

Women's Political Participation

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If the legislature was a husband, every woman Member of Parliament would have the right to a protection order.

Background: This paper is one of a number commissioned by IDRC in 2009 in the context of the new global initiative “Democratic Governance, Women’s Rights, and Gender Equality: Building Partnerships for a New Global Research Initiative. The initiative will investigate the key issues and challenges surrounding women’s participation in political decision-making, the judiciary, and the public sector. This paper focuses on women’s political participation.

Research Approach: The consultant examined the IRDC website in depth. A search of the Scopus database, restricted to years 2004 – 2009 was conducted, and the search for ‘women’s political participation’ resulted in 114 references, all of which were examined for this paper. A full search of the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) database was made, and all web sites on women in politics on the IPU site were also examined, including UNIFEM, IDEA, NDI, and WEDO. A number of the most recent CEDAW 5 yearly reports were examined, but many of the countries in this scan have not submitted within the last five years. The consultant was a co author of the IPU study *Politics: Women’s Insight*¹ in 2000, is a former 3 term Member of the New Zealand parliament, has been a consultant for both UNIFEM and IPU in training activities for candidates or for sitting MPs in the Pacific, Asia and in Africa, and brings 30 years of activism and political participant observation to this research.

The key issues and challenges outlined here are selective, based on the research approach. A number of issues which have been the subject of research, discussion and analysis over 20 years: for example, do women offer themselves to stand in sufficient numbers; which is the best electoral system to deliver gains in parliamentary seats for women; are left out as not being ‘new’, to make space for questions, which appear to provide issues of substance for further investigation.

¹ Greenwood,G; Waring,M; Pintat,C; (2000) Inter Parliamentary Union, Geneva.

Executive Summary: Women and Political Participation

In 2000, 11% of those elected to single or lower houses of parliament were women. In 2003 the figure rose to 18%, and it fell back to 16% in 2004. In 2005 there were new records: one in five parliamentarians elected was a woman. By 2008 15% of parliaments had reached 30 percent more members,² the target set in the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) and in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).³

Region by region, this paper examines recent election results, and the outcomes for women. The paper considers women's political participation - including mobilization around issues, NGO and informal activity for advancing women's rights, and political advocacy - in looking for explanations of outcomes. It engages the 'critical mass' hypothesis to ascertain whether one third of the seats in those parliaments in the regions under examination have delivered critical changes for women's rights in terms of legislative or resource allocation outcomes. The results are mixed.

In Africa where seven countries have reached this target, there is no evidence to suggest that significant changes have resulted. Key changes have occurred when the country's leader is a woman, as in Liberia and Mozambique, or when a significant political space has been created by a woman of high international profile, in the case of Tanzania, creating space for others to move into. In other parliaments where women are few in number, such as Ghana, there have been significant legislative gains with a vibrant active women's movement. Large numbers of women in elected office have not translated into significant legislative and resource gains.

In this region women have gained reserved seats in post conflict constitutional arrangements, and the political activities of women in the immediate post conflict period have been critical to their access to power. Frequently, however, there has been no activity to increase women's access to decision making outside parliament, which can lead to isolation of those 'safe' women appointed by male dominated political parties. Corruption is also endemic and significant access to finance is needed to 'win' in this environment.

In the case studies for Central and South America we see major strategic outcomes around constitutional change, when a full engagement of women from all levels of the women's movement combines with elected representatives on a common platform for the advancement of women. This is not the case in the Caribbean, where a high degree of violence pervades the elections, and where the trade off for diminishing numbers of women in the Lower House seems to be to appoint them in large numbers to the Upper House.

This region also provides the clearest comparison of the difference between legislated zebra quotas with stringent penalties for political parties which do not comply, as in Costa Rica, and the loose, no penalty guidelines for political parties that are easily ignored, as in Brazil. How the Costa Rican situation was reached and legislated for would provide a great role model and case

² Rwanda, Sweden, South Africa, Cuba, Iceland, Argentina, Finland, Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, Angola, Costa Rica, Spain, Andorra, Belgium, New Zealand, Angola, Costa Rica, Spain, Andorra, Belgium, New Zealand, Nepal, Germany, Ecuador, Belarus, Uganda, Burundi, Tanzania, Guyana.

³Women's presence in public office represents one indicator for Goal 3 of the United Nations MDGs "to promote gender equality and empower women".

study for activists in other nations who wish to use CEDAW's Article 4 Temporary Special measures (TSM) approach.

In Asia, leadership and high profile women in India, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Pakistan did not result in changes of the magnitude found in Liberia and Mozambique. Election campaigns are marred by violence, and it is dangerous to be a woman candidate. The access to power is also closely controlled by the patriarchy in political parties, and women are hard pressed to make any impression on these. Key questions which arise include: What positions do women hold in political parties? Are there women's sections which don't have the same voting strength or power? Are women on the selection committees, the Executive boards, the Disciplinary Committees, and/or in other key party positions?

North Africa and the MENA region are also riddled with patriarchal power challenges, but here they are monarchic as well as party political. Where women make gains, for example in Morocco's Family Law, it is an important break-through and precedent for the region.

Many feminists researchers are concerned with finding regional patterns, implications that might be duplicated by following a similar path, strategies that might be replicated systematically to deliver similar outcomes. Political science rarely delivers patterns. As Krook found in her research on quotas, different variables have different effects, and causal factors operate in very different ways, in different contexts and cases. The complex and contingent nature of politics prevents prediction, to a very large extent because of the different actors.⁴

The paper points to further and emerging research areas which demand attention because silence pervades the subject area. These questions include the following: What do 'Governance' programmes actively embrace and are women central in all of them, or just a silo in some of them? What is the relationship, if any, between the numbers of women parliamentary representatives, the capacity to change and enforce laws, and to gain resources for issues of women's human rights and development, and the place of the country on Transparency International's (TI) Corruption Index. What analysis has been done of appointments to government Boards, Commissions, Tribunals, and Agencies, and what proportion of the membership of these are women? Where are women taking space in international affairs and nation state delegations in accordance with Article 8 of CEDAW? What positions do women hold in political parties, and why should we expect any change in candidate selection and places on the list until women hold positions of authority in political parties? What forms of inductions are offered to women politicians, and what are their major needs for resources and support to better represent women? While the paper does not support any form of auditing of parliamentary performance at this time, there may be some benefit in an analysis of the amount of activist space women parliamentarians occupy, for example, in the introduction of private bills, the numbers of questions asked in the House, the number and subject matter of Notices of Motion, and the amount of speaking time women take in the annual budget debate.

⁴ Krook Mona Lena: Candidate gender Quotas: A Framework for Analysis.
www.essex.ac.uk/ecpr/events/generalconference/marburgpapers

1. Women's Political Participation: the Recent Numbers

In 2008 women took 20.6% of the 12,879 seats up for renewal in 66 chambers in 54 countries, the highest renewal on record. Of these 1707 were directly elected, 878 were indirectly elected (for example off party lists), and 71 were appointed. The bald figures mask a significant texture of analysis and difference in trends and the reasons for them. IPU's Women in Parliament in 2008 reports: "Women's access is affected by different factors, including attitudes about the role of women in society, lack of support of political parties and bias among the electorate. But electorate arrangements and political will are amongst the most important factors"⁵ In 2008 those countries which used special measures elected 24% women to parliament on average, as opposed to 18 % for countries that did not use such measures.

The figures above also include results from countries outside the scope of this review, which is limited to Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. This paper explores some of the trends in elections in the past 4 years in these regions, and raises questions for further investigation later in this essay.

African Regions

The 30% benchmark set as the 'critical mass' for women parliamentarians has been attained in 24 countries. Thirteen of these countries, including in seven from Africa, are part of the current study. As in the BPA and the MDGs, thirty per cent of the parliamentary seats is also the goal set by the Southern African Community.

Tanzania

Tanzania has had a steady increase in the number of reserved seats for women, the numbers of women in parliament, and the numbers of women contesting, and being successful in, open seats. Seats had been reserved for women at 20%, and in 1995 women sat in 11.24% of the seats in parliament. In 2005, this rose to 21.36 per cent and 97 seats went to women, 17 from constituencies and 80 from special seats. In the 2009 election, after a constitutional amendment increased the special seats number to 30%, women in Tanzania held 30.4% of the parliamentary seats.

The special seat system for women was first introduced under single party rule in 1985 in the first past the post (FPP) single-member plurality system. In 1992 the Eighth Constitutional Amendment changed the election procedure and special seats were distributed on the basis of proportional representation, among parties which won elections in constituencies and secured seats in the National Assembly. The allocation system changed again in 2005. The special seats were distributed proportionally on the basis of the number of votes won by each party, not on the basis of the number of seats. Only parties that won at least 5% of all valid votes could propose names for special seat candidates. Only three parties met the 5% threshold in 2005. Research did not clarify the extent to which minor parties, which did not reach the 5% threshold, may have had more active 'women's rights' candidates.

⁵ www.ipu.org

In the context of the increases in the overall numbers of seats, this meant that in 1995 there were a total of 36 special seats for women. In 2000, the number was raised to 48 seats, and it increased again to 75 seats in 2005. The increase in percentages can be attributed to considerable political activity by a range of women: the lobbying efforts of United Women of Tanzania, women politicians and gender equality advocacy NGOs; and to a certain degree of political will on the part of the government.

Each special seat MP serves a region. Special seats can serve as stepping stones to constituency seats, but their existence may discourage experienced and capable women from contesting in the constituencies. The special seat system has increased numerical representation, but the system is questioned because of a lack of accountability for and to other women. The political parties select and rank their candidates for the special seats. The special seat members, especially those interested in re-election, tend to promote their party's position on women's interests, if it is in conflict with women's interests. There has also been argument that this system erodes women's competitiveness in the constituencies, because even powerful women take the special seats.

Despite having experience as MPs, Ministers or Deputy Ministers, women from special seats stand for them again and again. Very few of them contest constituency seats, but when they do, they tend to win by a large number of votes. Some women seek special seats considering them less demanding, although their constituencies are larger than the regular parliamentary seats. However, the special seats have been very useful tools to recruit capable women to politics, who might not have a chance to be recruited otherwise.

Some women MPs have suggested there should be a term limit for special seat MPs. Because they are representing the party, not a constituency, special seat MPs do lack autonomy in conducting their business inside and outside of Parliament, and despite their party allegiance, they have occasionally been disadvantaged in receiving government resources.⁶

These changes in Tanzania raise the question of what impact one woman, promoted to a key international position, might have in her own nation. Hon Gertrude Mongella was a Minister in the Tanzanian government in the one party state system in 1986. From there she moved to international work with the Board of the UN NGO WEDO, and then became Secretary General for the 1995 Beijing United Nations World Conference on Women. Subsequently she has been the President of the Pan African Parliament. She has consistently advocated not only the need for women to be in parliament, but also the need to change policies, strategies, and outcomes for women. "It is not enough just to open the door to the rooms of power – we have to get inside and rearrange the furniture".⁷ She has consistently questioned to what extent parliamentarians have ensured equal distribution of resources for gender equality and women's empowerment.

But one individual cannot do it all alone. Following the adoption of the multi-party system and an increase in constituencies in Tanzania, there have been major efforts by women NGOs to field more women. The Tanzania Gender Networking Programme and the Tanzania Media Women's

⁶ Mi Yung Yoon: Special Seats for Women in the National Legislature: The Case of Tanzania. *Africa Today* 55.1 (2008) 61-86

⁷ IPU: Summary Report of Proceedings; 52nd Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, New York, February, 2008

Association have encouraged women to stand for constituency seats and offered seminars, symposia, forums and workshops to train female aspirants for confidence-building, public speaking, campaign management, fundraising, lobbying and leadership, and in addition they have urged the political parties to nominate more women. Strong party support is crucial because the majority of voters in Tanzania vote for parties. Women nominated by small parties have a low probability of winning seats.

The changes in Tanzania and the increases in numbers of women in parliament have happened through a change from a one party state, a change in the voting system, the establishment of reserved seats for women, the sustained pressure and activism from women's groups both to increase this percentage, and to encourage women to run. In addition, the effect of the international prominence of a Tanzanian woman, who created a great deal of political space for others as a political role model, cannot be underestimated.

Uganda

The changing numbers of women representatives in Uganda are of particular interest. Following the national liberation conflicts,⁸ the inclusion of women in governance has been influenced by President Museveni and the National Resistance Movement (NRM) in Uganda. Museveni mainstreamed women within the NRM, appointed women to important posts in the Cabinet and the Supreme Court and set aside reserved seats for women in the legislature. In 1995 women won 17.41% of the seats in parliament. Silvia Tamale's study of women in Ugandan politics in 1999 showed that women were simply not taken seriously by their male counterparts.⁹ In 2004, Tamale commented that such affirmative action approaches would have limited success when patriarchal structures and institutions were not also challenged. In 2005 the proportion of seats held had risen to 23.9%, and it rose again to 30.7% in 2006.

The Ugandan electoral structure is based on a complex combination of direct and indirect elections and an Electoral College system. Early in 2006 Uganda reformed its system for reserving seats for women by raising the number of women district representatives from 69 to 80. In addition to these, women won 14 constituency seats, and held a number of appointed seats: 1 each of the youth and disabled representatives, and 2 representatives from both the workers, and Ugandan People's Defence Forces – a result of 99 of the 332 seats in the Ugandan parliament. In 2007 I attended the Commonwealth Ministers' of Women's Affairs conference in Kinshasa, and was able to observe the women working across party boundaries on the issue of marital rape, a major concern within an environment of the practice of polygamy, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and the increasing number of women diagnosed with the virus. They were not successful in their advocacy for this change.

But it's a tough environment for these women. In 1990 Miria Matembe, a former special reserved seats MP, lobbied successfully for an amendment to the Land Act for equal ownership of the family residence. The amendment was passed in parliament, but missing when the Land Act was promulgated in 1998. Matemba spoke out against this, and against corruption, and was removed from her seat. Subsequently she spoke of women members being subject to ridicule and

⁸ While the national liberation struggles are over, war continues in the northern Ugandan border region.

⁹ *When Hens Begin to Crow: Gender and Parliamentary Politics in Uganda*, Westview Press, (1999) Boulder, Colorado

sexual harassment. Even with this number of women in the house, there have been no up dated laws on domestic relationships, domestic violence or sexual offences.¹⁰

The Ugandan parliament continues to be patriarchal and unrelenting in its defiance of human rights issues: witness the horrendous proposals on the criminalisation of homosexuality - involving the death penalty - progressing through the house in late 2009.

Although there is a relatively free press,¹¹ Uganda sits at 130 on the TI corruption index. The first lady, Janet Museveni, also a Member of Parliament, runs one of the largest HIV/AIDS NGOs in the country, and received millions from the former USAID programme which promulgated abstinence. With the change in US policy, the first lady has embraced sex education, and her policy stance has followed the money.

High profile activists are subject to threats and intimidation, and the media assists in this. Sylvia Tamale told me that she wore with some pride being voted the most disliked woman in Uganda in a national newspaper poll, but such high profile targeting takes its toll of the strongest of women. In Uganda there is an active women's movement, which includes former front line liberation fighters and academics. There is a Constitutional Court which in theory provides for ready and inexpensive access to challenges of fundamental human rights abuses. There is a high representation of women across political parties and working across political lines. What then are the key impediments to progressing legislative and resource allocation changes on key women's rights issues?

Burundi

In Burundi articles of the Constitution guarantee women's participation at 30% of the members of parliament and the government. Candidate lists must include one woman in every five. In the election of 2005 women won 30.5% of the seats. However, while there is a significant absence of women in every other sphere of public life, any attempts to move on women's concerns is resisted at every other point in the government and party machinery. One third of parliamentary seats are not enough to make gains for women, without changes in other spheres of public (and private) life.

Even with the constitutional guarantee of a 30 percent quota for women in government and parliament, public policies and programmes are not sensitive to women's needs. Women's representation at decentralized levels is still very low, since no quotas exist for these positions. There are currently no women in the top five positions in the Republic.

The message has reached some high places, and the Government of Burundi requested the Secretary-General for UN support for the 2010 presidential, parliamentary and local government elections. In this context, UNIFEM supported a workshop in Bujumbura aimed at formulating a harmonized strategy for women's participation in the upcoming elections, bringing together representatives from civil society, political parties, the media and religious institutions.

To address the limited participation of women in competitive politics, and their low

¹⁰ www.womensnews.org/story/the-world/060313/ugandas-pro-woman-program

¹¹ Countries with low literacy rates can afford to tolerate a free press.

representation in decision making, participants in the workshop developed a five point action plan, including gender mainstreaming of electoral laws and the overall electoral process; mobilization of women to participate in the elections; capacity building of women candidates at all levels; integration of women's priorities and specific needs in political party programmes; and enhancement of women's role in peace building during the electoral and post-election periods.

The action plan seeks to achieve parity in electoral lists, introduce a 50 percent quota in all institutions and maintain gender balance in cases of resignation or other changes in post. The strategy aims at streamlining the efforts of different actors, including women's organizations, international organizations, political parties and the government.

But there is a strong possibility that all the planning in the world won't help. Omitting Iraq and Afghanistan, of all the countries in this research which have more than a 30% representation of women in parliament, Transparency International (TI) lists Burundi as the most corrupt, at 168 on the table. In such a system, corruption is a large part of getting elected, and unless they are equally corrupt, women are unlikely to make gains in this environment. Women commentators have often claimed that there is a relationship between women's representation and a diminution in corruption. There is in fact no evidence to support this claim. There is some evidence which shows that an increase in human rights compliance can lead to changes in levels of corruption, and such human rights changes usually mean women have more access to prominent decision making positions. This question needs further research to unpack the dynamics of the relationship between these variables.

Liberia

In Liberia, results for the last three elections, in 1995, 2005 and 2009, saw women win 5.7%, 5.26 % and 12.5 per cent of the seats in parliament. For the elections of 2005, guidelines were developed for political party candidacies which specified a 30% quota for women on party lists. However, there were no penalties for non compliance. As a result, only 12.5% of candidates elected were women, but this was a 7.2% increase over the numbers of women in the previous legislature. We will see this outcome of falling short of targets in non legislated quotas frequently in this paper's analysis of parliamentary elections 2005-2009.

The war in Liberia continued for 14 years, displacing at least half the country's 2.5 million population and claiming the lives of between 150 and 250, 000 people. Fuest observed that the years of violent conflict seemed to have resulted in an increase in the scope of economic activities performed by women and political positions held by women and in women's organized action in general. In spite of male resistance, women insisted on a full voice in peace negotiations, and the 2003 Liberian Peace Agreement contained some gender-relevant policies.

Liberia held peaceful national elections in 2005, and the world read of former World Bank official Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's victory, in an environment where there had been significant international involvement in peace building and international development assistance. Liberia has a relatively low representation of women in the legislature at 15%, but President Johnson-Sirleaf nominated a woman as the first female chief of the Police Force, appointed women to 22% of the positions in her Cabinet, including the crucial Ministries of Finance, Justice and Commerce, and launched national programmes that support schoolgirls and market women.

Under Johnson-Sirleaf and the 23 Ministries, at least 15 Deputy Ministers' posts and 16 Assistant Ministers' posts have been occupied by women. Women in the nation's leadership office can choose whether or not to significantly advance women in many spheres, as Johnson-Sirleaf has done. They can also choose to do nothing, as we shall see later in our review of Asia.

Observers of the 2005 election agreed in finding that the proportion of elected female representatives in the legislature, 15%, would certainly have been larger had it not been for a) an internal selection process for political candidates that demanded hard lobbying of political leaders and members, skills which many Liberian women had not had the opportunity to learn; and b) the guidelines of the National Elections' Commission, which made the registration fees for candidates prohibitive for many female aspirants.

It is very interesting in the context of this analysis, to have regard to the socio economic space women move into in a post war period, particularly if they insist on participation in peace talks and in constitutional reviews which follow. Fuest commented that the political and economic roles that Liberian women performed appeared "to be larger in 2008 than before the war ... Since the war, women's ability to live independently has increased dramatically." One woman explained: "the war brought a lot of evils and a lot of good things but it brought out leadership abilities in women. They think of how to protect their communities, their families. The women show so much energy and creativity. The war has made an enabling atmosphere for women to strive for leadership."¹² The political and economic roles of women in a post war environment, and the effects of these on women's political participation at all levels is worthy of further investigation, and this paper raises further questions on this matter later.

Sierra Leone

Women in Uganda, Burundi and Liberia have made gains following post war peace talks, but it's a different story in Sierra Leone. Certainly women's representation went from 1% in 1982 to 14.5% in 2002. But in the 2007 election the number was 13.2%, and the choice to change from a proportional to a FPP electoral system signals a hard road ahead for women's representation.

In Sierra Leone, activist Mary Musa described an environment of cultural barriers, huge corruption and patronage, discrimination and lack of finances, as key factors inhibiting women's participation at any level. "Men think women should be at the back" she said.¹³

In addition to the challenges outlined by Musa, the new FPP law stipulates that candidates must have a certain level of schooling – and only 25% of women in Sierra Leone are literate. Candidates must also be long standing members of a party and have contributed financially to the party. They must regularly attend meetings, and pay local taxes. Many men pay the household taxes, often the result of women's income generating work, so they can participate. The candidate also has to be accepted by the political party and the electoral committee, and there were suggestions of fraud in the selection of candidates in the primaries in the last election,

¹² Fuest, V. (2008) This is the Time to Get in Front: Changing Roles and Opportunities for Women in Liberia. *African Affairs*, 107, (427), 201-224

¹³ Castillejo Clare: Women's Political Participation and influence in Sierra Leone. www.learningpartnership.org/iwdn/2009/07/sierraleone-women-politics

disadvantaging women candidates.¹⁴ The country has a huge corruption and patronage culture, and ranks at 146 on the 2009 TI Index.

However, the 50/50 Group movement, which has been active through the change in electoral system, and which is involved in candidate training for central and local elections, has seen changes. Women's representatives on District Councils has resulted in an increase in the number of health clinics, and has boosted the numbers of girl's in school. The training has invoked a solidarity, which has seen women candidates standing together on issues. Activists have begun to focus on the multiple ways in which women can be political actors, even when corruption, gerrymandering and patriarchal reaction to gains attempt to turn back incremental change.

Malawi

Malawi experienced some gains in women's political participation and increased representation in Parliament between 1995 and 2005, from ten to 27 seats and from 5.65% to 14 % per cent. But it's a political history of "patriarchal rule, a culture of neo-patrimonialism and a social and cultural context which discourages women from entering politics".¹⁵ In Malawi's history women have been considered subservient and illiterate. One of the few political roles played historically was dancing for the former President for Life, Hastings Kumuzu Banda. This compulsory involvement of women was in singing and praising the ruling political party.

The 1993 Referendum ended one party rule in Malawi. A multi-party era began in 1994, with the adoption of a new constitution. Human rights, gender equality and the rights of women were identified as fundamental components.

Malawi has a long history of women's participation in church-related activities, saving clubs, income-generating groups and self-help associations, so there has been a long-standing informal and local network of women. However, Tiessen explains that in 10 years of multi-party rule there's been single party dominance which has limited the activities of civil society. There are also major patron client networks, and the system and structure of neo-patrimonialism prevents development assistance from being administered efficiently, equitably and to those who need it most.¹⁶

Women have made important gains in recent years in terms of 'high up' appointments. There have been women appointed heads of ministries. Malawi has a first woman Deputy Speaker, a woman Inspector General of Police, the first woman Supreme Court Judge and the Chair of the Malawi Electoral Commission. Any of Malawi's successes and small victories for gender equality stem from the work of key leaders in government, but also in NGO, civil society and private sector activities. But the growing presence of women in leadership positions has not been enough to promote more wide-ranging gendered equality of opportunity.

¹⁴ *ibid*

¹⁵ Tiessen, Rebecca (2008). Small Victories but Slow Progress. *International Journal of Feminist Politics*, 10:2, 198-215

¹⁶ *ibid*

Ghana

Ghana has only 20 women Members of parliament (9%). For women who wish to contest for public political office, it involves cultural obstacles, such as resistance from husbands and families and society at large. Winning primaries requires a great deal of money. Yet there have been considerable gains in Ghana. The women's ministry is one of 8 agencies which cross cut all ministries and agencies in the policy process. The women's movement has focused on family planning, domestic violence, women's rights to abortion, health and child care. Parliament has passed the Domestic Violence Act, Human Trafficking Act and the Children's Act. Here there have been substantial legislative, budgetary and strategic gains without large numbers in parliament.

Ghana had a referendum in 1992 which passed in support of a democratic system, and had the first free and fair elections in 2001, so it shares a history of emergence from war with many other countries examined here. But there are differences. Parliamentary numbers of women actually reduced from 25 in the last election. But there is less corruption: the TI Index position of 69 is among the best on the Continent. There are comparatively higher literacy rates for women and girls. There is more transparency and accountability in the parliamentary process. The press is free. What might explain this? I hypothesize that it is because Accra is the regional hub for multilaterals. The outside world is close at hand and watching. Women in Ghana know how to use access to these, and know how to use their own system. Of all the countries studied for this paper, this is the only one where I uncovered targeted activity to push for more women to be appointed to Boards, Commissions and other such public offices.

Mozambique

Mozambique is the other country in the region with a woman Prime Minister. Luisa Dias Diogo, previously Minister of Planning and Finance,¹⁷ became Prime Minister in February 2004. Among her activities she has urged African Health Ministers to provide reproductive and sexual health services free of charge. She is a strong anti poverty advocate both nationally and internationally. She has promoted equality for women as a central concern of government. She has been an advocate for women's empowerment all her life. Along with Johnson Sirleaf and Mongella, this is another example of one woman making space for activism and change.

Diogo's leadership has seen solid increases in women in parliament. The proportions increased from 63 seats (25%) in 1994, to 73 (29%) in 1999, then to 89 (35% in 2004 and 96 (38%) in 2009. Women appointed to cabinet ministries hold the portfolios of justice, Labour, Public service, Women and Social Action and Parliamentary Affairs.

Mauritius

In Mauritius, in the elections of 2005, after a sustained awareness campaign by non-governmental organizations and political parties to increase and strengthen the numbers of women, representation increased from 4 to 12. The campaign involved promoting options such

¹⁷ Also a former World Bank employee, as Desk Office for Mozambique. Also note the TI Index position of 130, equal with Uganda.

as Temporary Special Measures (TSM) (Article 4 CEDAW), and other mechanisms. In the end, no concrete measure was adopted, but mobilization on the issue led to an increase in numbers of women parliamentarians, without legislative or party policy changes. In other regions, in other unsuccessful instances of attempts to use the TSM approach, the growth in activism and consciousness also appears to have resulted in gains in seats held by women. This is a phenomenon of interest.

Key questions that arise from this region for further investigation are:

- How might it be possible get women who have experience in reserved seats to move to constituencies
- How does the ‘space making’ impact of one individual translate into increased political participation at all levels?
- Do women in reserved seats use leverage within the political party system to advance women in the party, and/or to make substantial policy gains?
- What is the relationship, if any, between the numbers of women in a national parliament, the legislative and resource allocation record for women’s rights, and the position of the country on the Transparency International Corruption index?

2. Central and South America and the Caribbean

Countries in Latin America have diverse experiences in gender politics: some have been leaders in the suffrage movement and some have only recently legalized divorce. One article, which examined the relationship between gender and participation in seventeen Latin American countries, found that there is no evidence that economic development provides an impetus for more equal levels of participation. The most important contextual factors were civil liberties and women’s presence among the visible political elite.¹⁸ In the examples which follow in this region, we see major strategic outcomes around constitutional change, when a full engagement of women from all levels of the women’s movement combines with elected representatives on a common platform for the advancement of women.

Argentina

In Argentina in 1995 women occupied 21.8% of parliamentary seats. In 2005 the figure rose to 33.7 per cent. In 2007, 40 per cent were elected to Argentina’s lower chamber for the first time, a percentage mandated by law. The result in both houses was a record number of women.

There has been considerable NGO activity in Argentina, with some funding from the Partnerships with UN Democracy Fund. Part of the project on Organising Women Against Corruption in Argentina was a strategy to monitor elections and the financing of political parties, to foster gender equality in training politicians and electoral campaigns, and to advocate for more democratic and gender sensitive decision-making. It monitored the public and private funding of five political parties, with an emphasis on identifying gender inequalities. The monitoring

¹⁸ Desposato,S and Norrander,B. (2009). The gender Gap in Latin America: contextual and individual influences on gender and political participation. *British Journal of Political Science*, 39(!), 41-62

uncovered irregularities, in accessing information regarding the source of funds for campaigns, and a lack of transparency regarding public disclosure of campaign financing. The strategy also completed and published *Mujeres en Politica*, a comparative study of gender equality issues in the charters of five political parties.

These changes came despite Argentina's ranking at 106 on the TI index. But any analysis has to take into account Argentina's past, a military junta within living memory of the majority of voters, where women played such an extraordinary role led by the mothers of the disappeared. Women have made substantial gains in legal changes: for example in the prohibition of domestic violence, the criminalisation of rape including marital rape, sexual harassment in the public sector, equal pay, and property rights, and the law provides for prison terms for discrimination based on gender. Trafficking of women to and inside the country is a problem. The difficulty, as experienced in most parts of the world, is in implementation of all of these laws.

Costa Rica

In 2006 Costa Rica ranked in the top five nations after the election delivered 38.6 % of seats for women in parliament. It has the highest number of women in public office in the region, including the Ministers of Justice, Police and Public Security, Science and Technology, Culture, Health, Housing Public Works and Transportation. The parliament included nine legislative committee chairwomen, and a leader of one of the party caucuses. The 22 seats were won in a system with a legislated candidate quota.

But this many women does not mean full realisation of rights. A predominantly Catholic country, issues of women's reproductive health and rights have not kept pace with other issues. There is a large number of adolescent pregnancies, issues of abortion complications, an abstinence until marriage school curriculum, and difficulties obtaining contraception outside of marriage.¹⁹

Political parties have to ensure that their candidate lists include at least 40 per cent women in winnable positions, or they will be unable to register the lists for the election. This is the strongest legal position adopted in any country in respect of political parties which fail to observe the quota provision. How this was achieved would be of considerable interest, as the requirement for party quotas, as opposed to reserved seats, seems to be gaining ground as a preferred alternative for patriarchal response to women's demands, but without the provisions regarding party registration which are found in the Costa Rican example.

Peru

In 2006, after reforms in electoral law, Peru held an election using a proportional representation system with legislated political party quotas of for women of 33%. Women were 34.7% of electoral candidates and won 29.2% of the parliamentary seats.

Following the election a Partnership with UN Democracy Fund launched a serious capacity-building programme for Peruvian women leaders to strengthen know-how, promote leadership and increase the incidence of women running for office. At the same time it was to strengthen and build networks by encouraging women's organizations and women leaders to join efforts, exchange information, experiences and cooperation in achieving common goals.

¹⁹ <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/about-us/international-program/costa-rica-country-program-18998.htm>

The programme established a group of experts to analyze key legislative political decisions and processes. It circulated the National Women's Political Agenda throughout the country and raised awareness about it through the mass media. The work also established a baseline of needs and capacities of women politicians in sectional and local governments through an inclusive process of consultations with political associations. Training modules were developed based on findings of the needs assessment. UNIFEM also supported the sustained efforts to draft the more inclusive and democratic Constitution. The mobilization paid off: 95 percent of the demands were included in the text of the 2008 Constitution.

This is one of the countries where the NGO IDEA has been engaged in follow up work with this larger representation. In April 2009 nearly 100 women completed a training programme to equip them for political leadership in dealing with media and equality issues in Peru. The participants were selected from political parties in twelve regions across the country. It aimed not just to strengthen the leadership capability of the women, but to promote dialogue between the different parties and improve the quality of debate within their own parties.

This was a very successful series of initiatives. Once women were elected to 30% of the seats, there was no expectation that they could make a difference without a large mobilization and participation of women across the country. There was constructive work to find out what they needed and to assist in this. Women outside elected office were there to support, to inform, to advocate, to teach, to assist. Coalition building, networking and working together, with capacity building at all levels, was the aim. The outcomes, particularly in respect of the Constitution, were outstanding. The women inside the parliament could not possibly have won those gains on their own.

Brazil

In the 1990s the Brazilian Congress approved an electoral quota for female candidates in the parliamentary elections. The vagaries of the law and the peculiar open lists electoral system have seen no great increase in the number of women in Brazilian legislatures. There has been some change in the municipalities. The law imposes quotas on parties, but it has no practical sanctions in the cases where this is not followed. The Brazilian electoral system is a representation system with open lists. Party lists that include strong female candidates have gained advantages in comparison to those that do not, but this has not made much difference to party political practice.²⁰

Electoral quotas were first introduced in 1995, for 20% of women for Mayors and members of municipal chambers. In 1997 the percentage was set at 30% for regulated state and federal elections. There are three key differences to note about these quotas: 1) The quotas are for candidacies, not for seats in Parliament; 2) at the same time as Parliament instituted vacancies reserved for women, the legislation also increased the number of candidacies each party or coalition could put forward. So the measure that guarantees a higher number of female candidates, does not reduce the number of their male counterparts; 3) parties and coalitions are not required to fill all the vacancies allotted to women, it's just that they're not allowed to

²⁰ Miguel, L.F. (2008) Political Representation and Gender in Brazil: Quotas for women and their impact. *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 27,(2), 197-214

replace them with men. But overall they are allowed to run more candidates than there are positions for!

Men are usually at an advantage in open list systems but not in closed list systems. In Brazil, while the number of female councillors rose in the 1996 municipal elections, the number of elected female deputies in 1998 was lower than in previous elections. In 2002, the second election with quotas, female numbers did rise but not greatly. Women went from 6.2% of elected officials for the federal chambers before the law change, to 5.7% in 1998, to 8.2% in 2002 and 9% in 2006. An analysis of the data from these elections has revealed that the goal of offering 30% of the candidacies to women has not been reached. Women scarcely passed the 10 per cent mark; parties just left many of the vacancies empty.

Opting for the political party route for quotas for women is unlikely to be effective, if the Costa Rican type sanctions are not applied.

Ecuador

Ecuador has a legislated quota for women of 25%. The increased presence of women in the parliament of Ecuador in 2006 played a key part in the revisions of the constitution. The recently elected women drafted a National Women's Political Agenda at the National Pre-Constituent Assembly of Women (Riobamba, Chimborazo, June 2007). The key components of this were: i) equality and parity in political participation; ii) guaranteeing the right to a life free from gender violence, providing protection and reparations for the victims; iii) respecting sexual and reproductive rights, and secularism; iv) having equal access to resources, goods and services, v) recognizing domestic work as productive and guaranteed rights for housewives; and vi) strengthening the national women's machinery. Here again there was cross party cooperation and the engagement of women inside and outside the legislature.

Bolivia

Results in Bolivia in 1995 gave women 10.77% of the seats. In 2005 the figure rose to 19.23 per cent; in 2009 it fell to 17 per cent. A recent paper which investigated women's political participation in rural municipalities in Bolivia, found women were politically excluded from both communal political institutions and the relatively newly created rural municipalities, in spite of legislation stipulating women's participation. Women expressed a desire to participate and clearly identified the obstacles to their participation and the patriarchal mechanisms that perpetuated them.²¹

A very clear pattern of significantly better results in countries with a legislated candidate quota for women is emerging in this region. Outcomes in constitutional revisions are also much stronger when women parliamentarians, with a legislated quota, are working with mobilised advocates in sustained capacity building programmes. In addition, the activism around the constitutional changes shows the need for action research approaches, using participatory and emancipatory frameworks, in the IDRC toolkit. Too many opportunities to uncover how and why women worked as they did to make these gains, are lost in any analysis carried out later, relying on secondary data and documentation and personal recall.

²¹ Pape, I.S.R. (2008). "This is not a meeting for women": The socio-cultural dynamics of rural women's political participation in the Bolivian Andes. *Latin American Perspectives*, 35(6), 41-62

Caribbean

In 2005 in Dominica, and St Vincent and Grenadines, representation fell by 5.8% and 4.5% respectively. In 2006 one woman was elected to the lower house in Saint Lucia in an eighteen member parliament. In Haiti 4 women were elected to a 98 seat parliament (4.1%). Neither St Lucia nor Haiti has a quota formula in place, and both have constituency based systems.

In 2007 at 60%, the Bahamas upper house had the highest representation of women of any chamber in the world. They were appointed to these positions. However, the elections to the lower house saw representation drop from 20 to 12.2 percent, and just 5 seats. In 2008 women were appointed to 40% of the seats in the upper house in Belize; no women won election to the lower house, and only three contested. In Grenada, women were appointed to 30% of the seats in the upper house, and two of the four women members of the lower house lost their seats. All of these states have majority systems, and there seems to be a pattern to redress the very low numbers of women in the lower houses by appointments of women to the upper house.

Trinidad and Tobago also has a majority system and no quotas, but women were successful in 11 of the 41 seats in the election (26.8%). In the same electoral legal system, women won only 8 of the 60 seats in the Jamaican election, and five of the 41 seats in the Bahamas. Both countries have had strong women's movements, so it is interesting to ask what the differences are.

In 2008 Jamaican MP Sharon Hay Webster told colleagues at an IPU meeting that several realities contributed to the maintenance of the male dominated status quo in political representation in Jamaica. "Firstly women in Jamaican society perform the bulk of unpaid household and voluntary or community work, which means that their contribution to the national wellbeing, although essential, is not measured by society in economic terms. Secondly, it is only in recent years that women in Jamaica have been attaining some visibility in the upper echelons of corporate power, which provides the opportunity for the social networking necessary to attract campaign funding from corporate sources.

Thirdly, by virtue of their household responsibilities, including the nurturing of children, women have much less leisure time for the kind of recreational activities that are amenable to the social networking necessary to attract private funding for political campaigns. Fourthly, the entrenched norms that govern the public conduct of females in Jamaican society make it impossible for them to utilize certain campaigning methods that are open to male political discussions in a relaxed atmosphere. In Jamaican society, it would certainly be counter productive for any female candidate for a political office to attempt to do the same. Fifthly, much of the political campaigning in Jamaica takes place in the late evenings – a reality which also poses a challenge to any female candidate, particularly those with family obligations.

The end result is that comparatively few women in Jamaica offer themselves for selection as candidates for political office; and fewer still are actually selected by their party of choice to run for office".²² This is not surprising. Both major political parties now run their own militia, and it is not an environment many would ever wish to enter.

In 2008, without a legislated quota, but in a one party state, women improved their numbers in

²² IPU Meeting: 52nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, New York, 2008

the Cuban parliament to 43.2% of the seats. In Grenada, with no quota and in a majority system, the result saw women win two of fifteen seats (13.3%). In Barbados, they won three of thirty (10%).

In this region there is a uniform outcome for those former British colonies which inherited the constituency first past the post system, with Trinidad and Tobago the exception. There is also a patterned trade off of offering reserved seats in the Upper House, where there is much less power, and the seats are also subject to appointment, and so appointees tend to toe the party line.²³

It might be very interesting to pursue why this is the case and what is different there. The region had a very strong feminist movement in the nineteen seventies and eighties. Certainly there was the factor of Lucille Mair, who was the Secretary General for the Copenhagen Half Decade Conference and was later appointed to the highest position held in the UN by a woman at that time. The region had a vigorous `wages for housework` movement, a strong academic tradition with Peggy Antrobus and others, and sent very strong delegations to international conferences. Was there no inter generational transfer of feminist politics? Or has male violence made the political environment too dangerous for participation.

Key questions that arise from this region are:

- What inhibits the intergenerational transfer of active feminism and its translation into parliamentary participation, as appears to be the case in the Caribbean.
- What are the lessons from the outcomes of the combined efforts of women in parliament and women's NGOs in working for the inclusion of women's rights agendas in constitutional revisions.
- How might research terms of reference be constructed by IDRC to provide the opportunity for engagement in action research of a participatory and emancipatory nature?

3. The Middle East and North Africa

A number of countries in this region were the last to grant suffrage to women, but they have already passed the Pacific in terms of the representation of women in parliament. Qatar remains one of the three countries never to have a woman parliamentary representative. In 2006 men and women stood for election and voted for the first time ever in the United Arab Emirates. One woman was successful in the election, and eight were subsequently appointed, gaining 22.5% of the seats.

Kuwait

In 2006 in Kuwait women stood for the first time in an election, but all were unsuccessful. There had been mobilization by women's organisations, electoral and campaign training and some

²³ While the Pacific is not part of this study, the same pattern, without the Upper House, emerges in the former British colonies with FPP constituency based electoral systems.

innovative campaigns by a number of the twenty eight candidates. The one month limit on campaigning disadvantaged these women as they were unable to build up name recognition. In the elections in 2008, no women won again, but the continuing mobilization of women was an effective pressure to see two women appointed to the sixteen member cabinet sworn in June 2008. Cabinet ministers also sit in parliament, so there were then two women in the 65 members in parliament.

In May 2009, four women were the first elected to the parliament. In October 2009, two of them, Rola Dashti and Aseel al Awadhi, refused to wear the hijab in Parliament. They protested the electoral regulations that said that they had to observe sharia law in Parliament, and tabled an amendment saying the sharia rider should be dropped, because the Constitution stipulated freedom of choice and equality between the sexes.²⁴ This was a significant and courageous stand. In the past in other parliamentary situations, women on the outside who have worked hard to get women into office, have then urged those successfully elected not to take a stand which might undermine such efforts. The constant daily undercurrent of subterfuge and threatening judgments from male colleagues through this period can only be imagined as relentless and battering. It would have taken considerable courage to take this stand - one of principle and one supported by the Constitution - but the two women will have paid an emotional - and perhaps political - price for this important victory.

In 2006 one woman in Bahrain became the first woman elected in that country's history, in only their second experience of political participation. Eighteen of the 207 candidates were women. The winner was unopposed in her constituency. Women candidates had been offered training in campaign skills. There was also an extensive media campaign prior to the election to highlight the importance of women's political participation. Women were subsequently appointed to 25% of the Senate seats.

In 2007 elections Syrian women retained 31 seats (12%) in a system with no quotas or reserved seats. Seventeen of the newly elected women Members of Parliament, or 55 percent, had participated in the regional project Arab Women Parliamentarians, implemented by the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs and the General Women's Union in collaboration with the UNIFEM. This involved a variety of trainings and workshops on participatory planning, communications and gender-sensitive budgeting, which strengthened the capacity of more than 100 MPs to lobby for gender equality in parliaments.

In 2007, a slight increase in numbers in Algeria to 30 (7.7%) seats followed unsuccessful activism for a legislated quota, but at least one political party adopted voluntary quotas as a result. Algeria joins Mauritius, and as we shall see, Timor Leste, in gaining additional seats for women following an unsuccessful TSM campaign.

Jordan

Following the 2003 election in Jordan, when no women won an open seat, research was conducted with losing women candidates. Al-Khozahé found that competition, tribal fanaticism, lack of political parties which could provide convincing and reasonable programmes, lack of participation of women in those parties, non coherence and backstabbing, the large number of

²⁴ Spencer Richard, Telegraph Group Ltd; in New Zealand Herald, October 14 2009, A 15.

both men and women candidates, and the lack of experience of Jordanian women to run in campaigns were among the challenges faced.²⁵ This echoed the findings from another study of the same election, which found that candidates representing tribes, religious inclinations or services were able to earn a greater number of votes, and that the voting climate favoured traditional, tribal and masculine values.²⁶

Following the 2003 election, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) provided technical assistance, training and support to women running for parliament and helped launch Women Helping Women: Jordan's Women's Election Network (WHW),²⁷ a network of people interested in supporting and funding women candidates. WHW provided fundraising training to several women candidates, raised money and in-kind donations for candidates, and implemented a post-election survey on women's participation in the national Jordanian elections. NDI also completed and launched a book and video documentary entitled *First Class*, which profiled the women Senators and MPs in Jordan from 2003-2007. In the 2007 election the six reserved seats for women were retained, and one woman won an open seat.

Lebanon

The situation of women in politics in Lebanon in a post war period reinforced their economic deprivation and the patriarchal nature of politics. While the war opened new space to participate in public life, this has not extended to full political citizenship. Political participation remains minimal. The politics in Lebanon is conceived of within a patriarchal framework. In the 2005 legislative elections only six women out of 128 made it into parliament, or 4.7 per cent. The only non-affiliated woman in the Lebanese parliament formed in 2005 was Ghinwa Jalloul.

The 2006 UN report on the implementation of CEDAW in Lebanon stated that "the continuing active influence of traditional factors, family allegiance, services, client networks, family or partisan political legacy determines the chances of women's success". Female members of parliament in Lebanon have been largely unconcerned with pushing for a change in personal status laws or for implementing legislation against gender discrimination. The exception was Ghinwa Jalloul, who tried to start a public debate about women citizenship rights and to raise this issue in parliament but her calls fell on deaf ears. Her campaign, however, also overlapped with the 33 day war between Hezbollah and Israel in July 2006, but earlier a number of events had taken place as part of her campaign. Women's Rights clubs at the University of Beirut and the Lebanese American University had staged public debates and workshops about the issue. They led awareness campaigns on the street, but the campaign ground to a halt as the country was overtaken by the war with shortages of food, road blockades, and bombing.²⁸

The Lebanese Electoral Law Commission appointed in 2005 had one woman member, Arda Arsenian Ekmekji. She proposed a quota system that guaranteed between 10 and 30% of Parliamentary seats for women as a temporary measure for the three rounds of elections after the

²⁵ Al-Khozah, H.O. (2006) Jordanian women and challenges to enter into parliament: A sociological field study regarding female electoral candidates. *Journal of the Social sciences*, 34(3), 129 -167

²⁶ Al Hazaymeh, M.A. (2005). The Jordanian voters' awareness of the factors that determine their voting. A case study of parliament elections for the year 2003. *Journal of the Social Sciences*, 33(3)

²⁷ IPU Meeting; 52nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, New York, 2008.

²⁸ Khatib, L. (2008). Gender, Citizenship and Political Agency in Lebanon. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 35(3), 437 - 451

2006 round. The 2006 report on CEDAW implementation published the results of a survey which stated that 46% of those surveyed were in favour of some form of female quota. Adopting the quota was reliant on the Lebanese Cabinet in Parliament approving it.²⁹

Cabinet did not endorse this proposal. Political blocs said that parties would have a voluntary quota, and repeatedly made public statements about the equality of men and women. The 'Reform and Change' bloc nominated only one woman and more than sixty male candidates. The number of woman candidates on the pro government bloc party lists did not exceed three, who were all chosen on the basis of nepotism, political legacies and martyred relatives.

The number of women MPs was reduced to four, and all four parliamentarians were tied to political heritages and slain relatives.³⁰ However the Cabinet appointments after months of negotiations between the coalition partners have seen two women appointed on merit, and one of them appointed Minister of Finance.

Morocco

The Morocco Lower Chamber introduced a 10% quota system in 2002. This led to the percentage of the women in the lower house jumping from 1 to 10 percent. They moved from two seats in 1998 to 35 out of 330 parliamentarians in 2002; thirty of these were as a result of the quota, five successfully competed against male candidates. This result was an exception by Middle Eastern and North African standards.

Sater describes this as a major change in a formerly authoritarian state.³¹ After a critical analysis of recent legal changes, and after a number of interviews with women parliamentarians, she concluded that the quota appeared innovative, but relied on formal mechanisms to prevent real political innovation and contests. What Sater describes as a 'superficial democratisation' resulted from an effort to guarantee the survival of individual rulers. Morocco is perceived to be an example of exceptional sources of legitimacy for the ruling family of the Arab world.

Sater wrote: "Multi-group competition conveys to the ruler the authority of arbitration. King Mohamed VI has been trying to be more modern, but the King remains a centre of a system of patronage and monopolizes all political decisions. Internally the reform for the quota is portrayed as a significant step in the State's efforts at democratisation.

Regime interference in political parties, either through banning or co-opting individual leaders ensuring loyal support to the regime, has been a constant feature, so there are strong limitations on the role of women as political active because of the distinct functions that political parties fulfill in relation to the monarchy".

But some changes in the Family Law, in particular, have come with the reserved seats for women. It is important to remember that there has been a long, strong, Moroccan feminist

²⁹ ibid

³⁰ Boutros Eliane, Women in Lebanese Elections: Second Class Citizens. www.baldati.com/news/article. Accessed 15/10/2009

³¹ Sater, J.N. (2007). Changing Politics from Below? Women Parliamentarians in Morocco. *Democratization*, 14 (4), 723-742

movement since 1946, and a number of exceptional writers and journalists throughout this period, particularly in the 1970s. Strong women's organisations have been the Democratic Association of Moroccan Women and the Female Action Union. Then there have been smaller women's associations which have emerged to work on issues such as violence against women, gender-based legal and cultural discrimination, under-representation of women and illiteracy. These issues have given Moroccan women the opportunity to become skilled in advocacy, gaining and building resources, and gaining credibility. In particular, they have been able to politicize women's issues in the new family law.³² The new family law is seen as a major breakthrough, as women in many other countries in the region grapple with a similar challenge. Those activists on the outside needed the voices of women on the inside, and the support of the King, for these changes to be realized.

Mauritania

In Mauritania women held no parliamentary seats in 1995, and held 3.7% in 2005. In 2006 there was a significant change in law and outcome in the elections. The reforms introduced quota legislation requiring parties to nominate women for at least 20% of their candidates. In addition there was a placement mandate, and parties were required to put women in winnable positions on party lists.

In 2006 after the legal changes, women won 22.1 per cent of the seats. In advance of the 2006 transitional elections in Mauritania, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) supported a steering committee of women leaders from political parties and civil society whose successful lobbying led to the adoption of this quota. NDI also worked with the committee to develop a broad media campaign that included the production of a documentary, TV and radio spots, and print ads to raise awareness of women candidates. Mauritania emerged from these elections with the second-highest proportion of women representatives in the Middle East and North Africa region.

Questions arising from this region include:

- What can we learn about unsuccessful attempts to use TSM and introduce a quota, in terms of the increased success of women candidates?
- What legislative precedents for the Family Law revisions in Morocco would easily translate into private members bills which women in other countries of the region might introduce to their parliaments?

Asia

Asia traditionally has had slow gains in numbers of women in parliament. Despite the success of women rising to Prime Ministerial positions in Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Philippines and Pakistan, none of them `made space` for a women's agenda in the manner of the current leaders of Mozambique or Liberia. As well as having had the most women leaders, this is the most populous of the regions under consideration, and so a number of countries are considered in this commentary.

³² Sadiqi, F. (2008). The central role of the family law in the Moroccan feminist movement. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 35(3), 325 -337

India

In India women's participation as candidates in national and state elections has actually declined. Increasing violence, sexual harassment and victimization of women at the ground level in political parties makes participation hazardous. It is difficult for women to establish a foothold without the patronage from powerful men in the party. The decline in women's political participation runs contrary to the trends in other fields, where educated and elite women have broken down most stereotypes and have access to a wide range of professions and occupations.³³ However, Neeta Lal writes that despite India's women becoming politically empowered, "women in India continue to lag behind on almost all crucial development parameters like education, health and economic participation."³⁴

In the election of 2009, there was an increase in the number of women candidates from 335 in 2004 to 556 in 2009. Fifty nine of these women were successful, less than 11% of the lower house. But women emerged in key positions to join Sonia Gandhi as the leader of the ruling Congress Party: Pratibha Patil was the country's President, and Meira Kumar was the Speaker in the lower house.

From the first address of the President to the assembled legislators, it appeared as if these women might be having an influence. A Bill to reserve seats for women has been pending in India since 1999. It was introduced first in 1996 and several times thereafter. At the opening of the 2009 new parliament, President Patil said that the government was committed to reserving 33% of seats in parliament for women. The proposal has once again met with strong opposition from male leaders, in particular those of caste based parties. Others argue for a quota within a quota – for minority women for example. The promise to deliver on this commitment in the first 100 days in office of the new government was not met.

Pakistan

In a statement redolent of the politics between the two countries, at the failure to achieve progress on a quota in India, in August 2009 the Pakistani Ambassador offered Pakistan's help.³⁵ Pakistan has 60 reserved seats in the 360 seat National Assembly and 17 in the 100 member Senate. He claimed that women parliamentarians played a major role in raising health, education and social issues in Pakistan. They introduced 42% of private member's bills, asked 27% of questions in the house, and moved 24% of resolutions in parliament. In the elections of 2008, an additional 16 women won open seats to register the highest number (22.2%) of women ever in its lower house.

While I have no way of substantiating this claim of activity on the part of women Members of Parliament, it might provide an interesting opportunity for research comparisons, to examine what opportunities women, compared with men, take in parliaments to use the initiatives available to them under standing orders. I would also note that a Pakistani woman MP currently holds the chair of the women's group of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, and such positions are usually held by activist politicians who lead by example in using all avenues

³³ www.indiatogether.org/women/authority/history.htm Retrieved November 17, 2009

³⁴ [Http://ipsnews.nt/news.asp?idnews](http://ipsnews.nt/news.asp?idnews) Retrieved November 17, 2009

³⁵ www.thaindian.com/newsportal/southasia/pakistan Pakistan offers to share with India lessons on women's quota.

available to them for advocacy for women.

Bangladesh

Bangladesh has been led by two different women, neither of whom has worked to assist women into parliament. In Bangladesh there had been a provision, which expired in 2000, to reserve 10% of seats for women in parliament. This expiry resulted in a dramatic decrease in the number of female legislators. A constitutional amendment in 2001 extended women's reserved seats from 30 to 45 for a period of 10 years. Prior to this, the reserved seats of 30 enacted in 1978 were about the only route for women into parliament. In 1996, 11 or 3.6% of the seats in the first past the post system were won by women. In 2001 this dropped to 6 or only 2% of the seats in parliament. In 2005, a law increased the overall number of seats in parliament, and 45 of these were reserved for women.

These were allocated to political parties on the share of the national vote received in the elections, and the number of women increased to 13% of the seats in the 2005 elections, and in 2008 this increased to 18.6%. In Bangladesh, 19 women won out of 300 constituency seats, to join 45 appointed women members.

The number of women holding ministerial portfolios has never exceeded 3%. As of 2009, nearly 80% of parliamentary standing committees have no women. With the addition of the 45 reserved seats in November 2009, women are now 14.8% of the total positions.

Begum has commented: "The mode of nomination for reserved seats lies exclusively with political parties. A woman selected from the reserved quota has to represent an area more than ten times larger than those of the general seats. The women are not given important or specific portfolios in the government and are treated less than equally with significant disparities in the distribution of responsibilities. In the parties' internal organizations, women occupy insignificant positions other than, of course, Begum Zia. All the political parties consider a long party career, academic qualification, financial support and family background in politics as a pre-requisite to be put on the list. The Electoral Commission is supposed to monitor elections beyond fear or favour but this doesn't really happen and the party leaders are overwhelmingly in charge of who gets to sit where in the lists".³⁶

Indonesia

The first woman President of Indonesia did not share Johnson-Sirleaf's belief in the capacity of women to work in parliament or in senior positions. When the movement for a women's quota of seats in parliament was gaining publicity, momentum and support, Megawati Soekarnoputri said that asking for a quota would only show unrealistic progress on the part of women. She said, "Enacting the quota means creating new discrimination against men."³⁷ In 2003, she changed her position and hoped that more women would participate in the political world. She claimed that small numbers of women in politics were due to a lack of promotion by political parties.

³⁶ Begum, Afroza. Politics in Bangladesh: Need for a Reconceptualisation of the Politico-legal Approach to Mitigate Women's Disadvantaged Positions in the Parliament. (2009), Journal of Asian and African Studies, 44, 2, pp 171-198

³⁷ Siregar, Wahidh Zein Br. Parliamentary Representation of Women in Indonesia: The Struggle for a Quota. Asian Journal of Women's Studies, Seoul, September 30, 2005, Vol 11, Issue 3, p.3

No women sat on the Boards of political parties as of 2004. An important thing to remember about Indonesia is that in the past, members of Dharma Wanita, which is female civil servants and wives of civil servants, and Dharma Pertiwi, the organization of wives of military personnel, weren't allowed to join political parties, so there were thousands of women who had an educational background or an organizational experience who weren't able to join political parties until 1999, and, of course, it takes a considerable period of time to establish oneself in that situation.

In the decade following Beijing, Indonesia saw its first woman party leader, first woman faction leader in Parliament, first deputy speaker of the People's Consultative Assembly, and the first Agriculture Minister. Outside of the formal government realm, women were active in organized opposition to the Suharto regime, protested against the continuing dominance of the military in social and political life, against price rises of basic commodities and against state-sanctioned religious and ethnic intolerance. They organized demonstrations, facilitated inter-faith prayer sessions, were arrested for political activism, published and disseminated political newsletters, founded political organizations and advocated political reform.

Women had never made up more than 13% in the Indonesian national parliament. In 1999, 45 women were elected out of a total number of 500 members. It was no surprise in these circumstances, and with a women head of state, that a women's movement for a quota emerged. Seventy four countries at that point had set up various types of quotas via constituencies, constitutions, regulations or laws. To achieve gender representation for women in the parliaments, activists identified the following strategies: a quota for women; political education and training for women; strengthening women's networks; preparing a database of potential women MPs; and working closely with the media.

Working with IDEA, the activists assumed that the quotas would increase women's representation in a short time and that Indonesian women didn't want to wait any longer. The quota was also supposed to compensate women for being discriminated against in Indonesian political life.

Women activists met with leaders of the political parties. Party leadership gave undertakings to the women activists and commitments that they would reserve between 20 and 30 % of their positions for women candidates. These commitments were not honored. Men in political parties did not want to lose their privileged positions. There were only four women out of the total of 42 members in the special committee working to draft the law on political parties, and this number made it impossible for them to adopt bargaining positions. Women activists and women legislators also had no agreement about their proposals, and male legislators worked very hard to work to publicize any disagreements between them.

In the end the 30% quota stated, "Every political party in the elections may propose candidates for members of the national, provincial and local parliaments for each electoral district, with consideration for at least 30% of women's representation." There was no guarantee provided in the law - no Costa Rican type penalty - that made it mandatory for political parties to give women a 30% quota.

In the elections of April 2004, most political parties did not fulfill the 30% quota. Most female candidates were placed in non-winnable positions in the lists. Only 13.3% of all 1183 female candidates were placed in the first or second positions on the party lists. There was no guarantee that candidates would be elected even if they were first or second. To ensure success for women candidates it was also necessary to field them in first and second positions in districts where their political parties had voter support and were sure of winning. Party leaders, mostly male, had the power to decide the list.³⁸

The percentage of women in the Indonesian Parliament is now less than it was when the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was signed. In 1997 women occupied 12.6% of the lower or single house seats in Indonesia. In 2005 it was 11.3%.³⁹

Vietnam

In Vietnam the law provides for equal participation of women in politics. In 2009 there was only one woman in the Politburo, and one Vice president and several ministers and vice ministers were women. There have certainly been some major changes for women in the 45 years since then end of the Vietnam War, in particular in literacy and life expectancy. But societal discrimination is deeply ingrained. Equal pay provisions are not enforced, domestic violence is common, and there is a significant forced prostitution market. Vietnam is a one party state, and the party controls the Vietnam Women's Union. The Union has a broad agenda, and in the new economic approach of the country, is very engaged in micro credit schemes.⁴⁰

Very few women hold key positions in the Communist Party, and male leaders are described as lacking the political commitment to change this. There are other women NGOs active in the human rights field, but the party controlled Union is not about to lead a major political action in this context.⁴¹

While Vietnamese women were leaders of the Peace talks following the war, these occurred before even the first world conference of women in Mexico City in 1975, and so Vietnam does not offer a case study for post conflict and constitutional gains. In the 2007 election the country registered a slight decrease in women representatives to 127 (25.8%) in a quota free system. Prior to this election there were debates about the use of CEDAW's Special Temporary Measures to legislate for a women's quota, but no changes to electoral law were made. Vietnam is an exception in this research to the gains made elsewhere in similar circumstances.⁴²

Nepal

In 2008, post the major changes in law in Nepal, which mandated that at least 33% of electoral candidates overall were to be women, the country became the first in Asia to pass the 30% mark for women parliamentarians. Women won 197 (32.8%) of 601 seats. But it had taken a great deal

³⁸ Siregar, Wahidh Zein Br, Parliamentary Representation of Women in Indonesia: The Struggle for a Quota. Asian Journal of Women's Studies, Seoul, September 30, 2005, Vol 11, Issue 3, p.36

³⁹ Davies, Sharyn Graham. Women in Politics in Indonesia in the Decade Post-Beijing. 2005, UNESCO, pp 231-242

⁴⁰ www.onlinewomeninpolitics.org/womensit/vn Retrieved November 17 2009

⁴¹ www.wedo.org/learn/library/media-type/pdf/vietnam-women-in-politics Retrieved November 18 2009

⁴² In 2007 post conflict Timor Leste, where voluntary political party quotas are in place, women won eighteen (27.7%) seats following an unsuccessful attempt to use the CEDAW TSM provision.

of work, activism, training and lobbying.

UNIFEM, in partnership with the National Commission for Women and local NGOs, boosted efforts that contributed to this historic representation of women. With support from the German government, Nepal's Making Politics Work with Women programme supported capacity building of female and male members of the Constituent Assembly, and continuous advocacy with various subcommittees for the inclusion of gender and women's rights concerns within the draft Constitution.

The Partnerships with UN Democracy Fund programme focused on capacity-building of women candidates for office, and elected leaders, and for the training of media on gender issues, and civic education to promote women's participation in constitutional reform. The strategy advocated for quotas for women at all levels of government. A consensus was built with women's groups, political parties, civil society, and government ministries on a new draft Constitution incorporating gender equality considerations. The programme publicized women's contribution to political and peace processes through advocacy tools, including a documentary on *Women's Role on Peace and Politics* and radio jingles. Informational, educational and communication materials were also used to illustrate women's contribution to political and peace processes.

The project mapped women leaders belonging to all major political parties, and potential leaders. It published the names of two thousand and seven women identified and referred these women to political parties as potential candidates for the Constituent Assembly elections.

The project also reviewed political party manifestos. Based on these findings, and after consultations with women's organizations and key stakeholders, it recommended that they include a gender perspective. As a result the Constituent Assembly Election Bill (2007), and the Truth and Reconciliation Bill (2007) included clauses to strengthen gender equality, women's participation and human rights. The work delivered the BPA and MDG target representation of 33%. Nepal's experience is similar to that of Peru, Argentina and Ecuador, of a sustained nationwide programme, engaging women from the grass roots to the educated elite, to gain significant legal and political gains.

Questions arising from this region:

- On what issues, if any, have the large number of women leaders of the nations of this region, been seen to promote women's rights, and what tactics and strategies might women activists and women parliamentarians use in future not to lose the possible opportunity to have women leaders engage on women's issues?
- Under what conditions and with what safeguards can women be asked or promoted to positions on the central boards or executive committees of political parties, in an effort to make progress on the numbers of women candidates fielded in any election?

4. Key further questions that arise in this review

Figures are not the whole story

Iraq: The clause in Iraq's new constitution required 25% of the national assembly to be female. However, women are fearful of venturing outside their homes; they fear appearing in public and even hesitate to wear lipstick. "Women's lives changed as Iraq was transformed from a largely secular state living under a dictator to a sectarian state living under fear".⁴³ Other writers described that 'despite vigorous women's activism, Iraqi women have been disempowered – reduced to instruments of political agendas and symbols of communal indifference.'⁴⁴

One of the main strategies in reconstruction in Iraq is 'democratic promotion', an urgent response to rebuild state and civil society infrastructure. In this women's NGOs implement democracy training workshops, seminars, and conferences. The curriculum of these courses is similar around the world, limited to the promotion of political representation and participation, and not to the promotion of social and economic equality. One of the outcomes of this 'democratic promotion agenda is the marginalization and the exclusion of opposition activism, in particular that of women's groups who challenge the content and focus. Work by El-Kassem suggests that women's NGOs that participate exhibit signs of professionalism and are not politicised by a feminist or human rights analysis, weakening the women's movement as a whole. El-Kassem's compares the Independent Women's forum, a US based NGO involved in promoting this agenda in Iraq, with Iraq Women's Will, a women's organization that actively resists such an agenda.⁴⁵

Rwanda: In Rwanda the proportion of women parliamentarians went from 17.1% in 1988, to 25.7% in the transition period, to 48.8% in 2003. In 2008 the proportion of women in Rwanda's lower house reached 56.3%. This was the first single or lower House in history where women hold the majority of seats.

Since seizing power in 1994, the Rwandan Patriotic front (RPF) has created a Ministry of Gender, organized women's councils at all levels of government, and instituted an electoral system with reserved seats for women. Becoming the first nation where women occupy more than 50% of parliamentary seats has been a nice little earner for Rwanda. Many international missions and conferences are held there to 'endorse' or 'support' this achievement and historic first. Yet the dramatic rise in women's participation is paralleled by the increasing authoritarianism of the government, and with increasing numbers of women MPs, women's ability to influence policy has actually decreased. There are still disappearances, a lack of press freedom, corruption and nepotism and racial hatred and distrust.⁴⁶ The numbers of women in parliament make an interesting 'benefits' selling point for diplomats when these issues are raised. Some critics of President Kagame accuse him of suppressing internal opposition and dissent

⁴³ Ahmed, H. (2006). Women in the Shadows of Democracy. Middle East Report, 36(239), 24-26

⁴⁴ Al-Ali, N. and Pratt, N. (2006). Women in Iraq: Beyond the rhetoric. Middle East Report 36(239) 18-23

⁴⁵ El-Kassem, N. (2008). The pitfalls of a 'democratic promotion' project for women of Iraq. International Journal of Lifelong Education, 27(2), 129-151

⁴⁶ Burnet, Jennie E, (2008). Gender balance in the Meanings of Women in Governance in Post Genocide Rwanda. African Affairs, 107/428, 361-386

more ruthlessly than Robert Mugabe.⁴⁷

The situation in Iraq and Rwanda can be compared with the illustration given earlier of the situation in Ghana, Mozambique and Liberia. Numbers do not necessarily translate into legislative or budgetary gains for women's rights in development.

Post-conflict Success

In Angola, Burundi, Mozambique, Timor Leste, Nepal, Rwanda, Liberia, South Africa, and other nation states, post conflict settlements engaged women (or they refused to go away) and special measures were incorporated into electoral laws or party practices to increase women's representation in a short amount of time. In 2008 in Angola women took 37% of the seats in the first post conflict election, where the electoral law specifies candidate quotas. South Africa's post conflict agreements saw special measures in electoral rules and party practices. In 1995 women were elected to 25% of the parliamentary seats. In 2005 the numbers rose to 32.75%. In 2009 South Africa joined the 40+ club with women winning 43.5% of the total number of seats.

In many of the countries dealt with in this essay, electoral quotas and other statutory electoral mechanisms providing for more than 30% of women in parliament and government structures have emerged in post conflict situations. What is this linked to? Is it because women have to take on many more roles during conflict? Is it because women have been fighting alongside men and are not going to go home from a leadership role when the fighting is over? Does it rely on active participation of women in the peace process, with a real space given for their contribution? Must there be a constitutional drafting process that includes women? Are the best outcomes achieved in the introduction of electoral quotas when they emerge in this constitutional process? Is it because the war has required the mobilization of women in all spheres of life, to run families, households, communities and businesses, and they are refusing to go away when the war is over? I believe there are significant issues here to explore in further research.

Bauer introduces another possible factor to the positions and space contested by women in a post conflict environment. During the independence struggle, 40% of Namibia's exiles were women. Many of them who were young had access to study opportunities they would not otherwise have had. There was not the same gender discrimination as they had experienced at home. They moved into fields previously seen as male domains. Because they were abroad on their own they developed a high degree of autonomy. In 2002, 10 of the 20 women MPs in the National Assembly and National Council had been in exile with SWAPO. All of them confirmed the transformative impact of exile, providing a range of skills from English and public speaking to advanced degrees in building confidence.⁴⁸ The author also noted sustained pressure from a nascent women's movement influenced by the global women's movement.

There are exceptions to the gains women make in post conflict electoral arrangements, but this is

⁴⁷ Valley Paul, How is Rwanda coping with the aftermath of genocide? Independent published New Zealand Herald October 9, A20

⁴⁸ Bauer, G. (2004). 'The hand that stirs the pot can also run the country': Electing women to parliament in Namibia. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 42(4), 479 – 509

an area which needs more research, to see if there is a pattern, of which women are engaged and when, and with what support, in those countries where there are constitutional amendments delivering 33% or more of the seats to women. Such a pattern of engagement would be useful background for all women activists, advocates, and for the agencies that work with governance issues in post conflict situations.

Legislated Political Quotas

In 2008 one third of those parliamentary chambers that had reached 30% or more representation were in Africa, and 23% were in Latin America. By 2009 Rwanda, Cuba, Argentina, and South Africa had passed the 40% mark. Of the four, Cuba does not have legislated quotas. The key for effective use of quotas is implementation and enforcement. It is important to differentiate between those with, and without, sanctions.

Two further examples to those given earlier in this essay make the point. In Guyana, women were one fifth of the 1995 parliament. In 2005 the number rose to twenty out of 65 seats or 30.77 per cent. In 2006 the result was 21 seats out of seventy. Guyana has a 30 percent proportional representation system, with legislated political party quotas requiring that at least 30% of all electoral candidates are women.

El Salvador is another country without sanctions for political party quotas. In 1995 and 2005 women won 10.7 per cent of seats, nine out of eighty four. The highest numbers ever elected to the lower chamber, fourteen out of eighty four (16.7%), was achieved in 2008.

As women activists and politicians in these and other regions attempt to use private bills, constitutional or post conflict talks to gain further representation, it would be useful to add to the largely western work on quotas, collected examples from the South. Such a review should include the specific use of CEDAW's Temporary Special Measures mechanism.

As of May 2008, constitutional or electoral law quotas, the strongest means of increasing women's representation, were used in 46 countries. I have not been able to find any specific listing of the apparently more than 90 times that TSM has been used, which may have been affected by the representation of women in parliament. It would be a very useful comparative research exercise for this to be done across all the TSM outcomes, as it would give important information to women legislators about precedents, and examples to advocates and women's activists of how others had used the provision, on which policy issues, and with what constructive outcomes.

Which Discourse is the Most Successful Strategy

In Namibia there has been the emergence of a unified women's movement around electing more women to political office. This movement had its origins in March, 1996 in a workshop held by sister Namibia for NGOs, political parties and elected women at all levels of government to discuss ways of increasing women's representation in politics. The workshop participants

decided to draft the Namibian Women's Manifesto. One of its seven aims was a 50% quota for women on party lists that were also zebra lists. In 2000, the Namibian Women's Manifesto Network formally launched a 50/50 campaign. They have held many workshops, meetings, marches, distributed thousands of pamphlets, collected thousands of signatures and have popularized a bill. Such countrywide mobilization and unity around a women's issue was unprecedented in Namibia. Women MPs largely supported the call for equal representation.⁴⁹

There has been a very strong support across the board for this but the discourse is interesting. It reveals many women are claiming political roles based on their social status as wives and mothers and representing women's interests. This approach is also found in Asia. It has in fact been useful in Latin America and in the Middle East at times, as it can be used to persuade men that 'nothing serious or threatening' about a re distribution of power or resources is going on. It's just women's business and they wouldn't be interested. Feminists challenge this approach. Women MPs should not only represent women's interests, but also address other issues differently from men. Yet it is also clear that many elected women do not share this viewpoint. Even if they do agree, they frequently don't have the analytical skills, or the staff and time, to be so engaged in everything. I see this area as an interesting one for research, from many angles, but in particular, which approach appears to give more short term, and which more long term, gains overall for women.

Political will and leadership

A review of results and literature, points to questions that can be raised about the political will, and/or feminist politics, of a leader. This can have a major impact on culture over generations. It can provide regional leadership and influence. Women leaders can be inspirational and change makers, in Liberia or Mozambique or Chile, or make no difference at all. They can be a burden; this has been the case particularly Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia. Many political scientists who have studied parliamentary politics, come to a similar conclusion regardless of whether the study is of male or female leaders, major or minor parties, upper or lower houses. It is that change is created by bold individuals who challenge the existing shape and paradigms of power, shake them loose from their foundations, and make space for others to fill in that moment of chaos, when the centre cannot hold. I am from that school of political science.

Being a Candidate

The resilience and courage required to run for parliamentary office can still be inhuman; it can, in fact, qualify as 'cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment'; the words of the Convention on Torture. We have to be very sure we know what we are asking of women candidates who run for electoral office. In this section some recent experiences are described. Consider, for example, the descriptions from the South Asian Regional Conference on Violence Against Women in Politics meeting in November 2008 in Islamabad, Pakistan.

⁴⁹ Bauer, G. (2004). 'The hand that stirs the pot can also run the country': Electing women to parliament in Namibia. *Journal of modern African studies*, 42(4), 479 – 509

“The gender insensitive masculine political culture of the region has made it impossible for the women politicians to survive, unless they come from political backgrounds, have strong political connections or adopt the strategy of male politicians ... Politics ensures status and is a lucrative source of income and power over which men hold control ... In Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka women voters and politicians have been subject to a full range of atrocities during elections and the electoral process. Rape, misbehaviour and physical abuse are rampant against women, both voters and candidates. Many communities also consider a woman to be of ‘bad character’ if she participates in politics and runs for elections. Men, women and society have used character assassination as a tool to violate women politicians, forcing many to quit their career. The meeting noted that “None of the international instruments have provisions to create a gender sensitive, safe and secure space for women to participate actively in politics”.

Tiessen’s analysis of the difficulty of running in Malawi echoed the stories of many others. She described an environment where women are frequently lacking in political experience, resources, education and connections.⁵⁰ Finding time for community responsibilities and multiple gender roles, productive, reproductive labour and community work is especially challenging, so is balancing home life and professional life.

The interviews with women who had stood outlined a gruelling experience. Political participation can be dangerous for women. Respondents referred to cultural beliefs that women exposed to public activities would lead to immoral behaviour. Wives would cheat on men, wives wouldn’t grant men the respect that was due, wives would engage in prostitution if they joined politics. In many cases, husbands forbade their wives to run as they were threatened by the possibility that their wives would interact with other men. There was a serious social stigma on women who left household responsibilities. Those who had been elected to office commented on sexual harassment, verbal abuse, sexual comments, and pressure for sexual favours. Women in positions of power were perceived as loose. One reported being asked how much she cost for sex and where she could meet for a drink. Negative attitudes were held by community members generally and male colleagues in particular. There was resistance, rejection, sabotage, lack of acceptance and opposition from both men and women. There was a widespread perception that women in key leadership slept their way to the top. The cultural attitudes demeaned women leaders with jealousy, mud-slinging, and general discrimination. The media reproduced stereotypes of women as ineffective leaders. Women MPs reiterated that they had to be twice as clean as men, that they had to shout to be heard or to work twice as much as male colleagues to be recognized. One interviewee spoke of gender-unfriendly work environments, unfamiliar language and rules, a lack of training and experience or adequate support. There were other day-to-day obstacles, like a lack of restrooms and childcare facilities.⁵¹

Sater described the difficulties of running in Morocco as similar to other places. The public space that is constructed as male was the geographical area where most public affairs took place. Party meetings took place in the evenings, often until late at night. In rural areas candidates needed the support of intermediaries for elections, traditionally chiefs of economically and politically powerful families or clans who controlled constituents to vote in favour of one candidate or

⁵⁰ Tiessen, Rebecca (2008). Small victories but slow progress. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 10:2,198-215

⁵¹ *ibid*

another. Very few women have autonomous financial means. Women were not only politically and financially dependent on men in political parties. Party leaders could and did promote their own women with family and ethnic links and in turn these women became dependent on their patron.

In Tanzania female MPs and civil society leaders describe a patriarchal culture, a lack of resources available to women and biased party nominations as the most serious barriers to winning constituency seats. Male-dominated culture and tradition restricted women candidates. In many communities they cannot go out after dark, and much campaigning and information-gathering was conducted at night. Bars and nightclubs were off-limits. The media were also biased against female candidates and often demonize and infantilize them.

Low income was also a major problem. The majority of women interested in running for parliamentary seats could not afford even the deposit that had to be paid in cash to the returning officer in the constituency for nomination forms. This was about \$45 in 2004. Customary laws also prohibited women from owning or inheriting land or property and since the multi-party system was introduced campaign expenses had escalated. The candidates' ability to finance their own campaigns was crucial. The current female constituency MPs were all employed in the formal sector before entry into Parliament. Women have accounted for a very small proportion of candidates in each election. A majority of constituencies have never had a female candidate.⁵² In such a context is it at all surprising that women do not want to leave their reserved seats and campaign for open seats in an election?

In Bangladesh a number of negative socio-cultural assumptions affect governance roles. The traditional assumption that women should stick to domestic work is very obvious and women do not have much of a "public world or space to move in". Ninety per cent of rural women are illiterate. The political environment includes corruption, a fundamental lack of sensitivity to a democratic political culture, violence, killing, booth capturing, buying of votes, proxy votes, vote riggings and election fraud are common. Criminals are usually employed in aggressive electioneering tactics and are given a political shield. Transparency International reports that there is no precedent in Bangladesh to suggest the proper disclosure of election expenditure and a code of conduct and ethics for politicians receive even minimal attention of the country's administrative and legal bodies.⁵³

In the circumstances outlined in Bangladesh, Tanzania, Morocco, Malawi, and in Asia in general, there should not be an expectation that women would willingly contest open parliamentary seats. Yet reserved quotas tend to deliver representatives who are 'safe' for political parties.

Measuring Parliamentary Performance: a personal feminist reflection

There are a number of expectations of any Member of Parliament. They should attend sittings of the House and of Select Committees; they should participate as actively as possible to forward

⁵² Mi Yung Yoon op cit

⁵³ Begum, Afroza. Politics in Bangladesh: Need for a Reconceptualisation of the Politico-legal Approach to Mitigate Women's Disadvantaged Positions in the Parliament. 2009, Journal of Asian and African Studies, 44, 2, pp 171-198

the human rights, and the interests, concerns and strategic policy ideas of their ‘constituencies’.

Here is the first challenge for measuring performance. Attendance is an output: it says nothing about the quality of contribution while there. Does the MP understand the legislation before the House? Can they give a clause by clause analysis of a Bill? Can they draft amendments? Do they know how to use parliamentary Standing Orders to move amendments? Are they party hacks and cannon fodder and simply do what they are told? Do they speak against measures but then vote for them, undermining their integrity?

What are an MP’s constituencies? This is clear in an FPP model, as there are constituency boundaries and an electoral roll. In such a context, does the MP just vote the party line? Does the MP work for, and promote this geographical boundary, and if necessary vote for the interests of the constituency against the party of government which they belong to?

It has been my observation that most parties expect that the ‘constituency’ of a list or appointed Member of Parliament is the party. Most of the women in the regions of focus for this study, who have gained political power in this way, appear to comply with the party policy to ensure a place on the list next time. In this they can often vote against the perceived interests of the ‘women’s movement’. They would likely reply, if challenged, that being there enables them to moderate other policies, to stop even worse things happening, and this could be true. This is the description of how many women work in this setting. But because of caucus secrecy, no monitoring and evaluation could ever show this, and in most countries and most political parties, women are in a minority situation in a party caucus.

Members of parliament usually have other ‘constituencies’ which they openly promote, or which depend on them. These may be specific sector interests, such as agriculture, tourism, education, health or the environment. They might be workers, or women, or children, or refugees. Inside each of these sectors, activists and participants and promoters will not always agree. MPs may choose to use a human rights framework to lobby for what should really happen – usually creating a large space between themselves and others in parliament. They will get hammered for this by their colleagues – and the level of battery in politics should never be underestimated - but they will create more space for others to move into. If they are a compromiser, then they are likely to adopt the ‘this is all we can get at this time’ approach. Who is to say which of these tactics is better in measuring performance? And how would the observer ever know what lay behind the strategic approach adopted?

One of the inputs required for women MPs to continue to work for a ‘women’s agenda’, is for those engaged in that wide and diverse movement, to supply the MP with everything possible: information, assistance, logistics, research, and yes – meals and massage and a safe space for down time. One of the most constant jibes directed at women who represent women, is that ‘they’ are bickering again. Male colleagues love it when activist women brawl in the media about issues. It undermines whatever work the women MP is attempting to do. It doesn’t matter that males battle every day. And the constant carping criticism of women MPs, who haven’t won a legislative amendment or a budget increase, coming from elements of the women’s movement, is completely counterproductive. They should be targeting the majority of men who didn’t perform. But it’s quicker and easier to target the women. Perhaps we should also have a focus on

the 'performance' of the women's movement and an analysis of their political savvy in any situation?

Changes in budget allocations are another area for monitoring parliamentary performance. I didn't need a 'women's budget' framework to do this and neither does anyone else. There are a few circumstances in which this might be useful, especially if a whole new transparent and accountable budget system is being established. I see it as a diversion from the need for any MP to be across all the issues of fiscal and monetary policy. If each woman MP was trained and work-shopped in this area, she would shame most male MPs anywhere on the planet. Most activists don't know how the calendar of budgetary decision making works, and so do not know when and how to lobby around that. If a woman MP is across all the issues and is a strategist, the resources needed to establish a women's budget could be used on the front line of applied policy. It has to be recognized that a woman's budget is an output, not an outcome, and is just decoration if it doesn't deliver real budgetary redistribution and changed outcomes. For example, has a woman's budget been able to change the tax structure? It is also extremely difficult to link an MP or group of MPs with changes in budgetary allocations, as most major changes are developed over a period of years.

To what extent does 'parliamentary performance' measure the simple day to day accomplishment of righting wrongs and ensuring access to entitlements, which is an extraordinarily important task, and the place where women representatives find work satisfaction and have some 'victories'. Many women MPs change the lives of hundreds if not thousands in this way, quietly resolving issues without any observation or publicity. In parliaments where there are few women, these MPs tend to receive requests from women across the country, who are too scared to approach a male, or know that they could not possibly tell a man about the experience they have just had – say in a public hospital, or because it's about the incidence of male violence, and a whole range of such subjects.

Parliamentary performance must involve questions of corruption and nepotism. To what extent do women MPs display a different behaviour in these spheres? Are they able to change the systems to do this? Do they have a dossier of names and curricula vitae of hundreds of women so that they can challenge poor and nepotistic appointments?

Where would data be collected on the treatment received by women MPs which hinders or conditions their 'performance'? Many are sexually harassed and abused both inside and outside parliament buildings. They are regularly threatened with physical violence: most of these may be empty threats, but how are they to know that? They are regularly threatened that if they don't be quiet on one issue, they will be punished in another, for example by ensuring that their constituency does not receive a project or programme. How do women MPs deal with the constant intrusion of rumor, media, and intimidation?

Women are invariably 'performing' without the same access to financial support for campaigning, and without the powerful network support of men who have been 'in charge'. Is any performance monitoring to take any account of this? The expectations on the few women in some parliaments are immense. And women across the country behave as if they own them. The failure to be available is interpreted as a slight or a refusal. I can imagine that some might think

that not being present is somehow a failure in accountability.

There cannot be any movement on measuring MPs performance without a parallel observation of the smarts of the women's movement. I think we would get much more activity and traction by addressing the groups and needs together. For example: how many women in parliament would introduce Bills if they had access to drafting experience? How many sectors of the women's movement know how to, and regularly, make submissions to a select committee hearing or a parliamentary public inquiry? How well do women MPs know their parliament's standing orders and use this knowledge in the House? How often do the sectors of the women's movement raise petitions for presentation, and draft questions for oral or written answer to give to women MPs? How often does the movement target a group of male MPs?

The example of Brazil's feminist schools for women politicians is enlightening. Christina Buarque, founder of the Pathways of Empowerment Initiative for women elected representatives, admitted that she had presumed that these women were the nepotistic sycophants of powerful men. She found, however, that these women were isolated from each other and from the women's movement. They felt that they lacked political skills and information about issues facing women. They were hungry for this information. Many became ardent feminists in this on-going education process.⁵⁴

I have written at length on other occasions about being a woman MP.⁵⁵ I have read many autobiographies written by others. I have known and spoken to and with hundreds over the years. I do not believe that there is a remote general understanding of these lives at present, which could result in any sort of global audit of 'performance' which would be at all useful. If there is any doubt about this, here is a little exercise. Read a woman MPs memoirs, for example, Pregs Govender's *Love and Courage, a Story of Insubordination*,⁵⁶ and attempt to construct a meaningful performance template from this story.

5. Other Emergent Issues for New Research

This section contains a number of issues which are worthy of research interest in the context of the IDRC programme, and the key field of this inquiry, but there is no substantive commentary to be found on them. I believe they would be excellent additional fields of inquiry.

1. What is governance presumed to be, and what relationship does 'women's political participation' have to the prevalent use of this term in a wide expanse of policy sectors, especially in the development context? Shouldn't we be asking questions about this treatment?

What are the broader aspects of democratic governance? Where are women a central part of the programme? Where are they silenced, or treated peripherally, or omitted entirely? What are the implications of this treatment for 'women's political participation'?

⁵⁴ http://www.pathwaysofempowerment.org/lamerica_projnewspolitics.html

⁵⁵ Greenwood, Waring, Pintat op cit. See also *Three Masquerades: Essays on Equality, Work and Human Rights*, (1997) University of Toronto Press; Toronto

⁵⁶ (2007) Jacana Media Limited, Auckland Park

For example, the UNDP programme supports policy assistance, parliamentary development, electoral systems and processes, access to information for citizen participation, decentralization, urban/rural development, public administration reform and anti corruption. Most of this space is controlled and dominated by men, and most of the counterparts in any of these programmes, unless there is a ‘women’s empowerment’ cross cutting component, will be male. To what extent are these programmes, in and of themselves, supporting the separation of gendered spaces?

2. There seems to be a complete absence of material on the appointment of women to Boards and Commissions. In many countries Ministers and Members of Parliament are appointed to these. This is not best practice of course, and much of it is nepotistic and corrupt, but these bodies are frequently highly powerful, with millions of dollars of investments and operating capital, and many with very wide policy and strategic planning mandates which effect large populations, including, for example, energy, broadcasting, mining, oil, and transport organisations. Many of these bodies are state trading organisations, being readied for privatization, with significant consequences – for example, the privatization of water services. Where and when are women appointed to these, and in what numbers, and in which sectors? Can we see any pattern in the increase in numbers of women appointed when numbers of women in parliament rise? Do we see any pressure from women activists to increase the numbers of women in this form of governance?

3. In respect of Article 8 of CEDAW, where are women taking space at the international tables?

“States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure to women, on equal terms with men and without any discrimination, the opportunity to represent their Governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations”.

Where are we in delegations and enabled to make/take decisive actions? To what extent does an increase of women in political and executive positions change the composition and the policy content of international delegations to key conferences? Are women still confined to particular ‘sectors’ in this context? To what extent can the failure of the MDGs and the Paris Principles, for example, to address the particular and specific interests of women, be a reflection of the few women’s voices at the table? The absence of women at these tables seems to mean time and effort needs to be spent for years in tedious vigilance of stopping even worse things happening, or looking for small opportunities for initiatives, as opposed to creating constructive space for engagement for different outcomes. How might fulfillment of Article 8 move capacity from reaction to initiation?

4. What sort of induction to parliament do MPs get? Do elected women representatives have a good knowledge of how the system works: how to use standing orders, how to make a submission to a parliamentary select committee? How many women in office would introduce Bills if they had access to drafting experience? What sites, resources, trans-national networks can be built between isolated women MPs and the skills they need?

5. To what extent do IRDC’s research projects invite, support and enable action research, community participatory research, emancipatory research, or appreciative inquiry approaches?