democratic legitimacy from grassroots support.

Reserved seats have been used in South Asia for the lower house of the national legislature in Bangladesh (30/300) and Pakistan (60/357), distributed to parties according to their share of seats in the House of Representatives. Reserved seats are also used in Afghanistan, Nepal (for the Constitutional Assembly), the Philippines and Taiwan. Similar policies have been used at the sub-national level with considerable success including 30% of seats reserved for women in local village councils in India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan.

Reserved seats have also been employed to elect representatives drawn from regional, linguistic, ethnic, or religious minority communities.[44] The effects of these measures depend upon the size and geographic concentration of such groups. Reserved seats for ethnic minorities have been used in about two-dozen countries.

For example, in New Zealand, Pakistan, and Fiji, seats are filled by appointees from recognized groups or elected by voters from a communal roll. In Singapore, the Group Representative Constituencies provide a voice for Indian, Malay, and Eurasian minority candidates. Mauritius allocates eight seats for Hindu, Muslim, Chinese and Creole recognized communities. India reserves a certain number of seats in each state for Scheduled Castes and Tribes, where candidates only drawn from these communities can stand for election.

The varied way that constitutional provisions for reserved seats have worked in practice can be illustrated by comparing the contrasting experience of Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan and India.

Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, the 1972 Constitution introduced after independence reserved 15 out of 315 (4.7%) parliamentary seats for women, elected by members. This number doubled in 1978 following a presidential proclamation. This provision was designed to be a temporary measure and it lapsed in 1987. As a result, in the 1988 general election, the proportion of women members dropped from 10.6% to 1.3%. Reserved seats were reestablished from 1990 to 2001. On 16 May 2004, Article 65(3) regarding constitutional reform raised the number of parliamentary seats by adding 45 seats (13 percent) reserved for women. These seats are indirectly elected. Women candidates can also contest any other seats during the general election. The 2008 election saw the return of 19% women overall, with 18 women candidates winning direct elections.

Unfortunately the manner in which reserved seats have been implemented is open to numerous criticisms.[45] The process of indirect election has discredited legitimacy, since the ruling party has often used this process to strengthen its parliamentary majority. The proportion of reserved seats (13%), even under the most recent version, remains quite a low target. Moreover women appointed to these positions by party leaders have no popular legitimacy or grassroots electoral base and often have little political experience or party connections, sapping their capacity to serve an independent role. Chowdhury argues that women members of parliament have usually not served as strong advocates for women's rights.[46] As shown earlier in Figure 4, traditional cultural attitudes towards gender equality in politics remain in Bangladesh, discouraging women from coming forward to pursue careers in public life. As noted in Table 4, Bangladesh also has a substantial 20 percentage point gender gap within party membership. In short, in the absence of any other measures, there would probably be fewer women in the Bangladesh parliament without the use of reserved seats. Nevertheless the way that this policy has been implemented means that reserved seats have not necessarily led towards women's empowerment. Indeed their use may have prevented other more effective steps being taken, such as gender quotas for candidate nomination processes within main political parties.

Pakistan

In Pakistan, the 1956, 1962, 1970, 1973 and 1985 constitutions all provided reserved seats for women at both Provincial and National Assemblies. However, this allotment was usually quite limited, around five to ten percent, and conducted only through indirect elections by members of the assemblies themselves.[47] Today, 60 of the 342 seats (17.5 percent) in the national assembly are reserved for women. These seats are allocated to political parties proportionally from the provinces, according to electoral result. Parties nominate and ultimately elect women to special seats. In the 2008 general election, 76 women were elected to the national parliament (22 percent), although only 4% of ministers are female.

BOX 1   *RESERVED SEATS IN AFGHANISTAN*

The adoption of reserved seats for women in post-conflict constitutional settlements, and their impact in traditional cultures, is exemplified by the case of Afghanistan. The parliament in Afghanistan has not functioned since 1973 and even during the decade of the New Democracy (1963-1973), the King usually ruled by decree. The breakdown of Taliban rule, international pressures for democratization and human rights, and the development of the new constitution presented a critical opportunity to develop new political institutions and to incorporate women into the public arena.

The new constitution was crafted by the Constitutional Drafting Commission and the Constitutional Review Commission before being finally debated in December 2003 by the emergency Loya Jirga (Grand Assembly). Women had a voice in each of these bodies, representing 12% of the delegates in the Loya Jirga, while two women sat on the nine-member Drafting Commission. The international community, led by the United Nations, was also engaged in providing expert advice about constitutional design options including measures for upholding the rights of women. Women's groups in Afghanistan also mobilized, including those who had been exiled, calling for 25% female representation in the new assembly and a woman's Bill of Rights.

The new Afghan constitution, agreed in January 2004, established women's representation in both houses of the national assembly. Article Eighty-three Ch. 5, Art. 3 specified that for the Wolesi Jirga (lower house):

Members of the Wolesi Jirga are elected by the people through free, general, secret, and direct elections. Their mandate ends on the 1st of Saratan of the fifth year after the elections, and the new assembly starts its work. The number of members of the Wolesi Jirga, proportionate to the population of each region, shall be not more than two hundred and fifty. Electoral constituency and other related issues shall be determined by election laws. In the election law, measures should be adopted for the election system to provide general and just representation for all the people of the country, and at least two female delegates should be elected from each province.

The constitution specified the total number of seats and at least two women should be directly elected to the Wolesi Jirga from each of the 34 existing provinces. In practice this meant 68 women would be included in the lower house, or 27.3% of the total. However, the constitution did not specify the type of electoral system nor how to guarantee the inclusion of women. For the Meshrano Jirga (upper house), the constitution empowered the President to appoint one-third of the members, of whom half must be women. At least one quarter of the seats on provincial councils were also reserved for women.

The May 2005 Electoral Law and the Electoral Commission determined how requirements would be implemented. Afghanistan chose the Single Non-Transferable Voting (SNTV) electoral system for the Wolesi Jirga, with multimember constituencies and simple plurality voting. In this system, used in Japan until 1993,

electors cast a single vote for one candidate in a multimember district. The candidates with the highest vote totals are declared elected. This system was adopted as it is technically simple to administer and count, and it works even in the absence of organized parties and any other political groupings. Multimember districts based on existing provincial boundaries are also advantageous, given the practical limitations of insufficient population data (and time) to draw single-member constituency boundaries. The system allows any independent candidate to be self-nominated, without requiring prior party endorsement. The system also encourages local elected members to serve their provincial constituency, since individual candidates compete for popular support within as well as among parties.

A Candidate-centered voting system is disadvantageous because it encourages weak party organizations with potential problems for coordination within the new legislature. It is one of the most disproportional electoral systems since candidates can be elected with an extremely modest plurality of the vote, and even a small shift in votes may tip the outcome in an unpredictable direction. SNTV also encourages strategic party nominations (in deciding how many candidates to nominate in each district) and strategic voting. In Afghanistan, electors faced long lists of candidates – for example, more than 600 candidates listed on the ballot in Kabul - without any familiar party cues to simplify their choices. This system may have reinforced voting for local leaders along ethnic lines with minimal incentive for cooperation in the parliament.

In terms of the constitutional requirement for inclusion of women, the SNTV electoral system constrained available options. The system ruled out statutory gender quotas implemented by ranking a specified proportion of women candidates in party list PR. Use of voluntary party quotas would also fail to achieve the constitutional guarantee in Article 83. Moreover reserved seats for women and minority communities had also long been employed for majoritarian elections in neighboring Pakistan and Bangladesh, as well as for village elections in India, which may have influenced Afghan decision-makers. As a result, the Commission specified reserved seats within each province, varying the number allocated in each area according to population size until the total accurately reflected constitutional provisions.

Two women could not have been allocated in every province because smaller provinces with only two seats only allow for the return of women candidates. The Electoral Commission implemented the constitutional requirements and designated the number of Wolesi Jirga seats per province according to population size. For example, 33 seats were allocated for Kabul of which 9 were reserved for women. The system was structured for candidates with the most votes in each province to be elected until all general seats were filled, irrespective of gender. If the specified minimum number of women were not returned under the general competition, women who achieved the most votes in each province were elected to seats reserved for women. This

system meant that women candidates were often elected even though they received dramatically fewer votes than men, which raises questions regarding fairness of outcome.

The first legislative elections in September 2005 attracted 2,835 candidates for the Wolesi Jirga, of whom 344 were women (12.1%). The results revealed 68 women out of 249 members (27.3%) were elected leading to Afghanistan being ranked 24th in the Inter-Parliamentary Union's global comparison of the proportion of women in parliament. This situation is quite remarkable given that it occurred in a context where Afghan women have long lacked many basic human rights, including access to education, health-care, and freedom of movement, and in a traditional culture where many women candidates who stood for office were subject to serious threats, harassment, and violent intimidation during the campaign. A record number of women candidates ran in the parliamentary elections in September 2010. At least 406 female candidates participated, compared with 382 in 2005, out of which 69 were elected (one more than the reserved seats), constituting 27.7 % of seats (69) in the parliament exceeding the 27.3% quota (68), despite intimidation and threats against them.[80]

At local level, the Musharraf government adopted a Devolution of Power Plan in March 2000.[48] An important feature of this development was provision for a 33 percent quota for women at the district, municipality (tehsil) and union councils. These are the local legislative bodies mandated to approve by-laws, taxes, long-term and short-term development plans and annual budgets. Local governments are responsible for delivering many basic services of water and sanitation, roads and buildings, basic health and education. Union councils also facilitate the formation and functioning of citizen community boards and cooperatives to reduce poverty. In total, across all these levels, around 40,000 seats are reserved for women, generating new opportunities to reshape the agenda and priorities in local government. Many individuals elected under the new system in 2002 were illiterate, young, and socially marginalized, and the overwhelming majority had never contested elections before, bringing a new generation into politics.

Afghanistan

Another related initiative concerns the constitutional amendment approved in Afghanistan in 2004 (see Box 1). Reserved seats for women were implemented in the electoral law passed the following year. This law requires parliament to set aside seats for at least 68 women out of 249 members (27%) in the lower house of parliament (the Wolesi Jirga). In the 2005 and 2010 elections, Afghans elected more women than the minimum requirement. Despite a highly traditional culture in attitudes towards girls and women, and an atmosphere of violence and intimidation during elections to the Wolesi Jirga, many women candidates ran for office and many were also successfully elected. Hence, in 2010, women constituted 27 percent of the lower house.[49]

BOX 2   *RESERVED SEATS IN INDIA*

In India, the 74th constitutional amendment requires women to hold 33 percent of seats filled by direct election in local municipal bodies and rural panchayats (village councils which take decisions on every important decision in local communities). A random one third of village council leaders, or pradhan, are also reserved for women. This is a well-known yet controversial measure in Indian politics. It was originally introduced in 1993, as part of the anti-poverty measure to revive local governance and village councils. However, states vary because by virtue of electoral law, some states raised the proportion to 50% for both panchayats and municipalities, (e.g. Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Maharashtra, and Tripura), while others raised the proportion only for panchayats, (e.g. Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, and West Bengal).

As a result, women councilors have become relatively common. For example, in the Delhi municipality, women councilors outnumber men. There were 138 reserved seats (50 per cent) for women in the 272-member Municipal Corporation of Delhi, six more women also won from open constituencies, taking the final tally to 144 women councilors. Women now comprise the majority in each of the three municipalities. Out of a total 64 seats in East Delhi Municipal Corporation, 35 belong to women councilors. In North Corporation, 53 of the 104 councilors are women, and in South, 56 out of 104 councilors are women. Moreover each of these corporations will have a woman mayor in the first year and a woman chief minister has been running the state for more than a decade.

The use of reserved seats in India has been studied quite extensively. The randomized nature of reserved seats, in particular, allows for quasi-experimental studies examining the impact of this policy.[81] Recent research has revealed profound consequences for including women in India such as altering policy priorities, changing perceptions of women's abilities, improving women's electoral chances, and raising aspirations and educational attainment for adolescent girls. Hence, studies have reported the significance of gender for policy outcomes; in particular, Village Councils headed by women invested more in public infrastructure concerning the provision of clean water, while Village Councils headed by men invested more in job provisions.[82] Nevertheless others have reported the interaction of gender with the effects of caste.[83] Female legislators in seats reserved for lower castes and disadvantaged tribes comparatively invest more in health and early education, to favor "women-friendly" laws, such as those concerning inheritance rights, and prefer redistributive policies, such as land reforms. In contrast, female legislators from higher castes do not have any impact on "women-friendly" laws, oppose land reforms, invest in higher tiers of education and reduce social expenditure.

Despite frequent attempts to introduce a similar policy of reserved seats for the lower house of the national parliament (the Lok Sabha), these initiatives have repeatedly failed. With 60 women MPs out of 545 (11%), nationally India's lower house ranks only 105th worldwide. The Women's Reservation Bill (the 108th Constitutional Amendment) proposes thirty three per cent of all seats in the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies to be reserved for women. The Upper House (Rajya Sabha) passed the Bill on 9 Mar 2010, but has yet to receive endorsement by the lower house.

India

In addition, the Indian constitution has implemented gender quotas for village elections via constitutional provisions [Boxed case 2]. The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments, passed in 1992, directed India's state governments to conduct elections at local levels, devolved powers of expenditure and oversight to these bodies, and mandated reservation of one-third of the seats in these local bodies for women. Women's representation, which had ranged between 3% and 9% in India's state and national legislatures, now stands at more than one-third of the seats in local bodies. Seats reserved for women are randomly chosen by lot and rotate from election to election. This ensures a fair process, as every seat has an equal chance of being reserved, and men in reserved constituencies are not permanently excluded from office. Seats are also reserved for scheduled tribes and scheduled castes.

Therefore we can conclude that the adoption of reserved seats, through constitutional reforms, differs in each of the cases we have compared. However, what matters most is often the detailed implementation of these policies. For example, whether women are directly or indirectly elected, the proportion of the legislature allocated through reserved seats, and the broader context of the governing regime in each state. In Bangladesh, there appears to be widespread dissatisfaction with the way reserved seats have been used whereas the outcome appears to be more positive in Indian local governance.

Legal quotas for women candidates

Legal quotas for women candidates are found in many developing countries and are enacted through reforms to electoral laws and sometimes constitutions, requiring all parties to nominate a certain percentage of women *candidates*. Gender quotas can be applied to other decision-making bodies, such as recruitment targets to achieve gender balance in the judiciary and civil service. These policies became popular during the 1990s and have continued to be proposed and passed in many states during the last decade. In the region, legal quotas ensuring gender balance among candidates running for the lower house of the national parliament have been adopted in China (for indirectly elected positions), Indonesia, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea and Timor-Leste.

Legal quotas generally call for women to form between 25 percent and 50 percent of all parliamentary candidates nominated by political parties. In most instances, the language of these measures is gender-neutral, speaking of women and men together or making reference to the 'underrepresented sex.' Yet, legal quotas vary according to how strict their goals are articulated; some speak vaguely about 'facilitating access,' while others offer concrete guidelines regarding the selection and placement of female candidates. Similar to voluntary party quotas (see below), policies are implemented in different ways depending on the electoral system, often applying to party lists as well as to a broad group of single-member districts. Given the legal status of quotas, they may contain sanctions for non-compliance and subjected to oversight from external bodies such as Electoral Commissions.

	Type	Electoral system	Latest revision	Target %	Rank placement requirements	Penalties for non-compliance	% women in 2000 (prior to current law)	% women in 2010 (after law)	% Change
Table 8									
Afghanistan	Reserved seats	SNTV	2004	27			--	28	+1
Bangladesh	Reserved seats	FPTP	2004	13			9	19	+10
China	Legal quotas	Indirect	2007	22			22	21	-1
Indonesia	Legal quotas	List PR	2009	33	Yes	No	8	18	+10
Mongolia	Legal quotas	Mixed	2012	20	No	No	4	-	
Nepal	Reserved seats	Mixed	2007	33			6	33	+27
Pakistan	Reserved seats	Mixed	2004	17.5			17	22	+5
Philippines	Reserved seats	Mixed					11	22	+11
Republic of Korea	Legal quotas	Mixed	2004	30-50	No	No	4	15	+9
Taiwan	Reserved seats	Mixed	2005	10-15				22	
Timor-Leste	Legal quotas	List PR	2007	25	Yes	Yes	-	29	
All AP							**8**	**13**	**+5**

The table title that spans the top:

Table 8 *The impact of legal quotas used for candidates for the lower house of parliament, Asia-Pacific*

Notes: Other Asia-Pacific states do not currently use any legal gender quotas for legislative candidates.

Source: www.quotaproject.org

The impact of reserved seats and legal quotas on gender equality in elected office in the region is estimated in Table 8. This compares the eleven Asia-Pacific countries using either of these measures. It should be noted that many of these policies have only been adopted relatively recently so the long-term effects remain unknown, and there may be a cumulative process at work. Nevertheless, in seven cases we can compare the proportion of women elected to the lower house of parliament in 2000 and 2010, before and after the most recent version of these policies were implemented. The results demonstrate that on average, in the seven Asia-Pacific countries with reserved seats or legal quotas, the proportion of women members rose on average by about 10.1 percent between 2000 and 2010. Yet all these gains should not be attributed to the use of these measures per se, since many other policy initiatives and cultural trends are also encouraging gender equality in elected office. Also, in all other Asia-Pacific states not using legal quotas, the proportion of women increased, although at a lower rate (+5%). Thus the net impact of these measures can be estimated more conservatively at an average gain of 5 percent over a decade. Moreover variations in the design and implementation of legal quotas means the numerical effects of these policies have been mixed. Hence gains have been relatively modest in some countries, like Pakistan, and far more dramatic in others, as in Nepal. Differences stem from a number of factors including the *design* of reserved seat and legal quota policies, targets, rank placement requirements, and the implementation of any sanctions for non-compliance. [50]

In Indonesia, for example, the target level of the quota was one third of all candidates on party lists. This was adopted under Election Law 12/2003, where Article 65 (1) states, 'each political party in the election *may* propose candidates for members of the national, provincial and local parliaments for each electoral district *with consideration* for at least 30 per cent of women's representation.' (My italics). Parties failed to meet this target in the 2004 legislative elections. However, women candidates were often ranked low on closed party lists and the law lacked any effective mechanisms to ensure compliance or 'zippering'.[51] Of the seven political parties that reached the 3 per cent electoral threshold in the 2004 elections, only three parties (the Prosperity and Justice Party, the National Awakening Party, and the National Mandate Party) fulfilled the 30 per cent quota for women in their candidate lists. The electoral law was amended in 2008 to ensure a more transparent process yet it still lacked concrete sanctions. In 1999, women comprised only 8 per cent of the Indonesian Lower House. Following the 2004 election, the proportion of women increased slightly to 11.3 per cent. In the 2009 election, the number of women increased again to comprise 16.8 per cent. Thus, even though the proportion of women in elected office doubled during a decade, the result is well short of the 30 per cent goal.[52]

A second explanation for variations in quota effects relates to features of the *broader institutional context*. Quotas often have the greatest impact in countries with PR electoral systems with closed party lists and high district magnitudes.[53] In Sweden, for example, multiple seats are available in each constituency and candidates are elected from lists put forward by political parties. In contrast, it is more difficult to apply quotas where only one seat is available per district, unless the quota entails reserved seats. Quotas also tend to improve women's representation in countries where several parties co-exist and larger parties respond to policy innovations initiated by smaller parties, as well as in parties with left-wing ideologies where party leadership is better able to enforce party or national regulations.

Further, quotas are often more successful in countries where political culture emphasizes sexual difference and group representation, and less successful where it stresses sexual equality and individual representation.[54] This stems in part from quotas being challenged in some countries as a violation of constitutional principles of equality, as was the case in Italy, the UK and Spain. These challenges, however, are not in line with international declarations. Article 4 of the UN's Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW) emphasizes, *'temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination.'*

A third account points to the importance of *political will*. Party leaders, officers, activists and members who make up the 'selectorate' are the people directly responsible for variations in quota impact, since the effective application of these measures largely hinges around their willingness to recruit female candidates. Moreover, selectorates are often disproportionately male. Table 3 demonstrates continued sex disparities in active party membership, a pattern which increases at higher levels of party office. In a large number of cases, selectors take various steps to mitigate quota impact, ranging from passive refusal of quota enforcement to active measures for subverting intended effects. These steps may lead to large-scale electoral fraud. However, other actors play direct or indirect roles enforcing quota provisions, including women's organizations inside and outside political parties, national and international courts, and ordinary citizens, all of whom may monitor party compliance with quota measures in ways that lead elites to either ignore or honor quota requirements.

BOX 3   *LEGAL QUOTAS IN KYRGYZSTAN*

Kyrgyzstan is a Central Asian state bordering China who became independent with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. No women members returned to the Kyrgyzstan Parliament in the 2005 election resulting in poor representation of women in the Government. There was only one female member in the Cabinet of Ministers, no female deputy ministers, and the number of women in higher administrative positions was falling sharply.

In October 2007, following advocacy by civil society organizations, a new article 13 in the Kyrgyzstan Constitution was passed giving men and women equal rights and opportunities. This article was applied in the new edition of the Election Code of Kyrgyzstan, which introduced a gender quota in the electoral lists of political parties that participated in parliamentary elections. In the parliament – the Supreme Council, or *Jorgorku Kenesh* – 120 members are elected through a closed-list proportional representation system to serve 5-year terms. The Electoral Law specifies a 30 percent quota for either sex on electoral lists (Code on Elections, Article 72) and mandates no more than three positions separating men and women. Lists that fail to meet the quota requirement will be rejected by the Electoral Commission. The impact of the new quota was immediate. During national elections held in December 2007, 23 women (25.6 percent) were elected to the Parliament of Kyrgyzstan. This figure made Kyrgyzstan a leader in women's representation within Central Asia.

In April 2010, President Kurmanbek Bakiyev was deposed in a popular uprising amid widespread anger over falling living standards and rampant corruption. To replace him, the opposition-dominated interim government chose a female head of state named Roza Otunbayeva. Within months of taking over, Otunbayeva supervised a referendum in which 90% of voters backed a new constitution intending to reduce the powers of the presidency and transform the country into former Soviet Central Asia's first parliamentary democracy. In June 2010, the new constitution was passed establishing a parliamentary republic. Otunbayeva was formally sworn in as caretaker president and the region's first post-Communist female leader with new presidential elections scheduled for October 2011.

With the ratification of over 30 international conventions, including CEDAW and its Optional Protocol, and a vast array of domestic legislation, the foundations for gender equality are strongly developing in Kyrgyzstan.

BOX 4   *LEGAL QUOTAS IN THE PACIFIC FRENCH TERRITORIES*

All three Pacific French Territories -- New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna -- have a territorial assembly elected by proportional representation system. They are also subject to the French Law on Parity 2000, which requires all political parties to include 50% women on their lists of candidates in a so-called "zipper" list (ie. alternating the names of one man and one woman candidate from the top to the bottom of the list). As a result of the Parity Law in combination with the PR electoral system, in sharp contrast to other Pacific Islands, New Caledonia has 52.6% women in its legislature and French Polynesia has 42.1% women in its legislature.

However, similar measures have not been very effective in the French territory of Wallis and Futuna because of the large number of political parties and small district magnitudes. While men and woman are alternated on party lists as is required by the Parity Law, in the 2002 elections there were 32 parties with every party list headed by men. Only one party gained enough votes to put more than one candidate into the legislature, resulting in only one woman being elected. Two other women took their places in the Assembly because one male member resigned and another died. In the 2007 elections, 20 parties won seats but only 3 parties placed women at the head of the list. As a result, two women were elected. The Wallis and Futuna example illustrates the significance of how a country's national electoral system, political party system, and quotas interact. [84]

Actors involved in quota implementation may depend to some degree on campaigns leading to quota adoption. In some countries, women's grassroots mobilization is central for bringing quotas to the political agenda. In others, quotas are the result of strategic calculations on the part of political elites, who may view these measures as an effective means for competing for female votes.[55] This concern may be heightened if the party is seeking to overcome a long period in opposition or a dramatic decrease in popularity. A third group of actors with a potential role include international organizations and transnational NGOs. Over the last decade, a variety of international organizations – including the UN, the Socialist International, the Council of Europe, the European Union, the Commonwealth, the African Union, the Southern African Development Community, and the Organization of American States – have issued declarations recommending all member-states aim for 30 percent women in all political bodies which is in line with the Beijing declaration.[56]

These various demands often meet great success when gender quotas are linked to existing or emerging political values. For example, left-wing parties are generally perceived to be more open to measures such as quotas because these match with their general goals of social equality.[57] In other countries, gender quotas may be viewed as an extension of guarantees given to other groups based on linguistic, religious, racial, and other cleavages. In India, for example, quotas for women at local levels have followed the adoption of reserved seats for lower caste groups.[58] Finally, many quotas emerge during

periods of democratic transition, when quotas are seen as a way to establish the legitimacy of the new political system, as has also been the case in many post-conflict societies.

The dramatic impact of legal quotas can be witnessed in the case of Kyrgyzstan where a 30 percent quota law was introduced in 2007 with a requirement that no more than three positions separate male and female candidates. Combined with a PR electoral system, this policy resulted in an overnight shift in women's representation where the proportion of women in parliament jumped from zero percent to one quarter of all members after the 2007 elections (see Box 3).

In the Pacific region, where women's representation is usually lagging well behind, the use of a quota law combined with proportional electoral systems in two French territories means women have been remarkably successful in getting elected to territorial assembles (see Box 4).

Together with data presented in Table 8, such outcomes suggest legal quotas can serve as an effective measure for electing larger amounts of women to political office. This is especially true in cases where quotas are well-specified in terms of requirements because they are combined with the PR electoral system, and compliance to implement them is carefully enforced. The evidence suggests that from a general perspective, legal quotas are most successful in establishing gender equality in elected office when:

(1) Laws require a relatively *high proportion* of female candidates to be nominated by political parties;

(2) Laws have *placement mandates* (also known as 'double quotas') regulating the alternative rank order of women and men candidates on party lists ('zippering');

(3) Laws include *penalties for non-compliance* which strictly bind the behavior of political parties through financial sanctions or the rejection of nomination lists which do not comply with the law, or, alternatively, which create positive incentives for parties to nominate more women; and,

(4) *Compliance is monitored* by independent bodies, including Electoral Commissions, the courts, NGOs and women groups, using legal and political means if necessary, to ensure that parties implement these policies to their fullest degree.

Party Selection Rules and Proceedures

Reserved seats and legal quotas reflect state-led policies to ensure gender equality in the political realm. Voluntary party quotas, in contrast, entail commitments by individual political parties which aim to include a specific proportion of women among their own candidates nominated to political office. Party quotas are most often implemented through party constitutions, statutes, and rulebooks. In Western Europe, measures were first adopted in the early 1970s by a few socialist and social democratic parties. Over the course of the 1980s and 1990s, however, quotas began to appear in a diverse array of parties in all regions of the world such that today, they are the most common type of quota policy. Presently, several Asia-Pacific member states such as the Philippines, Indonesia, Australia and the Republic of Korea include at least some parties using gender quotas in candidate selection processes.

Party quotas typically set a goal of between 25 percent and 50 percent female candidates. All the same, the phrasing of this requirement varies. For example, in Argentina, South Africa, and Spain some policies identify women as the group to be promoted by the quota while other nations set out a more gender-neutral formulation, as in Italy and several Nordic countries. Party quotas govern the composition of party lists in countries with PR and mixed electoral systems, and they are directed at collections of single-member districts in countries with majoritarian electoral arrangements.

The numerical effects of party quotas are sensitive to the type of party system and, in particular, the size of the party making this commitment. Party quotas thus have a greater impact on the numbers of women elected when:

(1) *Many parties*, especially several *larger parties*, adopt these policies;

(2) The adopted quotas call for a relatively *high proportion* of women to be nominated as party candidates;

(3) The quotas are framed in ways that link them to well-understood and widely accepted *cultural practices and traditions*; and,

(4) Parties have bureaucratic organizational structures, and formal nomination procedures, so that *rules are enforced* by internal party bodies. Where party

nomination procedures are more informally determined, for example in clientelistic parties where the top party leadership personally hand-picks a shortlist of loyal supporters as candidates, few enforcement mechanisms will be able to guarantee the inclusion of women.

Party quotas have been particularly effective in Western Europe, where women have mobilized inside and outside of political parties since the 1920s to ensure the selection of female candidates. Over time, quotas gradually increased the proportion each party considered for women to be adequately represented, from one woman per list to now equal numbers of women and men. In the 1990s, more informal goals, targets, and recommendations in many parties gave way to more formal quota policies. While gains have been made possible through the use of a PR electoral system, party strategies have been of paramount importance. Today in Sweden, for example, almost all parties embrace the principle of alternation (or 'zippering'), meaning that they alternate between male and female names on party lists to ensure women form not only 50 percent of candidates, but also close to 50 percent of those elected. This results in Sweden ranking second in the world in terms of women's representation, with women occupying 45% of all seats in parliament.

Although not all parties adopt formal quota policies, many nonetheless recognize the importance of taking active steps to recruit more women to their candidate ranks, as the Swedish case illustrates. When gender quotas per se are particularly controversial, as is the case in many conservative parties but also in various national contexts, political parties may reject formal quotas but still establish informal goals or targets regarding the selection of women. The exact number of such 'soft quotas' is difficult to calculate, given that these measures are not labeled 'quotas.' Yet, these policies are often functionally equivalent to formal party quotas in that they seek to increase women's representation in some concrete way.

The two main forms that 'soft quotas' may take are *informal targets and recommendations*, which are anticipated to directly affect the nomination of more female candidates, and *quotas for internal party bodies*, which are expected to indirectly influence the number of women in the pipe-line who eventually run for elected office.[59] As such, despite the care taken to disassociate these measures from quotas, provisions are often adopted with the express purpose of stimulating – although not necessarily guaranteeing – the election of more women to various kinds of political bodies. In some instances, the language is simply to 'encourage' attention to possible female candidates. As such, 'soft quotas' are measures that step back from the spirit and aims of formal quota policies, even as they agree with and seek to promote similar ends.

The shared aim of quota policies of various types is to recast the candidate recruitment process, stimulating both supply and demand for female candidates. Models of political recruitment typically focus on a sequence that progresses from (1) the large number of citizens who are *eligible* to run for political office to (2) the smaller pool of citizens who *aspire* to run for political office to (3) the small group of citizens who are *nominated* to run for political office to (4) the smallest band of citizens who are *elected* to political office.[60] If no mechanisms of distortion are at work, the characteristics of individuals present at each of these four stages should be roughly the same. Although various types of qualifications may set some groups of candidates apart from others, including levels of education, party service, legislative experience, speaking abilities, financial resources, political connections, kinship, name-recognition, group membership, and organizational skills,[61] there are clear patterns of exclusion resulting in fewer female, minority, and younger candidates than exist proportionally in the electorate.

BOX 5   *Voluntary PARTY QUOTAS in Sweden*

After gaining the right to vote in 1921, women in Sweden engaged in a series of campaigns to persuade parties to select female candidates, precipitating a number of difficult struggles in the 1930s and 1940s over the nomination and placement of women. Women mobilized both inside and outside political parties in a complementary way, combining work through women's sections in the parties with efforts of nonpartisan organizations like the Fredrika Bremer Association. Female party members lobbied their own parties to get women placed in electable positions on party lists, while civil society groups sought to raise elite and public awareness on women's status in politics.

Although women's mobilization was ongoing, important gains were made in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when campaigns began to press party leaders to make firmer commitments to increasing female representation. In the 1970s and 1980s, almost all major parties introduced recommendations, targets, or goals regarding the proportion of women to be nominated to internal and elected office, usually in the form that 'neither sex be represented in less than 40 percent of all positions. As a result of these efforts, up until the 1988 election the percentage of women in the Swedish Riksdag had increased to 38 percent.

In 1991, however, the proportion of women in parliament dropped for the first time since the 1920s, decreasing from 38 to 34 percent, reflecting shortcomings across all parties in the recruitment of women. Although women began to lobby inside the parties, many also began to meet across party lines, establishing a cross-party network known as the 'Support Stockings.' The hope was to pressure parties to place women in more 'safe' positions on party lists, and they pledged to form a women's party to contest the next elections if parties did not take recommended steps.

To this end, women began to coalesce around the demand for a new approach known as 'varannan damernas,' or literally 'every other one for the ladies.' Originating with a state-commissioned report on women's representation on local and national committees, the term 'varannan damernas' referred to a custom at countryside dances where every other song became the woman's turn to invite the man, a tradition also known as 'democratic dancing.' Some parties responded with unequivocal support for quotas, while others made firmer commitments to the need for equal representation. Women's representation has grown closer and closer to 50 percent as more parties have endorsed the principle of alternating between men and women on party lists, rising to 41 percent in 1994, 43 percent in 1998, 45 percent in 2002, 47 percent in 2006, and 45 percent in 2010.

Within this framework, studies have sought to determine whether the main reason behind women's under-representation stems from gender differences in political ambition that cause fewer women than men to consider running for political office, biases in the recruitment practices of political elites that lead them to select fewer female candidates than male candidates, or prejudices on the part of voters who prefer to elect men over women. The third explanation has been firmly debunked, with evidence indicating that voters not only elect male and female candidates at equal rates, but may even vote in greater numbers for women over men.[62] Most research has thus focused on the relative role of supply and demand side factors as well as interactions between them, in explaining how and why their representation might be increased. In this context, quotas reflect a clear 'demand-side' solution to the problem of women's under-representation, seeking to encourage party elites to find qualified female candidates, which may require exploring less traditional avenues of recruitment. However, quotas might also be viewed as a 'supply-side' strategy, indicating the political arena is open to women and thus leading more women to come forward as candidates.

UNDP India

Capacity Development

In addition to quotas, additional strategies have been developed, primarily by groups in civil society, to stimulate women's interest in pursuing elected office. While largely reflecting 'supply-side' tactics, these efforts have also sought to raise broader awareness of the need for more women in politics, and therefore to raise the demand for female candidates on the part of elites and voters. In countries where it may be difficult to introduce quotas, capacity development initiatives are vital to efforts for increasing women's political representation. However, they are also essential in countries where quotas are in force, as together these two strategies offer a more holistic approach to addressing problems of both 'supply' and 'demand.'

Although civil society organizations have played a major role, several types of actors are engaged in these types of initiatives, which take various forms but can be broadly categorized in terms of three distinct but overlapping threads: *equal opportunity initiatives* (candidate training, recruitment initiatives, and knowledge networks), *initiatives to combat stereotypes and raise awareness* (media

campaigns and citizen education), and *political party initiatives* (women's sections, fundraising, and women's parties). These strategies are necessary not because women lack the skills and qualifications to hold political office, but rather because women as a group have not had the same opportunities as men to access a political career.[63] The presence of three threads reflects the fact that enabling women's participation requires a multi-faceted approach, focused on encouraging women who might consider coming forward as candidates, undermining the stereotypes that maintain patterns of gender inequality, and highlighting the party structures that facilitate women's candidacies.

Equal opportunity initiatives

Many women possess the qualifications needed to hold political office, but due to gender discrimination, do not always have access to the same information as men in terms of learning how to launch a political career. For this reason, programs focused on developing this knowledge form a crucial part of any campaign to enhance women's political representation.

Papua New Guinea has a unicameral parliament with 109 members elected using the majoritarian Alternative Vote (or Limited Preference) system. Under this model, 89 members are elected from open electorates and 20 from provincial electorates. Despite Papua New Guinea being a signatory to a number of international conventions and treaties such as CEDAW, the country has a long history of women being under-represented in elected office. Since Independence was gained from Australia in 1975, only three women have ever been elected to PNG's National Parliament. Following the June 2007 elections, where 102 women stood as candidates, only one was elected out of 109 members of parliament. This proportion reflects the poor record of women's representation already noted as commonplace throughout the Pacific islands.

The debate over reserved seats

This situation triggered considerable debate about the need for reforms, in particular an active campaign by women's groups and activists seeking to introduce reserved seats. In 2008, the single female MP in PNG and Minister for Community Development, Dame Carol Kidu, submitted a proposal that Cabinet (the National Executive Council) appoint three women to parliament, as an interim measure, using an existing but unused constitutional provision allowing for three appointed seats. This idea was accepted by the government but a motion to appoint three women was subsequently defeated in Parliament.

The women's campaign thus moved to push for introduction of 22 reserved seats for women, one for each of the provinces (2 new provinces were created in 2011) and one for the National Capital District. In November 2011, parliament voted to amend the constitution and create 22 additional seats (16.7%) reserved for women. However, before this measure could be implemented, an organic law had to be amended to recognize new constituency boundaries. The amendment failed to get the super majority of 73 votes needed for implementation. Nonetheless, the National Council of Women is still calling on the Government to introduce the new seats at the June 2012 elections, on the basis of the already enacted Equality and Participation Act 2012.

Candidates training

Despite the absence of institutional reforms, a capacity development program was introduced to strengthen the skills and knowledge of women candidates running in the June 2012 elections. This was launched by the Office for the Development of Women, on behalf of the Department for Community Development. UNDP's Women in Leadership project and the ANU's Centre for Democratic Institutions (CDI) provided technical assistance to support development of the Strategy. The Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission, registered parties, and civil society organizations also collaborated in this effort. Planning for the program started about fifteen months prior to the campaign. CDI has taken the lead on providing female candidate training to approximately 100 women, including both candidates and their campaign managers.

Inaugural Practice Parliament for Women

In 2011, successful Mock Parliaments for Women were initiated for the first time in the Pacific region. The parliaments were held in Kiribati, Marshall Islands and Palau by the UNDP Pacific Centre and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. In April 2012 approximately sixty women were selected by ODW, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and UN Women to take part in the inaugural week-long 'Practice Parliament for Women'.[85] Workshop sessions were run by UNDP in Port Moresby, with technical inputs from other Government departments, the Electoral Commission, media and UN agencies. Training was designed as a way to familiarize women with parliamentary and legislative procedures, increase confidence and presentation skills, and prepare women to debate substantive policy issues relevant to Papua New Guinea.

Following three days training, a practice parliamentary session was broadcasted live to the general public on radio. A South-South exchange of experiences led to the Clerk of Parliament from the Solomon Islands assuming the position of Mock Speaker for the Practice Parliament. Women participants divided into Mock Government and Mock Opposition teams and first engaged in Question Time. Women candidates asked and answered questions on issues such as health services for rural villages, the "Education for All" policy, problems of corruption, and responsible environmental practices. Following question time, participants debated a mock bill on reproductive health rights, an exercise designed to expand women's skills in analyzing proposed legislation and debating amendments. Since the training, feedback has indicated political parties who tuned in to the live broadcast have begun to actively include women participants in party nominations.

Mentoring and training

The most direct capacity development initiatives in this sense involve *training programs* for current or future female candidates, run by political parties or bipartisan civil society groups. A recent example is the campaign in Papua New Guinea, which provides support, advice, and training in campaigning, public speaking and media skills to women candidates who wish to become more politically involved (see Box 6). The first ever 'practice parliament for women', broadcast by radio to the general public, was used in April 2012 to provide women candidates in Papua New Guinea with experience debating legislation and asking parliamentary questions. Similar Mock Parliaments for Women were held in Kiribati, Marshall Islands and Palau which became widely regarded both as effective capacity development opportunities for women, as well as potent awareness raising activities for voters.

Mentoring programs can also be used, establishing long-term relationships between women leaders who have successfully entered elected office and others aspiring to these positions.

Along slightly different lines, women inside the Norwegian Labour Party designed a program known as, 'Women Can Do It,' which arranges candidate training opportunities in more than 25 countries worldwide. Funded by Norwegian People's Aid, topics covered in the program range from democracy and women's participation to communication, argumentation/speeches/debate, handling the media, negotiations, networking, advocacy training, and violence again women. Seeking to facilitate women's participation in public affairs, the program offers training in particular skills but also serves as an opportunity for women to meet and form networks.[64]

In the United States, Harvard University's Institute of Politics has run a bipartisan program since 1972 for newly elected members of congress, including women and men. The program provides intensive seminars on major public policy issues such as foreign policy, health care and the Federal budget, led by prominent scholars and practitioners representing viewpoints from across the political spectrum. It also offers workshops to help new Representatives make the most of their first weeks and months on Capitol Hill. These workshops focus on the "how" of getting things done in Washington, and are led by current and former senior officials from Congress, the White House, cabinet departments, regulatory agencies, and the national media. The program also provides informal opportunities for newly-elected members to network socially with members across the aisle, prior to the pressures of entering Congress. These workshops promote an atmosphere of collegiality, trust, and collaboration on Capitol Hill and similar programs have been run for newly elected Mayors and Governors.

Recruitment

A second prong in promoting equal opportunities entails *recruitment initiatives* to identify and encourage women to run for office, whether in the immediate or distant future. Organized primarily by civil society organizations, these programs are particularly well-developed in the United States, where the use of a majoritarian electoral system, combined with hostility to gender quotas, make it difficult to achieve dramatic increases in women's political representation, at least overnight. Many of these projects are therefore focused on promoting a shift in women's mentalities over the long term.

A recent campaign gaining national prominence is the 2012 Project, a non-partisan campaign initiated by the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University.[65] The campaign is directed at women aged 45 and older, especially those in professions generally under-represented in politics, such as finance, environment,

science, health, technology, and small business. The 2012 Project focuses on older women on the grounds that women of this age are more likely to be at the top of their professions, hold fewer family responsibilities (because children may be older), and be financially independent. The Project seeks to reach these women at industry conventions through talks led by former female legislators and those who express interest in the project are given information on think tanks, campaign training programs, and fundraising networks to help them succeed.

A group named Running Start, in contrast, centers its work on a younger demographic, arguing the key to increasing women's representation in the U.S. is having more women engaged in politics and elected to office at a younger age.[66] Running Start's Young Women's Political Leadership Program introduces secondary school (high school) girls to the importance of women in political leadership and trains them in public speaking, networking, on-camera media training, and platform development. The Running Start/Wal-Mart Star Fellowship places seven university-aged women in the offices of female representatives or senators for a semester long internship, with each Friday spent in a seminar learning the 'nuts and bolts' of political office.

Two final American initiatives include *She Should Run*, an online nomination tool and resource center that asks women to consider running for office. The program was inspired by statistics indicating women as being much less likely than men to think about becoming a candidate. However, when women choose to run, they tend to win at equal rates to men. An individual can submit a form with information pertaining to a woman who he or she believes should run for office someday, and the program will guarantee that she gets positive encouragement, connections, and resources necessary to take the next step.[67] A related project is the *Appoint Her* campaign organized by the Women's Campaign Forum Foundation. It provides a national resource for women seeking appointed office by informing women of available positions, sharing skills and traits of women currently in office, and discussing how they launched their own careers.[68]

Knowledge networks

A third type of equal opportunity strategy focuses on information sharing through creation of *knowledge networks*, primarily across national borders to exchange ideas on effective ways for raising public awareness, identifying prospective female candidates, and assisting women in running successful campaigns. At the global level, a group of transnational NGOs have come together to facilitate these exchanges through the International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics, or iKNOWPolitics (http://www.iknowpolitics.org/), a website funded by the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. The project is described as an 'online workspace' designed to serve the needs of elected officials, candidates, political party leaders and members, researchers, students, and other practitioners interested in advancing women in politics (see Box 7).

In Europe, the European Women's Lobby (EWL) based in Brussels has been actively campaigning for increased representation of women in the European Parliament (EP). The EWL has organized a campaign before each EP election since the early 1990s, with the goal of getting parties to nominate more women. It does so by mobilizing its network of 2500 women's groups across Europe, but also by providing a number of lobbying tools on its website, available in a range of languages to help ordinary citizens put pressure on elites in their own countries to take gender balance seriously in their nominations.[69]

BOX 7   *Capacity Development: The iKNOWPOLITICS WEBSITE*

The International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics (iKNOWPolitics, at http://www.iknowpolitics.org) provides a web-based forum for exchanging information on the status of women in politics around the globe. The goal is to increase participation and effectiveness of women in political life by utilizing a technology-based forum. The website provides users with opportunities to *access resources*, including an online library and the expertise of other uses, experts, and practitioners; *create knowledge* via mediated discussion forums, information exchange, and consolidated expert responses to member queries; and *share experiences* by using tools specifically designed to facilitate the exchange of lessons learned and best practices among members of the global community committed to the advancement of women in politics. To ensure accessibility and wide-scale use, the content and resources on the website are available in Arabic, English, French, and Spanish.

The project is a joint initiative of several organizations committed to improving women's status in political life. The United Nations Development Programme works in 166 countries to assist governments and support citizen driven solutions to national and global development challenges. It supports capacity development of political parties' female members and independent candidates preparing to enter the political arena. The United Nations Development Fund for Women provides financial and technical assistance to innovative programs and strategies fostering women's empowerment and gender equality. The fund seeks to increase the number of women at all levels of government by training women leaders and equipping them with necessary skills to participate in elections as candidates and voters. The National Democratic Institute offers practical assistance to civic and political leaders committed to advancing democratic values, practices, and institutions. The Institute supports a Women's Political Participation Program, dedicated to increasing the number of women in elected positions and improving women's leadership in parties and civil society. The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance is an intergovernmental organization seeking to strengthen democratic institutions and processes. It develops comparative analyses and tools to advance the participation of women in public life. The Inter-Parliamentary Union is the world organization of parliaments of sovereign states. It conducts extensive research to monitor trends and raise awareness of women in politics and provides technical assistance on projects for women parliamentarians and candidates.

Initiatives to combat stereotypes and raise awareness

Monitoring of the number of women at different stages of the pipeline, especially those who are nominated as candidates and elected to parliament, is a standard equal opportunity strategy. Responsibility for monitoring and reporting may lie with the national statistical office or with the parliamentary body.

Beliefs that women should not run for political office are informed and reinforced by gender stereotypes, associating men with the public sphere of politics and

women with the private sphere of the home. Reforming these stereotypes can increase the number of women considering a political career, as well as alter how voters – and political parties – view female candidates. A mechanism for combating such stereotypes is through a variety of *media campaigns* aimed at changing how citizens think about politics. Several campaigns waged across the Asia-Pacific region have focused, in particular, on providing a more conducive environment to women's candidacies by raising awareness among voters and elites regarding the current lack of gender balance in the political sphere and the need to elect more women for the sake of democracy.

An early example was the Parity Parliament in Portugal attributed to the idea of three female members of the European Parliament (EP) in the run-up to EP elections in 1994. They invited 115 female politicians and 115 male politicians to a one-day parliamentary session to discuss democracy, the role of women in Portugal, citizenship and parity. Partially funded by the European Commission, the event sought to provide an example of what gender balance would look like with 50 percent of the seats filled by women and 50 percent of the seats occupied by men.[70]

A more extensive media campaign was organized in Iceland in 1997 in the form of a multi-partisan parliamentary committee that created a well-funded five-year campaign (1997-2002) to increase the proportion of women in politics through humorous advertisements, alongside training courses, education networks, public meetings, and mentoring programs. The advertisements included posters challenging stereotypes at the top levels of government to frame gender balance as an issue affecting both women and men.

More recent examples of media campaigns include a poster campaign in the Prague subway and street network, sponsored by Fórum 50% in the run-up to the 2006 elections in the Czech Republic. The posters featured a long row of pants or ties and the question: 'Do you really have a choice?' The message implied that while there were some differences among men in politics, opportunities were severely restricted when the options did not include women. In Turkey, Ka-Der, the Association to Support Women Candidates, has waged a series of innovative public awareness campaigns. In the run-up to local elections in 2009, they used billboards depicting the three male leaders of the main political parties shoulder to shoulder, with text implying three parties were united in preferring male candidates over female ones.

Political party initiatives

In addition to campaigns organized within civil society, there have also been efforts inside political parties directed at improving the proportion of female candidates. Women's voices in political parties have traditionally been aided by the establishment of *women's sections*, or formal organizations that – theoretically, at least – bring together all of the women who are members of a particular party. In Western Europe, women's sections were often created after women gained the right to vote as a means to attract female voters to the party. In Communist states, such sections were viewed as crucial for incorporating female workers and for drawing support from non-party women. In both instances, however, the goal was typically for women to serve the interests of the parties rather than the parties serving the interests of women. Yet, over time women's sections in many countries have come to serve as an important platform for women inside political parties, both mobilizing around women's issues and gaining commitments from party leaders for increased recruitment of female candidates.[71] Notably, some new parties, like the Greens, do not have separate women's sections arguing these might contribute to the side-lining of women's issues. Attempts to get rid of women's sections in more

established parties, however, have not been successful due to arguments that these organizations continue to play an important role, providing women with a vehicle for putting items important to women on the political agenda.[72]

Fundraising

A second set of party-based strategies involve *fundraising initiatives* to encourage female candidates and ensure resources are available for waging successful campaigns. Fund raising is a particular challenge for women candidates running in countries such as Mongolia, which do not allocate public funds for party campaigns. Perhaps the most well-known among these fundraising organizations is the U.S.-based EMILY's List. It is a group founded in 1985 which recruits and trains women, but more uniquely, publicizes their names to solicit campaign contributions from supporters across the country.[73] Similar fundraising groups have been established in other countries on the model of EMILY's List, including Australia, the UK, and Italy.

Additional mechanisms are available in countries with quotas, or where parties are publicly funded. As noted above with respect to the case of France, parties are assessed a financial penalty proportional to the degree to which they violate the quota requirements of 50 percent male and 50 percent female candidates. This 'stick' approach has had different effects on smaller versus larger parties, with the former being more dependent on state funding and the latter being better able to 'afford' to nominate more men.[74] Recognizing the limits of such an approach, actors in other countries have sought instead to offer a 'carrot' to parties as a way to induce them to nominate more women. In recent years, for example, parties in Croatia were extended a 10 percent increase in funding if they succeeded in electing women to parliament. In a similar effort to get more women elected, the government of Morocco offered financial incentives to the party with the most female candidates in the 2009 local elections. While not yet extensively applied, these experiments may go some way to enhance the transparency of party funding.

Women's parties

A final and less common party-based strategy for raising public awareness and getting women elected is the establishment of *women's parties*. In 1995, thirteen women's organizations in Lithuania founded the Lithuanian Women's Party, headed by former female Prime Minister, Kazimiera Prunskiene, with the goal of showing the public that women did not need quotas to be independent political actors. The party came in seventh among 24 parties in the 1996 elections, providing important shock value to the existing parties.[75] Such initiatives often grow out of women's political movements seeking to stand 'above' existing political parties while giving a voice to women, which was explicitly the case in Iceland and Northern Ireland.[76]

Gender-Sensitive Procedures and Rules In Elected Office

N-Peace/Nid SRI-THAMMA

The initiatives outlined above indicate promotion of women's representation is a multifaceted process, requiring various strategies to raise awareness of the need for gender balance, locate and encourage prospective female candidates, and ensure women receive resources, skills and tools to help them succeed in becoming elected. However, it is not sufficient to place gender equality in campaigns if women are unable to effectively make their voices heard once they enter elected office. A 2008 IPU survey of parliamentarians revealed many women continue to perceive the traditional culture, rules, and working practices of parliament to be problematic.[77] Even in egalitarian Sweden, a 2004 survey of parliamentarians revealed women find it more difficult to reach senior leadership positions. Two dimensions are involved in developing a more gender-sensitive parliament.

The first concerns the capacity of parliaments to *mainstream gender* into its policy work, legislative priorities, and debates by emphasizing the gendered dimensions of all public policies. One strategy to achieve this goal is establishing specialized parliamentary committees and caucuses focused on issues of gender equality. For example, the Parliamentary Caucus of Women MPs and Women Cross-Party Clubs connect women in legislatures. Another alternative involves gender mainstreaming throughout existing parliamentary committee structures and legislative work, through tools like gender budgeting (doing an analysis of the national budget in terms of its implications for women and men, respectively) and the use of gender experts in legislative drafting.

The second dimension concerns *parliamentary working conditions and operational cultures*. Legislative bodies are organized around a set of standardized rules, operating procedures, and institutional facilities which may generate obstacles to the equal inclusion of women in all decision-making and leadership roles. As a recent Asia-Pacific report notes, certain elements of parliamentary culture may deter women from pursuing a political career, like party meetings that take place late in the evening and the lack of child care facilities.[78] To facilitate women's participation, parliamentary bodies should review internal procedures to ensure gender-sensitive structures and working

conditions in elected office, including consideration of sitting hours, recruitment of leadership positions within the legislature, and provisions of childcare and maternal facilities. Moreover new MPs face major challenges in learning parliamentary rules, legislative drafting skills, and debating procedures, hence parliaments should ensure that new women and men members have equal access to capacity development, induction programs, and training.

In Sweden, for example, an internal process has been used to assess the gender sensitivity of the Swedish Parliament.[79] The results of a survey assessment indicated women members face several challenges in parliament: women usually struggle to reach high positions within parliament, women view themselves and their work as being invisible, women are often subject to ridicule and belittling, and women often do not have access to full information about parliamentary work. This resulted in a document with '15 proposals for gender equality in Parliament.' A gender equality plan was adopted for each parliamentary session, requiring reporting and follow-up, falling under the responsibility of the Secretary General of Parliament. Some of the reforms Sweden has implemented to make parliament more family-friendly include provision of subsidized childcare facilities, possibility to take parental leave without resigning, and standardization of rules regarding working hours and sick-days to bring women closer to the rules guiding the rest of the workforce. The leadership also took a strong stand promoting these initiatives. It has taken a number of years and dedicated political will to implement these reforms, indicating when gender equality appears widespread, further efforts are needed to ensure true gender equality in the political sphere.

Conclusions and Next Steps

The Asia-Pacific region needs to provide equal opportunities for women and men, as well as integrate gender equality into policies and practices. Full and equal exercise of human rights by women is essential to achieving a more peaceful, secure, and democratic region. The issue of gender equality in decision-making is particularly important, highlighted by the 1995 Beijing Declaration. Since Beijing, there have been some concrete gains in women's participation in national parliaments, but the rate of progress has been slow, uneven, and incomplete. Institutions are still far from achieving gender balance, either within the Asia-Pacific region or worldwide. Among all Asia-Pacific member states, the proportion of women in national parliament has gradually risen on average by about 0.5% per annum since 1995. If maintained at this pace of change, without any further active intervention, gender parity in Asia-Pacific national legislatures will only be achieved more than half a century from now.

Six-step gender equality action plan

Nevertheless this projection would be far too pessimistic since the cases presented in this report clearly demonstrate concrete steps can be extremely effective in bringing more women into elected office when a genuine commitment to gender equality exists. The six-step action plan described in this report suggests multiple policy mechanisms to fast-track gender equality. No single approach works in every context, but national stakeholders can select the most appropriate initiatives in each case.

(i) **Constitutional reform**: The broadest interventions expand constitutional rights for women. This includes expanding rights to vote and to hold public office, removing any residual forms of sex discrimination. Constitutions can also incorporate positive action provisions, including specifying the provision of reserved seats or the requirement for legal quotas. As exemplified by Afghanistan, Nepal and Timor-Leste, new or revised constitutions provide important opportunities to incorporate and strengthen women's rights, such as in constitutional agreements following the transition away from autocracy, peace-building efforts in post-conflict states, or following the introduction of new decentralized legislative bodies.

(ii) **Electoral, campaign finance, and party laws** regulate nomination, campaigning, and election processes for entering parliaments. Many features shape opportunities for male and female candidates but the most important concern is the type of electoral system, the average size of district magnitude, the provision of party and campaign funding, term limits, ballot access, and threshold requirements. The study demonstrated that within the Asia-Pacific region during the last decade, compared with countries using majoritarian systems, those using proportional representation party list and mixed electoral systems included on average more women in their lower house of parliament. The need to present a balanced ticket for PR lists, to maximize voting support, provides an electoral incentive for the party's electorate. The type of electoral system represents another challenge for gender balance, however, since two-thirds of the countries in the region used majoritarian/plurality electoral systems for the lower house of the national parliament. Any reforms to electoral, campaign finance, and party laws should therefore consider the consequences of these changes for gender equality.

(iii) **Reserved seats and legal gender quotas** are related strategies which have been implemented during the last decade in almost a dozen Asia-Pacific nations. The design of these policies varies in terms of proportion of women and men specified in each, the use of rank placement requirements, and the penalties for non-compliance. Overall the study demonstrated that the proportion of women elected to parliament during the last decade rose at a faster pace in Asia-Pacific countries which had implemented legal gender quotas compared with those which have not used these measures. Nevertheless substantial variance was also evident; a remarkable 25 percentage point rise in the proportion of women in elected office was registered during the last decade in the case of Kyrgyzstan, which combined list PR with a 30% gender equality target.

(iv) **Party selection rules and nomination procedures**, determined by internal processes and rulebooks, are also vital for achieving gender balance in elected office. As documented in this report, Sweden has almost achieved gender parity in parliament, a country with an egalitarian culture and party list PR elections, where many major parties have adopted party gender quotas. The design and implementation of party quotas vary across and within countries. For example, in their target levels, how far rank ordering exists on party lists, and how far formal rules are respected in practice.

(v) **Capacity development** policies and programs have also been widely used, especially by civil society organizations working outside of parties, involving *equal opportunity initiatives* (candidate and leadership training, induction and mentoring programs, recruitment initiatives, and knowledge networks), *initiatives to combat stereotypes and raise awareness* (statistical monitoring, gender audits, media campaigns and citizen education), and *political party initiatives* (women's sections, fundraising, and women's parties). There are numerous examples of these types of initiatives and although specific cases are often regarded as successful, it remains difficult to draw any general lessons assessing overall effectiveness. Further knowledge-sharing and evaluation is recommended as a valuable next step in this process.

(vi) Lastly, it is insufficient for more women candidates to be in office if standard rules and procedures of democratic bodies are gendered, thus preventing women from operating effectively as elected representatives. Encouraging **gender-sensitive**

rules and procedures in elected bodies is also important, both by integrating gender issues into all parliamentary committees, debates, action plans, commissions, reports, and legislation, as well as reviewing standard working conditions and operational cultures to ensure equal opportunities for female and male members are accessible. This is an area which has received far less attention in public debates and is recommended to gather more systematic information, perhaps by surveys and workshops monitoring the experience of parliamentarians across Asia-Pacific states and identifying best practices of elected bodies.

In all these initiatives, National Action Plans should be developed and published to establish clear targets, to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of gender equality policies, and to disseminate and share lessons learned from these experiences. Political parties should also be encouraged to develop, publish, implement, and monitor their own Party Action Plans by specifying clear performance targets and specific time-sensitive goals. The next step recommended for Asia-Pacific is to develop practical guidelines and handbooks for providing technical assistance and templates which parties could use to develop and monitor their own Action Plans. Through implementing these types of initiatives, it is hoped gender balance will gradually be achieved in all areas of political leadership and public life, strengthening women's rights and deepening the quality of democracy.

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