

# Women in Government

In the 1995 World Conference on Women, 189 governments committed to “ensure women’s equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.” To fulfill this strategic objective, governments also pledged to establish the goal of “gender balance in governmental bodies and committees as well as in public administrative entities and in the judiciary.” Six years later, not much has changed - women’s representation in politics remains dismally low.

Today women are only 13.7 percent of parliaments worldwide according to data collected by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, a mere 0.6 percent increase annually. In the Asia Pacific, women are 14.2 percent of national parliaments. At this rate, it will take 75 years before women attain equal representation in national governments.

At the local level, the situation is no different - women make up a small percentage of legislative councils and other local bodies in most countries in the world. Only Sweden, Denmark and Finland in Europe have reached a critical mass of 30 percent women in local governments, while South Africa and Trinidad and Tobago come close at 28 and 23 percent respectively. In the Asia Pacific, women’s representation in local governments has ranged from a low two percent to a high 30 percent (e.g. India, Bangladesh and New Zealand).

## Women in Local Governments in the Asia Pacific

Sri Lanka	(2%)	Australia	(26.3%)
Japan	(6.2%)	Vietnam	(26.6%)
Philippines	(16.5%)	New Zealand	(31.5%)
Thailand	(18.1%)	India	(33%)
China	(22.1%)	Bangladesh	(33.3%)
Nepal	(24.1%)		

Source: Jean Drage, *Women in Local Government in Asia and the Pacific: A Comparative Analysis of Thirteen Countries*. UN ESCAP, June 2001.

Why aren’t women represented in public office in large numbers? The sad reality is that obstacles remain to women’s full, equal participation in politics. Many of these barriers are deeply rooted in patriarchal structures and attitudes and manifested in the structures and agenda of political parties, unfair electoral voting systems, high costs of elections, and lack of access to training and education.



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The good news is that many countries in Europe were able to break through these barriers to claim the record for having the highest representation of women in government. Similarly, several countries in the Asia Pacific are making headway in challenging these barriers using strategies that transform the way political power is perceived and used; and putting women's interests and concerns in the policy agenda.

### Countries that Reached 30%-40% of Women in Parliaments

Sweden (45.5%)	Austria (38.1%)	Luxembourg (33.3%)
Finland (43.8%)	Denmark (37.5%)	Spain (32.8%)
France (42.5%)	Netherlands (35.5%)	Belgium (32.0%)
Germany (38.4%)	Ireland (33.3%)	

Source: InterParliamentary Union, 2001, <http://www.ipu.org>

This resource kit intends to share tools for learning about the issues, supporting the campaign for gender balance or 50/50 in government, networking with organizations across the region, and planning for advocacy for gender balance in politics. It contains:

- Issue Briefs on Strategies for Attaining Gender Balance:
  - Campaign financing
  - Quota system
  - Proportional representation, and
  - Political leadership training and support services
- Signature Statement on 50/50
- Guide to Launching a National Campaign for 50/50 in Government
- Manila Declaration on 50/50 Women in Government in the Asia Pacific (Appendix section of the "Guide")
- List of Resource Institutions on Gender and Governance and Endorsing Organizations of the 50/50 Campaign in the Asia Pacific

#### Sources:

*Beijing Platform for Action, Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995.*

Socorro L. Reyes, "Working with Women, Breaking Down Barriers," in *Getting the Balance Right: Strategies for Change Primer, Women's Environment and Development Organization, 2001.*

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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# Campaign Finance

**T**he high cost of election campaigns is a significant barrier against women's full, equal representation and participation in politics. Women do not have access to resources to finance their campaigns and wealthy individuals and corporate contributors would rather give to men who are generally leaders of political parties. Related to the high cost of campaigns is the problem of vote buying and the ensuing corruption that often go with the use of private money to finance public office campaigns. Unless the system and culture of "money politics" is changed, women will continue to be marginalized in political and public life. This brief examines how regulating campaign spending through campaign finance reform, including public financing of campaigns, can make a difference for women.

## MONEY POLITICS DISCRIMINATE AGAINST WOMEN

- **Women candidates are often placed in a disadvantaged position.** Because 'money politics' is often a sad reality, women are discouraged to enter politics because of the price or amount involved. Many women who decide to join elections are forced by the prevailing political culture to spend huge amounts to compete with male candidates who in most cases have access to funds.
- **Campaign financiers (individual or big private organizations) are more willing to support male politicians.** Since politics is still seen as a 'male world', it is not surprising that most private companies and individuals give their support to men as they are generally believed to have greater chances of winning.
- **Candidates who win elections are generally expected to return the favor by giving 'preferential or special treatment' to big donors.** This patron-client relationship goes beyond the election period to the public policy decision-making process. For instance, we may find a legislator who strongly lobbies for a privatization act, only to find out that the buyer of the public company contributed huge amounts to the legislator's campaign.

## CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

- Funds for campaigns may come from individuals and groups or institutions, e.g. unions, special interest groups, and government unless specified by law. Campaign finance laws generally work to make the campaign financing system, including the electoral process, more transparent, fair and democratic by putting control and accountability mechanisms in place.
- Campaign finance laws mandate a system of reporting to disclose **where** and **how** campaign funds are raised and spent, including limitations on fund raising and expenditures.



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## PUBLIC CAMPAIGN FINANCING WORKS FOR WOMEN

- Generally, public financing of campaigns refers to campaign money provided by the government to a candidate or political party. Public funds may be provided to cover a **portion** or **all** of the campaign costs by the candidate or political party.
- Public financing of campaigns is seen as democratic, fair and equitable as both women and men candidates and parties that qualify for government support are given equal amounts for campaigns, thus not only the “wealthy” or those with access to party coffers, often male party leaders, are capable of running a serious campaign.
- In France, political parties which do not include 50% women in their party lists face sanctions such as reduction or withdrawal of campaign funding support from the government.
- In Nordic countries like Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Netherlands, Finland and Iceland, which have high numbers of women in parliaments, political parties receive state subsidy or some form of assistance (e.g. free, equal broadcasting time on TV and radio for campaigns or party-related activities such as research).

## FUNDING LIMITS

- Limitations on the amount raised by political parties or individual candidates make campaign financing more equitable, transparent and democratic. They are intended to reduce the possibilities for the exercise of undue influence in a candidate or party by a contributor.
- To work more effectively, contribution limits should apply to campaigns for federal, state and local offices, donations to campaigns used for “party building” activities such as voter registration and membership campaigns, and payments to party-related “think tanks.”
- In Mexico, the law limits the amount of contributions from nongovernmental organizations and bars funding from foreign citizens, religious officials and private businesses. Sanctions include economic penalties and fines, suspension of public funding for parties or revocation of party’s registration.
- Countries with contribution limits as of 1995 include: India, Taiwan, Japan, Israel, Russia, Mexico, Brazil, France, Italy, Spain, Turkey and the United States.

## PUBLIC REPORTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- Campaign financing systems will work better for women if they provide for adequate and efficient public reporting and accountability mechanisms. Reporting of campaign fund raising and expenditures should emphasize the need to ensure transparency with regard to sources of funding and public reporting of accounts by candidates, political committees and parties.
- In Denmark, political parties are required to submit a list of all of contributions. In New Zealand, every registered party is required by law to appoint a qualified auditor to audit the financial return of the party. At the federal level in the United States, campaign committees including parties and political action committees must present to the Federal Election Commission quarterly reports on funds raised and spent.

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### Sources:

*Administration and Cost of Elections Project: Campaign Financing.* <http://www.aceproject.org/main/english/ei/eif01b.htm>  
*Data as of 1995. “Public Policy Inquiry: Campaign Finance”* ([www.campaignfinance.org/proposals/contribution1.htm](http://www.campaignfinance.org/proposals/contribution1.htm))  
*Delury, George. World Encyclopedia of Political Systems & Parties. Vol 1 & 2, Second Edition. NY: Facts on File Inc. 1987*  
*Public Campaign: How Women are Affected by Money Politics.* <http://www.publiccampaign.org/women.html>  
*Public Policy Inquiry: Campaign Finance.* <http://www.campaignfinancesite.org/proposals/contribution1.html>

# Quota System

Quotas are an affirmative action tool aimed at ensuring that women constitute a critical mass in decision and policy-making bodies. Article 4 of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) clearly states that quotas as “temporary special measures are aimed at accelerating de facto equality between women and men and shall not be considered discrimination as defined in the present Convention.”

The importance of quotas is also embodied in the proposed outcome document for the special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. In paragraph 100a of Section IV, governments committed themselves to:

“set and encourage the use of explicit short term bound targets or measurable goals, including where appropriate, quotas to promote progress towards gender balance including women’s equal access to and full participation on a basis of equality with men in all areas and at all levels of public life, especially in decision-making positions, in political parties and political activities, in all government ministries and at key policymaking institutions, as well as in local development bodies and authorities.”

## QUOTAS WORK DIRECTLY AND EFFICIENTLY TO OPEN THE POLITICAL ARENA TO MORE WOMEN.

- Quotas set a minimum percentage of representation, i.e. 30% or 40%, for both sexes to ensure balanced representation in decision-making bodies.
- They are established through national legislation or constitutional mandates (legislative or constitutional quotas) and through political parties (party quotas).

## QUOTAS HAVE DRAMATICALLY INCREASED THE NUMBER OF WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS.

- Nordic countries have the highest number of women in the lower or single house of national legislatures, all which have some type of quota in place: Sweden-40%, Finland and Denmark-34%, Norway-38% and Iceland-25%.
- Currently, 29.8% of lower parliamentary seats in South Africa are held by women. South Africa jumped from No. 141 in 1994 in the Inter-Parliamentary Union’s ranking of national legislatures by the share of seats held by women to No. 9 in 2000 after the African National Congress adopted a 30% quota for women candidates.



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## MANY COUNTRIES HAVE PASSED LAWS OR CONSTITUTIONAL MANDATES ADOPTING QUOTAS FOR WOMEN IN NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEGISLATIVE BODIES.

- In **India**, the 74<sup>th</sup> amendment to the constitution requires that 33% of the seats in local municipal bodies be reserved for women.
- The 1991 Constitution of **Nepal** mandates that 5% of the candidates of each political party must be women, and that 20% of all village and municipal level seats be reserved for women candidates.
- In **Bangladesh**, 30 seats out of 330 are reserved for women.
- In **Eritrea**, 30% of seats at the national and regional assemblies are reserved for women.
- One parliamentary seat from each of the 39 districts is reserved for women in **Uganda**.
- In **Tanzania**, 25% of seats at the local level and 20% of seats at the national level are reserved for women.
- 20 to 40 % of candidacies are reserved for women in many Latin American countries: **Argentina, Brazil, Dominican Republic, Panama, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador**.
- **Belgium** has a 33.3% statutory quota for women in party lists.
- In **France**, a constitutional amendment was introduced in June 1999 that mandates 50% representation of women in all elected assemblies in each succeeding election. A law was also passed mandating “obligation of results” i.e. 50% women in the local elections in 2001 and in the National Assembly in 2002. Political parties which do not include 50% women in their party lists face financial sanctions such as reduction or withdrawal of campaign funding support from government.

## QUOTAS HAVE BEEN INITIATED BY POLITICAL PARTIES TO SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASE WOMEN’S REPRESENTATION.

- **South Africa’s** African National Congress adopted a quota system that reserves 30% of parliamentary and 50% of local government candidacies for women.
- The ruling parties in **Mozambique** and **Namibia** used quotas in completing their party lists to ensure they contained at least 30% women.
- **Australia, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Sweden and the United Kingdom** have political parties committed to using quotas with fixed percentages of women candidates, e.g. German Social Democratic Party has a 40% quota rule for each sex in every list of candidates, and the Green Party has a 50-50 rule.

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### Sources:

Azza Karam, et al. *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*. Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA). 1998.

Mala N. Htun, “Women’s Political Participation, Representation and Leadership in Latin America,” Issue Brief, Women’s Leadership Conference of the Americas, Nov. 1998 in WEDO Fact Sheet on “Quotas”, 2000.

“Quotas” Fact Sheet, Women’s Environment and Development Organization, 2000.

“Quotas: Women’s Boon or Bane,” Women Around the World Fact Sheet, Center for Legislative Development, Philippines, 2000.

# Proportional Representation

The type of electoral system used by a country greatly affects the extent of representation of women in politics. The two main types of electoral systems – proportional representation and the majoritarian/pluralistic type – produce different outcomes for women. Studies show that proportional representation (PR) generally results in higher number of women winning seats in parliament.

## PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

- In PR systems, voters cast their votes by party or in some cases, by individual. Seats in parliament are allotted in proportion to each political party's overall share of national votes.
- Most dramatic results for women are yielded in cases where parties mandate the percentage of women to be included on lists - as in the rule of "every second seat a woman" also known as the "zebra rule."
- Countries in the world where women constitute over 30% of parliamentarians such as Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, and Netherlands, have electoral systems based on proportional representation. PR is used by the 10 countries with the highest percentage of women in Parliament (see table on p. 2).

## MAJORITY/PLURALISTIC SYSTEM

- In this system, there is usually only one seat per district and the candidate or individual that wins the plurality or majority of votes cast gets elected.
- In the winner-take-all electoral system, women have much less chance or success in getting representation. This system is used in about 40 percent of countries including the United States, which has one of the lowest numbers of women elected.



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## ELECTORAL THRESHOLDS

- Some PR systems require a minimum percentage of votes for a party to be represented in parliament. A low electoral threshold discourages creation of “mini parties” which often let in only one or two representatives, in most cases male, party leaders.
- In designing a PR type of electoral system, there is need to examine this element and work for higher electoral threshold that would increase women’s chances in winning seats.

<u>Country</u>	<u>Percent Women in Lower/ Single House</u>	<u>Electoral System</u>
Sweden	42.7%	Multimember PR
Denmark	37.5%	Multimember PR
Finland	36.5%	Multimember PR
Norway	36.4%	Multimember PR
Netherlands	36.0%	Multimember PR
Iceland	34.9%	Multimember PR
Germany	30.9%	Mixed PR and Majority Systems
New Zealand	30.8%	Mixed PR and Majority Systems
Mozambique	30.0%	Multimember PR
South Africa	29.8%	Multimember PR

*Source: InterParliamentary Union, www.ipu.org*

## MULTI-MEMBER DISTRICTS

- The size or magnitude of the electoral district can affect the outcome of PR elections for women. The higher the district magnitude, the more seats up for grabs. This gives parties more incentive to balance their ticket by including women in the lists to broaden their appeal to voters.
- Similarly as the number of seats per district increases, parties will go further down their lists where women are usually listed, and result in more women getting elected.
- As shown in the Table, Nordic countries including South Africa and Mozambique have multi-member PR systems that result in high level of representation of women in parliament.

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### Sources:

“Electoral Systems: Attaining Gender Balance in Political Representation” Women Around the World Fact Sheet, Issue No. 5, CLD, 2000.

Reynolds, Andres and Reilly, Ben. *The International IDEA Handbook of Electoral System Design*. Sweden: International IDEA. 1997.

# Political Leadership Training and Support Services

**W**omen have been excluded in decision-making and electoral politics for a long time. As a result, most women lack knowledge on political and electoral processes as well as resources to run effective campaigns. When they do get elected, women are often faced with yet another obstacle – lack of technical skills and information to do their jobs effectively. One strategic response to these two related barriers to women’s political participation is to provide training for women to get into public office and to develop necessary skills for policymaking including access to research and analysis. Another strategic response is to provide voter and citizenship education for women and men.

## TRAINING WOMEN CANDIDATES

### □ Political Awareness and Gender Consciousness Raising

This type of training aims to develop an understanding of the political environment and women’s political participation as a human right. It seeks to help women see problems using a gender lens and develop a gender perspective necessary to transform policymaking into an important strategy for women’s empowerment.

### □ Campaign Skills

Skills necessary to run and win an election campaign include developing a platform for action, using the media in elections, and organizing and managing a campaign from raising funds to managing a campaign team.

## SUPPORT SERVICES FOR WOMEN LEGISLATORS

□ Women policymakers can make a difference in politics through the policies they initiate and advocate. They need access to **research and analysis** for effective legislation. This particular need is addressed by women’s groups, NGOs and women studies programmes by providing data and analysis of women’s issues and concerns that are critical to the adoption of gender responsive policies.



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- Support services may also include **technical training** to develop necessary skills such as:
  - Legislative agenda setting workshops aimed at consciousness raising on gender issues and concerns that require policy action.
  - Preparation of legislative proposals that need skills on policy analysis, research, and bill or ordinance drafting.
  - Advocacy and negotiation for legislators not only to express their positions but also how to participate in committee and plenary deliberations, gain support of other legislators, and how to negotiate without compromising basic principles.

## **VOTER AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION**

- Voter and citizen education activities may use different mediums such as training and media campaigns among others. These activities aim to get women involved in politics as citizens and voters so they can contribute meaningfully to decision-making in their communities and society. They are not only about getting women to go out and vote during elections but also developing a consciousness for choosing candidates that would practice good governance principles of accountability, transparency, democracy and participation.
- A critical element of voter education among women is building awareness about political participation of women as a human right - that women have the right to vote, to run for public office or campaign for election just as men do. Related to this is to develop a consciousness among women to value their vote so they are not easily vulnerable to vote buying.
- Voter and citizen education to be effective must also target men. Many of the prevailing negative notions about the concept and practice of politics are the result of men dominating political and public life. Transforming politics must thus address the need to change the attitudes of men towards women's roles in the family, community and national life, about women's rights as human rights.