

**REPORT ON THE STATE OF WOMEN  
IN URBAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA**

**1. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE COUNTRY**

**1.1 Socio-economic profile**

Located in the east of Asia and on the western coast of the Pacific, the People's Republic of China has a territorial land area of 9.6 million square kilometers and a population of 1.225 billion; about one fifth of the total population of the world. China is a unified multi-national country with 56 nationalities. The Han ethnic group makes up 91 per cent of its total population. Administratively, China is divided into four municipalities, 23 provinces, five autonomous regions, and two special administrative regions: Hong Kong and Macao. Beijing is its capital. By the end of 1999, China had 668 established cities (including four municipalities but excluding those in Taiwan Province).<sup>1</sup>

China is a civilized country with a long history. After its founding in 1949, the People's Republic of China has carried out massive economic construction in a planned way. This has increased the country's national strength and brought about a basic satisfaction of the feeding and clothing needs of its more than 1 billion people. In 1978, China started a campaign of economic restructuring. Since 1993, it has tried to introduce a market economic system. At present, its economy is developing in a sustained and healthy way, and its social undertakings are advancing on all fronts. The cultural quality, health level and living quality of its people as a whole are seeing great improvement, and the rights of its citizens are guaranteed. In the same way, the social status and living level of women have also been greatly improved.

With a vast country and a big population, China is comparatively deficient in terms of per-capita possession of resources and comparatively low in terms of its per-capita economic level. There is also a comparatively big gap of development between different regions. The eastern coastal areas, for instance, are comparatively well developed in economic terms and provide habitats for most of its population. Inland areas in the central and western parts, on the other hand, are sparsely populated and comparatively backward in economic development. There is also a certain gap between men and women so far as their participation in politics, employment and education are concerned.

**Table 1**

Year	Population (10000)		Proportion of women against total population (%)	Level of urbanization (%)	Average per-capita GNP (RMB)
	Female	Male			
1960	31924	34283	48.20		218
1970	40306	42686	48.57	12.68	275
1980	47920	50785	48.55	14.04	460
1990	55429	58904	48.48	18.96	1634
1998	61181	63629	49.02	23.90	6398

Source: China Yearbook of Statistics, 1999, China Statistical Publishing House, 1999 edition, Beijing

**Table 2: Population in China's five biggest cities (unit: 10000)**

Year	City 1	City 2	City 3	City 4	City 5
1980	Shanghai 598.3	Beijing 454.8	Tianjin 376.1	Shenyang 284.4	Wuhan 257.5
1990	Shanghai 749.6	Beijing 576.9	Tianjin 457.4	Shenyang 360.4	Wuhan 328.4
1995	Shanghai 833.80	Beijing 619.40	Tianjin 474.25	Shenyang 379.95	Wuhan 375.84
1999	Shanghai 923.19	Beijing 701.79	Tianjin 489.32	Chongqing 437.39	Wuhan 434.46

Note: The population in the cities listed above refers to their population in the city proper.

Source: Yearbooks of statistics for China's urban areas for various years, China Statistical Publishing House, Beijing

**Table 3: Proportion of illiterates and semi-illiterates against the population above the age of 15 (unit %)**

Year	National			City		Town		County	
	Average	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
1990	22.3	31.9	13.0	13.5	6.3			37.1	15.7
1997	15.8	23.2	9.6	12.9	3.9	13.2	3.8	29.9	13.0

Source: China Yearbook of Statistics, 1998, China Statistical Publishing House, 1998 edition, Beijing

**Table 4: Composition of level of education of people above the age of 6 in 1997 (unit: 10000)**

Sector	Above 6		Population receiving education							
	Female	Male	Primary school		Junior middle school		Senior middle school		At and above college	
			Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
National	564522	579248	232579	232509	156694	210039	50430	68315	11493	19806
City	132904	131613	35464	34227	43746	47901	28116	29686	8904	14169
Town	50007	49059	14250	13041	17331	17960	10609	12199	1875	4047
County	381611	398575	182865	185240	95617	144178	11705	26430	714	1591

Source: The same as above.

**Table 5: Proportion of gender-divided population above the age of 6 and with different levels of education in 1997 (unit: %)**

Sector	Level of education							
	Primary school		Junior middle school		Senior middle school		At and above college	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
National	41.2	40.1	27.8	36.3	8.9	11.8	2.0	3.4
City	26.7	26.0	32.9	36.4	21.2	22.6	6.7	10.8
Town	28.5	26.6	34.7	36.6	21.2	24.9	3.7	8.2
County	47.9	46.5	25.1	36.2	3.1	6.1	0.2	0.4

Source: Calculated according to figures above.

**Table 6: Urban-rural infant mortality, birth-giving mortality and total birth rate**

Year	Sector	Infant mortality (per 1000)	Birth-giving mortality (1:100000)	Total birth rate
1990	National	32.9	88.9	2.25
	Urban		45.9	
	Rural		112.5	
1997	National	34.0	63.6	1.80
	Urban		38.3	
	Rural		80.4	

Source: 1. China Statistics by Gender (1990-1995), China Statistical, Publishing House, 1998 edition, Beijing

2. 10 per cent Sample Survey of the 1990 Census in China, China, Statistical Publishing House, 1991 edition, Beijing

3. China Yearbook of Statistics 1998, China Statistical Publishing House, 1998 edition, Beijing

**Table 7: Situation of employment of women**

Year	Sector	Total population of working age (10000)		Total number of employed women (10000)	Proportion of employed women (%)
		Female	Male		
1982	National	25673	29414	22784	89
1990	National	31734	36169	29101	84
1995	National	35300	38500	31936	84

Source: 1. China Statistics by Gender (1990-1995), China Statistical Publishing House, 1998 edition, Beijing

2. One Per Cent Sample Survey of the 1995 Census in China, China Statistical Publishing House, 1996 edition, Beijing

## 1.2 Politics and governance

1.2.1 China has a unitary state structure, with one central government governing the whole country. In areas inhabited by minority people, the system

of national autonomy has been introduced. whereas in Hong Kong and Macao, the system of special administrative region with a high degree of autonomy has been introduced.

China follows the people's congress system, a state system that falls into the category of representative systems. The National People's Congress is the supreme organ of state power, and has supreme legislative power, decision-making power, appointment and dismissal power, and supervisory power. In other words, all state administrative organs, courts, and procuratorates are elected by, hold responsibility to, and are subject to the supervision by the National People's Congress.

Local people's congresses at various levels are local organs of state power and exercise state power in their respective administrative regions on behalf of their people.

1.2.2 As their executive bodies, governments (i.e., state administrative organs) at various levels are closely related to people's congresses. The administrative leaders of governments at all levels are elected and appointed by people's congresses at the corresponding levels.

Local governments both hold responsibility to people's congresses at the same levels, and are subject to the leadership of the central government. The limits of power of state organs at the central and local levels are divided according to the principle of unified leadership by the central government and full display of the initiatives of local governments.

1.2.3 China's system of political parties is a system of cooperation between multiple political parties under the leadership of the Communist Party. China has a total of nine political parties. Apart from the Communist Party of China, there are eight others: The Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang, the China Democratic League, the China Democratic National Construction Association, the China Association for Promoting Democracy, the Chinese Peasants and Workers Democratic Party, the China Zhi Gong Dang (Public Interest Party), the Jiu San (September 3) Society, and the Taiwan Democratic Self-Government League. Taking a leading position in multi-party cooperation, the Communist Party of China is the party in power. All the democratic parties are parties participating in government and political affairs under the leadership of and in cooperation with the Communist Party and for the common cause of socialism. In China's central and local governments, these democratic parties and non-party personages all make up considerable proportions. An important organizational form of the system of multi-party cooperation is the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

It is stipulated in China's Constitution that all Chinese citizens enjoy freedom of speech, the press, assembly, association, procession, demonstration, and religious belief.

1.2.4 People's deputies are elected by secret ballot through direct and

indirect election. The National People's Congress and people's congresses above the county level are elected by people's congresses at a lower level, that is, indirectly, while the people's congresses at the county, autonomous county and cities without being divided into districts and levels below are elected directly by voters.

The Chairman and vice-chairmen of the People's Republic of China are elected by the National People's Congress for a term of five years which is the same as that of the National People's Congress. They cannot be re-elected for more than two terms. It is stipulated in the Constitution that the chairman and the vice-chairmen must be the citizens of the People's Republic of China with the right to vote and to be voted and reaching the age of 45.

The State Council is elected for the same term as that of the National People's Congress and implements the policies of the government under a Premier. Candidates for the Premier of the State Council are recommended by the Chairman of the People's Republic of China, approved by the National People's Congress, and appointed or dismissed by the Chairman of the State. Candidates for other members of the State Council are nominated by the Premier of the State Council, approved by the National People's Congress, and appointed or dismissed by the Chairman of the state.

In local people's governments at various levels, the system of responsibility by the top leader is implemented. The administrative heads are elected by people's congresses at the corresponding levels and serve for a same term as that of the people's congresses at the corresponding levels.

1.2.5 When electing deputies to people's congresses at a higher level by local people's congresses above the county level, the candidate deputies are recommended according to the voting units by various political parties and mass organizations independently or jointly, or by more than 10 deputies together.

Election (direct election) of deputies to people's congresses at and below the county level is carried out by electoral districts. Voters with production (institutional) units vote in the electoral districts of their respective work units, and those without production (institutional) units vote in the electoral districts of the areas of their permanent residences.

Appropriate quotas are reserved for various democratic parties and minority groups in people's congresses at all levels.

### **1.3 Participation and representation of women in politics**

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, the campaign of liberation of women has entered a new period in China. The social barriers hindering women's participation in government and political affairs have been

removed, and the number of women in government organizations has been on gradual increase. In overall terms, however, the proportion of women's participation in government and political affairs is still low, and the phenomenon of unequal opportunities still exists.

Due to a lack of statistical data on the division of voters by sex, it is impossible to make any comparison according to the proportions of female and male voters. According to statistics compiled by the National People's Congress, participation by women in grassroots election (direct election) has stood at above 95 per cent since 1984. In elections above the county level, the proportion of female voters has been 20 per cent or so because the elections are made indirectly and the proportions are determined by the proportions of women deputies in people's congresses at various levels.

**Table 8: Number and gender composition of deputies to the National People Congress and its Standing Committee in different terms**

Different terms and year of election	Delegates (persons)			Standing Committee members (persons)			Chairman and vice-chairman (persons)	
	Female	Male	Proportion of females (%)	Female	Male	Proportion of females (%)	Female	Male
1 <sup>st</sup> (1954)	147	1079	12.0	3	73	4.0	1	14
2 <sup>nd</sup> (1959)	150	1076	12.2	4	58	6.5	1	16
3 <sup>d</sup> (1964)	542	2492	17.8	17	79	17.4	1	18
4 <sup>th</sup> (1975)	653	2232	22.6	39	105	27.1	4	20
5 <sup>th</sup> (1978)	742	2755	21.2	35	148	19.1	4	26
6 <sup>th</sup> (1983)	632	2346	21.2	13	125	9.4	1	21
Different terms and year of election	Delegates (persons)			Standing Committee members (persons)			Chairman and vice-chairman (persons)	
	Female	Male	Proportion of females (%)	Female	Male	Proportion of females (%)	Female	Male
7 <sup>th</sup> (1988)	634	2344	21.3	16	121	11.7	2	18
8 <sup>th</sup> (1993)	626	2352	21.0	17	121	12.3	2	18
9 <sup>th</sup> (1998)	650	2329	21.8	16	118	12.0	2	17

Source:(1). China Yearbook of Statistics 1999, China Statistical Publishing House, 1999 edition, Beijing

(2). Handbook of Data on the People's Republic of China, Social Science Documents Publishing House, 1986 edition, Beijing

(3). China Statistics by Gender (1990-1995), China Statistical Publishing House, 1998 edition, Beijing

(4). Collection of Documents of the First Session of the Ninth National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, People's Publishing House, 1998 edition, Beijing

**Table 9: Number and gender composition of deputies to the 8<sup>th</sup> (1993-1998) local people's congresses and their standing committees**

Sector	Number of congress deputies			Number of standing committee members		
	Female (person)	Male (person)	Proportion of females (%)	Female (person)	Male (person)	Female proportion (%)
Provincial level	4524	16464	21.56	206	1525	11.90
County level	144367	506944	22.17	9079	41333	18.01

Source: China Statistics by Gender (1990-1995), China Statistical Publishing House, 1998 edition, Beijing

**Table 10: Number of women leaders in governments at various levels (unit: persons)**

National-level (vice-premiers and State councilors)	Provincial and ministerial-level	City-level
4	61	463

Source: (1) People's Daily April 4, 1999

(2) The number of women mayors are quoted from the 1999 statistics of Branch of Women Mayors of China Association of Mayors

**Table 11: Composition of leaders of State organs and their working bodies at various levels**

	Females (10000 persons)		Males (10000 persons)		Proportion of females (%)	
	1982	1990	1982	1990	1982	1990
Central-level	0.26	0.33	1.65	1.25	16	19
Provincial-level	0.65	0.77	6.33	6.25	9	10
Prefecture, city and county-level	4.18	8.03	76.69	87.50	5	12

Source: China Statistics by Gender (1990-1995), China Statistical Publishing House, 1998 edition, Beijing

## 2. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN URBAN LOCAL GOVERNANCE

### 2.1 Women's participation in urban local government

It is stipulated in Article 48 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China that the women of the People's Republic of China enjoy equal rights as men in political, economic, cultural and social affairs and in family life. The State protects the rights and interests of women, pays men and women equally for equal work, and trains and selects women cadres.

The Constitution of the People's Republic of China also stipulates that all citizens of the People's Republic of China reaching the age of 18 shall have the right to vote and to stand for election and the right to hold public posts regardless of their nationality, race, gender, occupations, family background, religious belief, level of education, situation of property, and length of residence. Corresponding clauses have also been included in the Election Law and the Law Concerning the Guarantee of the Rights and Interests of Women in line with this principle.

It is stipulated in Article 3 of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women promulgated by the United Nations in 1980s that all signatory states shall pledge to adopt appropriate measures including formulation of laws in all fields, especially in political, social, economic and cultural fields, to guarantee the full development and progress of women, so as to guarantee that they can exercise and enjoy human rights and basic freedom on the basis of equality with men. Article 7 of the Convention stipulates that all signatory states shall adopt various kinds of appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in their political and public affairs, and to guarantee, in particular, that women can, under conditions equal to those of men: (a). Have the right to vote in all elections and referendums, and the right to stand for election in all publicly-elected organizations; (b). Participate in the formulation and implementation of government policies and hold public posts in governments at various levels, and perform public duties; and (c). Participate in non-governmental organizations and associations related to the public or political affairs of their countries. China is one of the earliest signatories to this Convention.

In 1992, the National People's Congress of China passed an important law devoted exclusively to the protection of the rights and interests of women: the Law of the People's Republic of China Concerning the Guarantee of the Rights and Interests of Women. Chapter II of this Law contains clear-cut stipulations on the political rights of women: Article 8 states that: "The State guarantees that women enjoy equal political rights as men". Article 9 states that: "Women shall have the right to manage, via various channels and in various forms, State affairs, economic and cultural causes, and social affairs". Article 10 states that: "Women shall have equal right as men to vote and to stand for election. The National People's Congress and local people's congresses at various levels shall have appropriate numbers of women deputies and try to gradually increase of the proportions of women deputies". Article 11 states that: "The State shall actively train and select women cadres. When appointing cadres, all State organs, social bodies, enterprises, and institutional units shall adhere to the principle of equality between men and women, and pay attention to the training and selection of women cadres to hold leading posts. The State attaches importance to the training and selection of women cadres of minority nationalities". Article 12 states that: "Women federations at various levels and their group members can recommend women cadres to State organs, social



bodies, enterprises, and institutional units". Article 13 states that: "Departments concerned shall hear and accept criticisms or rational proposals for the guarantee of the rights and interests of women; and investigate and handle complaints, charges and accusations concerning the infringement of the rights and interests of women. No units or individuals shall suppress or make vindictive attacks on the complainants". In a legal form, the Law of the People's Republic of China Concerning the Guarantee of the Rights and Interests of Women contains all-including stipulations on the various rights of women to participate in the management of governments at various levels and administration of political affairs, and the guarantee of these rights.

In 1995, the Fourth World Conference on Women was held in Beijing, China. The Chinese Government pledged fully to implement the Beijing Programme of Action in China. At the same time (one month before the congress), the State Council of the People's Republic of China worked out the Program for the Development of Chinese Women (1995-2000), and urged local governments at all levels to implement it. The number one chief objective of the outline is to expand the degree of women's participation in the decision-making and management of State and social affairs. Included in the outline are two specific targets: (1). Active efforts to elect women into leading bodies of governments at all levels and comparatively big increase in the number of women in leading positions of government departments, and (2). Appointment of more women in the leading bodies of industries, departments, enterprises and institutional units with a comparative concentration of women staff and workers.

## **2.2 Gender sensitizing of urban local government**

### **Establishment of necessary indexes to guarantee the proportion of women in government**

The Decision of the 5<sup>th</sup> Session of the 8<sup>th</sup> National People's Congress on "Issues Concerning the Number of Deputies to the 9<sup>th</sup> National People's Congress and Their Election" made in March 1997, stipulates that "the proportion of women deputies against the total of deputies to the 9<sup>th</sup> National People's Congress shall be greater than that of the 8<sup>th</sup> National People's Congress". The 9<sup>th</sup> National People's Congress held in 1998 had 650 women deputies, or 21.81 per cent of the total number of the deputies. The 9<sup>th</sup> Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference had 341 women members, or 15.54 per cent of the total. The figures were 0.78 and 2.02 per cent more respectively than those in the 9<sup>th</sup> National People's Congress and the 8<sup>th</sup> Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference<sup>2</sup>.

### **Formulation of plans to train and select women cadres**

For five years, two national conferences on the training and selection of women cadres have been held in succession, and five-year plans have been worked out for the training and selection of women cadres. At present, all provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities have formulated work plans on the training and selection of women cadres. The number of women in leading bodies at various levels have also been increased. Of the current State leaders, four are women. In the 29 ministers and commissions of the State Council, there are 18 women ministers and vice-ministers including two ministers. The number of women leaders in provincial, autonomous regional and municipal governments has also increased by 46.5 per cent from five years ago, while the growth in prefecture, county and township governments have been 42.5, 88.4 and 80 per cent respectively. All counties (and cities) and more than half of the towns in China now have women leaders<sup>3</sup>.

### **Attention to the training of women cadres at the grassroots level**

Pursuant to State policies and in response to State requirements, all local governments have taken effective measures to train and select women cadres at the grassroots level to lay a foundation for the selection of women cadres. For instance, in the enrollment of new college and polytechnic school students, the principle of treating girl and boy students equally has been adhered to; in poverty-stricken, remote and relatively economically backward areas inhabited by minority people, special quotas have been given and students are enrolled directionally to train women cadres for township governments; and attention has been paid to select student cadres and excellent girl students from among college and polytechnic school students as candidates of cadres and assign them to work at grassroots levels as a way of training. Some young and outstanding women cadres have been selected from departments, enterprises and institutional units with a comparatively big concentration of women to hold posts in governments at the township or neighbourhoods levels, and women congresses have been established and perfected at the village level. To guarantee that women are elected in each re-election of village committees, the Ministry of Civil Affairs issued the "Opinion on Efforts to Guarantee a Due Number of Rural Women in Village Committees" to guarantee participation by rural women in the management and decision making of village committees.

### **Earnest efforts to guarantee the right of women to hold public posts**

The Chinese Government has promulgated special regulations to emphasize the protection of the legitimate rights and interests of women in employment, engagement, promotion, reward, training, conferring of professional titles, and welfare guarantee. For five years, the proportions of women in State organs and State-owned enterprises and institutions have

grown year by year. In 1995, the number of women cadres against the total was 33.3 per cent. In 1998, the proportion grew to 35 per cent, 1.7 percentage points more than the 1995 figure<sup>4</sup>.

### **Organization of training for women**

Special schools for the training of women have been set up at both the central and local levels, and many specialized sectors and comparatively big enterprises and institutions have set up cadre schools to provide training for cadres. In each term, women cadres are enrolled to study in these schools.

### **Attention to the solicitation and acceptance of the proposals on the safeguarding of the legitimate rights and interests of women**

Whenever the government comes to formulate relevant policies and plans it solicits and accepts proposals put forward by women organizations or representatives of women. Women deputies in people's congresses and women members in the people's political consultative conferences at various levels have taken an active part in government and political affairs, exercise their rights, and put forward bills and suggestions on the safeguarding of the rights and interests of women and on the employment of women and girl college students. Many of these bills and suggestions have been adopted and put into implementation.

## **2.3 Specific measures by non-governmental organizations in the promotion of women participation in the exercise of power and decision making**

### **The All-China Women's Federation**

As a national organization of women, the All-China Women's Federation has done a lot of work in the training and recommendation of women talents. These include:

(1). Establishment of a network of information on women talents to recommend women talents through multiple channels. Since 1991, women federations at various levels have set up banks of women talents to collect information and data on reserves of women cadres and recommending candidates to relevant government departments by making good use of their perfect organizational networks and bringing into play their advantages of close contacts with women in various circles. Some of the women candidates have already got appointments. A vice-minister of Civil Affairs, vice-governors of Shangdong, Liaoning and Jiangsu provinces, the Director of Organization of Jilin Provincial Party Committee, and the vice-mayors of Guangzhou and

Dalian, for instance, have all been recommended by women's federations. In the five years from 1992 to 1997, the women federations above the county level in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region recommended to government departments at various levels a total of 1710 women cadres, of whom 714 got appointments<sup>5</sup>.

(2). Strengthening of training and publicity to seek all-round improvement of the quality of women. Making use of the 47 newspapers and magazines published by women federations, the All-China women's Federation has devoted vigorous efforts to publicizing women's role in and contributions to economic, political and cultural development. It has also relied upon the 36 schools and colleges for women in the country as training bases to sponsor various kinds of training courses and symposiums designed to improve the leading art and ability and management level of women, and promote self-improvement among and sharpen the sense of voluntary participation of women cadres.

### **Branch of Women Mayors of China Association of Mayors**

With the in-depth development of China's drive to launch reforms and open to the outside world, an ever increasing number of women have become leaders of local governments. As a response to an urgent call by women mayors, the China Association of Mayors set up its Branch of Women Mayors in Hangzhou in 1991.

At the inauguration ceremony, nearly 100 women mayors came from various parts of the country to speak glowingly of their personal experiences of growth, discuss the development and utilization of the potentials and intelligence of women leaders as a community, and study the law and characteristics of women mayors in management.

In November 1998, the Branch of Women Mayors of the China Association of Mayors sponsored the first course on economic theories for women mayors. in Guangzhou City. The focus of the course was the theory on socialist market economy and financial issues in China, global financial crisis, its causes and results and prospects of economic development in the Pearl River Delta, in particular. In May 1999 and May 2000, the Branch cooperated with the Communications University in Shanghai to sponsor two courses on the science of management and sustainable development respectively in Shanghai. About 100 women leaders attended the two courses. During informal discussions and exchanges with experts and scholars concerned, they made in-depth study of themes including "systematic thinking and art of leadership," and "strategic management and study." In connection with the contents of training in the three courses mentioned above, the branch organized women leaders to make inspection tours of Guangzhou, Zhuhai, Zhongshan, Shanghai, Jiangyin, Suzhou and other cities to study local urban planning, construction, reform of state-owned enterprises, community services, and solicitation of

external investment.

Through study and inspection, the women mayors have broadened their fields of vision, increased their knowledge, and understood fully the numerous new challenges they face as major leaders of local governments in current economic construction. They have come to the conclusion that they can live up to the demand of management of modern cities and do a good job at their posts only by constantly raising their level of ideological understanding, restructuring and enriching their knowledge, and extensively exchanging experiences in work.

When summing up their work experiences, the women leaders have paid special attention to discussing the characteristics and advantages of women, and the cognition of women. They have preferred the combination of the advantages of both women and men to the masculinization of women leaders. They concluded that the right image of women leaders must be resolute and correct in decision, vigorous and speedy in work style, firm and indomitable in temperament, upright and clean in officialdom, and combine strength and grace, and respectability and amiability.

## 2.4 General situation of women mayors in China

463 women mayors are serving in the 668 established cities in China. Of these, four are at the municipal level, 181 are above the prefecture level, and 278 are at the county level. A total of seven women mayors hold the posts of commands-in-chief (five in cities at the prefecture level and two at the county level).

Recently, the Branch of Women Mayors of the China Association of Mayors made a statistical study of 317 women mayors (or leaders of urban districts). Following is the result of the study:

### Age

31-40	41-50	Above 51
41	197	79
12.9%	62.2%	24.9%

### Nationality

Han	Minority nationalities (including Man, Hui, Zhuang, Yao, Bai, Yi, Dai, Zang, Chao, Mongolian and Elunchun nationalities)
291	26
91.8%	8.2%

### Political background

Communist Party	Democratic parties	Nonparty
241	35	41
76.1%	11%	12.9%

The democratic parties include the Taiwan Democratic Self-Government League, the China Democratic League, the Chinese Peasants and Workers Democratic Party, the China Association for Promoting Democracy, the China Democratic National Construction Association, the Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang, the Jiu San (September 3) Society, and the China Zhi Gong Dang (Public Interest Party).

**Post**

Mayor	District head	Vice-mayor	Deputy district head
7	1	279	30

**Level of official schooling**

At and above college	Polytechnic	Senior middle school
311	5	1
98.1%	1.58%	0.32%

**Technical Level (professional title)**

Senior	Secondary	Primary	None
68	95	2	152
21.5%	30%	0.6%	47.95%

**Division of work**

Culture, education and public health	Financial and economic affairs	Industry and agriculture	Urban construction	Others
178	30	9	14	86
56.2%	9.5%	2.8%	4.4%	27.1%

To sum up, the women mayors in China have comparatively high levels of official schooling, and are in the prime of their life. Those aged between 41 and 55 account for 82 per cent of their total, and those with official schooling at and above the college level make up 95 per cent of their total, with three per cent of them have received education at the postgraduate level. Also, more than 92 per cent of them have professional titles at and above the secondary level (Note: there are three levels of professional titles in China: senior, secondary and primary. A person can obtain his/her professional title according to his/her degree, i.e. bachelor, master or doctor, his/her working experience, the comments of his/her colleagues, his/her achievements etc.)

In addition, most of the women mayors and vice-mayors in China have been selected from grassroots levels. Of the total, 177 or 30 per cent have been promoted from city or district government departments, 102 or 18 per cent of the total have come from personnel or Party departments, and 60 or 11 per cent of the total have be selected from scientific, educational, or cultural departments.

China is a country of several nationalities. Apart from the Han nationality,

outstanding women from more than 10 other nationalities including Hui, Man, Uygur, Zang, Zhuang, Dai, Elunchun, Korea, Mongolian, and Buyi nationalities are now serving as mayors or vice-mayors.

The women mayors in China form an outstanding community. Highly dedicated, sharp in sense of responsibility, and selfless, they have lived up to the expectations of the broad masses of people, earnestly practice what they advocate, surmounted uncountable difficulties, and come out with indelible deeds with an indomitable and progressive spirit. These women mayors have usually been elected with big votes. Because of their earnestness in work, impartiality in handling official businesses, quickness to understand people, and cleanness in government, they have displayed their talents and ambitions on the huge stages of cities and won respect and support from their people.

The women mayors in China also constitute an important force in China's urban reforms. Just like men, they have stayed at the frontier of reforms and served as pioneers in their respective fields of work. Since most of them have come up from grassroots levels, they have a good understanding of the departments put under their charge and can find the cutting edge points of reforms with greater ease. For instance when it comes to help State-owned enterprises to surmount their difficulties, women mayors have focused their attention on the readjustment of industrial structures, on promoting upgrading of traditional industries, and on the development of hi-tech and new industries. In agricultural production, they have given greater momentum to the readjustment of the structure of agricultural production and the structure of agricultural regions. Taking into consideration the characteristics of different regions, they have given prominence to regional division of work and development of farm products with local characteristics and advantages. In order to stimulate demand in the domestic market, they have tried to select projects for absorbing investment both from other parts of the country and from foreign countries, thus speeding up construction of basic facilities and developing new areas of economic growth for local governments.

As women leaders, they have attached great attention during the surge of reforms to stimulating the broad masses of women to take an active part in the readjustment of industrial structures, and participate in the construction of ecological environments and basic facilities, implementation of the strategy of revitalizing the country by relying upon science and technology, and promotion of the development of women.

## **2.5 Obstacles hindering promotion of women's participation in government and decision making on an equal footing**

2.5.1 With the reform of China's economic system, corresponding changes have also taken place in the mode of administrative management

adopted by governments. These changes have influenced the number and proportion of women in government in some areas, and resulted in elastic or soft target management.

2.5.2 To a certain extent, some leaders of government departments still believe that men are superior over women and lack a due understanding of and sensitivity to the equality of both sexes. When it comes to the selection and appointment of cadres, there is still the phenomenon of preferring men to women when they share similar qualifications. All these have dampened the enthusiasm of women in participation in government.

2.5.3 Women make up a relatively small proportion in high-ranking decision-making bodies and in departments making decisions on economic management.

2.5.4 Due to influences of traditional concepts about rule by men, some women have a comparatively weak sense about participation in decision making, the spirit of blazing new trails, and the confidence to take part in competition. So far as social opinion is concerned, there are still some negative factors in our traditional concepts concerning the recognition of the role of women. These factors stand as obstacles to the development of women.

2.5.5 Due to insufficient importance attached by the chief leaders at various levels, there has not been any complete system for the compilation of gender-based statistics and collection of gender-disaggregated data.

### **3. WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN URBAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

#### **3.1 Legal and political initiatives**

In line with the objectives and demands raised in the Program for the Development of Chinese Women from 1995 to 2000 promulgated by the State Council of China in 1995, each province, autonomous region and municipality has worked out its specific objectives for women's participation in formulating policies on and management of State and social affairs according to its actual situation of advancement and development of women.

**Case 1:** The specific objectives set up in the Programme of Hebei Province for the Development of Women from 1995 to 2000 for further strengthening the training and selection of women and increasing the depth of women's participation in the decision making and management of State and social affairs include:

(1). The proportion of women deputies to people's congresses at all levels shall not be smaller than 25 per cent and can be raised to 30 per cent of the total number of deputies, and the proportion of women members to the



people's political consultative conference shall be gradually expanded on the current basis.

(2). At least one woman cadre shall be appointed to the leading body of the Party organization and the government at the prefecture, county, district, and township level across the whole province, and two can be appointed if possible. Half of the departments directly affiliated to governments at the provincial, city (prefecture), and county (town and district) levels shall have women leaders.

**Case 2:** The specific objectives set up in the Programme of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region for the Development of Women from 1995 to 2000 for increasing the depth of women's participation in political activities and management of State and social affairs include:

(1). Active efforts to achieve the goal of presence of women in the leading bodies of Party organizations and governments at all levels in the autonomous region, and bring about a comparatively big expansion of the proportion of women as leaders of government departments. Specifically speaking, 80 per cent of the leading bodies of Party organizations and governments at the township level in the autonomous region should have one woman cadre by 1996. The percentage should be raised to 100 per cent by the year 2000. By the end of 1996, at least one woman cadre should be appointed to the leading body of each Party organization and government at the county (town and district) level; and efforts should be made to increase the number to two by the year 2000. Before the year 2000, at least one woman cadre should be appointed to the leading body of each Party organization and government at the prefecture and city level.

(2). In the leading bodies at all levels, there shall be a certain proportion of women serving as the top leaders and women cadres of minority origins.

(3). By the year 2000, half of the work units of the Party organizations and governments at the autonomous regional, prefecture, city, and county levels shall have at least one woman leader each. In departments with a concentration of women, more women cadres shall be appointed. Village committees must have women cadres.

(4). By the year 2000, the number of women cadres shall account for more than 30 per cent of the total number of cadres in the autonomous region, and the number of women deputies to people's congresses at various levels shall not be smaller than 25 per cent of the total number of deputies.

**Case 3:** The specific objectives set up in the Programme of Beijing Municipality for the Development of Women from 1996-2000 for increasing the depth of women's participation in the decision making and management of State and social affairs include:

(1). Gradual increase of the proportions of women in Party congresses,

people's congresses and the people's political consultative conferences at all levels. The proportions of women delegates to the Party congress, people's congress and the people's political consultative conference at the municipal level shall be raised from the current 25 per cent to 27 per cent in 1998 when they are re-elected. The number of women members in the Municipal Party Committee, the number of alternate women members to the Municipal Party Committee, and the number of women members to the Municipal Disciplinary Committee shall be increased to more than 15 per cent. The proportion of women in the leading bodies of the Municipal Party Committee, the Municipal People's Congress, the Municipal Government, the Municipal People's Political Consultative Conference, and the Municipal Committee of Party Discipline shall be increased from the current basis.

(2). Appointment of one and more women into the leading bodies at the district, county and bureau level so that the proportion of women cadres in these leading bodies shall reach over 20 per cent. There shall also be women cadres in Party and government departments at the urban neighbourhood and township level. Of the total number of cadres at the departmental level in all Party organizations and government departments of the municipality, women cadres shall make up more than 25 per cent. In addition, attention shall be paid to the training and selection of women cadres to hold top posts in leading bodies at various levels.

Apart from establishment of specific targets for women's participation in the management of social affairs, the provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions of the country have worked specific policies and measures for the fulfillment of these targets. The policies and measures stipulated in the 1996-2000 Programme for Women of Anhui Province to guarantee women's political rights and participation in decision making include:

(1). Deepening of understanding of the political rights of women so that women can participate, on an equal footing, in State and social affairs and in the making of decisions on major issues.

(2). Attention by governments at all levels to the solicitation of proposals and demands raised by women's organizations at various levels, full consideration of the special interests of women, and guarantee of the legitimate rights and interests of women when formulating policies and regulations with a close bearing on the immediate interests of women.

(3). Earnest effort in the training and selection of women cadres, including formulation of plans in this regard and regular check and assignment of work in the implementation of these plans.

(4). Vigorous efforts in the training of trans-century women talents. Organizations at various levels shall show necessary concern to and provide due preferential policy treatment to the training and selection of trans-century women talents. Of the cadre reserves, 20 per cent shall be women. Those

women who are extremely outstanding can be promoted by breaking existing rules.

(5). Improvement of the ability of women cadres to participate in governance and their level of leadership. Education, cultivation and training of women cadres shall be strengthened. Women cadres already holding leading posts shall be released from work to receive training at least once during their tenure of office, and various measures including assignment of posts in departments at lower levels and rotation and exchange of posts shall be taken to improve the quality and management level of women cadres.

(6). Unless otherwise stipulated by the State, women shall not be rejected because they are women when public servants are recruited, cadres are assigned or engaged, college and polytechnic school graduates are employed, or professional cadres demobilized from the armed forces are resettled. No extra standards shall be established for the recruitment of women. When public servants are recruited or cadres are elected for township governments, the proportion of women shall be no smaller than 20 per cent, and women shall also have precedence in case they have similar qualifications as men.

(7). Women leading cadres (including those not actually in post at present) at and above the divisional level, and women professionals with senior professional titles can work till they are 60 years old if they can work normally, have good health, and are voluntary to do so. Women professionals meeting qualifications specified in the State Council Document serialized as G.F. [1983] No 141 can have their age of retirement be extended to 65 years old if they are needed in work, good in health, voluntary to do so, and have approval from organizations concerned.

## **3.2 Training and support mechanisms for women in urban local government**

3.2.1 Beijing Municipality has earnestly implemented stipulations set in the Law of the People's Republic of China Concerning the Guarantee of the Rights and Interests of Women and the Election Law of the People's Republic of China, and striven to expand women's representation in practice. Its practices in this regard include:

(1). Deepening of ideological understanding, overcoming of fear of difficulties, and active mobilization of women in participation in politics and State affairs in election.

(2). In-depth investigation and study before election, analysis and study of the proportions of women representatives of the municipality as a whole and its various districts and counties, drafting of work plans and work emphasis, and

formulation of work plans meeting actual conditions.

(3). Full development of democracy and mobilization of voters to jointly recommend candidates so as to pick out women representatives with both qualifications of representation and a certain mass basis, thus laying a solid basis for guaranteeing due proportions of women representation in the representatives elected.

(4). Heavy reliance upon women federations at various levels to make extensive publicity and create an advantage in opinion.

(5). Attention to the expansion of women's representation throughout elections with supplementation of necessary organizational measures. When official candidates are to be determined for an electoral area, for instance, partial advantages shall be created for the women candidates so that there will certainly be women in the representatives elected. In usual case, the candidates recommended by various political parties shall not come from electoral areas where women representatives may be elected.

Thanks to the practices described above, the proportion of women deputies to people's congresses at the township level throughout Beijing Municipality has basically kept expanding from one election to another, with the expansion average annual rate of 3 per cent. In the election of deputies to people's congresses at the township level held at the end of 1999, 3878 women deputies were elected, accounting for 33.21 per cent of the total number of deputies, thus basically achieving the goal of raising the proportion of women deputies to one third of the total number of deputies after the 30 per cent margin was broken for the first time in the 1996 election<sup>6</sup>.

**Table 12: Women deputies elected in different years to people's congresses at the township level in Beijing Municipality<sup>7</sup>**

Time of election	Total number of deputies	Number of women deputies	Proportion %
1984	24090	6372	26.45
1987	12042	2594	21.54
1990	11922	2679	22.47
1993	11764	3074	26.13
1996	13797	4366	31.6
1999	11677	3878	33.21

3.2.2 Shishi City has introduced the practice of fair and open competition to promote women's participation in government and political affairs. In September 1993, it sent an invitation to seek women candidates from across the province to fill the post of a vice-mayor. Applicants entered their names for the post one after another, and 59 people signed up, including 50 with official schooling at and above the college level and one with a background of doctoral education. Coming from departments directly under the Fujian Provincial Government and nine cities across the province, 31 of the applicants had

professional titles at and above the secondary level, two were cadres at the departmental level, and 15 were cadres at the section level. Some of these applicants were lecturers in colleges, some were cadres of Party organizations or government departments, some were enterprise managers or factory directors, and some were engineers. Some were recommended by their employer units or by democratic parties, and some volunteered their services. In the end, Zhou Zhenping, a 28-year-old doctor of economics from Xiamen University, beat others to become a vice-mayor of Shishi City due to her extensive knowledge, quick thinking, and eloquence<sup>8</sup>.

For recent several years, Shishi City has adhered to and further improved its mechanism of public selection of cadres and assignment of posts through competition, thus enabling a greater number of outstanding women to win posts in the leading bodies of various departments at various levels according to the principle of openness, fairness, competition, and selection of the best. After expiration of her three-year term, Zhou Zhenping was promoted to the post of Director of Commission for Restructuring Economy of Qunzhou City, and Guo Lilian, ranked second in the competition for the vice-mayor, was elected vice-mayor of Shishi City in the 1999 election. The rest of the excellent women took part in the election, 10 of them have become leaders at the country level<sup>9</sup>.

### **3.3 Obstacles hindering efforts by local governments to promote women's equal participation in the management of local governments**

Viewed from the situation in various regions, work in the training of women cadres has been unbalanced in development, and certain weak links still exist in this regard. In some regions, the channels for the selection of women cadres are comparatively narrow, and the methods and measures of examination and check are outdated. As a result, it is difficult for outstanding talents to emerge. In some regions, especially poverty-stricken regions, there is a deficiency of reserves of women cadres.

Viewed from the grassroots level, women's participation in government and political affairs is comparatively unsatisfactory in the election of village committees. This can be seen most noticeably from the following:

(1). The obstacle of power with men standing in the center. Usually cadres at the township and village levels consciously or unconsciously reject women to take up important posts. Women cadres who have worked outstanding deeds or outperformed men cadres would usually be found fault with and rejected.

(2). Indifference of the society to women's participation in government. Quite a number of cadres and masses alike harbour an erroneous understanding of the significance of women's participation in government.

(3). The obstacle from their families. In the rural areas, there are still quite a big number of people who believe that it is unruly for women to work all day long away from home.

(4). The obstacle from women themselves. Psychologically, women are still self-abased, tend to rely upon others, hate to shoulder heavy responsibilities, and are reluctant to compete with others.

#### **4. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE EXPERIENCE OF CHINESE WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

With a vast territory and a comparative large number of cities, China has a comparatively big number of women mayors. We have actually administered and recovered 21 questionnaires. During our administration of questionnaires, we have taken into consideration the following principles:

First, with consideration to the sense of responsiveness and accountability of the respondents to local social affairs, we have tried our best to target those women mayors with comparatively rich experiences and great work achievements in the survey, the respondents have been those aged between 40-60, or in prime of their professional lives.

Second, since Chinese cities are divided into those at the municipal level, the provincial level, the prefecture level, and the county level and in view of the representation of decision-makers at different levels, the respondents have been chosen from all the levels mentioned above. Of the 21 respondents, one is a vice-mayor at the municipal level, three are vice-mayors at the provincial level, one mayor and 13 vice-mayors at the prefecture level, and one mayor and two vice-mayors at the county level. Of the total, two are firsts-in-command, and 19 are seconds-in-command.

Third, with consideration to the representation of different regions of the country, we have paid attention to their regional distribution when choosing the respondents. The 21 respondents are distributed respectively in Northeast China, Northwest China, Southwest China, Central China, and coastal East China.

Fourth, with consideration to the representation of minority regions, two of the 21 respondents have been chosen from minority nationalities.

Fifth, the form of office taken by the women mayors. All the 21 respondents have been elected into their office. Of the total, five have been appointed as the leaders of relevant government departments or enterprises

upon expiration of their terms of office. Because we have not carried out a simultaneous survey of 20 men mayors, it is impossible to make any gender-based comparative analysis. Following is a preliminary analysis of the questionnaires administered to and recovered from the 21 women mayors.

#### **4.1 Backgrounds of the election of the women mayors into local governments at various levels**

##### **Personal backgrounds**

Viewed from their level of education, all the respondents have received higher education. Some of them were postgraduates, and a few used to study abroad. It has been discovered in the questionnaire that in this era of explosion of knowledge, all these women mayors have attached great importance to the learning and upgrading of knowledge to keep their creativeness and advantage in intense competition, no matter whether they have attained their current levels of higher education through self-teaching, adult education, or official regular schooling.

Viewed from their ages, 10 of the respondents are between 40-50, and 11 are above 50. Because we have given more consideration to work achievements and experiences during our administration of questionnaires, all the respondents chosen are in their prime of their professional lives. Those below the age of 40 have not been sufficiently represented.

Viewed from their personal wills and political motives, the forces driving the respondents into the political arena usually include "extensive and active participation in social, political and economic activities," "doing good deeds for the people," and "proving of women's value and ability of governance" (2); "belief of their qualifications for being mayors in terms of their experiences and work records" (2); "interest in politics" and belief of "being personally good at governance" (1); "challenge of mayor-ship to the growth and demonstration of personal talents" (1); and seizing of opportunities, believing that "the opportunity is there" (1). This shows that most of these women mayors have a comparatively sharp sense of social responsibility and great political ambition, a certain sense of gender equality, full confidence and initiative, readiness to meet challenges, and attentiveness to the realization of their personal value.

Viewed from their experiences, the questionnaires have revealed that they have all worked their way up step by step. They have built a natural relationship with and taken their roots in the public. Some of them had been educated youths sent to work in the countryside during "cultural revolution" in the 1960s and 1970s, some had been ordinary workers, and some had worked as doctors, teachers, or technicians. After 10-20 years of hard work and

continuous accumulation of experiences, they have not only tried to be the best in all the jobs they had taken, but also longed to break, with the help of their work achievements, the fetters of China's traditional culture and rise up as leaders of local governments. It can be said that they make up an excellent community of Chinese women with a comparatively high personal quality.

### **Family backgrounds**

Viewed from their marital status, all the respondents are married, with one of them being divorced. China's tradition culture attaches great importance to the role of families. For this reason, marital status is also an important resource for women to serve in governments.

Viewed from the political backgrounds of their families, none of the respondents except one has any close relatives in politics or government. Most of the women mayors covered in the questionnaire have risen to their posts of mayors step by step, with only one who has both relied upon her personal talents and made good use of her resources in government. Viewed from the overall psychology of the respondents, these women mayors would rather attribute their achievements to their personal efforts than rely upon any connections of family backgrounds. They also take light of use of political resources to some extent.

### **System background**

Viewed from system background, the mechanism of "selection and appointment of women cadres" has noticeably provided a guarantee to the election of these women mayors. When explaining their motives of entering the political arena, five of the respondents said it was "arranged by government organizations." When asked "who encouraged you to participate in election," the answers in the sequence of frequency are government organizations (10), family members and relatives (6, with one specifying her husband), classmates, friends or colleagues (5), and themselves (3), with the role of government organizations being referred to most frequently once again. When asked "did the fact that you are a woman create obstacles for you in the electoral/appointment process," 17 ticked "No." All these show that the mechanism for the selection and appointment of women cadres has cleared the way and provided an opportunity and guarantee, to a certain extent, for women to take part in election and governance.

When asked "once in office, did you face any difficulties or discrimination because you are a woman," the only two minority mayors replied that as minority women, they have had even more opportunities because of State policies on minority people and on women instead of meeting with any obstacles on their road into government as women. The fact that they are women has become one of their advantages. That explains the role of China's



current policies in guaranteeing minority women's service in governments.

## **4.2 Role of women in the reform and management of local governments**

### **Political achievements by women mayors in the reform and management of cities**

Viewed from the work under their charge during their tenure of office, 8 or 38.1 per cent of the respondents have taken charge of culture, education and public health, 4 or 19 per cent have assumed overall responsibilities, 8 or 38.1 per cent have taken charge of urban construction and economic work, and 1 or 4.8 per cent has taken charge of no specific work. Viewed from the overall situation of women mayors in China, most of them have been in charge of cultural and educational work, jobs close to the traditional occupational posts of women. Viewed from our survey of 317 women mayors as described in Part 3, 56.2 per cent of them have taken charge of this work. Viewed from those with comparatively bigger work achievements or richer experiences, however, there has been a breakthrough in the traditional direction of work division and a development toward all-round responsibility and fields used to be in the charge of men in tradition. In other words, changes are taking place in the fields and structure of management taken up by women mayors.

Viewed from their future ideals, all the respondents are ambitious about their future and vow that so long as they stay in office, they will try to serve their people and do their utmost to guarantee sustained development and prosperity of their regions. Four of the respondents have specially expressed that they would "make contributions to the development of women and improvement of the position of women." In addition, three of these women leaders said emotionally that "woman is not a synonym of the weak" and hoped that "more women leaders would rise up in the world, move into even higher posts, and come out with even more outstanding achievements." This shows their beautiful and lofty ideals and ambitions.

Viewed from their achievements in reform and management, all the respondents have listed numerous examples of their initiation or participation of programmes/projects for the development of their cities. In work, these women mayors have planned, constructed and managed their cities according to the concepts of "taking local citizens as a fundamental concern" and "striving for sustainable development." (1). In civic construction, more funds have been put in to accelerate the pace of construction with the aim of changing the situation of backward basic facilities, a common headache of Chinese cities; in the improvement of urban ecological environments, efforts have been made to control pollution and plant more trees; in order to solve the problem of water

supply shortages in their urban areas, water diversion projects have been launched; and to provide sufficient housing to their people, projects of "home to all" have been launched. (2). In cultural, educational and public health management in cities, efforts have been made to the re-organization of educational, public health and cultural resources; plans on nine-year compulsory education have been implemented; health building programmes for all have been initiated; welfare facilities, rest homes, libraries, and centers of activities for women have been built; and programmes for the development of women, and for the development of children have been worked out, trans-century educational projects and projects of scientific and technical creations have been started, and cultural relics and places of historic interest have been conserved. (3). In the development of the urban economy, the procedures for the examination and approval of outside investment have been reformed to absorb outside investment into local projects of civic construction, water supply, waste water treatment, garbage treatment, and hospitals; and business promotion, tourist festivals, large commodity fairs and other activities have been planned and organized. With outstanding achievements, some of these women mayors have been awarded national titles such as "model for women," "advanced mayor for comprehensive improvement of urban environment," and "excellent mayor for the promotion of 'home for all' projects." Some of the cities under their rule have also been named as "national model for cities in public health promotion" and "national model for cities relying development upon science and technology."

As for their "influences upon the ways of governance of their cities and functions of their local governments," most of the respondents have taken an active part in the reform of the mode of urban management and government operation including mainly their exploration in the reform of the system of public civic undertakings, the reform of business and trade systems, the reform of enterprise systems, the reform of the system for investment in education, the reform of the system for community management, and the reform of the system for medical insurance. In terms of the mode of government operation, some "rigid" systems have been introduced to improve the efficiency and result of government disposition and use of public resources; methods such as mathematical statistics, social surveys and public opinion polls have been advocated to reduce willfulness and improve rationality of government decisions; and social equality has been emphasized during the process of government decisions. The work achievements of all the respondents have been extremely noticeable.

### **Role of women mayors in the promotion of local causes of equality between men and women**

When answering the question "do you think women's concerns and priorities differ from those of men in terms of urban issues," five have given a

“no” reply. One of them explained that “so far as urban issues are concerned, people may have different opinions because of their differences in personal experiences and cultural levels, not necessarily because of their differences in gender.” This reflects to a certain extent that a few women mayors are still not so gender sensitive. Another 16 of the respondents have given a “yes” reply mainly because

(1). Women are more concerned about social public undertakings and have greater concern about and give priority consideration to issues with a close bearing upon the life of the general public such as urban employment, care of the aged, poverty elimination, rights and interests of women and children, education, medical care and sanitation, family planning, families, quality of life, and charities and social relief.

(2). As mothers, they keep faster in mind the principles of taking people as a fundamental concern and striving for sustainable development. During the process of acceleration of the pace of urbanization, for instance, women would pay special attention to the development of urban diseases, and refrain from seeking development at the cost of the survival of offspring or temporary prosperity at the cost of future generations.

(3). They pay more attention to the training, selection and use of women. In comparison, men are more concerned with their work achievements and give more attention and greater priority to economic construction, finance, taxation, and social security.

When asked the question “do you think your approach or style in local government is different from your male colleagues,” all of the respondents except one have said that they differ from their male colleagues in terms of approaches and styles in work. These differences lie mainly in

(1). Making of decisions in a democratic way. Women prefer contemplation, argument and discussion with their subordinates and seldom resort to orders;

(2). Solidity and carefulness in work. Women always try to help grassroots units allay their worries and tide over difficulties, and do practical deeds for the people.

(3). Amiability and naturalness in style. Women are good at educating people and bringing people together with personality and at coordination, and always try to establish a work relationship of equality and team work with their subordinates.

(4). Perseverance and endurance. Women always struggle to the end when it comes to a difficult or crucial piece of work.

(5). Consideration to subordinates. They would put themselves in the place of their subordinates and others when planning and doing things.

When asked the question “do you believe that increasing the number of women with power in local government will have a direct effect on the status of women,” all the respondents have replied that it is important to increase the number of women with power in local government for the following reasons:

(1). An increase of the number of women with power in government until it gradually nears a proportion equal to that of women against the total population will change the status of women as being secondary and finally bring about equality between men and women, and will be the most visible embodiment of the policy of elimination of gender discrimination.

(2). An increase of the number of women with power in government will increase the opportunity for women to take part in and make decisions on social public affairs so as to effectively present their interests and demands and improve the rationality and impartiality of management of social public affairs.

(3). An increase in the number of women with power will enable women to produce a more direct and effective influence upon the society's education and culture because of their possession of powers and resources, pass their world view and value about equality between men and women to the whole society, and influence the improvement of the status of women and the level of social civilization from the educational and cultural angles.

(4). An increase in the number of women in government will give women more opportunities and broader platforms for them to demonstrate their talents and ability, enhance social trust in women, improve the social status of women, and encourage more women to enter the political arena with greater courage.

(5). An increase in the number of women in government will start a transition from individual to group show of women in politics, bring about a fundamental change in the current situation of dominance of the political arena by men and use of the standards of men as the standards of judgement, thus influencing the social status of women from the angle of the system of value and the structure of politics. Another two respondents have pointed out that although it is important to increase the number of women in government, it is even more important to improve their quality and ability.

When asked “how much responsibility do you think women leaders hold over the promotion of female participation in politics at all levels and the increase of the capacity of women in society in general,” all the respondents have concluded that women leaders play an important role in both fields. Restricted by their posts and limits of power (most of them are vice-mayors with limited decision-making powers), however, women mayors are limited in the responsibilities they assume. Some of the respondents have pointed out that this is a social issue that should be solved from various angles including laws, policies and objective environments because it is not a responsibility that can be assumed by women leaders themselves.

When asked “what have you done to improve the status of women in

general in your particular city” and “whether have you undertaken any programme or been part of any programme to promote women’s representation and/or participation in local government,” only five have given a negative reply and all the remaining have said that they have made practical contributions to the improvement of women’s status because,

(1). They have taken an active part in the formulation and implementation of local outlines for the development of women;

(2). They have rendered active support to and taken part in the various kinds of activities organized by federations of women, trade unions and other mass organizations to improve the quality of the broad masses of women.

(3). They have advocated the establishment of and provided support to various kinds of organizations bodies of women.

(4). They have actively trained and recommended excellent women cadres to leading posts at various levels.

(5). They have provided financial support to activities organized by women establishments.

(6). They have promoted the implementation of policies on equality of men and women such as equal right between men and women to State-funded housing (see the questionnaires for details).

When asked “do you believe that people’s perception of women in local government has changed for the better or worse over the past 10 years,” 18 of the respondents have replied that it has changed for the better, two have concluded that there has been some small changes, and one has pointed out that there has been no changes. This shows to some extent that the process of promotion of equality between men and women in local government has not been satisfactory to the respondents. Those who have said that it has changed for the better have given examples including an increase in the number of women’s participation in politics; people’s perception of women has changed because of women’s spirit of all work and no complaint and contributions to the society; a change for the better of overall opinion about and enhancement of social trust in women; and people’s belief that women are superior than men in terms of responsibility over their work, planning, carefulness, and the ability to coordinate and communicate, and in terms of their consideration to the masses, clean government, and selflessness. In the past, women were assigned to take charge of science, education, culture, public health and some other jobs that seemed not to be very important because their entry into politics were taken as a result of preferential policy treatment. Now many women have become mayors taking charge of economic development and trade, urban construction, or even overall responsibilities. There have been some changes and breakthroughs in the structure of participation of women mayors in management, and the policy that the leading bodies of all local governments must have female leaders has come to be accepted universally. The

respondents have given an affirmative acknowledgement of the policy of women's participation in politics and the changes brought about by this policy.

### **4.3 Difficulties faced by women leaders in government and evaluation of these difficulties**

When asked "have you met with any difficulties, barriers or discriminations in election, in office or at present because you are women," 15 of the respondents have replied negatively, one has replied "yes" when in office but "no" at present, and five have admitted that they have met with "difficulties and discriminations from the society, their family members, or their colleagues." The main reasons they have given for these difficulties and discriminations include

(1). Because women have to shoulder the dual responsibility over the society and their families, they have to sustain physical pressure of intense work, on the one hand, and on the other, psychological pressure. They can not afford more spare time on learning to keep themselves abreast of the time, like men mayors do, and feel bad for not being able to take good care of their family members.

(2). They have to work together with their colleagues in styles and modes acceptable by their male colleagues because they are an absolute minority in decision-making bodies, and have to submerge their sensitiveness about social gender and social justice in a climate characterized by male communities, thus leading to decision-making deviations.

(3). They are subject to misunderstanding or setbacks because they do not boast political resources as men or those from families of politicians.

(4). They as women are subject to comments by the society or by a handful of their colleagues. These comments often put them at their wits' end. People judge and test the abilities of women by the standards and principles of men. If a woman handles matters like a man, people would say the woman is arrogant or is seeking the limelight. If a woman comes out with some achievements, people would become suspicious and say that she might have attained these by special "means" or "relations."

Although quite a number of the women mayors have stated that they have not met with any discriminations in their work, there has been a widely held cutting view about the barriers of social environments against women's participation in government. These barriers include mainly

(1). Equality in law has not yet been turned into equality in reality. Although China has established a fairly complete legal system composed of a series of laws and regulations based on the Constitution of the People's

Republic of China and composed of the Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding the Rights and Interests of Women, the Marriage Law, and the Education Law to guarantee the basic rights of women to participate in government, the various basic rights of women can hardly be realized in a legal culture centering around the will of men. In addition, there have not yet been any legal clauses or auxiliary measures to definitely guarantee women's participation in government, and there have been no law-enforcing organs or departments to take charge of enforcement of laws and regulations on the political rights of women. As a result, equality between men and women tend to be a legal principle in a pigeonhole.

(2). The conditions of guarantee are imperfect, the channels for women at grassroots levels to participate in politics are not smooth, acts of rejection or discrimination against women are not sanctioned against with duly or taken as commonplace behaviours, no mechanisms have been established to exercise effective supervision, enforcement of law has not been strict enough, and phenomena such as injustice are not corrected in good time.

(3). The Chinese Government has stipulated that there must be at least one woman in the leading body of each government. In implementation of this stipulation, it has come to be there will be only one woman. As a result, there is usually only one woman in the leading body of a government at different level across the country, putting women into an absolute minority. Also, because of the principle of the minority being subordinate to the majority, the influence of women upon decisions on social affairs has been affected. Of the women leaders, 90 per cent are deputies. This also has affected their opportunities and abilities to make decisions.

(4). People still use dual standards to measure the success of women, that is, family and work achievements. If a woman does not have a happy family life, she will not be looked upon as a woman of success even if her work achievements are equally outstanding as those of a man. Most husbands do not like their wives to climb into social positions higher than those they themselves are in. Barriers and lack of support from husbands can also make it difficult for women to participate in politics. Due to social prejudice and influences of a social culture and psychology of discrimination against women, there has been a social inclination to keep support from women.

(5). Due to social prejudice and discrimination, the opportunities provided by the society for women to receive education and seek development have been unequal. As a result, women have comparatively poor psychological, cultural and personal qualities, which in turn have hindered their participation in local government. Even if a woman has received necessary education at an equal level and got an equal opportunity for development early in their life, women have to stand in a position unequal with men in terms of their conditions for personal development because the majority of them have to take care of more family chaos than men. Their competitive edges in participation in politics

are blunted as a result.

#### **4.4 Suggestions by women mayors to the management of government work according to the principle of equality between men and women**

The “more powerful measures for women to take part in politics” they have suggested and are looking for include mainly:

(1). Inclusion of a gender sense by the government into all its decisions and plans as a major consideration. In statistics of the national economy and social situation, for instance, differentiation and statistics by gender should be made wherever is possible so as to provide people with a timely understanding of the situation of different genders, develop a constant sense about genders, and help the government to exercise timely control over women's participation in politics and women's development. The sense about gender should be taken as an important principle for macro regulation and control. The government should continue to exercise index management of the number and proportion of women in politics favourable to women, and put into implementation law stipulations on the rights of women to participate in politics. The child-bearing functions of women should be included in the quantitative assessment of the society, and the practice of counting the child-bearing functions of women as obstacles preventing women's normal development and promotion instead of as a kind of social contribution should be changed.

(2). Adoption of powerful measures by the government to stipulate the rational proportion of candidates of different genders and constantly increase the proportion of women. The Central Government should take the lead in this regard, create an environment favour for the growth of women cadres, and take bold measures to train and appoint women cadres so that they can grow up through training in practice. So long as the government attaches importance to it, traditional perceptions are changed, and women improve their personal qualities, there will be more and more women participating in politics in the future. Public selection and fair competition should be promoted, and heroes should not be determined according to which gender they are of. More opportunities should be created for women to participate in politics. Women should not be taken simply as objects for preferential treatment, and those already in government should not be regarded as setoffs or symbols.

(3). Overcoming discrimination. Correction and overcoming of gender discrimination by the society in a true sense, evaluation of women according to the principle of equality and impartiality instead of the culture and principles of men, evaluation and acceptance of female communities by male communities truly equally and without prejudice, and correct understanding by the excellent



of the female communities of their advantages and disadvantages in participating fields of social public affairs in the present-day society so that a relationship of sincere friendship and partnership can be developed, men and women can advance hand in hand, and cooperation between men and women on a truly equal footing can be promoted.

(4). Elevation of the level of education accessible by women so as to constantly improve their quality as a whole. Quality of girls should be strengthened, and attention should be paid to the display of the potentials and personalities of females. Females should be trained in their sense of self-reliance, sense of efficiency, and sense of creation starting from their early life. In addition, women in work should be provided with professional training and continued education in the cultivation of ethics and spare time hobbies so as to help them develop a personality of self-respect, self-confidence, self-reliance, and self-improvement.

(5). Publicity of the achievement of women. Dissemination of the voice of women via the mass media and vigorous propagation of the work achievements of women leaders so that people can understand them, acknowledge them, and praise them, and successful women leaders can become the models to be copied by the broad masses of women cadres and enhance their confidence in participation in politics and pursuit for political attainments. All environmental resources such as the mass media, social bodies, work units and community environments should be exploited to promote the transformation of concepts among modern women so that they will become modernized, outward-looking, and future-oriented.

(6). Sharing the burden of family responsibilities. Although scientific, technical and economic advancement has provided conveniences for women to lighten their excessively heavy family burdens, men should also be encouraged to shoulder the burdens of family chaos equally with women so that women can tear themselves off endless family chaos and have an equal amount of time for self disposal as men. This is an important condition for achieving equality between men and women.

(7). Strengthening networking among women leaders. Strengthening of unity among female communities, renovation of the culture of jealousy among women, and mobilization and education of women to develop an attitude of trust in and support to their women representatives in government.

## **5.1 Annotated list of organizations**

5.1.1 All-China Women's Federation; 15# Jianguomennei Street, Beijing, PRC; Postal code: 100730; Tel: 86-10-65221133.

Founded on April 3, 1949, the All-China Women's Federation is the biggest non-governmental organization in China devoted to the improvement of

the status of women. It follows the organizational system of combination of local branches and group members. Its basic responsibilities include the representation and safeguarding of the rights of women and promotion of equality between men and women.

The specific tasks of the federation include: Unification and mobilization of women into the drive of launching reforms and opening to the outside world and modernization construction so as to promote economic development and social progress; education and guidance of women in the spirit of self-respect, self-confidence, self-reliance, and self-improvement, in the all-round improvement of their quality, promotion of the growth of women talents, representation of women in the democratic management and supervision of State and social affairs, participation in the formulation of laws, regulations and rules on women and children, and safeguarding of the legitimate rights and interests of women and children; coordination and promotion of efforts by various social circles to do good and practical deeds for women and children, responsibility over liaison with women in Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan and overseas Chinese women, and conduction of friendly exchanges with women in various countries across the world.

5.1.2 The Branch of Women Mayors of the China Association of Mayors; 9# Sanlihe Road, Baiwanzhuang, Beijing, PRC; Postal code: 100835; Tel: 86-010-68393407; 68394583; Fax: 86-10-68393047

Founded in March, 1991 in Hangzhou, capital of Zhejiang Province, the Branch of Women Mayors of the China Association of Mayors has nearly 500 members from 667 established cities in all Chinese provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions.

The major tasks of the Branch of Women Mayors of the China Association of Mayors include: 1. Irregular organization of members in work studies, exchange of work experiences, and discussion of issues of common concern; report of major issues come across by women mayors in their work, and the demands and suggestions of women mayors. 2. Conduction of directional inspections and academic activities in line with the special characteristics of women mayors themselves and their work. 3. Conduction of exchanges with foreign countries, organization of inspection tours to foreign cities so as to provide economic and technical information on urban development.

The Branch of Women Mayors of the China Association of Mayors was set up for the purpose of "serving cities and serving the work of women mayors." With this purpose in mind, the branch has organized meetings in Hangzhou, Sanmenxia, Guilin, Chengdu, Kunshan, Huadu, and Kunming in recent years. Women mayors in charge of cultural, educational and public health work have been organized to inspect models and advanced units in the cultural, educational and public health sectors in Weihai, Shenyang, Shanghai,

Jiangxi, Ningbo. It has published the book "Women Mayors of China" in three volumes and with 700,000 Chinese characters, the first collection of papers on women mayors in China. In addition, it has organized some women mayors in the country to visit France, Singapore, Australia and other countries, and sponsored training courses for women mayors in Shanghai and Guangzhou. Through these symposiums and training, the branch has done some work in publicizing the political achievements of women mayors, spreading the influences of women mayors, and building the image of women mayors. As a result, the branch was commended by the China Organizing Committee of the World Conference on Women of the United Nations, and rated as an "advanced model" and a "demonstration post of civilization for women" in the national drive of "contributions by women." It has won close attention and praise from various social circles.

5.1.3 The Chinese Women's Research Society; 15# Jianguomennei Street, Beijing, PRC; Postal code: 100730; Tel: 86-10-65221133-2507; Fax: 86-10-65225396; E-mail: [wsi@public.bta.net.cn](mailto:wsi@public.bta.net.cn)

Founded in December 1992, the Chinese Women's Research Society is a national academic body and a non-governmental body specializing in the study of women-related theories and practices. Composed of institutional and individual members, the society has more than 80 institutional members of women's research institutions at the provincial, municipal and autonomous regional level and at the level of cities with separate budgets in State plans and women's research bodies in institutions of higher learning and scientific research institutions, and over 130 individual members who are supportive to, engaged in or have an enthusiasm over the study of theories on women and who have a certain theoretical level and research ability.

The business scope of the society covers: (1). Focus on the study and exploration of major issues concerning women in the new era of reform and opening-up and socialist modernization construction, in-depth study of theories on liberation and development of women, and gradual establishment of a system of theories on women with Chinese characteristics. (2). Coordination and organization of forces devoted to the study of women across the whole country, planning of studies of women, undertaking of tasks of scientific researches on women assigned by the State, and supply of scientific basis for government policies and decisions on women work. (3). Communication of domestic and foreign information on the study of women, and promotion of Sino-foreign cooperation and exchanges in the study of women. (4). Construction of Chinese networks for the study of women, and launching of the society's publication to step up propagation of theories on women. (5). Acceleration of development of the branch of study of women, organization of professional training, promotion of application of results of scientific research, and fostering of ranks devoted to the study of women.

In the first half of this year, the society sponsored the Seminar Marking

the 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China. It won extensive praises for the seminar.

## 5.2 List of Individuals

NAME	POSITION	TELEPHONE	FAX
Ms. Zuo Huanchen	Vice Mayor Shanghai City	86-21-63212810	63119660
Ms. Ma Jing	Vice Mayor Shijiazhuang City	86-311-6044032	6033528
Ms. Wang Shouchu	Vice Mayor Guangzhou City	86-20-83123103	83340347
Ms. Zhu Jin	Vice Mayor Shenyang City	86-24-22824777	22824031
Ms. Xu Huiling	Vice Mayor Nanjing City	86-25-3614777	3615571
Ms. Chen Chonghua	Vice Mayor Hangzhou City	86-571-5251006	5251016
Ms. Shi Lijun	Communist Party Secretary General Laiwu City		
Ms. Zhang Ying	Deputy Director Environmental Protection Bureau Shenzhen City	86-711-2803484	2803484
Ms. Zhang Ningsheng	Mayor Dujiangyan City	86-28-7132494	7121472
Ms. Yang Zhehui	Vice Mayor Guiyang City	86-851-5822419	5824915
Ms. Li Dengju	Vice Mayor Xi'an City	86-29-7295135	7295453
Ms. Song Naixian	Vice Mayor Lanzhou City	86-931-8848393	8848048
Ms. Dekyi Dolkar	Vice Mayor Lhasa City	86-891-6328742	6324663
Ms. Lin Wenyi	Vice Mayor Beijing City	86-10-65192687	65192269
Ms. Lin Shuangshuang	Vice Mayor Kunming City	86-871-3130470	3134597
Ms. Ji Heping	Vice Mayor Taiyuan City	86-351-4220851	4225353
Ms. Lei Wujiang	Vice Mayor Nanchang City	86-791-6772226	6771815

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER ACTIONS**

### **6.1 Reform of local municipal governments to achieve real gender equality by facing the challenges in this field**

6.1.1 The governments that purport to serve the general public are affected by insufficient participation by women may easily neglect or pay inadequate attention to the needed social services by the female members, which in turn may lead to more serious de facto gender inequality and failure in giving adequate care to members of the society as a whole.

6.1.2 Employment in highly educated society inevitably requires educated human resources including women. If the situation of the current de facto gender inequality persists, the potential individual capability of the female population will not be developed sufficiently, the adequate supply of female labor will be affected, and the coordinated social progress will be greatly impaired.

6.1.3 Due to insufficient participation by women in decision-making in local municipal governments, government planning in public sectors and investment in constructions do not give sufficient consideration to views of women. As women bear more workload, they may make more and specific suggestions to the planning and operation of the utility of the cities. Insufficient participation by women in this area may lead to defects in the functions of cities.

### **6.2 Proposals and measures to foster the role of women in local municipal governments**

6.2.1 Increase of the proportion of women representatives to China's National People Congress. It may be achieved by increasing the proportion of women representatives to the National People's Congress by two percentage points every four years, and increasing the proportion of women committee members to 25 per cent in the tenth session of the National People's Congress to be held in 2002. Meanwhile, local governments shall be encouraged to exceed this proportion in order to appeal to and promote women's participation in government and political affairs.

6.2.2 Fostering and perfecting the laws and policies on participation by women in government and political affairs. Clearly specify in the laws and policies with obvious statements the number of women required (such as one to three women) in the leading bodies of the Party and the government, and the

number of women holding chief positions. The Central Party Committee should also take bold steps in selecting women cadres for its important high level leadership positions. The specific objectives include the following: To increase women members of the Political Bureau of the Central Party Committee to 15-20 per cent; to have a woman among vice-premiers of the State Council, to raise the proportion of women ministers to 15-20 per cent. At the Sixteenth Congress of the Communist Party of China to be convened in 2002, the ratio of woman members of the Central Committee will be raised to over 12 per cent on the basis of 7 per cent of that of the fifteenth Central Committee. The ratio of woman members will be increased for each of the future Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in an effort to make it equal to and surpass that of the democratic parties so as to make the ruling Party an example in the promotion of the women's participation in political affairs.

6.2.3 To reinforce the sex-sensitive education for decision-makers at all levels. To extend the sex-conscious training to the male leaders is an important measure to make sex consciousness as an essential aspect in the making of decisions. A compulsory course of equality between men and women in sex education should be opened in training for all ranks of cadres and in the Party schools at all levels in order to make sex consciousness a concept and mentality that each leading cadre must understand and keep in his mind.

6.2.4 To make and disseminate data and information of sex analysis. The competent leaders at all levels should attach greater importance to sex statistics and provide support in funds and manpower and other aspects to establish their objectives and set up a nationwide database for sex statistics as soon as possible.

6.2.5 To improve the women's ability in decision-making participation and leadership, and emphasize and strengthen the training of women cadres. Ability training should be the foundation of women's participation in political affairs and it is particularly important to train the women cadres. Special women leading cadres training sessions should be opened in Party schools and cadre schools at different levels all over the country so as to make the training for women leaders at all levels in the country regular, systematic and long termed.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Abbreviated Map of Administrative Division of the People's Republic of China, 2000, China Map Publishing House, 2000 edition, Beijing

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from the People's Republic of China Report on the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, pp 34-35

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem

<sup>6</sup> Liu Zhuquan: Gradual Increase of the Proportion of Women Deputies to People's Congresses at the Township Level, Collection of Papers on the 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1995 World Conference on Women, part 11, p 280

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem

<sup>8</sup> Yan Nian'an: Assignment of Work Post Through Open and Fair Competition to Promote Women's Participation in Government and Political Affairs, Collection of Papers for the Seminar on the 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1995 World Conference on Women, Part II, pp 275-277

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem