Women in Politics in Asia and the Pacific

United Nations

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Women in Politics in Asia and the Pacific

Proceedings of the Seminar on
the Participation of Women in Politics
as an Aspect of
Human Resources Development
18-20 November 1992
Seoul

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Foreword

Women's visibility in public life and their participation in the political process are becoming increasingly evident in the Asian and Pacific region. In many countries of the region, women have succeeded in influencing government decision-making through their involvement in the women's movement, in women's groups and other voluntary organizations, and through their participation in trade unions, business and other interest groups. Increasingly, efforts by women outside the government to effect reform are being complemented by those of women inside the government — heads of state, heads of government, cabinet ministers, members of parliament and women holding senior positions within government bureaucracies.

Despite the many achievements of women in the region, however, the stark reality is that politics continues to be dominated by men. In no country does the level of women's participation in politics come close to their representation in the general population. Women are half of the world's population and half the world's resources of talent, ability and potential. Throughout the world, women are major contributors to national economies through their paid and unpaid labour. As a constituency, women comprise half the electorate; they are half of those served and represented by governments. As citizens, therefore, women should in theory and practice enjoy equal political rights and positions of equal status and responsibility. Up to now, women have lived in a world where their agendas and priorities have been set primarily by men. Increased political participation would give women a significant voice in shaping their own as well as society's future.

In seeking to support regional efforts to enhance women's role in politics, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), in cooperation with the Center for Korean Women and Politics, organized the Seminar on the Participation of Woman in Politics as an Aspect of Human Resources Development in the ESCAP Region. The Seminar was convened in Seoul from 18 to 20 November 1992. It was attended by over 100 ministers, members of parliament, academics and representatives of women's organizations from around the region. One of the highlights of the Seminar was the adoption and signing of the *Seoul Statement on Empowering Women in Politics*. The *Seoul Statement* calls upon Governments to raise political awareness among women and promote their active participation as full partners in political life in the ESCAP region.

The present volume contains the proceedings of the above Seminar, including the *Seoul Statement on Empowering Women in Politics* and the country papers presented by the keynote speakers. It is hoped that this publication will prove to be a useful source of information on the status of women in politics in the ESCAP region. I wish to take this opportunity to thank the Government of the Netherlands for having generously provided the funds for this publication.

Rafeeuddin Ahmed
Executive Secretary

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Part One

ORGANIZATION OF THE SEMINAR ON
THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN
POLITICS AS AN ASPECT OF HUMAN
RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT
18-20 November 1992
Seoul

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Seminar on the participation of women in politics as an aspect of human resources development

I. Background

The Seminar on the Participation of Women in Politics as an Aspect of Human Resources Development was organized by ESCAP in cooperation with the Center for Korean Women and Politics. It was held from 18 to 20 November 1992 in Seoul. The Seminar was financed by the Republic of Korea.

The objective of the Seminar was to promote an exchange of views and experience among women political leaders in the Asian and Pacific region as a means of devising strategies to increase the level of women's participation in politics.

II. Attendance

The Seminar was attended by over 100 Ministers, members of parliament and academics from the following countries: Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand and United States of America. In addition, representatives of the following Governments attended: Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Indonesia and Mexico.

Representatives of the following United Nations bodies attended the Seminar: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); and United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

Observers from the following organizations attended the Seminar: All-China Women's Federation (China); Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (Australia); and the Hawaii State Senate (United States). In addition, observers from the following organizations in the Republic of Korea attended: Center for Women and Public Policy; Cheongju University; Cho Hung Bank Training Center; Chungang University; Democratic Liberal Party; Democratic Party; Ehwa Women's University; Hyundae Research Institute; Korea Local

Administration Institute; Korea Sexual Violence Relief Center; Korean Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs; Korean League of Women Voters; Korean Research Institute for Women and Politics; Korean Women's Development Institute; Ministry of Health and Social Affairs; National Assembly Library; Regional Council, Kwangju City; Second Ministry of Political Affairs; Seoul National University; Songsim Women's University; Sungkyunkwan University; United People's Party; and YWCA.

III. Opening of the Seminar and inaugural addresses

The Seminar was opened by Dr. Tai-Young Lee, a leading Korean women's rights advocate and Ramon Magsaysay Award recipient.

In her opening address, Dr. Lee emphasized that women of the Asian and Pacific region could not afford to be concerned only with their countries' development. Women need to work together to address the urgent task of preparing all women for participation in politics and public life. As qualified and capable leaders, the participants of this Seminar should become enablers of women's political participation throughout Asia and the Pacific. They should join hands to work for peace, justice and true development.

In his message to the Seminar, the Executive Secretary of ESCAP observed that women's involvement in politics was an essential condition for achieving gender equality. As citizens, women should in theory and practice enjoy equal political rights and positions with men. In that connection, he praised the contribution made by the leading women politicians present at the Seminar in promoting equality of rights in the ESCAP region. The Executive Secretary thanked the Government of the Republic of Korea for its generosity in financing the Seminar. Appreciation was also expressed to the Center for Korean Women and Politics for its support in the organization of the Seminar.

In her statement, Dr. Bong-Scuk Sohn, the Director of the Center for Korean Women and Politics, observed that the deliberations of this Seminar would provide a useful basis for a comparative review of each society's progress in attaining equal opportunities and rights for women in politics as well as in development in general. The conclusions of the Seminar would assist policy makers, women's organizations, and the public in effecting reforms to enhance the political status of women. She thanked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, ESCAP and the Korea Foundation for their roles in the organization of the Seminar. Appreciation was also expressed to the business sector, private organizations and individuals for their contribution to the Seminar.

IV. Election of officers

The Seminar elected H.E. Mrs. Margaret Alva (India), Chairperson, and H.E. Ms. Adi Finau Tabakaucoro (Fiji), Vice-Chairperson.

V. Adoption of the agenda

The Seminar adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the Seminar.

2. Elections of officers.

3. Adoption of the agenda.

4. Review of women's participation in politics in the ESCAP region:

    (a) Regional overview.
    (b) Role of women political leaders in promoting the status of women.
    (c) Role of women political leaders in community development.
    (d) Role of women's organizations in developing the leadership potential of women.

5. Formulation of strategies to promote women's participation in politics and enhance their status in society.

6. Adoption of report.

7. Closing of the Seminar.

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Part Two

SEOUL STATEMENT ON EMPOWERING
WOMEN IN POLITICS

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Seoul Statement on Empowering Women in Politics

We the participants in the Seminar on the Participation of Women in Politics as an Aspect of Human Resources Development in the ESCAP Region (Seoul, 18-20 November 1992),

Recognizing that the equal rights of men and women are one of the fundamental principles incorporated in the Charter of the United Nations, one aspect of which is the equal participation of men and women in public life,

Recalling the international conventions and instruments of the United Nations promoting the equality of men and women in all spheres of life,

Recognizing further that the countries and areas of Asia and the Pacific are at different levels of development and that their development patterns are influenced by their diverse historical, cultural, political and resource situations,

Convinced that in any fair, representative and efficient society women should be active participants at the policy-making level in all forums that contribute to the political process, and that they should be active executors of policy once made,

Noting with concern that, despite undeniable progress, women continue to be grossly underrepresented in political and parliamentary life in all countries and areas of the Asian and Pacific region,

1. *Urge* all ESCAP members and associate members to take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in political and public life and ensure that women enjoy the right, both *de jure* and *de facto*, to:

☐ Vote in all elections and public referenda and stand for election to all publicly elected bodies;

☐ Participate in the formulation and implementation of government policy and hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government;

☐ Participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with public and political life.

2. **_Also urge_** all ESCAP members and associate members to adopt the following strategies aimed at raising political awareness among women and promoting their active participation as full partners in political life in the ESCAP region:

(a) Legislation

(i) Accede to and ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women without reservation, where not already done, and work to reduce the scope of, and ultimately withdraw, reservations where such have been expressed.

(ii) Consider the adoption of an electoral system which allows women equal access to political and parliamentary positions.

(iii) Initiate direct and affirmative action in the form of constitutional safeguards to ensure minimum levels of female representation in legislatures through systems such as reserved seats, and ensure increasing female representation over time.

(b) Public awareness

(i) Promote awareness of women's political rights through formal and informal education, non-governmental organizations, trade unions, business organizations and the media; encourage and motivate women to exercise their right to vote and be elected; and assist and support women seeking to participate in the political process at all levels on equal terms with men.

(ii) Design educational programmes to eliminate gender stereotypes and to prepare men and women to share responsibilities both within and outside the family; and motivate parents and teachers to play an important role in educating the young along these lines.

(iii) Undertake studies to trace where and how women have made a difference in changing the tenor, content and priorities in public affairs.

(iv) Undertake national and regional studies to document the situation of women in public life and analyze the economic, social and cultural barriers preventing their participation in politics, as well as the means of overcoming them.

(v) Undertake research on the means of enhancing women's role in the political process, including their role in both formal and informal movements as well as in government service, and document and publicize women's contribution in political movements, as well as their efforts to empower themselves with

respect to reforms in legislation, employment practices, educational oppor-
tunities and the environment.

(vi) Recognize and highlight the importance of non-governmental organizations
in promoting the advancement of women in civic life.

(vii) Reflect, through the media, the full range of women's contributions to society;
and encourage the media to portray women in a fair, objective, non-
discriminatory and non-exploitative manner and promote positive role images
of women in political positions, professional associations, community service
and institutions such as the judiciary, chambers of commerce and industry,
and the defence, civil and diplomatic services, with emphasis on the activities
of women politicians.

(viii) Improve statistical systems to assess the participation of women in all economic
sectors, in particular to measure the productive work of women, whether paid
or unpaid, not only for development planning but also to raise the self-esteem
of women in all sectors, particularly the voluntary and non-formal sectors.

(c) Women's role in political parties

(i) Urge political parties, if they have not already done so, to consider introducing
quotas in their statutes or as internal directives to ensure the increased
representation of women, considering also the fixing of quotas on the
percentage of women to be fielded as candidates for election.

(ii) Urge political parties to increase and improve women's participation within
their ranks, provide women with equal access to the political machinery and
to resources for developing their skills in practical politics as well as effective
leadership, and ensure women's representation in their executive councils
through measures such as reserving a percentage of seats and increasing
the number of those seats steadily, as well as expanding women's membership.

(iii) Encourage political parties to develop policies that take into account the special
interests of women. Women in political parties have a special responsibility
to assist in this field.

(iv) Urge political parties to take effective measures to eliminate the formal and
informal barriers to women standing for election, and to work to ensure more
access for women to stand for election through measures such as building
up active women's wings.

(v) Encourage political parties to ensure that women candidates receive sufficient
party funds for election campaigning.

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(vi)   Motivate women politicians to recognize their special responsibility to support other women aspiring to active political participation, and identify and encourage women with potential to take part.

(d)   Women's role in government

(i)   Intensify efforts to ensure equality of participation in the appointment and promotion of women to policy-making and high administrative posts, considering even the institution of quotas for appointive positions. Where quotas are not appropriate, "monitored goals" or "time-fixed targets" should be considered.

(ii)   Increase the recruitment, nomination and promotion of women to civil service positions, especially to decision-making, policy-making and advisory positions, by publicizing posts widely, increasing upward mobility and applying other appropriate interventions.

(iii)   Encourage the availability of information on women qualified for appointment to senior decision-making, policy-making and advisory positions at the national and local levels, and periodically monitor women's representation in such positions.

(e)   Women's organizations

(i)   Assist women in developing political skills to prepare them to assume decision-making positions, recognizing that women's organizations serve as effective training, empowering and recruitment grounds for women making the transition to decision-making positions.

(ii)   Encourage and strengthen women's organizations to promote women's role in politics, with facilities to network with women's organizations in other countries and areas of the Asian and Pacific region.

(f)   Regional and international cooperation
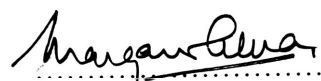
(i)   Undertake regional studies to ensure an accurate picture of the status of women's participation in politics in Asia and the Pacific.

(ii)   Convene regional training programmes to mobilize and help prepare women, particularly those at the grass roots, to participate in the political process, targetting such programmes at leaders of women's organizations and other relevant non-governmental organizations to train them in developing political skills and awareness campaigns for women.

(iii) Convene regional and international forums of women politicians to provide opportunities for them to exchange national experience on strategies to enhance women's representation in public office.

(iv) Hold regional and international conferences on women in formal and informal politics on a regular basis to monitor the progress or deterioration in the status of women in politics, exchange views on political issues affecting women, and mobilize women to empower themselves in public life.

(v) Promote women's participation in politics through the regional networking of women's organizations and other non-governmental organizations.

We, the undersigned, hereby adopt the Seoul Statement on Empowering Women in Politics:

H.E. Ms. Margaret Alva
Minister of State for Personnel, Public
   Grievances and Pension
Government of India
   INDIA

(President/of the Seminar)

H.E. Ms. Adi Finau Tabakaucoro
Senator and former Minister of Women,
   Culture and Social Welfare
   FIJI

(Vice-President of the Seminar)

H.E. Ms. Wendy Fatin
Minister for the Arts and Territories and
   Minister assisting the Prime Minister
   for the Status of Women
Government of Australia
AUSTRALIA

H.E. Ms. Sarwari Rahman
State Minister for Social Welfare and
   Women's Affairs
Government of the People's Republic of
   Bangladesh
BANGLADESH

H.E. Ms. Brenda Robertson
Senator
Parliament of Canada
CANADA

H.E. Madam Liu Yandong
Member, Standing Committee of the National
People's Congress, and Deputy Chief, United
Front Department of the Central Committee
of the Communist Party of China
CHINA

Ms. S. Sutopo Isnomo
Former Member of Parliament
INDONESIA

H.E. Ms. Tamako Nakanishi
Senator
The Diet
JAPAN
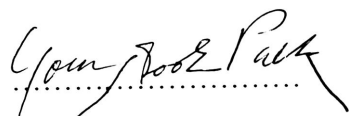
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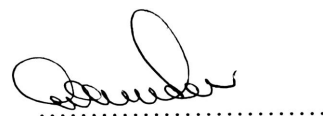
Ms. Young-Sook Park
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Former Minister for Community Development
SINGAPORE

Khunying Supatra Masdit
Former Minister of the Prime Minister's Office
and former Member of Parliament
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Dr. Barbara Nelson
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Co-Director, Center on Women and
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University of Minnesota
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

20 November 1992

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Part Three

COUNTRY PAPERS

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Australia

Wendy Fatin*

Politics is everyone's business

I commend both the Center for Korean Women and Politics and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific for their enterprise in holding this event, and wish to express my thanks for the invitation to speak at this significant seminar.

I am particularly pleased to be able to take part in this occasion as I am increasingly conscious of the need for women to participate in the political processes at all levels. While we have equal voting rights in many countries and in some, like my own, women make up the majority of voters, women are not yet in positions of power, in any great number. This has big implications for our ability to have a say about the way in which our communities are run and in the decisions that affect women's life chances and opportunities. We cannot achieve equality unless we achieve effective participation in political processes.

Today I will look briefly at the current state of women's participation in political processes internationally; at the obstacles to participation and, in particular, the reasons why few women enter national parliaments. I will also look at some strategies for bringing more women into political processes.

I will begin my paper today with a quotation:

"The political space belongs to all citizens; politics is everyone's business and affects the lives of each of us.... There is no doubt that the more women are associated, in numbers corresponding to their percentage of the population, in

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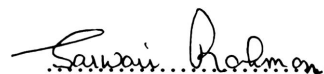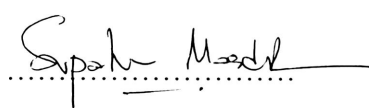 * **Minister for the Arts and Territories and Minister assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women, Government of Australia.**

the political decision-making processes, in parties, in elected bodies, in governments and in international bodies, the more they can be associated with this process as protagonists and the more they can change the modalities and outcomes of politics. Only then will the concept of democracy find concrete and tangible expression. Indeed it has been underscored that democracy and the participation of women go hand in hand and promote each other mutually."[1]

This was not said by some radical or peripheral group, but was one of the many serious statements made at the Symposium on the Participation of Women in the Political and Parliamentary Decision-Making Process organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in 1989.

Most of us who are here today would have no hesitation in saying that we come from a democracy. But in the light of the statement I have just quoted, and if, as I do, you come from a country where relatively few women participate fully in the political processes, can we really affirm that we believe that the needs, aspirations and concerns of half of the population are being fully and truly represented and met in and through those processes? If our answer to that is "no", what does that suggest to us about the nature of the democracy in which we live?

A recent report by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs on Equal Opportunity and Equal Status for Women in Australia, which was presented to the Parliament in Australia earlier this year, was given the title "Half Way to Equal", itself a comment on the committee's conclusions about the status of women in Australia today.

Amongst other aspects of life for women in Australia today, the report comments on women's participation in political life. It is not a situation which I find satisfactory, although it is not dissimilar to the situation in many other countries. At the time of Australia's first report to the Committee for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1988 there were 16 women in the federal upper house, (the Senate) and 9 women in the lower house, (the House of Representatives).[2] At the present time there are 19 women in the Senate, 25 per cent of the total, and 10 women in the House of Representatives, 6.7 per cent of the total.[3]

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[1] *Inter-Parliamentary Symposium on the Participation of Women in the Political and Parliamentary Decision-making Process, Geneva, November 1989. Reports and Conclusions of the Symposium,* Inter-Parliamentary Union Series "Reports and Documents" No.16, pp. 64, 66.

[2] *Consolidated Report of Australia: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service, February 1988), p. 90.

[3] *Women in Australia: Australia's Second Progress Report on Implementing the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (Commonwealth of Australia, June 1992), p. 82.

One of the more disturbing trends that has developed world-wide in recent years, at least within those political systems which operate through parliamentary democracies, is a decline in women's representation.

"Worldwide the percentage of women holding seats in the lower or single Chamber of Parliament has dropped to 11 per cent. This is the lowest figure in at least 16 years. In 1975, the first year of the United Nations Decade for Women, the global percentage of women parliamentarians was 12.5. This figure stood at 14.6 per cent on 1 January 1988 and 12.7 per cent on 30 June 1989."[4]

Even in those countries with the highest proportions of women representatives, Finland (38.5 per cent), Sweden (38.1 per cent), Guyana (36.9 per cent), Norway (35.8 per cent), Cuba (33.9 per cent) and Denmark (33.0 per cent),[5] it still does not reach the 50 per cent mark that we should have if women were represented in proportion to their numbers.

At the other end of the scale there are still some countries which have never had any woman in parliament, including Comoros, Djibouti, Kiribati, Morocco, Tonga and the United Arab Emirates,[6] and some where there are no women at present, including the Cook Islands and Papua New Guinea.

I stand before you, therefore, as one of what may be described as a rare and possibly endangered species, to borrow a term from our environmental friends. And to continue the analogy, what are we going to do to ensure that the species survives? This must surely be one of the primary purposes of this seminar - to stimulate ideas and develop practical solutions to bring women into the political process at all levels.

Women's suffrage is an essential prerequisite for women entering political life. In some countries women's suffrage was gained first, and only later were women made eligible to stand for parliament. In other countries the two came simultaneously. Australia's close neighbour across the Tasman Sea, New Zealand, will be celebrating the centenary of women's suffrage next year. In Australia, it is exactly 90 years since the majority of women were given the vote. However, it was not until 1967, when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were granted citizenship, that all Australian women, and men, became eligible to vote. Voting is compulsory in Australia; we all have to vote, men and women. Many other countries, I know, allow their citizens to decide for themselves whether they will play their part and perform their civic duties in this way. Often only a small percentage do so. Regrettably, there are still some countries, for example in

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[4]   *Meeting of Women Parliamentarians,* Inter-Parliamentary Bulletin, No. 4, 1991, p. 320.

[5]   Ibid.

[6]   *Women and Political Power: Survey Carried out Among the 150 National Parliaments Existing as of 31 October 1991,* Inter-Parliamentary Union Series "Reports and Documents," No. 19, p. 123.

the Arabian Gulf area, where women cannot vote and take part in the democratic processes.[7] However, it is clear that the great majority of the countries of the world have taken seriously their responsibilities to provide political rights for women, responsibilities which are declared and enshrined in various United Nations human rights instruments, and now encompassed in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) Article 7.[8]

But even though these rights may have been written into legislation, they may not always be effectively put into practice. Women may be hindered from voting, or be unable to vote in an informed way because of social and cultural factors. In Australia during the mid-1980s, it was discovered that there was a very low awareness of political processes, amongst all sectors of the population; as a result, the Government has undertaken education programmes to inform the population, and especially school children, about the parliament and the electoral processes.

In some countries, the ability to vote in an informed way will be determined by factors such as the level of educational attainment, as it is difficult for those who cannot read, or who have only limited reading skills, to access the information that is provided in written form. As we all know, the world's illiterate women make up approximately 80 per cent of all those world-wide who cannot read. It is clear that this is one of the factors that prevents women from participating as fully as they might in the political processes. However, this is not a completely insurmountable barrier. Not only should efforts be made to improve literacy rates for women, with all the attendant spin-offs including better participation in political processes, but even where populations are illiterate this need not be a barrier.

In Namibia, despite the high level of illiteracy, free and fair elections were held in 1989 under the supervision of the United Nations, with a 97 per cent turnout. According to United Nations observers, the population understood clearly the processes and the goals of the different parties. Only a very small proportion of the votes had to be rejected; in Ovamboland only about 0.25 per cent were rejected, and in the Kavango area (an

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[7] *Women and Political Power: Survey Carried out Among the 150 National Parliaments Existing as of 31 October 1991,* Inter-Parliamentary Union Series "Reports and Documents," No. 19, p. 5.

[8] Article 7 of CEDAW states:

States parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and in particular, shall ensure to women on equal terms with men, the right:

(a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;

(b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government;

(c) To participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.

area with 80 per cent illiteracy) only about 2.0 per cent were rejected. Of the 72 members elected, five are women.[9]

I would suggest, therefore, that if we are to work seriously at improving women's participation as voters, there are a number of ways in which this can be achieved by government; through education programmes for women and, at the time of elections, by ensuring that the political parties provide information in ways that are accessible to all.

Women's suffrage is necessarily the first step to having women in parliament. (I will continue to use the word parliament although obviously the name differs from country to country). Having the right to vote does not necessarily mean that women will rapidly take up seats in parliament, despite the dire forecasts that have always been made by men when debates have been held on the issue. In Australia, for example, although the majority of women gained the vote in 1902, it was not until 1943 that the first woman, Dame Enid Lyons, entered the Federal Parliament, and she was the widow of a former Prime Minister. It was not until the mid-1970s that more than one or two women were elected as members in the House of Representatives, although there had been a number of Senators since the 1960s.

Why are women not entering parliament in any great numbers? It is important to find, or begin to find, the answers to this question because they may give us the key to some solutions. One answer, or set of answers, may well be to do with the way that political systems operate. Another set of answers lie in the cultural and social constraints that bind women including their general socio-economic status. A third set of answers may be to do with how women themselves perceive the political process and its relevance to their lives.

If we examine the way that electoral systems operate, there is some evidence that the use of proportional representation leads to a higher percentage of women in parliament. The situation in Australia demonstrates this. There is a far higher proportion of women in the Senate, where proportional representation is used for elections, than in the House of Representatives, where there is a majority uninominal system. It is also significant that Finland, the country with the highest proportion of women in parliament, uses a system of proportional representation. It has also been commented that, for example, in France the uninominal system produces proportionately fewer women representatives for the French Parliament than the proportional representation system does for the European Parliament, although from the same population.[10] Proportional representation was taken up as a major issue at the Inter-Parliamentary Union Symposium to which I have already made a reference.

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[9] Michael Clegg, "Monitoring the Vote: Elections in Namibia - A Retrospective", *The Parliamentarian - Journal of the Parliaments of the Commonwealth,* vol. LXXII, No. 4, October 1991, pp. 287-291.

[10] Nicole Pery, "Chances of Winning", *Inter-Parliamentary Bulletin,* No. 4, 1990, p. 361.

As well as the electoral system, which is a matter often determined by the constitution, there are other less tangible ways in which political systems may be loaded against women. The ways in which political parties operate has a strong bearing on whether or not a woman will be able to stand for parliament in the first place. I shall not go into detail on this issue except to note that a somewhat paradoxical situation appears to have developed. Women have, in some ways, a better chance of entering parliament if supported by one of the major political parties, especially if they gain pre-selection for seats that are safe or at least winnable. On the other hand, women appear less likely to gain pre-selection for the major political parties than for the smaller parties. In Australia in the 1990 elections only 15 per cent of all candidates from the two major parties, Labour and Liberal, were women. Of the smaller parties 14 per cent of the (largely rural-based) Nationals', 30 per cent of the Democrats' and 44 per cent of the Greens' candidates were women.[11]

There are also ways in which social and cultural systems may work against women. Women may be seen as having other roles which are believed, at least by men and possibly by many women, to be far more important than, and even incompatible with, the role of politician. For example, Edith Cowan, who in 1921 was the first woman MP elected in Australia to a State Parliament (in my own State of Western Australia), was accused during her campaign of being a disgrace to women and of heartlessly neglecting her husband and children. Her husband was out canvassing for her and her youngest child was 30 at the time.[12] Even where women are committed to entering politics it has often been important to be seen to demonstrate that they are not neglecting husband, children and home. In other words: as usual, they will continue to carry a double load.

Women's general socio-economic status is also likely to be a significant factor in determining their ability to participate in politics. Earlier I referred to the well-established fact that improving women's educational opportunities and levels of attainment has a number of other positive effects, and this is true not only for the women themselves but also for their families and their communities. Education will necessarily be a critical factor in women's participation in political processes at all levels and especially in achieving high public office. It is noticeable that all those women who have achieved high public office – and here in the Asian and Pacific region there are some of the most outstanding examples, such as Mrs. Bandaranaike, Mrs. Gandhi and Mrs. Aquino – have been fortunate enough to have had a good education, even in countries where the average level of education for the majority of women remains low.

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[11] Clive Bean and Ian McAllister, "The Electoral Performance of Parliamentary Candidates", in Clive Bean, Ian McAllister and John Warhurst, eds., *The Greening of Australian Politics* (Melbourne, Longman Cheshire, 1990), p. 80.

[12] Marian Sawer, "Housekeeping the State: Women and Parliamentary Politics in Australia", in *Trust the Women: Women in the Federal Parliament,* Papers on Parliament, Department of the Senate, Parliament House, Canberra, September 1992, p. 16.

Women's socio-economic status can be enhanced by the actions of government. Since coming to power in 1983 the Labour Government in Australia has taken seriously its responsibilities to improve the status of women. One of the first steps that it took was to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1983, and to implement CEDAW through legislation. This legislation includes the *Sex Discrimination Act (1984)* and the *Affirmative Action (Equal Employment Opportunity for Women) Act (1986)*. Following the United Nations's End of Decade for Women Conference in Nairobi in 1985, the Government consulted widely with women in all parts of Australia - some 26,000 women altogether. This major consultative process shaped the development of *The National Agenda for Women,* which flows from the recommendations of the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies. The *National Agenda* is the Government's main policy document on the status of women and it is used to monitor and review the effectiveness of Government action. Each year with the Budget papers a *Women's Budget Statement* is produced which details how each government department has pursued policies and implemented programmes that will lead to improvements for women. At the same time the information is also used to provide a report on the implementation of the National Agenda and thus how improvements are being made in the status of women.

About half of the world's countries have some branch of government specifically responsible for status of women issues. In Australia, the Office of the Status of Women, for which I am responsible, lies within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, indicating the considerable importance that the Government gives to these matters.

I would suggest therefore that it is important to examine and develop machineries of government that are appropriate to national political and administrative systems in order to begin to enhance women's status and to achieve equality for women.

It is through listening to women that governments and parliaments can understand and take action on the issues which women consider to be important, and needless to say these are often not the same as those which men think are important. This was made clear as early as 1903 in Australia when Mrs. Martel, one of the women who stood for the Senate in 1903, wrote:

"Until we got the vote we agitated in vain for certain reforms. Immediately the vote was granted, and fully a year before we were able to exercise it, we found member after member introducing measures which previously we had pleaded for all to no purpose."[13]

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[13] Marian Sawer, "Housekeeping the State: Women and Parliamentary Politics in Australia", in *Trust the Women: Women in the Federal Parliament,* Papers on Parliament, Department of the Senate, Parliament House, Canberra, September 1992, p. 11.

"In addition it was clear that the Senate agreed with this view as in a resolution cabled to the British Prime Minister Asquith in 1910 (the Senate stated that) women's suffrage had given greater prominence to legislation particularly affecting women and children, although the women had not taken up such questions to the exclusion of others of wider significance."[14]

There are many women's organizations in Australia and, as the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on the Status of Women, I consult widely with these organizations, particularly through the National Women's Consultative Council, which is a peak representative body of women nominated by a wide cross-section of women's organizations specifically to fulfil an advisory role to Government. This is an important way in which the Australian Government becomes cognisant of the issues that concern women.

Recently one of Australia's most respected opinion pollsters, Rod Cameron of Australian National Opinion Polls, talked about the "feminisation" of politics linking an increased involvement of women in political life with an apparent willingness to accept issues formerly seen as marginal and a new style of political, corporate and community leadership and a new order of political values.[15] I believe that this is true, not only nationally but also internationally.

Let me give you a few examples. In Japan the Zushi movement,[16] which has taken on the national government from a local government level, has been one in which housewives played a significant role from the very beginning. Similarly, the Chipko movement in India drew its strength from its women members and their actions. Both of these movements have a focus on environmental issues and it seems to be true to say that women have been instrumental in bringing such issues to the fore. Women have also taken a large part in the peace movement. Indeed the themes which are continuing on from Nairobi through to the year 2000, that is, the themes that are dominating women's issues at the international level, are equality, development and peace.

It is clear that the focus of this Seminar is on equality, equality in the political process. But as always, women know that one thing cannot be separated from another or seen in isolation. Development and peace are essential to the achievement of equality.

While I have examined the situation regarding equality in the political process I have also endeavoured to indicate the importance of enhancing the status of women, that is, development for women, as one is necessary to the other, and have provided some details

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[14] Ibid.

[15] Diana Bagnall, *If Women Ran Australia*, Bulletin, 1 September 1992, p. 29.

[16] Purnendra C. Jain, "Green Politics and Citizen Power in Japan", *Asian Survey, A Monthly Review of Contemporary Asian Affairs*, vol. XXI, No. 6, June 1991, pp. 559-575.

of steps taken by Australia in this regard. However, peace cannot be left out of the equation. I am particularly conscious of the high significance that women have put on peace, both internationally and nationally. Peace has always been a crucial issue for women, and indeed many of the roots of both the women's movement and the peace movement can be seen to be inextricably bound together. But at the present time there is one aspect of peace about which women are breaking a long silence, in national and international forums, and that is the issue of violence against women themselves.

Violence against women is a fundamental issue. It is women who have taken steps to provide support to victims, particularly by providing refuge for those women, and their children who are suffering from violence. In Australia the first such refuge was opened nearly 20 years ago. Over the intervening years the Government has increasingly provided financial support for women's refuges. Changing community attitudes is of major importance and is a task that has been undertaken by the Australian Government through education campaigns. The Government has also established a National Committee on Violence Against Women to examine and recommend strategies and actions for dealing with this particular type of crime. Australia, along with other nations from this region, has also been working at the international level. Both within CEDAW[17] and through the Commission on the Status of Women,[18] the issue of Violence Against Women has been brought to the attention of the international community within the United Nations and recommendations have been made including a draft United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Also at the international level it should be noted that, following representations from women parliamentarians, the Inter-Parliamentary Union addressed this issue and passed a resolution on these matters directed to all member governments.[19] Within the region, Australian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the Australian Government through the Australian International Development Assistance Bureau (AIDAB), have identified this as an important area where support is needed and have given assistance to community education programmes, and other activities, in countries such as Fiji, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, the Solomon Islands and Thailand, to support the needs of women and to help change ways in which people behave so that there can be peace in the home and the community. One thing is certain: violence against women is found in all countries and in all parts of society within countries.

In these and other matters it is clear that while legislation and government action are extremely important, indeed essential, they are not enough. Women themselves must also be empowered to act. The power of women comes from women's own strength to mobilize and support action for themselves and on behalf of others. This is true in Australia as well as in other countries.

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[17] Recommendation 29, CEDAW, Report of the 11th Session, January 1992.

[18] Report of the 36th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, March 1992.

[19] Resolution of the 85th Inter-Parliamentary Conference, *Inter-Parliamentary Bulletin*, No. 2 1991, pp. 103-111.

The two quotations I am about to read relate to one country (India), yet I feel that most women will recognize the situation that is described, even those women in countries without legislation relating to women's rights.

(Although there is) "some of the more advanced legislation in the world pertaining to equality rights for women...the objectives of the legislation have not been realized, and...the laws are virtually unenforceable in the patriarchal and hierarchical society"[20]

"The goal of empowerment is particularly critical for women, who have been deprived of power within the family by mainstream religious and social traditions. Women cannot hope to exercise public power so long as they are powerless over their own lives because of forced subservience to fathers, husbands, and in-laws; violence within the family; and limited educational opportunity. Nor can they exercise power over their own lives or public life if they are consumed with poverty, ill-health, and a lack of adequate food and clean drinking water. Working outside of governmental channels to raise consciousness and self-esteem and to question social structures is critical for the obvious reason that there are many cultural and religious barriers to women's equality that are outside the realm of government action; ...empowerment of the grass roots is seen as critical by those who hope to change public policy at the executive level ...because...the gap between the passage of the legislation and its implementation can only be bridged through public pressure.... Even when laws commonly exist that guarantee women's rights, they are rarely implemented without sustained, organized pressure.[21]

This brings me to the final set of issues. If women have the opportunity, if they are able to overcome the many social, cultural and economic constraints which exist, do they want to be involved in the political processes or are they put off by what they see as "men's business", run by men, for men, in ways that men determine?

This is where I want to come back to the point at which I started. Despite the obstacles, women must recognize that there are democratic processes which govern their lives. If we want to change things it is up to us to become the protagonists. And if we do not like the way the game is played we must try to bring our own firm hands to the processes. If we ignore these processes or allow ourselves to be marginalized then we are contributing to a diminution of democracy.

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[20] Sylvia Hale, "The Status of Women in India", *Pacific Affairs: An International Review of Asia and the Pacific,* vol. 62, No. 3, Fall 1989, p. 371.

[21] Leslie J. Calman, "Women and Movement Politics in India", *Asian Survey, A Monthly Review of Contemporary Asian Affairs,* vol. XXIX, No. 10 October 1989, pp. 947-948.

I have already provided at least some part of the answer to this final question as I have indicated that I believe that women have had, and increasingly are continuing to have, a significant effect on what is on the political agenda. This is certainly true for Australia, as well as many other countries, and is also true in regard to the international political agenda. In other words, the choice has been made.

Some women clearly *do* want to become involved in what they see as the legitimate means of ensuring that democratic political processes function well; that women's concerns, their needs and their values are taken into account. This is certainly how I see what I am doing.

I would see my own experiences as mirroring those of many other women.

In the course of what I have said so far I have referred to a number of ways in which steps are being taken to ensure that women's status is enhanced and that women begin to reach equality with men, particularly in regard to participation in the political processes. While I have obviously drawn largely on Australian experiences, I believe that often these link closely with the actions being taken by a number of countries. Indeed, much that has been achieved in Australia has been the result of involvement at the international level. I believe that it is extremely important therefore that there is regional cooperation on these issues. It is clear that these issues will take on a special significance in the lead-up to the Fourth World Women's Conference in Beijing in 1995, and especially at the regional level, as we work towards the Regional Conference in Indonesia in 1994.

There are already in existence a number of inter-governmental mechanisms for consultation and recommendation of action to governments. These should be utilized as far as possible to ensure that women's issues are put on the agenda if they are not there already. It is also important to continue support for multilateral agencies of the United Nations, especially the regional activities of these agencies, a number of which are related to enhancing the status of women, and where the skills necessary to improve women's participation in political processes can be strengthened. Again, where such agencies give women's issues a low priority, representatives of governments on the governing boards of such agencies should take action to ensure that these agencies are encouraged to take up women's issues.

The Australian Government has also been concerned about the limited participation of women within the United Nations system, that is at the international political level, as indicated by the low numbers of women within the United Nations Secretariat itself, particularly at senior levels. Australia has actively pursued this issue at the United Nations in speeches made to the General Assembly, through co-sponsoring and drafting resolutions and in monitoring actions taken, in order to urge the Secretary-General to improve the status of women within the United Nations, consistent with women's affairs, policies and programmes for members.

Regional forums and institutions in which a greater focus on women's participation in the political processes could be developed and which could have an effective role to play are quite wide-ranging. For example, existing ministerial meetings could be encouraged to put this issue on their agendas, at regional meetings of Education Ministers, which could make recommendations regarding the inclusion of special programmes in both the formal and non-formal education sectors, or regional meetings of attorneys-general, which could provide information campaigns regarding the legal rights of women in respect to the political processes in their countries. The Asian Development Bank could be encouraged to support programmes which are designed to improve women's political literacy. It could work in cooperation with multilateral United Nations organizations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), particularly in relation to its United Nations mandate to reach the goal of literacy for all by the year 2000. Literacy materials could include scenarios relating to the way in which women can be involved at the local, provincial and national levels. The work of other organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) are of course important for enhancing the status of women but countries could be encouraged to strengthen their support in their regional role.

Bilateral actions can also be taken. For example, Australia believes that it is important to encourage governments to ratify CEDAW, where they have not already done so, and to implement the provisions of CEDAW in their own legislation. Because we were aware that few of the Pacific Island States had ratified the Convention last year, Australia, together with New Zealand and with cooperation from ESCAP, held a Seminar on CEDAW in the South Pacific.

From the reports to the CEDAW Committee submitted by the Republic of Korea, I have noted there have been significant developments, both in regard to legislation and machineries of government, designed to improve the status of women, which have resulted directly from the Republic of Korea's ratification of the Convention in 1984. This is a most encouraging development and one which we welcome.

The role of ESCAP, as demonstrated also by this seminar, is clearly a significant one, and countries should be encouraged to work closely with it. This will be particularly important in the lead-up to the 1995 Conference and the Regional Conference in 1994. In addition, encouragement and support needs to be given to NGOs, that is, grass-roots organizations, where women themselves can be empowered to seek change.

To use the words of a New Zealand woman;

"To women I say: Don't wait to be asked or you will wait forever. Don't give up, don't be discouraged, keep trying. Teach other women, seek out women of like mind. We as women, can bring to the national and international tables those skills we have learned around our own kitchen tables."[22]

We all know that there are still huge difficulties in the way women participate in and succeed in the political processes and we cannot minimize them. We know that at all stages in the struggle, women have suffered for their beliefs, but that it is up to us, as women, to join that struggle, each in our own way, as best we can.

In 1995 the United Nations will hold its Fourth World Conference on Women, entitled "Action for Equality, Development and Peace". There will also be several regional preparatory conferences, including one for our region to be held in Indonesia in 1994. The 1995 conference and the lead up to it, presents an opportunity we should seize to focus our national governments and our international institutions on developing and implementing strategies to raise the status of women. I do not believe that equality, development and peace are achievable without the effective participation of women in the political processes, including at the highest decision-making levels. A focus of our activity for 1995 therefore should be raising the participation of women in political processes. I look forward to working, in concert with women from many other countries, especially from our region, on strategies to achieve this vital goal.

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[22] Katherine O'Reagan, "Don't wait to be asked", *Inter-Parliamentary Bulletin*, No. 1 1990, p. 42.

Bangladesh

Sarwari Rahman*

Role of women political
leaders in promoting the status of women

A. Introduction

I would like to commence by quoting from a verse written by a great poet of our country, Kazi Nazrul Islam, way back in 1922:

"I sing the song of equality -------
To me, there is no difference between man and woman.
Whatever great and good has been accomplished on this earth
Half has been done by woman, and half by man."

B. Women's status: Historical perspective

1. International

Having quoted the poem, I shall now try to examine women's status from a historical perspective. Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, women in the West had almost no rights in law. They could not vote, could not sign contracts, could not own property. If deserted by their husbands, they had no rights in relation to their children. With no legal status, it is no wonder women were treated like animals. We all know that the notion that women too are human beings with feelings like men and should be equally treated with men, came into existence only at the end of the nineteenth century. That

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means that equality for women is a concept which is little more than one hundred years old.

But in the Muslim world things were definitely better, for as far back as 1400 years ago, Islam recognized the equal rights of women and their rights to property. The people of Bangladesh were influenced by this religious tradition for a long time, and perhaps that is why, at this moment, the top-level political leadership of the country has been entrusted to women.

It has been said that the French Revolution brought a great change in the world by introducing the notion that man's emancipation lies essentially in his political behaviour and that democracy is a prerequisite. In other words, the Revolution gave birth to a very important component of modern civilization: the concept of human rights. But did this Revolution ever consider women's status? Yes it did! But that was limited to using the figure of a woman as the symbol of revolutionary France. What an irony! The women's clubs that began in 1789 were all closed by 1795 on the grounds that women did not possess enough physical or mental strength to exercise their civil rights. Right from the beginning of the nineteenth century, women were barred from taking part in politics. When Olympe de Gouges, the great pioneer of feminism, submitted the first-ever draft "Declaration of the Rights of Woman" to the French National Assembly in 1791, nothing resulted. Instead, she was condemned as outrageous and scandalous and sent to the guillotine in 1793. It is a pity that the Revolution, which promoted human rights, did not recognize even a woman of her stature. Thus French women had to fight for their rights for many more years, and it was not until the 1930s that they made any headway.

It was not until after the First World War was over that women were able to prove their worth to men. During the War, women did "men's jobs" in the factories. Resolution was finally reached only after the Second World War, when once again women took over the responsibilities of men while men were busy fighting at the front. But whatever rights women received from men were only what they demanded, and not what men spontaneously felt women deserved. In this regard women showed extreme tolerance because women are more democratic than men. Tolerance is one thing that children should learn from their mothers: we all know that this is the first lesson of democracy.

Women's suffrage was the first and most important of the political rights demanded by women because the vote is the very source of power in a democratic system. Women make up practically half the electoral body and have the potential to become a major political influence by exercising their right to vote.

2. **National**

Looking back into the history of Bengal, which includes the area of Bangladesh, it can be seen that women were politically quite conscious and active even though they

may not have been organized. This can perhaps be attributed to some social reforms which focused on women's inferior status and social oppression in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Child marriage was probably the most important factor in perpetuating women's inferior status in a male-dominated society, and it was not until 1929 that the Child Marriage Restraint Act was passed to stop this practice. In 1926 women were given the right to vote, but the franchise was narrow and only allowed a small proportion of middle-class women to vote.

The politicization of women in Bangladesh can be traced back to the colonial era when it gained popularity and momentum under the impact of the nationalist movement for independence. Peasant women, although unorganized, were the first to join this movement, which started as agrarian movements and later became linked with the middle-class dominated women's movement.

Although dominated by the urban middle class, the women's movement championed the cause of the poor and downtrodden and sought to improve their status in society. Pioneering movements of women in peasant revolts and agrarian movements led to the mass mobilization of women in the political and social arena of Bengal.

The politicization of middle-class women, as reflected in their participation in the elections of 1937, was a result of the nationalist movement of that period. By then, women's organizations had achieved limited success in influencing government policy regarding women's suffrage, education and health. Under the act of 1935, the franchise (eligibility to vote) was extended, and records show that 970,003 women in what was then Bengal were enfranchised, and two per cent of the seats were reserved for women. In the 1937 elections, eight women were elected from general constituencies and 42 from reserved constituencies, and six women attained office in the popular ministries. At that time few countries of the world, especially those in South Asia, had women serving as cabinet ministers.

3. Post-liberation Bangladesh

Since the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971, the people of Bangladesh, particularly the females, have taken great pleasure and pride in the fact that women have assumed the highest level of political leadership in Bangladesh. The current democratically elected government of Bangladesh is headed by a woman Prime Minister. The current leader of the opposition is also a woman. Women enjoy equal political rights in terms of voting and seeking public office. To reflect the interests and concerns of women, the "Jatiyo Sangsad" (National Parliament) has reserved a quota of 30 seats for women, which is 10 per cent of the total number of 300 seats. This is in addition to the regular seats, where women compete with men for nomination and election to parliament. Furthermore,

women's participation in local government as nominated members is also quite significant. In each of the local governments, there are three nominated women members. These include the 4,460 *Union Parishad* (lowest administrative units), 460 *Thana Parishads* and 80 *Paurashavas* (urban municipalities). In addition to these, women are included on some of the national committees, such as the national population council. As representatives of women, these nominated female members are expected to focus on the issues of women, publicize their problems and pioneer their cause; they also link the local administration and elites, on the one hand, and grass-roots women, on the other. These women are also expected to educate male members about women's issues and concerns and motivate them to make decisions and initiate actions to facilitate the integration of women in society- and nation-building activities.

These local government bodies provide forums where women members may develop themselves as political resource persons. Women can thus participate in all development efforts, including social and economic decision-making activities. However, the number of women who are directly elected or who chair local bodies remains insignificant.

C. Women's place in the productive and reproductive process: The reality

How much do women contribute to the production and reproduction processes of a nation? The answer to this question is quite relevant in assessing women's place in the modern world. A counter-question is: How long is the average woman's work day and what does she do with her time?

There has never been any effort to collect data on this in Bangladesh because such a study has minimal importance to the male community. It has only been since the 1970s that reliable detailed information has been collected on the activities of rural women, men and children. There are many differences, of course, between different countries and social classes. But several common trends emerge strongly in Bangladesh and confirm scientifically what most rural women could have told the researchers themselves:

1. Women work long hours. The average women's working day is between 8 and 18 hours. This makes a working week of 56 to 125 hours.

2. Men work hard, but women work more hours. Although men work between 40 and 75 hours a week, women's work week is always longer by up to 21 hours a week.

3. Women do both "productive" and "reproductive" work. For most women, especially rural women, work means not only housework and child care, but also earning an income or growing subsistence crops.

4. Women bear almost all the burden of "reproductive" work. Men's contribution to housework and child care is negligible compared to women's contribution towards productive work.

Thus I earnestly contend that the domestic work performed by women, in Bangladesh as in the world over, should be valued in economic terms to assess their contribution to the gross national product (GNP). As shown above, Bangladeshi women work 18 hours a day, starting from 5 a.m. to midnight, and if their so-called unproductive work is priced properly, they definitely contribute substantially to economic growth.

D. Women and education, development and environment

Even though women perform so much productive and reproductive work, men still look down upon women. In a situation like this the proposition that "Every human being has a right to an education" will remain a Utopian dream, at least as far as women are concerned. Although the last two decades have been marked by a great effort to extend education to girls and women, the economic crisis in developing countries, coupled with traditional attitudes, and insufficient educational programmes, have left a large proportion of the world's female population illiterate.

We are now aware that investment in women's education positively influences economic prosperity, family size, child survival and the health and school performance of children. Numerous research findings back this up.

The priority given to women's literacy is justified not only because of the seriousness of the situation facing women with respect to education, but also because of the responsibilities women assume for the survival and well-being of their children and the key role they play in transmitting the heritage of their culture to younger generations.

Under these circumstances it becomes the prime duty of women political leaders to publicize the magnitude and significance of the productive roles of women, as well as their important social and family roles, so that women are properly recognized. Besides contributing to family welfare, women assist the economy by producing 50 per cent of the food grown in the developing world. As mentioned earlier, necessity requires millions of illiterate women to engage in profit-making activities. Because they are illiterate, they are denied access to information provided by governments and other agencies. Alienated from the world of information and development, women remain unskilled and exploited, and therein lies the added responsibility of the women politicians.

On the environmental front, it has been observed for centuries that women have their roots in nature. They have a special environmental awareness through their closeness to the earth and their instinct to protect nature. Women commit themselves to a close

relationship with the environment. This relationship is based on principles of regeneration and reciprocity, and on forming partnerships between cultures, religions, classes, languages and genders.

E. What women political leaders are doing and can do

In spite of all these positive findings, the question remains; have we women been able to improve our status? The answer, perhaps, is "No". My intention so far has been to establish that although it is justified from men's point of view to treat women equally, in practical terms this equality is nowhere to be found. As a result, at the threshold of the twenty-first century, the role of women themselves has become vital to mobilize women's dormant force. This is the major task for the present women political leaders. In the Western world, although so-called "equality" exists, not many women have been able to occupy positions in public decision-making. In Eastern societies there are two extremes - on the one hand, women are political leaders in both government and opposition parties; on the other, there are very few women in parliament and government offices, and women's literacy rate remains alarmingly low. Perhaps this contradiction occurs because, although women are represented everywhere in public life, they rarely crusade on women's behalf, and apparently few women have gone into politics with the primary intention of representing women and their interests. It is very true that "... a male defender of equal rights will defeat a male opposer, but a female defender will lose to a man who says nothing about such issues." The truth is that men, and also many women, have come to see any social movement that seeks equal rights for women and freedom to decide their own careers and life patterns as anti-male, anti-child, anti-family and anti-feminine. And here lies the responsibility of a woman politician, be she a leader in a developed or a developing country.

The crux of the problem is this – the fewer women there are in public life, the less able women are to assert themselves. It is rightly said that: "As a minority operating in a male domain, most women public figures, in order to be accepted and function on an equal basis with men, have had to adapt to and adopt the male priorities predominating in public life."

Although in this last decade of the twentieth century women have been participating in politics in increasing numbers, in many countries there has been little change in the status of women. Only in a few countries has the proportion of women in politics reached a level where their influence on public life and policy is comparable to that of men. But humanity, at present, is faced with three big dangers: illiteracy resulting from the fast-growing population, sustainability of development and environmental pollution. I have already mentioned how women work at the centre in eradicating illiteracy, sustaining development and preserving the environment.

For hundreds of years women have watched men fighting each other, often over access to wealth. But through the millennia women have continued to collect seeds, nuts and roots to feed their families and communities. So women are symbols of peace, preservation and life. It is time women spoke up, pointing out connections between economic policy and environmental and human impoverishment.

It is said that "women have been trained to speak softly and carry lipstick". Those days are gone. I would like to add also that we have heard enough of "to educate a mother is to educate an entire nation", "educate a girl and you educate a nation", or "women sense destruction faster and are more concerned about preservation in the struggle against destruction". We must now act and demand more and true information about dangers to the world around us. Women have the right to know about toxic wastes, the residues of distant industries, military activities, nuclear wastes and the causes of deprivation. Women's role internationally, regionally and nationally should no longer be limited to social and domestic work. Women must also be involved in socio-economic as well as political activity, for women represent half the total population of the world.

Quantitatively, it is really disappointing to note that up to 1991, only 18 women had been elected as Head of State or Government in independent countries. Although in May 1991, eight women were in office (the largest number ever) still only some five per cent of the world's countries were led by women.

As mentioned earlier, in the political arena of the East there prevails a unique situation. We have had Srimavo Bandarnayakea, Indira Gandhi, Golda Meir and Benazir Bhutto as Prime Ministers of Sri Lanka, India, Israel and Pakistan, respectively, and Corazon Aquino as President of the Philippines. In Bangladesh we have elected Begum Kahleda Zia as Prime Minister. But interestingly enough, except for Sri Lanka, Israel and the Philippines, the literacy rate in these countries is remarkably low and social taboos continue to restrict women. Moreover, in almost all the countries mentioned above, few women occupy decision-making positions. In the Western world, which has an almost 100 per cent literacy rate, so-called "equality of men and women" and no social prohibitions, an insignificant number of women have been elected Head of State or Government. Western women also have no noticeable representation in public decision-making offices as well. The situation thus remains almost the same globally, and the reason is that women politicians try to prove they are more impartial and impersonal than their male counterparts. This essentially feminine quality has been recognized in male-dominated societies throughout the ages.

The prime duty, thus, of the world's few women politicians is to make it known that men have to break the barrier of gender bias from their end and women have to be more gender-conscious, at least at this juncture, if equal opportunity in society is going to be realized. Otherwise the gap between man and woman will not close and, even

worse, a feeling of animosity between feminists and male chauvinists will persist, causing harm to future generations.

At this stage, I intend to analyze briefly the qualitative achievements of women political leaders and Heads of State and Government. Internationally, I must mention the names of Margaret Thatcher, Srimavo Bandarnayakea, Indira Gandhi and Corazon Aquino. These names are legendary and their tenure of office has been no less eventful than that of any male decision-maker. 'On a number of occasions, these leaders were applauded and commended for their political wisdom and statesmanship. I would also like to mention the name of Gro Harlem Brundland, the Prime Minister of Norway, who chaired the World Commission on Environment in 1983 and helped compile its report called "Our Common Future". What could be a more symbolic endeavour on the part of a woman like Ms. Brundland than to save this world from destruction caused by ignorance? In fact, this woman has proven to the male community once again that the future of the world in reality rests with women. At the regional level, the names of Srimavo Bandarnayakea, Indira Gandhi, Corazon Aquino, Bangladesh's Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, Bangladesh's leader of the opposition in the National Assembly, Sheikh Hasina, former Prime Minister of Pakistan Benazir Bhutto and the opposition leader of Myanmar, Aung San Sue Ky may be added. Begum Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina should be acknowledged for their long and arduous struggles for the political emancipation of the people of Bangladesh and also for restoring democracy. This is unprecedented in the history of Bangladesh, a country where women are considered the weaker sex. But I must also mention that their leadership has never been contaminated by partiality and gender bias. Interestingly enough, the people of Bangladesh have had the least hesitation in accepting a woman's leadership in spite of the long tradition of male-dominated politics.

It is also remarkable that during the long struggle for democracy people unanimously assembled under the leadership of women politicians and then continued to place their confidence in Begum Khaleda Zia by choosing her as Prime Minister of Bangladesh. This is unique in the history of the world because 124 million people have unhesitatingly put their faith in a woman's leadership by electing her head of the Government in a free and fair election. This endorses the leadership quality of Begum Khaleda Zia as a woman politician.

F. Socio-political and economic conditions of women in Bangladesh

Although women constitute almost 50 per cent of the population of Bangladesh, it has been recognized that their marginalization in socio-economic activities does not allow development efforts to achieve what would be possible if women were integrated in the mainstream of development activities.

The women of Bangladesh are a disadvantaged group. They are vulnerable, mostly illiterate, poor and assetless, with virtually no access to or control over the means of production and resources. They are mostly dependent on traditional activities, which are characterized by low productivity and low returns. Women are discriminated against, and their underprivileged legal and social status perpetuates their poverty. Although women work very hard, most of their work is not given due recognition because it is unpaid domestic household work. Even when women's work is paid, women are subject to discrimination with respect to wages, working conditions etc. In spite of the fact that the Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees the equality of men and women (in terms of legal rights, opportunities etc.), forbids discrimination against women and allows women to enjoy equal political rights in voting and seeking public office, women often fail to avail themselves of their rights because of their underprivileged status and the traditional roles of women.

Bangladesh is one of the least developed countries in the world. Therefore, poverty affects the majority of the population, both men and women. Since Bangladesh is primarily an agrarian society and most of the people live in rural areas, the manifestations of poverty are most easily recognized in the lives of women in the rural areas. Hence, women's empowerment at the grass-roots level is essential for their meaningful participation in political and economic activities.

Social, economic and environmental structures create conditions for effective dis-crimination against women, especially in rural Bangladesh. Such discrimination arises as the product of running the family, farm, business, political alliances and other institutions. Specific features of the social system, the connection between population and production, and interdependence of socio-demographic phenomena are factors that determine the extent of the underprivileged status of women.

Since socio-economic conditions play such an important role in the lives of the people of Bangladesh, it is perhaps of little wonder that discrimination and exploitation of women are viewed more within the socio-economic context than as a political issue. Such socio-economic considerations often lead to policies detrimental to the interests of women. There is an increasing realization that policies which marginalize approximately half the population in the socio-economic and political spheres can never hope to achieve the desired goals and objectives of national development. This realization has brought about a gradual change in poverty alleviation programmes for disadvantaged groups such as women, from the direct delivery of resources, to income generation programmes. This approach, however, could inadvertently lead to further marginalization of women unless such policies are based on equitable distribution within mainstream programmes.

G. Development plans and women's development in Bangladesh

From 1973 until 1992 the following programmes were formulated within the development plans to raise the status of women in Bangladesh:

(a)   Improvements in women's education

(b)   Efforts to ensure women's equal access to development and training. (To facilitate this a separate Women's Affairs Division was created between 1978-1980).

(c)   Emphasis on women's skill development, rural credit and support services to encourage women to engage in income generating activities through self-employment as well as wage employment.

(d)   Provision of more funds for women-specified projects, both by government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in order to encourage greater participation of women in development.

The Fourth Five year Plan (1990-1995) aims, among other things, to improve women's nutritional intake; increase women's share in public sector employment, literacy education, vocational skill development and extension services (particularly in non-traditional areas); provide support services to meet the needs of working women, working mothers, destitute and persecuted women; and improve women's access to basic health care, medical and family planning services.

In order to achieve these objectives, the Government plans to create special "focal points" in the different sectoral ministries responsible for identifying and promoting issues of interest and concern to women. The Ministry of Women's Affairs will have the overall responsibility of coordinating the activities of these focal points. Furthermore, a National Council for Women's Development, with the Prime Minister at its head, will be formed soon as the apex body to supervise, monitor and guide the activities of the agencies dealing with women's issues.

H. Institutional framework for women's development in Bangladesh

The Government of Bangladesh recognizes the importance of the full participation of women in national development efforts and attaches highest priority to issues related to the advancement of women. Bangladesh is, perhaps, one of the few countries of the world which has a separate Ministry of Women's Affairs to deal exclusively with issues of importance to women.

The importance of the role of women in the national development of Bangladesh was recognized as early as 1976, when the Women's Affairs Division was created with the primary objective of identifying women's problems and integrating women into the mainstream of national development activities. Subsequently, recognizing that women have unequal access to some of the benefits and opportunities of development and to ensure parity in this matter, the Division was raised to a fully-fledged Ministry of Women's Affairs in 1978 to address these issues and formulate women-specific policies to encourage their participation in socio-economic activities. The purpose of creating this Ministry was to oversee and coordinate the activities related to women's development and to formulate policies, guidelines and programmes to deal with issues of concern and interest to women.

In 1982 three agencies of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, namely the Bangladesh Women's Rehabilitation and Welfare Foundation, the Women's Affairs Cell and the Women's Development Academy, were merged to create the Women's Affairs Directorate, which was subsequently upgraded to the Women's Affairs Department. This agency is responsible for implementing the policies of the Government through its regular staff, most of whom are women, and also through various technical assistance projects. The Jatiyo Mahila Sangstha, another national-level organization, has been created to help implement policies regarding the overall socio-economic development of women. Like the Women's Affairs Department, this organization has offices in the urban and rural areas of the country. The Government has also reserved 10 per cent of officers' posts and 15 per cent of all other posts in the civil service for women. Sixty per cent of the positions for primary school teachers are also reserved for women.

Within the overall perspective of poverty alleviation, employment creation and income generation for women (as emphasized by the policy planners in Bangladesh) a special credit fund set up by the Prime Minister is expected to act as a vital catalytic agent to invigorate economic development and improve social justice in Bangladesh.

I. Politics and administration

As recognized by the organizers of this Seminar, the participation of women in politics and administration is not only an end in itself, but also a means to an end, a tool to improve women's socio-economic condition. It has rightly been recognized that although women constitute half of the population, they have not received their fair share of the benefits of development. The reasons for this have also been correctly identified as the lack of mobilization in political and economic activities. Hence, the importance of mobilizing women as a political force, to thereby increase their participation in decision-making in order to change the status quo.

J. Women in administration and other economic activities in Bangladesh

Besides the position of Prime Minister, the highest administrative post held by a woman in Bangladesh is that of a Minister in the Cabinet.   The Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh attaches the highest priority to the issues related to the advancement of women in the administrative hierarchy.   Bangladesh is, perhaps, one of the few countries which has a separate Ministry of Women's Affairs to deal exclusively with the issues of importance to women.

Women are not only gaining access to the administration of the Government but also joining the judiciary as magistrates.   This is expected to alleviate the grievance of women that their allegations are not always given consideration with the sensitivity required. Unlike the political and government administrative areas, the participation of women in the private sector, particularly in leadership and management positions, has yet to be achieved in Bangladesh.   Women are almost non-existent as entrepreneurs although an increasing number are entering the independent professions of medicine, law, nursing, education, etc.

Although women's participation in the agriculture sector, particularly in post-harvesting of crops, is quite substantial, this work often goes unrecognized since it is performed as a domestic household chore.   Women's participation in the industrial sector is also quite insignificant although in recent years the garment industry has been recruiting workers, most of whom are women.   However, the ownership of all industries, including the garment industry, is almost totally controlled by men.

K. Recommendations

With this backdrop, I would now like to put forward a few recommendations to this august assembly:

1. There should be a world-wide movement to make both men and women realize that when women leaders speak of equality in all walks of life, they are not anti-male, anti-child, anti-family or anti-feminine.

2. Regional as well as national study centres can be set up for time-use studies of women's work, including housework and care of children and the elderly. A regional clearing-house can also be established for documentation and dissemination of information.

3. All women politicians, leaders and decision makers should have one priority item in their list of activities, and that is to propagate full and equal participation for women and men in decision-making and policy implementation at the international, regional, national and community levels.   In this regard, I fully

endorse the recommendation of the World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet which says that all public policy-making groups should contain no more than 60 per cent and no less than 40 per cent of either sex.

4. I fully approve of the following recommendations of the Women's Congress: "To encourage global networks of women to facilitate the analysis of consumer goods, from the extraction of the raw materials, through the production process, to their use and disposal." This is essential for the protection of the environment, and women constituting a vital force in preserving the laws of nature.

5. There should be more conferences, seminars, discussions, meetings and exchange of visits for women leaders and politicians at the international, regional and national levels.

6. To ensure the presence of and participation of women, more women should be included in the hierarchy of political parties by setting up and filling up a quota for women.

7. The women's fronts of political parties should concentrate on organizing women to establish women's rights and to mobilize them for involvement in women's development activities and to create positive social attitudes towards women's participation in politics.

8. Specific efforts should be undertaken to strengthen linkages between women politicians and organizations specifically for women.

L.   Conclusion

"It is up to women to stop rocking the cradle and start rocking the boat". I feel, these words discreetly bear an element of truth, and that is this: women have leadership potential, a quality that is inherent in them but that remains dormant until goaded. It is time we women political leaders went into action and promoted the status of women.

Canada

Brenda Robertson*

Role of women's organizations in developing
the leadership potential of women

It is a great honour for me to represent Canada at this important international gathering. It is also my duty to offer the regrets of the Honourable Mary Collins, federal Minister Responsible for the Status of Women in Canada, who is unable to attend this distinguished assembly.

The need for women to play greater leadership roles in political life, and to influence the development of the public agenda, is being felt in many countries of the world. I am pleased today to address specifically the role of women's organizations in developing the leadership potential in women, from the Canadian perspective.

I have no hesitation in saying that women's organizations have been *absolutely essential* to securing a meaningful political presence for women's interests in Canada. Because of the low representation of women as elected politicians, it is largely women's groups which represent, articulate, promote and defend women's special concerns.

Through more than a century of persistent, persuasive, pervasive activism by women's organizations, women have achieved the key goals of full political franchise and con-stitutionally guaranteed equality.

Today our country — a country of 27 million people, 52 per cent of them women — has almost 70 independent, well-established women's organizations operating at the national level, and hundreds of provincial and local groups, which cover a startling range of interests, life experiences and political viewpoints.

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* **Senator, Parliament of Canada.**

I would like to offer you a quick sampling of this rich body politic by describing four national women's organizations which inform the federal Government in a regular manner of the decisions made at their annual general meetings each year. Most work through networks of local chapters, bringing the ideas for change up the line to the national umbrella group. I will also focus on a few significant accomplishments of each group and comment on their brand of leadership.

To begin, the National Council of Women of Canada is one of Canada's oldest women's organizations, founded in 1893 to support and promote the role of women in society as the caretakers of home and family. Today it embraces 750,000 members through 1,500 local councils.

The National Council of Women created an important early network for organized women's activities and in 1900 received federal funding to produce a report on the status and roles of Canadian women. This report constituted the first published national portrait of women in Canada and served as an informal agenda for women's groups for years.

In 1910, the National Council of Women formally endorsed the call for suffrage and, after the vote for women in Canada was won in 1918, the Council began the practice of adopting an annual Canadian Women's Platform to identify women's issues and to press them upon the established political parties.

The National Council of Women was one of the leading women's organizations which lobbied successfully for the establishment of a Royal Commission on the Status of Women in 1967.

The report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women was, in a sense, the direct descendant of the Council's earlier portrait of women, and it too would set an agenda for change for years. I will speak in greater length about this report in my remarks.

The Canadian Federation of University Women is another national women's organization which has played a major role in advancing the status of women in Canada. The Federation was founded in 1919, at a time when women began to make up a significant proportion (14 per cent) of university graduates.

Its original purpose was to keep educated women abreast of developments in their fields. Today it has grown into an association of more than 12,000 members in 135 clubs. Its mandate has evolved to include the improvement of the status of women and active participation in public affairs.

Women academics have been vocal and public activists for women's issues in Canada, publishing much-needed research and adding a new perspective to traditional studies.

Again, it was the 1966 President of the Federation, Laura Sabia, who spearheaded and organized the drive to secure the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in 1967.

The Canadian Federation of University Women regularly submits briefs and resolutions to government ministries and bodies. Recent concerns include new reproductive technologies and adult literacy.

The third organization I'd like to mention is the Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs. This group was established in 1930 to promote the interests of the growing numbers of career women. From the beginning, the Federation's clubs were dedicated to the pursuit of equality between women and men and improved training for the advancement of women.

During the great economic depression of the 1930s, the Federation worked to register unemployed women and locate jobs for them.

In the late 1940s, the Federation successfully protested a federal job posting open only to male applicants. The job went to Federation nominee Muriel McQueen Fergusson, a lawyer, who went on to play a valuable leadership role as the first woman Speaker of the Senate, Canada's appointed upper house, in 1973.

In the 1950s, the Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women repeatedly asked the federal cabinet to appoint women to government bodies. It supplied a list of qualified women candidates with its requests, an innovative and effective tactic.

This Federation was also a major player in the coalition that lobbied for the creation of a Women's Bureau within the federal Department of Labour in 1954, one of the first federal agencies for women. It also lobbied for the passage of equal pay legislation in 1956 and for the establishment of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in 1967.

Within the past 20 years, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, which claims more than three million members under its umbrella of 570 member groups, has played a key leadership role.

Founded in 1972 to ensure that the recommendations of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women were carried out, NAC (as it is called) is in some ways the liberated granddaughter of the century-old National Council of Women of Canada.

NAC is unabashedly activist and feminist in its outlook, promoting a new social and political order in which women are fully empowered and involved. NAC promotes legislative reform, publishes research, lobbies governments and publicizes women's issues.

NAC's annual general meeting often features a public session at which it rigorously questions all three federal political parties on their records on women's issues over the past year.

I have mentioned some of the achievements of women's groups, but I would now like to highlight a number of instances in Canadian history where women's groups were most effective in making women's voices heard by those in power.

Canadian women won the federal vote in 1918 after decades of activism, and the first woman Member of Parliament was elected in 1921. But women remained excluded from Senate appointments because of a legal interpretation that women were not "persons". A number of women's organizations repeatedly petitioned the Prime Minister to appoint a woman Senator, but without results.

Then five individual women used a legal twist — an obscure section of the Supreme Court Act — to petition the high court for a ruling on the legal definition of "persons".

On 18 October 1929, they won their case before the highest court of appeal at the time, the British Privy Council. The first woman Senator, an active volunteer with a number of women's organizations, was appointed on 15 February 1930.

In the 1960s, Canadian women liberated themselves from many social conventions, but public policy and legislation lagged behind their new identities.

In 1966, 32 women's organizations came together as the Committee on Equality for Women to press for a full-scale national inquiry into the status of women. When the five official delegates went to ask the Prime Minister for a Royal Commission, they were accompanied by 60 observers.

The Royal Commission on the Status of Women was established in February 1967, to examine women's status in Canadian society in all its dimensions. It was the first royal commission in Canada ever to be headed by a woman — journalist and broadcaster (and later Senator) Florence Bird.

The Royal Commission on the Status of Women ordered research papers, solicited briefs and held public hearings across the country.

At first, the Commission's work was dismissed by the media and detractors as a forum for women to discuss their neuroses, but it soon became hard to ignore the national outpouring of women's experiences that included single mothers living in poverty, battered women and abused children.

The Commission tabled its report in 1970, making 167 specific recommendations that ranged from equal pay to the right of women to confer citizenship on their children. One prominent journalist noted that the report was a prescription for revolution.

Indeed, it was; the dogged pursuit by women's organizations of the report's implementation, combined with legislation and government initiatives, has quite literally changed Canadian society. Twenty years later, almost all of the Royal Commission's recommendations have been carried out.

The Canadian Government answered one of those recommendations with the establishment in the early 1970s of a federal ministry dedicated to advancing the status of women.

Today, Status of Women Canada reviews and analyzes federal government policies, programmes and legislation for their impact on women. Reporting to the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, it acts as a cross-departmental monitor to ensure women's needs and aspirations are implemented throughout the Government.

By 1982, this federal department was complemented by women's offices with similar functions in all provinces and territories.

Through these women's directorates and other ministries, women's organizations have access to the halls of government, an effective way to keep politicians in touch with the everyday environments in which Canadian women live. Women's groups often provide the federal Government with input prior to the development of policies and programmes. For example, the current Minister Responsible for the Status of Women met with women's groups on more than 200 occasions in her first year in the post.

Thanks to the relentless voices of women's organizations, from the grassroots to their national offices, many issues once relegated to being a "women's problem", have now been identified as societal concerns. For example, the issue of violence against women has gone from a closet secret in Canada to a national priority for change in less than 20 years.

In the late 1980s, a coalition of more than 30 national groups, armed with petitions, reports and the support of prominent politicians, pressed the Prime Minister for a Royal Commission on Violence Against Women. The coalition claimed to speak for more than 10 million Canadians.

In May 1991, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney announced the creation of a panel of experts to conduct the world's first national in-depth inquiry into the problem of violence against women. It is anticipated that the recommendations of the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women, due at the end of this year, will be far-reaching.

In another example, in 1980, the Government introduced a revised Canadian Constitution which included an entrenched Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Women's groups lobbied hard for a new and separate clause in the Constitution which specifically guarantees that the rights and freedoms in the Charter apply "equally to male and female persons." They commissioned position papers, held a national Constitution conference of their own, and garnered media attention. They were successful in securing the inclusion of an equality clause, Section 28 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I would like to turn now to my final consideration, a quick check-list of important aspects in developing leadership through women's organizations. A quick check-list, because, in a sense, that is what I have been talking about all along.

First, I believe that the power of women's organizations is the power of networking. By this I mean that individual women are empowered simply by coming together with other women to exchange ideas and experiences; individual organizations are empowered by the free and open exchange of information, tools and tactics among groups; and all organizations become stronger by working together in coalitions.

Secondly, one of the most important and visible components of leadership in women's organizations is the business of making news.

Women have long been socialized to be seen and not heard. But if women want to attract public attention to their concerns and achieve political power for themselves, they have to make some noise.

The importance of the media in focusing public and political attention on issues is a fact of modern life. Women's organizations must be determined to get their fair share of the limelight.

In Canada, we have seen some dramatic and effective media events created by women's organizations.

For example, in 1966, feminist leader Laura Sabia reportedly warned the Prime Minister's office that she would lead a huge march of women on Parliament if the Royal Commission on the Status of Women was not established.

More recently, during both the 1984 and 1988 federal elections, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women orchestrated a nationally televised debate on women's issues, among the three federal political leaders. That seems to have been a first anywhere in the world!

However, as important as the dramatic business of making news, is the quieter art of lobbying politicians, bureaucrats and other power brokers.

It is time for women to turn their vaunted verbal skills to bending the ear of the power establishment; to put the case of women persuasively and persistently.

It also behooves women's organizations to pick up establishment lobbying tools: written reports and "objective" research containing facts and figures and assessments of the economic impact of women's disadvantage.

Canadian women's organizations have made extraordinary gains in the past 20 years through a variety of research initiatives and important publications documenting women's experiences and expounding women's hopes and aspirations.

In Canada, the emerging image of women's organizations is that of a resilient, flexible web of relationships. Unlike traditional top-down organizations which manufacture a few good leaders, the fluid, interdependent networks of women tend to cultivate leadership in all its members.

And that is something of great value.

In closing, I would like to offer the conclusion that, in the Canadian experience, women's organizations have been extremely effective environments for cultivating leadership. Women's organizations have moved mountains with little money and even less power, relying on volunteers and representing the disadvantaged.

Now that takes impressive leadership.

More importantly, perhaps, women's organizations have fostered a new kind of leadership; a leadership characterized by openness and inclusiveness, consensus rather than competition, partnership rather than privilege. It is a type of leadership that is trumpeted as the style of the future, the key to creating a new world order.

In effect, women's organizations are world-class schools for new leadership — the leadership of tomorrow.

China

Liu Yandong*

Role of women political leaders in social development

A. Women's participation in political, economic, cultural and social life

Both men and women are responsible for progress in human history, and for the creative force of civilization as well. In the course of creating human civilization and propelling social development, women have played a great role. Without the participation of women, who make up half of the population, it is difficult to achieve any social development. Therefore, women's emancipation is a part of the emancipation of all mankind, a symbol of civilization and of the progress of humanity. And women's participation in politics and other spheres of life is a leap forward for women which has not only reflected, but also propelled, enormous social progress.

It is my understanding that women's participation in politics means that women take part in the decision-making and management of society and enjoy the same right as men to govern the political, economic and social life of the country. The Government of China has consistently attached great importance to that participation. With the support of the Government and the protection of the law, Chinese women have participated, on an extensive scale, in the building-up of China's political, economic and cultural life, as well as its social development. They are honoured as "half of the sky". Hence, their

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social and family status has also undergone great changes. Over the last 10 years or more, along with the process of reform and opening up to the outside world, women have made new progress in social participation and played ever greater roles in economic and social development.

1.   Economic participation

Chinese women have taken part extensively in state economic construction. In 1991, there were 55 million women workers and professionals in China, making up 38 per cent of the total. Eighty per cent of Chinese women are in the countryside. Of these, at least 180 million women are working on farm production and developing a more diversified economy. In developed areas, the total value of commodity production created by women constitutes 55-65 per cent. Since the practice of reform and opening up to the outside world began, a great many women directors of factories and women managers have emerged, and they are displaying their talents and skills in the economic arena.

Chinese women's extensive participation in economic activities has not only assisted the economic development of the country, but has also helped women improve their economic status and qualifications − a further enhancement of women's social and family status.

2   Political participation

Many talented and outstanding women have participated in political activities and put their abilities to good use. In our supreme state body, the National People's Congress, the ratio of women deputies today makes up about 21 per cent of the total. There are three women state leaders, 15 women ministers and vice-ministers, and 13 women vice governors. In 479 cities of the country, there are 250 women mayors and vice-mayors. In 1,936 counties, 1,148 women work as county leaders. In the eight political parties of China, there are five chairwomen and vice-chairwomen. In 1989, the number of women government employees exceeded 10 million, accounting for 30.26 per cent of the total, an increase of 26 times when compared with the numbers in 1951.

Many more Chinese women participate in political activities through exercising the rights granted to them by law. For instance, they go to the polls to vote in favour of people's deputies for people's congresses at the county level; they nominate themselves or are nominated and elected by others as leaders and are in charge of management; they take part in discussing important draft laws and decrees; they put forward opinions and make suggestions on state management and social development; they participate directly in the activities of their own work units and communities; they practise democratic supervision of government work and can criticize, supervise, inform against or bring charges against officials.

The scale of Chinese women's participation in politics has been expanding continuously. It guarantees the realization of women's rights and interests, and is also beneficial to the build-up of democratic politics. It has played an active role in pushing the social development and progress of women themselves.

3. Participation in culture, education and public health

Men and women have equal access to education at different levels in China. There are nearly 30 women's cadre schools throughout the country, which have trained over 10,000 female professionals for women's work. There are 4.25 million women teachers in China, making up 28.8 per cent of teachers in schools for higher learning, 30.7 per cent in secondary schools and 42.6 per cent in primary schools. Health care is traditionally a job for women, and 40-50 per cent of employees working in the field are women. Women are winners in sports and display a galaxy of talents in the arts and in literacy circles. Women have made great contributions to the development of culture, education and public health.

4. Participation in science and technology

Science and technology are a great force propelling economic and social development. Chinese women have shown great enthusiasm for work in this field and made outstanding contributions. Women make up 35 per cent of total scientific and technical personnel. They are working in various fields, including high-energy physics, genetic engineering, astronomy and the launching of satellites. There are 26 women members on the Academic Board of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, which is chosen from the top scientists and experts working in the field of science and technology. In recent years, 152 women scientists and technical personnel have become state-level experts and 1,458 women have won prizes for scientific and technical progress. In 1990, 42 per cent of the members of the State Science Commission were women, while in the Chinese Academy of Sciences, 47.3 per cent of members responsible for scientific research were women.

Nearly 100 million members of the rural female labour force in China have received agro-technical training, 240,000 women have become agro-technicians and 300 women peasants have been awarded senior agro-technical titles. Chinese women peasants have become an important force in revitalizing agriculture with science and technology.

Women's social participation in China means that society will be able to harness the talents of the previously forgotten half of the population. This will not only propel the all-round development of society but accelerate women's own emancipation as well. This is of profound historical and immediate significance.

B. The advantages of women's participation in politics and the existing obstacles

Women, as part of every country's human resources, should not be neglected. In further developing women's resources, women political leaders play a unique and important role. The reasons for this are:

(1) Women's participation in politics will greatly enhance democracy in political life. As political leaders, women can effectively mobilize and organize women to take an active part in economic and cultural construction, and this will help promote social progress.

(2) Women's participation in governing and decision-making bodies enables male and female politicians to augment each other's talents which in turn will lead to rational and humanistic decision-making and policies.

(3) Women's participation in politics helps the government have a better understanding of the concerns of half the population, hear women's voices and complaints, and solve their problems, thus ensuring that women's rights and interests are taken into account and safeguarded.

(4) Women's participation in politics will upgrade women's economic, legal, educational and family status, hence promoting the thorough emancipation of women, and thus the thorough emancipation of all of humanity.

However, we must also see that women's stepping over their thresholds, going out in society and participating in politics has happened only in modern times. Since women's total emancipation is a prolonged process, women still face some difficulties and obstacles in the process of political participation.

First, women's participation in politics is inhibited by the remnants of traditional culture and secular prejudice. Because the development of man's awareness often lags behind social realities, the outworn concepts of neglecting, looking down upon and discriminating against women, formed in feudal society, cannot be thoroughly eliminated overnight. The feudal remnants of concepts such as "men's superiority over women" and "men working outside while women stay indoors" still influence women's participation in politics.

Second, women's participation in politics is limited by the development of socially productive forces and the degree of political democracy.

Third, women's participation in politics is constrained by the double burden of family and career. To fulfil official tasks as well as their duties as mother and wife, women political leaders pay a much higher price than their male counterparts.

Fourth, women's participation in politics is restricted by their own qualifications. Women need better and higher political, cultural and especially psychological qualifications. For years, women's self-concept and psychological attitudes were warped by the yoke of backward feudal ideas which restrained the full development of their capabilities. We should make efforts to overcome these difficulties and continuously create opportunities for women to participate in politics and other spheres of life at a higher level and on a larger scale, so that they will play a still greater role in the progress of civilization.

C. Raise the level of women's participation in politics and give full play to women's role in economic and social development

I have been involved in social and political activities for over 20 years, working as a leading member of an enterprise and a local region, and now as a Standing Committee Member of the National People's Congress and as President of the China Youth Development Foundation. I believe deeply that women's participation in politics is inseparable both from the good objective environment provided by the government and society and the subjective efforts of women themselves.

Since the founding of New China, and especially during the past 14 years of reform and opening up to the outside world, the Chinese Government has continued to improve the objective environment and open up a vast world of opportunity for women's participation in politics.

(1) Extensive employment has created a precondition for women's participation in politics. Today, women's employment rate is over 88 per cent in the big and medium-sized cities of our country. Township-run enterprises which sprang up during rural reform have provided employment opportunities for over 35 million rural women.

(2) Formulation of laws has provided legal protection for women's participation in politics. Our Constitution clearly stipulates: "Women enjoy equal rights with men in all spheres of life — political, economic, cultural and social, and family life." This year, the National People's Congress has passed the "Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests", which is a comprehensive and fundamental law for safeguarding the rights and interests of women, promoting equality between men and women and ensuring women's participation in politics.

(3) Universal education has provided a cultural guarantee for women's participation in politics. In the past 40 years or more since the founding of New China, 110 million women have wiped out the stigma of illiteracy. By the year 1990, the number of girl students was 56.56 million (46.2 per cent) in primary schools, 21.56 million (42.2 per cent) in middle schools, and 700,000 (33.7 per cent) in schools for higher learning. In

1989, female postgraduates amounted to 18,000, while female Ph.D. students numbered more than 1,000, constituting 20.7 per cent and 10.12 per cent of the respective totals. In addition, another 12.7 million women are studying in various kinds of adult schools of higher learning.

(4) Equal family status, and husband and wife sharing of house work, child care and care of the aged have guaranteed that women will have time and energy to participate in political affairs.

Although Chinese women have achieved world recognition for their social participation, they are still facing the challenge: how to enhance further women's participation in order to allow full scope for women's role in social development. In order to solve this problem and open up more avenues for women's social participation, women political leaders must study and answer the following questions.

1. **What is the relationship between economic development and women's social participation?**

Economic development determines the degree of social development and man's development, as well as women's development and social participation. Although economic growth cannot raise the scope and level of women's participation automatically, it puts forward objective requirements and provides the material and technological basis for women's all-round social participation. Only with economic development and a high level of automation can the disparity between men's and women's physical strength be narrowed and conditions for equal access to employment for both women and men be created. Meanwhile, only with full economic development can material conditions be provided for the equal sharing of housework and the material foundation be created for social services and various kinds of social security, including compensation for child bearing. And only when the economy is fully developed can the education system be expanded and more access to education be created for women, thus enhancing the level of women's scientific and cultural knowledge. It is obvious that to surmount the obstacles to women's social participation, we must link ourselves with the developing economy. Women's social participation requires women's participation in large numbers in socially productive labour and economic activities on a regular basis. To give full play to women's role in economic development will give an impetus to the development of society in an effective way.

2. **What is the relationship between women's qualifications and their social participation?**

Women's qualifications are in direct proportion to their social participation and directly relate to their levels of participation. The definition of women's qualifications covers a wide range of aspects, the most important of which are their moral and ideological qualifications and scientific and cultural knowledge. The former chiefly find expression

in their awareness of the need for participation. That is to say, women must be encouraged to take part in public affairs as an act that embodies women's values, social duties and responsibilities. This will help women cast off the psychological constraints caused by their sense of dependence, inferiority and self-abasement and raise their consciousness of competition and enterprising spirit so that they will become new women. Scientific and cultural knowledge also have a direct bearing on women's social participation. If women's scientific and educational levels are comparatively lower than those of men, they cannot compete with men on an equal footing. Hence effective measures must be taken to improve educational conditions, to wipe out illiteracy among women, to ensure women equal access to and rights in education and professional training, to continuously develop women's intelligence and to facilitate the growth of women talents.

3. **What is the relationship between family and social environment and women's social participation?**

Women's social participation needs the support of society, and of their families as well.

So far as society is concerned, legal protection should be provided by the state to ensure women equal access with men in the fields of politics, economy, culture, education and social development. The state should also amplify regulations protecting women's rights, set up and perfect executive and monitoring mechanisms, pay attention to the climate of public opinion, advocate equality between the sexes through various channels, give publicity to women's roles in socio-economic development, encourage a civilized and progressive attitude towards women in the of whole society and oppose old ideas and behaviour which discriminate against women.

Family environment has a close connection with women's social participation. According to China's traditional concepts, housework was considered woman's respon-sibility. The contradiction between women's role in society and their role in the family often puzzles professional women. At present, as household duties are not yet totally socialized and public facilities are still inadequate, women have to bear the greater burden and pay a much higher price than men if they want to do well in their work. Hence, family support is an essential prerequisite for women's full participation. Along with the changes in people's concepts, Chinese women at work are winning more and more support and understanding from their family members. The importance of equal responsibility in household affairs (in particular between husband and wife), is increasingly recognized by people. Couples' equal sharing of housework and child care has become a common practice in the cities and economically more developed areas in China. This has, to a certain extent, alleviated professional women's troubles at home. Besides, women's role in and contribution to human reproduction must be fairly assessed and reasonably compensated; and women's social participation should not be affected in any way by childbirth.

D. Strategies to enhance women's participation in politics and cooperation in the Asian and the Pacific region

In recent years, with the support of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the governments of various countries, women in this region have strengthened their cooperation, expanded their exchanges, developed a great variety of activities and promoted women's participation in politics. This has already become an irreversible trend. After the conclusion of the Cold War, the more stable political situation and rapid economic development have provided an unprecedented opportunity for prosperity in the Asian and Pacific region. Women in this region must seize that historical opportunity to reinforce cooperation, increase exchanges and enable women's participation in politics to reach new heights, in order to make still greater contributions to peace and prosperity in the region and the world over. In this way, we can live up to what history expects of us.

Here I would like to make a few points which I wish to call to your attention:

(1) Take an active part in enhancing the economic development of our countries and of the Asian and Pacific region. Economic development decides the level of social development. It also decides the level of women's development and that of their participation in politics. Therefore, women's organizations and relevant agencies should, with economic development as the key link, organize and lead the broad masses of women to participate actively in economic development at home and in the region. Presently, China is encouraging the build-up of a new system of socialist market economy. To achieve this end, we shall motivate and organize our women to make greater contributions to China's reform and modernization drive and opening up to the outside world.

(2) Peace and stability are prerequisites for the development of our countries. Women of Asian and Pacific countries should dedicate our best efforts to a just and reasonable new international order and to peace in the region and the whole world.

(3) Do things according to the country's specific conditions. Women of Asian and Pacific countries have endured many similar historical experiences and hardships in the past. Now we have the common desire to strive for women's emancipation. Of course, we can share our experience of participation in politics. However, we have different cultural traditions, social systems and ways of life. Therefore, in seeking solutions to our problems in participating in politics, we must avoid indiscriminately copying the experience of others.

(4) Enhance cooperation and exchanges between women's organizations and women politicians of the region. We Chinese women are willing to promote friendly exchanges and cooperation with women of other countries in the region

on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. The areas of exchange and cooperation should be broadened, their scale should be enlarged, contents should be enriched and intensified, and channels such as seminars, study tours, exchange of information materials etc. should be extended. Importance should be attached especially to exchanges and cooperation among younger women political leaders. They should increase their contacts, deepen their mutual understanding and build up friendships among themselves, so that they will be able to shoulder the responsibility for women's emancipation and for the peace and prosperity of the world in the twenty-first century.

Esteemed Chairperson, dear friends,

Only if we women in this region strengthen our cooperation, expand our exchanges and join together in our efforts will we bring the cause of women's emancipation to a new high, and make greater contributions to the stability and development of the Asian and Pacific region, to the progress and well-being of mankind, and to the peace and prosperity of the whole world.

Fiji

Taufa Vakatale*

Role of women political leaders in promoting
the status of women

The paper I am about to present on the role of women political leaders in promoting the status of women will address four main areas, with specific reference to Fiji:

(1) An assessment of the extent of women's political participation at the local and national levels (as voters, in parliament, in high public office and in political organizations);

(2) An assessment of major factors in and obstacles to women's political participation, including national legislation, policies, programmes and practice;

(3) Contribution of women politicians to improving the status of women, including my own relevant experience;

(4) Strategies to promote the status of women in political life at the national, regional and international levels.

Before I proceed with the theme of this paper, I would like to preface it with a brief discussion on "development" because the whole seminar is focused on women's participation in politics as an aspect of human resources development. Hence it is vital that one understand fully what we mean by the term "development" in relation to human resources, and how women's participation in politics relates to it. The development of human resources entails growth, enrichment and empowerment. True development is as one perceives it, not as it is perceived by others. Thus, real development must emanate from within the person or from within the community. When we talk of women's participation

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in politics as an aspect of human resources development, we must at once realize that the desire for participation in politics must come from women themselves if it is to be a meaningful aspect of "development". It cannot be imposed upon women by well-meaning people. Women first need to appreciate what they lack and what they are deprived of, and what participation in politics implies. Only then can they see the inevitable need to participate in politics; only then can their participation be effective; and only then can it be an aspect of human resources development.

Having said all that about "development", let me now outline for you the political status of women in my country and hope that while I am doing this, you will also be examining your own individual countries and making comparisons.

Fiji is made up of over 300 small islands, only a little over 100 of which are inhabited. It has a population of approximately three quarters of a million people made up of 329,000 indigenous Fijians, 349,000 Indians and 37,000 other races, according to the last census taken in 1986. The current estimated population shows that the indigenous Fijians have bypassed the Indians in terms of numbers and that the Fijians now make up approximately 48 per cent while the Indians comprise 46 per cent. Fiji lies between latitudes 15° to 22° South and between longitude 174° East to 177° West, with an area of 18,272 square miles. Fiji was a British colony from 1874 to 1970, when it became an independent nation under the commonwealth of nations with the British Queen as its sovereign. In 1987, there were two bloodless military *coups d'etat,* which resulted in Fiji being declared a republic and withdrawing from the Commonwealth. An interim government administered the country from 1987 to May 1992, when Fiji held its first democratic election under the newly promulgated Constitution, which restricts parliamentary representation along racial lines.

Fiji is basically made up of two major ethnic groups, both of which are very traditional, especially in their perceptions of women and women's role in society. As in many other societies, women are primarily seen as mothers and home-makers and any other role they may have is of secondary importance. With the breakdown of traditions and values, women are increasingly becoming the "breadwinners" for the family as well. Women in Fiji, more so than men, are involved in many non-governmental organizations and charitable organizations, all of which play important political roles, informal though they may be, and affect the political life of the country.

A. Women's participation in politics

In Fiji we recognize two types of local governments: urban and the rural. Before the 1987 *coups d'etats,* our town and city councils had democratic elections, but since 1987, all councillors have been nominated. However, in terms of the extent of women's participation, there has been little difference except that, prior to 1987, women took an active role in campaigning for candidates and servicing the needs of candidates and voters

alike, but they failed to offer themselves as candidates for election. Since 1987 however, women have been nominated to a number of town councils and two or three women have then been elected by the nominated councillors as mayors or deputies. In these roles, women have proven themselves to be just as good as men. On the other hand, it is doubtful if these women would have even offered themselves as candidates in the first place if there had been democratic elections for town/city councils.

At the rural level, we have two sets of administrations/councils, one of which caters for the Fijian people and one for the Indians. For the indigenous Fijians, the lowest level is the village council, then the *Tikina* or district council, and finally the provincial council. At the top of the Fijian administration pyramid is the great council of chiefs, which is made up of traditional chiefs who wield a lot of political power not only amongst the Fijians but in the nation as a whole. At the village level, women (through the various non-governmental organizations and charitable organizations of which they are members) have played leading roles in development work such as improving schools, village living standards, churches etc. Hence, at the village council level, women who were excluded in the past are now becoming more actively involved and see their integration into the decision-making body of the village as a logical development. However, it would be fair to say that while there appears to be a natural evolution of women's participation at this level, it is still minimal. Having said that, it is true to say that active participation of women at the village level will improve without the need for pressure or sensitization from outside.

At the next level, however, women have come into the Tikina or district councils as observers and in advisory capacities only, but do not have any voting powers. Similarly the provincial councils also reflect a lack of active participation by women.

The advisory councils which cater for the Indian community are no better in their recognition of women and the importance of women's role. Rural Indian women very rarely find time to do things other than attend to the needs of the family, and they will only participate in political affairs if forced to do so through nomination or appointment.

In my view, women at the local level do not feel disadvantaged and do not yet feel the need to be actively participating in the decision-making body at the local level, although the decisions taken often involve them as implementors. The reason for this is that many do not see their involvement as a priority. For many, family commitments take precedence.

At the national level, the scenario is different. Women clamour for equality with the men and will enumerate instances of discrimination against women. Yet, when the crunch comes and women are required to take up leadership roles, very few have the courage to offer themselves.

Women make up about 50 per cent of the age group that is eligible to vote. However, one can only assume that 50 per cent of the registered voters are women and that 50

per cent of those who actually vote are women because, in terms of registration, the law does not provide for gender to be identifiable and there is no sure way to identify gender. From observation, though, the impression is that more women register as voters than men because they are often at home when the officials call and because more women appear to take time off deliberately to go and vote than men. But whether they fully understand why they are voting one way or the other is another matter.

The Fijian Parliament under the new Constitution has two houses: an elected House of Representatives and an Upper House or Senate that is nominated. The House of Representatives is made up of 70 members, of whom only one is a woman. The Prime Minister and Cabinet are all selected from the House of Representatives. There are 18 Cabinet members, one of whom is a woman. She is the first elected woman member to become a cabinet minister since Fiji became politically independent 22 years ago. All 34 members of the Senate are nominated except the Attorney General, and only three of the members of the Senate are women. It is debatable whether this is a true reflection of the political status of women in Fiji because in the recent general elections, in spite of what women were saying regarding their empowerment, only four women out of a total of 166 candidates stood for election and two others did not make it through the preliminaries.

In high public office and in political organizations, the participation of women at the decision-making level has been marginal. In the civil service, for example, of the 18 permanent heads, there were only two women. In May 1992, this number was reduced to one by the resignation of one woman. At the end of 1992 the one remaining woman permanent head would take a regional posting and for the immediate future there does not seem to be any woman in the pipeline for appointment to this post. Meanwhile in the various statutory bodies, the appointment of women has yet to proceed beyond tokenism, even though there are capable women in the community who could be considered.

Similarly, the various political organizations do not appear to be very serious about involving women in decision-making, although one party has a woman president and another party has a woman senior vice-president. These, however, are exceptions because women are still relegated to secretarial and servicing work for their political parties. The same picture emerges when one looks at the participation of women in trade unions. While women are active lobbyists, it appears that they are simply being used by the male leadership in the trade unions to do the "dirty" work.

I mentioned earlier the existence of a great council of chiefs in the administration of the indigenous Fijians. The Great Council of Chiefs has acquired a new and vital importance in the life of the nation since the 1987 coups. All matters relating to the indigenous Fijians must have the sanction of the Great Council of Chiefs, the members

of whom are there by right of birth rather than on the basis of gender. However, one must not assume that in traditional Fijian society indigenous Fijian women of high birth are not discriminated against, because this is not so. What generally happens is that women rise to a chief's position only if there is no male in line of succession. There are exceptions, of course.

B. Factors affecting women's participation in politics

In Fiji and in many other Pacific island countries, society is basically still very traditional. The role of women is seen to be that of home-makers and mothers rather than politicians etc. In the home, the father is seen as the head of the household, and in rural areas and amongst the disadvantaged in urban areas, many women accept this subservient status and their "double burden" role as part and parcel of being a woman.

Religion in many parts of Fiji and in the island nations of the Pacific further reaffirms what our cultures see as the rightful role of women. Many fundamentalists believe in the subservient role of women and see women who aspire to leadership roles as usurping the role of men.

Lack of awareness of women's rights also contributes to women's complacent acceptance of their status. Many women are so engrossed in their own daily struggle that they are not aware that there are alternative ways of resolving some of their problems. Even if they were aware, many women would not consider it among their priorities to become politically involved.

Then there are those women who are aware of their rights yet do not play an active role in political leadership. There are various reasons for this. One of the most significant reasons is that most women who have had access to education and decision-making or leadership roles have done so through the civil service or government, and while they may be active advocates of women's rights, the need for security and a stable source of livelihood deters them from risky political positions. Their lack of financial security is a very major factor deterring women from participating in politics.

Recently, a number of women in Fiji offered themselves as candidates for a number of political positions, but it appears that while political organizations consider the supportive role of women indispensable, this was not translated into accepting women as decision-makers. During the politically unstable year of 1987, before and after the coup, women became more prominent and more visible politically. In retrospect, is appears that women become very involved when there is a crisis. This was especially true in 1987, when there was a very strong feeling of nationalism and support for indigenous rights.

How can we exploit the enthusiasm inherent in women to mobilize them to participate in formal political organizations? What can be done to promote women in leadership

roles? How can we empower women to emerge from their marginal position in politics to become the centre of political activities? How can we strategise to hasten women's active participation in politics?

C. The role of women political leaders in promoting the status of women in politics

I had said at the very beginning that "development" must emanate from within. While it is accepted that women's participation in politics is essential for women's economic and social advancement, it must at the same time also be appreciated that women need to realize this fact themselves. Without women's active participation at the decision-making level, both locally and nationally, gender-sensitive changes cannot be made in employment, health, education etc. Thus, women must be made aware of what is lacking before women themselves can be expected to press for change. Women political leaders must thus play a leading role in raising awareness among women.

Women political leaders must use every opportunity to sensitize both men and women to the need for more women in political leadership roles.

A woman political leader needs to be involved in women's organizations, which still remain for many parts of the Pacific the best forum for consciousness-raising regarding women's rights. A woman political leader can use her influence to reorient women's organizations from service delivery to advocacy. In Fiji, for example, as a result of an initiative by a woman political leader, women who have been politically active have formed themselves into a group to undertake research and develop statements reflecting the views of women for the national economic summit. Women have thus been encouraged to voice their views together as a group. A woman political leader can thus use women's organizations and government agencies dealing with women's affairs, not only to deal with welfare and civil rights issues but also for advocacy.

A woman political leader can also use her influence, if necessary, to put pressure on her male colleagues to institute affirmative action to encourage the promotion of women. For instance, a woman politician could put pressure on those who are responsible for appointing statutory bodies, to appoint boards which reflect the extent of women's involvement in a particular activity.

Very often there are discriminatory policies and legislation which relegate women to being second-class citizens and reaffirm their subordinate position. Women political leaders can become the voice of women's groups in parliament and other forums by highlighting the injustice in such discriminatory legislation and policies. It is, however, the responsibility of women political leaders to research their facts properly and consider the rationale behind the legislation.

Women political leaders can also initiate moves that will hasten the promotion of the status of women. For instance, affirmative action legislation could be introduced. In this connection too, women in leadership positions have a special responsibility to institute measures to activate women's constitutional and legal guarantees of the right to be elected and appointed.

A woman political leader must also maintain close contact with and promote grass-roots women's organizations. It is imperative that she develop a solid women's constituency so that she can stand a better chance of not being co-opted by the male leadership, because in the Pacific, almost without exception, very few women have acquired leadership roles in politics. Hence, she too will need the support of women to maintain her political leadership role. She can also then articulate women's concerns on different issues.

A woman political leader can become a role model for other women. Being in a very small minority, she and her women colleagues always need to maintain a high profile so that other capable women may be encouraged to leave the security of their jobs and offer themselves as political candidates. The woman political leader has the onerous task of being exemplary in all she does, for it is through her performance that men, too, will assess the political capability of women.

D. Strategies to promote the status of women in political life

While it is recognized that women's participation in politics is crucial to social and economic achievement, one must also recognize that women cannot attain positions of political influence and decision-making power without equal economic and social access and opportunity. It is therefore a vicious circle. Women's limited human and other resources restrict their access to public decision-making bodies, which in turn adversely affect their access to resources. How, then, do we strategise to break through this vicious circle?

I consider that access to education is of prime significance as a long-term strategy for promoting the status of women in the Pacific, especially in political life. Girls in school should be given the same opportunity as boys in terms of accessibility to curricula, scholarships, career choices etc. With education, women are able to acquire social mobility and independence, but women lack the financial resources to pursue their education. In Fiji, as in many other Pacific countries, there is probably a need for an affirmative action mechanism to bring about parity between men and women in the educational arena. Stereotyping and sexist attitudes are often reinforced through school textbooks, and these need to be replaced. There is also a need for education of an informal nature to promote the partnership of men and women and the destruction of stereotyped roles.

Women must also be encouraged to join or participate in women's organizations which are concerned with women's affairs because these remain the major training ground for women's political participation. It is through these organizations that women's awareness of their rights is raised; it is also through these organizations that women lend each other support and establish a networking mechanism. It is in these organizations, too, that women are given the confidence to play an advocacy role rather than a servicing one.

Women need to be mobilized as a political force because it is only through women themselves that measures will be taken to secure women's participation in decision-making. How then do we mobilize women as a political force?

In Fiji, trade unions have now established women's wings which look specifically at issues relating to women and reorient women to play an advocacy rather than a servicing role. In some countries, including Fiji, a specific Ministry for Women has been established with the hope of promoting the status of women. I believe that a government ministry, as such, becomes too involved in the day-to-day issues facing grass-roots women, such as income generation. Perhaps a more effective strategy in politicizing women would be to have a women's desk in each government ministry to look at the broader issues of women's participation and undertake special activities to increase the recruitment, nomination and promotion of women to decision-making and policy-making positions until equitable representation of women is achieved. These women's desks could compile regular reports on the number of women in their respective ministries and their level of responsibility, and use these to put pressure on government ministries for positive action.

In order to destroy the popular myth that women are politically inactive and, more importantly, politically ineffective, it is essential that women's roles in politics and trade unions are documented, articulated and publicized. Women must not be satisfied with the leadership roles they are able to play within women's organizations, they must seek leadership roles in gender-integrated structures as well.

E. Conclusion

Most of the injustices and inequalities which exist in our societies today will take a long time to resolve because they are ingrained in our cultures and traditions. As a result, stereotyped roles are difficult to change. The fastest and surest way of changing attitudes and accepted norms is to reorient our societies so that they are not male-dominated but people-oriented, and this can only be achieved through greater participation of women in politics. The pressure for women's participation in politics must, however, come from women themselves. They must be convinced that political involvement and empowerment is of relevance to their everyday lives and will fulfil their needs and aspirations. Only then can women's participation in politics be truly considered an aspect of human resources development.

India

Margaret Alva*

Role of women political leaders in community development

Politics is a study of the exercise of power. Political participation should therefore mean participation in the exercise of power, the power to effectively influence decision-making processes and policies, to reverse existing situations wherever they are disadvantageous and to bring about necessary social change. Political participation therefore is much more than physical participation in formal institutions and processes, though this is necessary both for itself as well as for influencing decision-making processes.

Any assessment of women's political participation must therefore begin with such questions as: Has such participation led to an improvement in the quality of life of women? Has it led to any structural changes in the distribution of resources and power? Has it renegotiated gender relations and increased awareness among women? Have the political interventions made on behalf of women had any positive consequences, or have they merely reinforced existing hierarchies of power?

Since India had a colonial experience and a national struggle that led to the establishment of an independent, sovereign democracy, almost all analysis focuses on the difference between the pre- and post-independence eras.

Indian women had a very dignified place in ancient times. They participated in religious and community life as circumstances and situations demanded, and from time to time women appeared on the Indian scene who excelled as administrators, warriors, reformers and religious teachers. But invasions and wars led to political instability and the migration

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of populations, resulting in exploitation and the oppression of the weaker sections of society, especially women. Such social evils as caste, child marriage, sati and purdah followed and came to be sanctified by religion.

The birth of the Indian National Congress in 1885 provided a political platform for Indian women. In 1900, the first women delegates attended a session of the Indian National Congress held in Calcutta and spoke from a political platform. This was the dawn of a new era, which saw Indian women take an increasingly active part in political activities. They emerged in their thousands in response to the call of Mahatma Gandhi, and Sarojini Naidu became the first Indian woman president of the Indian National Congress in 1925. With these events, Indian women had become visible and their politicization had begun. The "Quit India" movement of 1942 saw the leaders of the movement arrested and jailed, and it saw women assume leadership roles. They came from all age groups, classes, castes and religions, with young college girls and housewives outnumbering the rest. Their sympathy and support to the nationalist movement, including its militant activities, unnerved the British.

The participation of Indian women in the nationalist movement was unique. At a time when women in the West were involved in the demand for suffrage, motivated by the interests of their own gender group, Indian women were concerned only with the freedom of their motherland. They were motivated by a sense of nationalist commitment. The primary focus of their activity was not feminism, but nationalism. This is why equal rights for women were accepted without any hostility or resistance from men. The adult franchise under the Constitution brought women political equality. The adoption of a democratic system, with equal rights and opportunity for all, irrespective of sex, race, creed or caste, was a bold and welcome step. The major challenge to Indian democracy was how the vast, largely illiterate electorate would function. But India's people, both men and women in rural and urban areas, have demonstrated a remarkably high level of maturity, fully justifying the faith which our Constitution makers had placed in them.

It is important to note here that over two thirds of India's women live in rural areas, and it is the lives of women in this sector that truly represent the reality of Indian women. The majority of them are illiterate, unorganized landless labourers who work for a daily wage. The aspirations of women in this sector are different from those of women in the urban areas. The need is to balance the interests of urban and rural women, with discrimination in both areas being the common basic factor. Generalizations become superfluous, centralized plans prove inoperative and borrowed solutions turn catastrophic. Local leadership and effective participation at the grass-roots level is the only way success can be ensured and the quality of their lives changed.

Mere numbers, however, are not enough; women have to be situated at political levels which are significant and effective for exercising power. Massive mobilization and

numerically impressive participation in the political process – formal and informal - are not goals in themselves. They are a means, and a strategy for achieving something more fundamental, which a group – in this case women – can accomplish only when its participation touches the structure of politics itself.

Democracy and development, in order to be successful, need maximum involvement of people at the ground level. *Panchayati raj* (local self-government) is an important political innovation and a vital conduit for popular participation in democratic development. It serves as a people's forum for the promotion of local initiatives and as a modality for enhancing people's political consciousness and awareness, as well as their direct participation in self-rule. Women's participation in these institutions assumes vital significance in the context of their visibility in local decision-making processes. For the majority of women living in the rural areas and belonging to the lower sections of society, participation, initiative and leadership in rural political institutions can be of immense help not merely for their own empowerment but also in bringing to bear a feminine perspective to the processes of planning, policy formulation and execution of rural development programmes.

With this in mind, bills were introduced in Parliament in 1989 (not passed yet) for revitalizing these grass-roots representative bodies and providing for 30 per cent reservation of seats for women. By reserving seats and removing co-option, women would contest these elections, putting an end to the nomination of favored persons by male political bosses. Even in elections, the role of caste, class and local pressures often comes in the way of putting up strong women candidates. Yet, there are examples of active women becoming *sarpanchs* (chairpersons) on the basis of their commitment and popularity.

The experiment of reservations in the southern state of Karnataka is proof of the success of the effort. Karnataka has 19 *zilla parishads* (district councils). Each *zilla parishad* has about 180 to 200 *mandal panchayats.* There are 157 municipalities and six major city municipal corporations. With 25 per cent reservations for women (under state legislation), the total number of women representatives are as below:

In 19 *zilla parishads*	211
In 2500 *mandal panchayats*	11,615
In 157 municipalities	414
In 6 city corporations	75
In 25,000 cooperative institutions (with one woman representative in each)	25,000
TOTAL	37,315

The total population of Karnataka is about 40 million. Out of the total number of 22,400,000 voters, half (i.e. 11,200,000) are women. With these reservations, there are today 37,315 women representative in the local elected forums.

While substantial gains have been made by the women's movement over the decades, this is not adequately reflected in the representation of women in positions of power. The United Nations adopted the Convention on the Political Rights of Women in 1952. In 1975 The World Plan of Action, adopted in Mexico City, put forward various suggestions for the recruitment, nomination and promotion of women in various branches of government, public bodies, trade unions and pressure groups. In Copenhagen in 1980, further steps were recommended to promote international cooperation and strengthen peace through women's participation.

The Nairobi Declaration (1985) stressed "Women by virtue of their gender, experience discrimination in terms of denial of equal access to the power structure that controls society and determines development issues and peace initiatives" and noted "For true equality to become a reality for women, the sharing of power on equal terms with men must be a major strategy". It emphasized the importance of governmental and non-governmental organizations in educating women to exercise their newly-won civil, political and social rights, and stated that in this process of consciousness raising, efforts would have to be made to fix definite time-bound targets and even resort to a quota system. In spite of all this, women continue to be marginally represented in decision- making processes which have a direct impact on them. (table 1).

Table 1. Percentage of women in parliament by region in 1975 and the most recent information
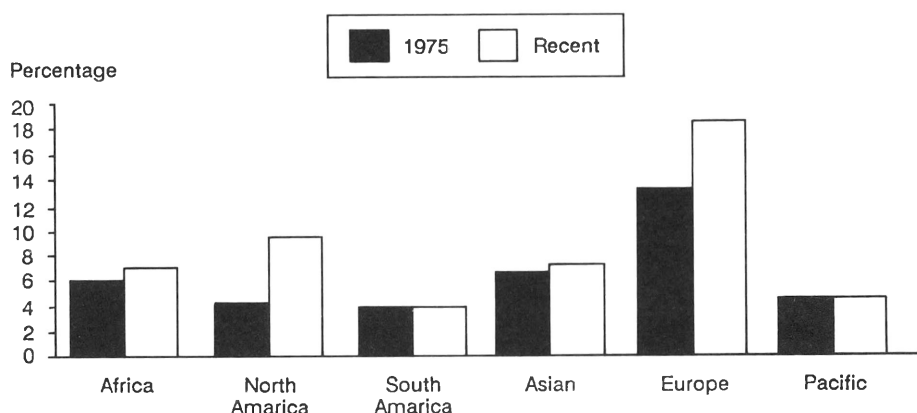
Source: United Nations Statistical Office, *Women's Indicators and Statistics Data Base,* New York 1988.

If this token presence of women in government, as against their numbers as voters, is to change, then it is of utmost importance that we formulate institutional mechanisms and work out concrete measures to ensure and enhance women's involvement and representation in positions of power and decision-making. We have to reject traditional structures — social, economic, political and cultural — which work to the detriment of women and strive to make programmatic interventions where necessary. We must inspire women to enter legislative bodies at the national, state and grass-roots levels in larger numbers. The more women we have in positions of decision-making, the more hope they will generate for the rest because it is presumed that it is the lack of sufficient representation of women in various positions at present that is responsible for their low status or share in development. It must, however, be realized that it is actually the reverse that is true. The sexual division of labour, the exclusion of women from certain positions and levels of power, and their poor representation in the decision-making machineries, are themselves the outcome of their poor status.

Any analysis of women's involvement in community programmes has to be made in the wider context of the status of women. It is universally agreed that women have always been acted upon as objects of social policy and have seldom been participants in their own destinies. This may be because of traditions that discourage women from expressing their opinions freely, their socialization to sex roles which preclude their leadership, their educational backwardness and inferior status, and above all the heavy demands that home and family make on women's time, attention and energy.

The opposition that most women face from male family, community and political leaders, if they decide to enter electoral politics or public life, is tremendous. The male-dominated political leadership in most political systems would like to restrict the number of women on the political scene. The manoeuvering and manipulation that go on in most political parties frighten women to such an extent that they withdraw from party politics altogether. However, many women activists involved in direct action for women's rights now feel the need to enter elective government bodies at the local as well as national levels.

India is a country in which opposites co-exist and contradictions thrive. Generalizations about Indian women, therefore, can be quite misleading. For while we have produced women who are among the most progressive in the world, we also have those who are perhaps amongst the most backward. The situation, however, is changing. The growing role of women in community programmes, the impact on their lives of education and training, progressive social legislative efforts, greater participation in economic activity outside the household and exposure to the visual media have all set in motion forces of transformation - slow, perhaps, but irreversible. But where do we stand in Indian politics today? Women, who form almost 50 per cent of the country's population, are not even 10 per cent of the total members of the national Parliament. It was no better earlier. In spite of all

the constitutional and legal guarantees and a galaxy of outstanding women leaders, including a Prime Minister for 16 years, women have not been able to get adequate and proportionate representation in the Lok Sabha, the highest representative body in the country (table 2). The eighth Lok Sabha had the distinction of having the largest number of women representatives (44), with the ninth and tenth Lok Sabhas showing a decline to 28 and 36, respectively.

Table 2. Women in the Indian Lok Sabha			
Lok Sobha	Total no. of seats	No. of women members	Percentage of the total
1	499	22	4.4
2	500	27	5.4
3	503	34	6.7
4	523	31	5.9
5	521	22	4.2
6	544	19	3.4
7	544	28	5.1
8	544	44	8.1
9	529	28	5.29
10	509	36	7.07

An analysis of women's participation in elections over the past four decades brings out the following facts:

(i)   The extent, nature and level of Indian women's participation is much greater than in most other countries, developed or developing;

(ii)   This participation has been steadily expanding over the years - by way of voting, as candidates, through participation in campaigning etc.;

(iii)   The gap in turnout between men and women is getting narrower;

(iv)   The percentage of women elected to representative bodies is increasing.

The politicization of women is combined increasingly with a degree of political awareness that is expressed not merely in terms of their mobilization at the time of voting but also in the way they cast their votes. It is now an accepted fact that Indian women do not vote blindly, or as ordered by their menfolk. Recent elections have shown that women have minds of their own and exercise their vote independently, pointing to the decisive role of women in the electoral outcome.

Equally significant has been the increasing delinking of female illiteracy from their voting behaviour. Literacy among women has been lower than among men, particularly

in the rural sector and among the poorer classes and Harijans. Yet most of the time they have demonstrated that they are politically sensitive and well aware of the various issues confronting them.

The effective mobilization of women and their election behaviour, however, is diluted by other disquieting trends. These are:

(i) Despite the increase, women contesting elections still constitute only 3.4 per cent of the total number of contestants; of the contestants, the women who get elected constitute a still smaller percentage.

(ii) Many women contest as independents, which implies that the political parties are, by and large, reluctant to field women as candidates.

(iii) Most of the women who contest gain their candidature by virtue of their birth or close relationship with established party leaders; few women contestants can claim to having risen step-by-step in their political careers.

(iv) There is no correlation between female population, their voting percentage and their numbers in the elected assemblies.

(v) The cost of participation in formal politics is at present too high for most women, and therefore their participation is low; it is lower than men of even weaker sections of society.

While women's participation in formal politics is low, their informal contribution is considerable. This informal process relies on the traditional tasks women perform - be it as home-makers, home-based workers, peasants or others. Its strategies are the traditional forms of get-togethers and communication media such as gossip, folk songs and festivals. Their power comes from this collective strength borne out of interaction among themselves. The system is one of pooling their energies and operating collectively, as organizers and members. Their seclusion from the world of men and from the "public sphere" has made women come together in a relationship of interdependence, often at the village well or the local fair. Strong cultural traditions, still preserved in villages, bring a majority of women into the informal political process. The freedom struggle as well as peasant movements witnessed women utilizing this informal participatory method. The close connection between women's role in these movements and the roles they played in daily lives proved the validity and effectiveness of this process.

In more contemporary times, these informal processes are manifested as women organizing and working through groups, by themselves, or through the mediation of others. Many non-governmental organizations are attempting this type of collective functioning to share information, organize income-generation activities and operate government-funded schemes. In studying women's participation in mass movements, the Chipko Movement stands out prominently. A genuine mass-based women's movement, it has grown out

of the grass-roots participatory organizations of women. The Movement, initiated in 1972-1974, is an example of the powerful impact that women's initiative can have on rulers, contractors and family members. Here women shouldered major burdens and the drudgery of bringing fuel, fodder and water from long distances. Naturally, action which affected these sources of livelihood adversely drew sharp resentment. In this struggle, women have not been mere supporters of an ongoing struggle but have functioned as initiators of the movement, with a far-reaching impact on gender relations in Garhwali society. As mentioned in the report on the *State of India's Environment,* "Women acting entirely on their own, rose up on the spur of the moment. While in Rani (Chamoli District) the protest was against a timber contractor, in all other areas the protest was against their own cash hungry men who could not care less if the forest was destroyed while their women had to walk for many miles to collect their daily load of fuel and fodder". Notwithstanding these positive developments, it will be a long time before rural women can participate freely and boldly, and take the initiative in launching programmes of special interest to themselves.

It can, of course, be debated whether these alternative structures and processes have not resulted in women being excluded from the mainstream and the exercise of formal power, thereby leading to their unequal and subordinated political status. If women have an alternative view of politics and develop a better strategy for constructing it, should they not be expected to share this with men, influence the formal processes and change them for the better by their positive intervention? Would not the integration of enough women change the political structures and their functioning?

In the past, such experiments have resulted in changing women more than the structures. The formal structures are hierarchial and vertical, paralleling the lines along which society everywhere is ordered. This ill-suits women, who need to be community-oriented and relate themselves horizontally if they are to take charge. The formal system, as is ordained, need not be viewed as either natural or inevitable; it has been established by male choice with very little input from or consent of women. It may be individual-oriented or state-oriented — but definitely not women-oriented. It is this conviction that has led to the birth of many women's organizations and groups in our country.

Women's organizations in India have a long history, tracing back to the beginning of this century. Differing in their methods and forms of action and appealing to different social groups and classes — all of them motivated by the single aim of fighting the exploitation of women — these groups today work quite effectively at various levels. Their campaigns have spread to various fronts: media, academic curricula, legal forums and courts, street plays, street meetings and marches. The strategy is one of creating public awareness, bringing about attitudinal changes, changing gender-oriented and anti-women values, and mobilizing for protests. Bringing pressure on the policy makers, disseminating information on rights, monitoring the enforcement of policies and, above all, mobilizing both women and men, for women's equality and justice — these organizations of various

hues and colours are seeking to bring about a change in the lives of women. But even while these groups are expanding in number, they are still not reaching out to as many as they should because most of them are city-based and urban middle-class oriented and steer clear of what they view as "political". Mobilization of rural women is thus limited and confined to a few regions of the country.

One of the most disquieting trends in recent years has been the effort by revivalist groups to use religious traditions and outdated and legally outlawed practices to reverse the trend of mobilizing women to fight for their rights and equal status.

Independent India has functioned on the basis of a multi-party system, with a spectrum of political parties that is ideologically ranged from the extreme right to the extreme left. Many of these parties are the off-shoot of the freedom struggle and continue its legacies with a reformist zeal. The increase in the number of women voters and eager participation by women in voting has made almost all the political parties pay special attention to organizing women, campaigning among them and choosing women to contest elections. In the earlier years, campaigning among women was done rather casually. Today, parties have regular party organizations, especially for women. These not only mobilize and campaign among women, and seek their support and membership for the party during and between elections, but also take up issues concerning women, though within the party's policy framework. They organize rallies and demonstrations on women's issues, pass resolutions and lobby with and pressure the Government for specific policies. Women are participating in these activities in great numbers and even court arrests on issues of popular interest. Parties are also giving increasing representation to women in parliamentary and state assembly elections, and in the party structure. It is, however, suspected that such induction is tokenism rather than real power sharing. There seems to be a general fear in all the political parties of women's groups emerging as self-reliant entities, independent of their parental control. Apprehensive of women's potential for social action and assertion of their rights, the parties keep a tight vigil over their activities. This has caused many women's groups to renounce the parties and form autonomous groups of their own.

Community participation also involves safeguarding and promoting women's professional interests, improving conditions of their work and, above all, liberating them from oppressive power relations. This calls for collective action in which the professional groups, trade unions and peasant organizations have a pivotal role to play. The presence of women in the trade unions, however, is far from satisfactory. This is partly due to the nature of women's work and on account of the trade unions' ways of functioning, as well as the strong patriarchal attitude prevalent among the workers and their leaders.

A significant result of the international women's decade, in so far as Indian women are concerned, has been a visible shift from viewing women as targets of welfare policies to their emergence as a critical factor in development. The scattered, piecemeal or curative

approach used for the advancement of women, unrelated to policies and strategies for economic development, are now being replaced by the integrated participatory approach, related to women's needs, aspirations and choices.

India is far ahead of many developed economies in providing progressive legislation and positive interventions on behalf of women. The impact of these policies on the status of women has, however, been limited. The reasons for this are varied. Given the hierarchial structure of Indian society with its diverse and complex socio-economic institutions and cultural values, it has been difficult to evolve a uniform strategy which could be effective within different groups. Policies, though developmental in origin, turn welfare-oriented in delivery. Difficulties in effective implementation and monitoring of programmes owing to the size and cultural diversity of the country and the intervening state-level administrative machinery, have led to the uneven distribution of the gains of development to women. It was this realization that led to the preparation of the *National Perspective Plan for Women* in 1989, with sector-specific, time bound, measurable goals, set for each sector but emphasizing the holistic approach for bringing women into the mainstream of national development programmes.

The emergence of gender issues on the women's agenda can be viewed as a reaction to the failure of the state to bring women's problems to the national agenda. The women's movement, which crystallized in the 1970s, emphasized personal and immediate problems, such as wife-beating, alcoholism, sexual harassment. The United Nations Decade for Women resulted in women's groups all over the world networking on critical activities. In India, the 1980s witnessed amendments to the Dowry Amendment Act, the Rape Law, and the Immoral Traffic (Prohibition) Act; the passing of the Sati Prohibition Act and the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act; and the establishment of women's development corporations. In spite of all this, women's issues have generally been categorized as social issues, requiring social action rather than intervention by the state government agencies.

Recognizing the limitations of using law as an instrument of social change, policy makers have adopted positive discrimination in favour of women in certain areas. They have tried to identify the sources and factors underlying economic dependence and social powerlessness of women and remove, or at least reduce, them. Recognizing the enormous burden which women carry within and outside the family as daughters, wives and mothers, policy makers have sought to reduce women's oppression through a series of welfare and economic policy pronouncements. Participatory planning and decentralized adminis-tration are also being attempted at all levels. In fact, India is one of the few countries where women have been participating in administration in an impressive way. Even though a majority of women ministers both at the central and state government levels are entrusted with social service portfolios, they have also been dealing with portfolios such as labour, housing, power, personnel and industry. A similar trend is visible in the top levels of administration. (table 3).

Table 3. Women in administrative service

Year	Service	Total number	Women	Percentage
1975	Indian Administrative Service	2286	162	
1985	"	4284	311	
1987	"	4548	339	
1992	"	4981	445	8.93
1975	Indian Foreign Service	338	30	
1985	"	535	50	
1987	"	533	53	
1992	"	523	59	11.28
1975	Indian Police Service	1437	—	
1985	"	2343	18	
1987	"	2439	21	
1992	"	2825	50	2

Table 4. Voters and electors

Year	Total voting percentage	Percentage turn-out of men voters	Percentage turn-out of women voters
1957	47.74	55.77	38.77
1962	54.76	62.05	46.63
1967	61.33	66.73	55.48
1971	55.35	61.00	49.15
1977	60.49	65.63	54.96
1980	56.92	62.15	51.22
1984	63.61	68.17	58.06
1989	61.95	66.13	57.32
1991	56.73	61.58	51.36

Table 5. Women ministers in the central government

Year	Cabinet Rank	Minister of State	Deputy Minister
1957	—	—	3
1962	2	2	5
1967	1	2	3
1971	1	2	2
1977	1	3	—
1980	2	2	2
1985	1	4	--
1989	1	6	—
1992	1	5	3

Table 6. Women judges				
Year	Supreme Court, no. of judges	Women	High Courts, no. of judges	Women
1975	13	—	299	1
1987	16	—	391	11
1989	26	1	387	12
1992	25	—	436	16

The Ministry of Human Resource Development, created in 1985, is an umbrella ministry which brings under its purview the Departments of Women and Child Development, Youth Affairs and Sports, Education and Culture, emphasizing the fact that women, youth and children have to be targeted as the nation's priorities. Education and training, awareness generation and leadership building, and involvement of women in all stages of planning and implementation of schemes and programmes designed for them, are implemented as special programmes for women, with supportive structures to reduce the drudgery of their lives.

The big task before us today is to ensure justice, to reduce the disparities in the opportunities and facilities available to women, and to make them equal partners in development. This entails a new determination and a new approach at devising appropriate measures to educate public opinion and direct popular aspirations towards the eradication of prejudice and abolition of all other practices which are based on the notion of women's inferiority. It is too much to expect that this can be achieved by government efforts alone. The political will is there, but it is not enough. What is essential is the commitment and involvement of women themselves in changing the situation for women.

Indonesia

Susilastuti S. Isnomo*

Role of women political leaders in community development in Indonesia

A. Women in politics

Both historically as well as culturally, Indonesian women have generally been living in a setting which is conducive to their participation in the decision-making process. For centuries Indonesian women have participated actively in politics and civic life, agriculture, social affairs, economic life etc. — facing little of the rigid and formalized discrimination which women face in many other countries. These historical and cultural facts of women's status and role facilitate both the enactment of constitutional laws and the formulation of policies which provide a favourable legal and policy environment for women to participate in the decision-making process, both domestically and internationally.

The Indonesian state philosophy, *Pancasila,* and the 1945 Constitution make no distinction between men and women and consequently guarantee equal rights and obligations in the fields of education, law, health, political participation and employment. The preamble of the Constitution extends the domain of people's participation not only in domestic development but also in the maintenance of world peace.

Subsequent legislative acts, regulations and policies have reinforced the guarantees set out in the state philosophy as well as in the Constitution. These include the ratification by the Government of Indonesia of international/United Nations conventions such as the 1952 United Nations Convention on the Political Rights of Women, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1952, under which women are ensured equal rights to employment, to vote and stand for election, and to hold public office, and the 1982 United

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Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Opportunities for Indonesian women to participate in all fields of national development have been specifically emphasized in the state policy guidelines of 1978, 1983 and 1988. Major policies, therefore, aim at promoting women's leadership, knowledge, capacities and capabilities, and professionalism in order that women may become equal partners with men in national development and assume functions in the strategy formulation processes at the international level.

The proportion of women represented in Indonesia's executive, legislative and judicative bodies, and in the armed forces, become relevant indicators of the realization of the constitutional mandate. The fourth and the fifth development cabinets, appointed in 1982 and 1987 respectively, included two women ministers: the Minister of State for the Role of Women and the Minister of Social Affairs. Meanwhile, there was a significant increase in the proportion of women civil servants between 1974 and 1984, which included positions at the higher salary levels.

Women's participation in legislative bodies has also been increasing, both in absolute as well as in relative terms, as is indicated in the table below:

	1977	1982	1987	1992
Parliament (DPR)				
- Total members	460	460	500	500
- Female members	37 (8.0%)	42 (9.1%)	59 (11.8%)	59
People Consultative Assembly (MPR)				
- Total members	920	920	1000	1000
- Female members	58 (6.3%)	69 (7.5%)	104 (10.4%)	...

The realization of women's equal right to vote and to be elected has shown substantial progress; the percentage of eligible women exercising their voting rights increased from 60 per cent in 1955 to more than 90 per cent in the 1992 election. The General Election Act stipulates that a general election in Indonesia shall be conducted by the President/ Mandator of the People's Consultative Assembly. The electoral system being used is based on proportional representation and a list system. That means that the representation of organizations in the House of People's Representatives will be commensurate with the number of votes collected in the general election.

The contestants in the 1992 general election, according to Law number 3 of 1975, consisted of three political groups, namely: Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (United Development Party); Golongan Karya (Functional Development Group); and Partai Demokrasi

Indonesia (Indonesian Democracy Party). In all three of these political groups, women have acquired top decision-making positions.

The House of Representatives elected 500 members in the 1992 general election. This consisted of political groups and an appointed group, as well as the Armed Forces, who divide themselves into factions. Out of the 500 members of the House, 400 were elected through the general electorate, with a ratio of 400,000 people to one representative in the House. The remaining 100 members were appointed.

Women members of the House total 59 (11.8 per cent) out of the 500 members. They represent all four factions, including the Armed Forces. There has been an increase in the representation of women in the House, however small, while the faction of the Armed Forces has also included a number of women members since 1987. More young women are now included as members of the four factions. We are also pleased to note that the faction of the Functional Development Group has a woman as vice-chairperson and the faction of the Indonesian Democracy Party has women as chairperson, vice-chairperson and secretary. Several women members of the House have been elected as either chairperson or vice-chairperson of three of the 11 committees, while the Committee for Inter-parliamentary Cooperation also has a woman as chairperson and one vice-chairperson. Because, in general, parliaments are mandated to respond to the expressed concerns and needs of the general public and to deal with problems and conditions which may adversely affect public welfare (including women's welfare), women members in the House have a wide opportunity in facilitating the enactment of laws and other legislation relevant to the expressed concerns, needs and problems of women (for example, in the Budget Committee, which covers the budget of all department and non-departmental state institutions and the Secretariat General of the high state institutions concerned with the State Budget).

Members of Committee VIII, which covers health, social affairs, women's affairs and the National Family Planning Coordinating Board, have the responsibility to respond to the needs and deal with problems and conditions concerning women. In carrying out its duty, this Committee holds working meetings with the relevant ministers, hearings with government officials and hearings with the public, groups or individuals, as well as conducting working visits to places or regions as necessary. The working meetings and working visits have resulted in the announcement of a Presidential Degree which states that in recognition of the vital role of women at the village level, starting in fiscal year 1980-1981, the Government would provide an annual grant of 100,000 rupiah (US$ 100); that amount has increased periodically, so that in fiscal year 1992-1993 the Government increased the President's aid to the Village Family Welfare Movement to 900,000 rupiah.

This significant increase will enable the women's movement to strengthen it's efforts to improve the welfare of families at the grass-roots level and to enhance the status of women in the family and society and their role in development.

Measures are also being taken to encourage and enable women to take active part in village community reliance bodies, in social organizations and in political parties. These are important forums for women to develop their ability to conduct fruitful negotiations and to formulate agreed principles in forms acceptable to all parties concerned.

The realization of power-sharing by men and women is reflected, among other ways, in the attainment of a consensus to accord the vice-chairmanship of the village community reliance body to PKK — the Family Welfare Movement, pioneered and managed by women.

Women's membership in the Supreme Advisory Council has also increased from one of 50 members in 1982 to two in 1987. The number of female judges on the Supreme Court is now seven compared to 45 male judges, while on the Court of Appeals, there are 27 female judges compared to 81 male judges.

In the private sector, women decision makers are playing an increasing role in the manufacturing and service sectors. They are also represented in the Indonesian Chambers of Commerce.

To promote women's participation in the decision-making process at the national as well as the international levels, intensive efforts are underway to secure the participation of more women in international cooperation for development and peace. There is also more publicity about the potential that women have for high-level decision-making positions, and about women's achievements at the decision-making levels.

Both non-governmental organizations and government agencies dealing with women's affairs remain the major arena of women's political participation. Women's organizations in Indonesia, whose 20 million members are spread out in urban and rural areas, and the Family Welfare Movement, with roughly 5 million volunteers, have engaged in extensive development activities, both in terms of advocacy as well as the actual implementation of programmes.

The training provided by women's organizations and the Family Welfare Movement aims at improving knowledge, understanding, appreciation and respect for the state philosophy, *Pancasila.* The object of this training is to enable women to realize the principles of that philosophy in their daily lives, particularly as mothers, the first and principal educators for their children. The training is in essence a form of basic political and citizenship education, which is the basis for the development of national resilience.

The five principles of *Pancasila* are: Belief in one supreme God; just and civilized humanity; the unity of Indonesia; democracy guided by the inner wisdom and the deliberations of representatives; and social justice for the entire Indonesian people.

These five inseparable and interrelated principles are respected by every Indonesian as the ideology of the state and the life philosophy of the Indonesian people. By virtue of the 1983 guidelines of state policy and on the basis of Act no. 3 of 1985, *Pancasila* has finally been adopted as the one and only ideological principle upon which all political organizations in Indonesia base their activities.

Management and leadership training specifically designed for women at the provincial and district levels was initiated by the Office of the State Minister for the Role of Women in 1984 and has been carried out in cooperation with the provincial body of women's organizations. Leadership training specifically designed for women is also conducted by various women's organizations, students and youth organizations at the national, provincial as well as district levels.

B. Women in community development

The development policies in Indonesia are based on the principle of equality between men and women. This principle is deeply ingrained in Indonesia's state philosophy, *Pancasila*, and in the Constitution of 1945. Consequently, this principle is also embodied in all regulations and legislative acts, including the Broad Guidelines on State Policy adopted every five years by the People's Consultative Assembly, which provide direction for the formulation of the Five-year Development Plan. Indonesia ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women with Law No. 7 of 1984.

The Broad Guidelines of State Policy of 1988 contain the basic concepts of: equal rights, obligations and opportunities for women and men in all aspects of civic life and in all development activities; women's harmonious role in the family and society; respect for women's dignity and protection of women's reproductive function; development of a favourable socio-cultural climate and enhancement of women's capabilities for wider participation in development; and encouragement of active participation of non-governmental organizations to promote family welfare.

In Indonesia, the endeavour to enhance the role of women in development has always been an integral part of national development. It is carried out within the context of poverty alleviation, improved human quality and the quality of life, equitable development, greater community participation and sustainable development.

In line with overall national development policy, women's development programmes are primarily targeted to women of the low-income groups in the rural, urban and coastal areas, women in isolated places and transmigration areas, women heads of households and young women of 15-29 years in age. The objectives of the polices and programmes are to enhance the role of women as wives, mothers, community members, economic providers, leaders at all levels, citizens and members of the world community.

A holistic strategy is pursued in the effort to uplift the situation of women. This holistic approach should be understood in its multiple dimensions. The strategy to enhance the role of women in development has the following characteristics:

(a)   Full recognition of women's issues as an integral part of overall national development issues;

(b)   Great importance accorded to the family as the basic unit in society;

(c)   Efforts to maintain harmony between the role of women in the family and in society;

(d)   Recognition of the heterogeneous nature of Indonesian women and the needs, concerns and aspirations of the various different groups and strata;

(e)   Full recognition of the importance of consensus (*musyawarah*) and mutual self-help (*gotong royong*) as a means to obtain the objectives of women in development;

(f)   Durable and close cooperation between the government and non-governmental organizations;

(g)   The importance of working closely with men in our efforts to integrate women in development;

(h)   The importance of having programmes designed specifically for women to close existing gaps between men's and women's aspirations and needs in general development programmes.

Thirteen ministries allocate budgets for specific women's programmes. Programmes for the enhancement of the role of women in Indonesia have to take into account the prevailing religious and socio-cultural norms and employ persuasive methods in order to make it acceptable to the people. The intermediary role of informal leaders, including religious leaders and women leaders, is not to be underestimated. Likewise is the role of traditional media and forums.

Recognizing that successful implementation of programmes for improving the situation of women depends on the ability of policy makers, planners and programme managers to integrate women's specific needs and concerns into all development sectors, training in gender-based techniques is being initiated for all relevant government officials.

Recognizing that women are not a homogeneous group, a variety of strategies and programmes have been formulated to meet the specific needs of different groups. for this purpose, in 1988 we developed and published a *Situation Analysis of Women* at the national level. A Situation Analysis of women at the subnational level is being developed in each of Indonesia's 27 provinces.

To carry out policies enhancing the role of women in development, the Government has formulated several broad programmes: enhancing the role of women in improving family welfare; increasing the level of women's education and skills; greater employment opportunities for women workers; and development of a socio-cultural climate more conducive to women's advancement at the national and subnational levels. Each of these broad programmes consists of various projects and activities, both integrated and specifically designed for women, carried out in various sectors and fields of development by the government, non-governmental organizations and the community at large.

In the field of education and training, priority is being given to eradicate illiteracy completely among the 4.5 million people aged 7-44 years, 2.9 million of whom are women, by the end of the Fifth Development Plan period (Repelita V). Special efforts are being taken to enable and encourage women to acquire post-primary education and participate in greater numbers in the fields of science and technology. Mothers and other family members are also being trained to foster early childhood growth and development (*Bina Keluarga dan Balita* programme).

Vocational and technical skill training programmes are being offered to improve women's productivity and develop entrepreneurship. Women are given priority in the so-called P-4 training. The P-4 training is in essence a form of basic political and citizenship education, which is the principal basis for the development of national resilience.

Employment opportunities in terms of quantity as well as variety at all levels for both men and women constitute one of Indonesia's major problems. Indonesia's policies and programmes on women and employment are focused on creating job opportunities for women, improving the knowledge and skills of women workers, increasing their productivity and improving the welfare, working conditions and protection of women workers in the formal and informal sectors.

In the field of health, nutrition and family planning, the condition of women still needs our main attention. One improvement underway is the community-based Posyandu or Village Integrated Service Post. There are more than 201,000 posts providing service to 20.9 million children under five years old (85 per cent of all under fives) and their mothers. The Posyandu provides five basic services for children under five and their mothers: nutrition improvement, immunization, diarrhoeal disease control, mother and child care, and family planning. Women play a crucial role in village social development activities. The nation-wide and community-based PKK or the Family Welfare Movement of female volunteers is active in organizing and managing social mobilization for Posyandu.

Because of the active role of women in health development, Indonesia has succeeded in reducing the infant mortality rate sharply from 90 per 1,000 live-birth in 1983 to 58 per 1,000 live-birth in 1988. The target of the Fifth Five-year Development Plan is to

reduce further the infant mortality rate to 49.8 per 1,000 live-births and to reduce the maternal mortality rate by 25 per cent.

Women in Indonesia also play a crucial role in family planning programmes. More than 90 per cent of family planning acceptors are women. The PKK members in particular are active and effective motivators in the village. The women cadres of the Family Welfare Movement (PKK) and members of women's organizations constitute the majority of voluntary workers at the village level. There are presently about two million PKK volunteers actively involved in village level social development programmes carried in almost all of Indonesia's more than 66,000 villages. Many women's organizations and the PKK carry out health and family planning programmes, which range from advocacy activities and health education to actual provision of primary health services. However, efforts are being carried out to promote greater participation of women in the family planning programme.

Indonesia is the world's fourth most populous country. The 1990 population is estimated at 180 million, up from 164 million in 1985. It is estimated that by the year 2000 Indonesia's population will reach 216 million. In view of the large population, the ability of the country to reduce the population growth is of paramount importance. The target is to reduce the growth rate from 2.1 per cent at the end of the Fourth Five-year Development Plan, to 1.8 per cent by the end of the current Fifth Five-year Development Plan. The marriage law sets the minimum marriage age at 16 years for women and 19 years for men. However, the Government is encouraging the delay of marriage to 20 years of age for women and 25 years for men.

The success of the family planning programmes and the internalization of "the small and happy family norm" have a far-reaching impact on the status of women. Women tend to marry later, which means they have more chance to reach higher levels of education. They also have more time to engage in income-earning activities outside the home. Female participation in the Indonesian labour force has indeed been increasing rapidly.

In order to increase the still low participation of women in decision-making positions at all levels of administration, some breakthrough measures have been undertaken, including management and leadership training, civic education and legal literacy pro-grammes for women. These are given high priority in order to meet the increasing demand for qualified women leaders and to improve the quality of those already occupying leadership positions in various social and community organizations and institutions. These measures will be continued, improved and expanded.

There are a number of socio-cultural and traditional values which are not supportive to women's advancement. Advocacy activities have been undertaken through the mass media, both modern and traditional, and through formal and informal leaders as well as through educational and training materials, to create a socio-cultural climate more

conducive to women's advancement and equal partnership in development between men and women.

Lack of women's legal awareness and knowledge about their rights often places women in a weak position, both within the family and society. In daily life women often fail to obtain justice and legal protection simply because of their ignorance about the existing laws and regulations. Therefore, legal literacy programmes are also given high priority.

C. National machinery for women's advancement

In the same year (1978) that a chapter on the role of women in nation building was included in the Broad Guidelines of State Policy, the Government appointed an Associate Minister for the Role of Women, whose status was elevated to Minister of State in 1983.

Presidential Degree number 25/1983 specifies the functions of the State Minister as follows:

(a) To prepare, plan and formulate government policies pertaining to the enhancement of the role of women in various fields of development;

(b) To coordinate all activities pertaining to the enhancement of the role of women so as to achieve comprehensive, balanced and integrated efforts in its overall implementation;

(c) To coordinate the operational activities for enhancing of the role of women in various government institutions and agencies;

(d) To submit to the President reports, information, and recommendations on matters concerning the role of women in development.

Thus, the office of the State Minister for the Role of Women is responsible for policy formulation, planning, coordination and advocacy of activities for improving the situation of women. The implementation itself is the responsibility of various sectoral departments. Programme officers are located within the hierarchical structure of the departments. At the subnational level the programmes or projects are carried out by field offices of sectoral departments in cooperation with the subnational governmental machinery. Almost all departments in one or another way engage in the implementation of programmes aimed at enhancing the role of women in development. These include the Department of Health, Department of Manpower, Department of Agriculture, Department of Forestry, Department of Cooperatives, Department of Religious Affairs, National Family Planning Coordination Board etc. The machinery for women's advancement at the subnational level (provincial and district levels) was also established in 1990.

To enable the State Minister to function effectively, institutional arrangements for policy formulation, implementation, monitoring, review and appraisal of achievements have been established by facilitating network linkages. Coordination of all development action, which starts from planning to the monitoring and evaluation stages, is conducted through various working groups established at the office of the State Minister for the Role of Women. Members of the working groups are representatives of sectoral departments and representatives of the Family Welfare Movement (PKK) and national women's organizations. The State Minister also holds twice-a-year meetings with first echelon officials of various sectoral departments for budget and programme formulation and programme assessments.

If we consider the national machinery for the advancement of women as transcending the formal bureaucratic structure, then we have to include semi-official and non-governmental organizations having similar objectives.

The PKK (Family Welfare Movement) is a community-based movement of women volunteers actively involved in activities to improve the socio-economic condition of families in the villages and urban neighbourhoods. There are about 2 million PKK cadres actively involved in grass-roots level social development programmes carried out in more than 66,000 villages throughout Indonesia. The PKK has ten major programmes: Application of *Pancasila,* mutual self-help, nutrition, sewing, housing and home economics, education and skill training, health, cooperatives, environmental protection and conservation, and appropriate household planning.

PKK cadres are supervised by motivating teams formed at the national, provincial, and local levels, which facilitate and monitor activities at lower levels. The Chairperson of the National PKK motivating team is the wife of the Minister of Home Affairs, and this structure is generally paralleled at lower levels, with the governor's wife chairing the provincial PKK motivating team, the *bupati's* (district head's) wife chairing the district PKK motivating team, and so on. At the village level, the PKK forms one section of the Village Community Resilience Council (LKMD) — also made up of volunteers — which is responsible for enhancing community participation in the planning and implementation of local development activities. The chairperson of the village PKK motivating team also serves as the vice-chairperson of the Village Community Resilience Council.

PKK's objective is to reach directly as many families as possible. The strategy is to organize households into units of 10 to 20 (*Dasawisma*), whose members select a chairperson to record and report on key social data for member families, and assist the village PKK in mobilizing community participation in village development programmes to reach disadvantaged women and their families, and to strengthen community initiative and participation in development.

Historically, Indonesian national development has been marked by close cooperation between the government and non-governmental organizations, particularly women's

organizations. There are many women's organizations in the urban and rural areas. These organizations are often grouped together under umbrella organizations which can be highly effective in lobbying and advocacy at the national level. *KOWANI* (Indonesian Women's Congress), for example, is composed of 64 nation-wide women's organizations, ranging from professional groups to religious associations, with a total membership of more than 25 million women.

Other federations of women's organizations exist at the provincial and district levels, with similar functions, namely the BKOW (*Badan Kerjasama Organisasi Wanita*) or Women's Cooperative Council or the district-level GOW (*Gabungan Organisasi Wanita*) or Federation of Women's Organizations.

Dharma Wanita, established in 1974, has nearly 10,000 units and sub-units throughout the country. Its members are the wives of civil servants, and its activities support government social development programmes such as functional literacy, family planning, health, nutrition, environmental preservation and cooperatives. *Dharma Wanita* runs thousands of kindergartens and schools for the handicapped.

Organizations for the wives of Armed Forces personnel — *Persit Kartika Chandra Kirana* (Army), *Jalasenastri* (Navy), *Pia Ardhya Garini* (Air Force), and *Bhayangkari* (Police), plus the Armed Forces Family Welfare League — are grouped together under the *Dharma Pertiwi.* These have set up over 1,000 kindergartens and more than 200 primary schools, as well as a number of junior and senior high schools, vocational and technical schools, and schools for the handicapped.

The National Commission on the Status of Women is a functional organization working towards the advancement of the status of Indonesian women in the family as well as in society. The Commission's primary task is to collect data on the situation of women through surveys, research and other means. Recommendations for improvement or actions are submitted to the government.

The National Commission, as a semi-governmental and autonomous body, is comprised of representatives of women's organizations and technical departments involved in women in development programmes and experts. It has a presidium or executive board of five members (three from women's organizations and two representing technical departments) elected for a three-year term. The National Commission receives an annual subsidy from the Government to cover its most essential administrative expenses.

D.   Women and international participation

At the international level the participation of Indonesian women in the strategy formulation processes for development and peace is also worth mentioning.

One Indonesian woman serves as Vice-President of the International Council of Women, which has consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, and one serves as the Convener for education.

At the regional level in the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the chairperson of the ASEAN Women's Programme (AWP) at the national as well as the regional level is an Indonesian woman. Indonesia is the country coordinator of the network of ASEAN Clearing-houses for information on women in development. An important achievement of this networking is the first edition of the thesaurus on Women in Development. Besides the AWP, non-governmental women's organizations belong to the ASEAN Confederation of Women's Organizations (ACWO). The AWP and ACWO are working together in regional women's activities.

In 1987, two important documents were issued; Policy Guidelines for the ASEAN Women's Programme and the Declaration for the Advancement of Women in the ASEAN Region. These two important documents serve to motivate women to enhance regional cooperation between women in ASEAN.

Special mention should be made of the presentation of international awards; the 1988 Maurice Pate Award and the 1988 Sasakawa Health Prize went to the women of Indonesia for their outstanding achievements in family welfare development, survival and development of maternal health care programmes.

Two Indonesian women have been awarded the Magsaysay Award for excellent leadership in community development.

During the Rio Global Conference on the Environment in June 1992, Indonesia received three "Globe 500" awards, one of which went to women in the Family Welfare Movement in a village in central Java for their achievement in providing clean water for their community, and another to a prominent woman leader for her advocacy on the environment and sustainable development.

In United Nations international development agencies located in Indonesia, several Indonesian women serve as senior and associate programme officers and consultants.

Women members of the Parliament are also actively participating in conferences of the International Parliamentary Union (IPU). At the latest conference of IPU, an Indonesian women was elected as the coordinator for the women's group. Women members of parliament also participate in the AIPO or ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Organization, the PGA (Parliamentarians for the Global Action), Global Parliamentarians on Habitat, the ASEAN Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development, the Inter-Parliamentary Conference on the Global Environment, as well as in the United Nations General Assembly and other United Nations conferences.

F. Conclusion

The national development policy and strategies recognize the existence of a number of categories of women, who, because of their special role, are experiencing not only the common problems faced by men and women alike but also specific difficulties because of their socio-economic and health conditions, age, social status or a combination of these factors.

This recognition is reflected in the Guidelines of State Policy, which will stimulate wider participation of women in all fields. For this reason women are obliged to develop their capabilities and enhance their knowledge and skills in order to exercise their rights and assume their responsibilities as citizens on equal basis with men as well as assume leadership positions in social and political life.

Japan

Tamako Nakanishi*

Strategies to promote women's participation in politics and enhance their status in society

It is a great pleasure and honour to have been invited to this important Seminar and to have a chance to talk to you. I would like to start by describing the situation of Japanese women in parliamentary decision-making processes.

A. Legal recognition of women's right to vote and be elected

Japanese women were granted the right to vote and to be elected on 17 December 1945. Despite the fact that 47 years have elapsed since then, and despite the fact that the number of eligible female voters exceeds that of men by 2.8 million, women are still terribly underrepresented in Parliament.

B. Proportion of women in parliament

As of September 1992, the proportion of women and the distribution of seats between men and women in the national parliament were as follows:

(a) House of Representatives (Lower House):

Total seats	Men	Women	Percentage
512	500	12	2.3

The world average for the Lower House: 11 per cent

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* Senator, The Diet, Japan.

(b) House of Councillors (Upper House):

Total seats	Men	Women	Percentage
252	215	37	14.7

The proportion of women members in Parliament, including both Houses, is 6.4 per cent. The number of seats occupied by women totals 49.

The current total number and percentage of seats held by women in Parliament have not shown any improvement since Japanese women first exercised their electoral rights for the two Houses, resulting in the acquisition of 49 seats in total, namely, 39 in the Lower House and 10 in the Upper House. The proportions of women elected in the first elections for the Lower House and Upper House were 8.4 per cent (now 2.3 per cent) and 4 per cent (now 14.7 per cent); the women voter turnouts were 67 per cent and 54 per cent, respectively.

However, in the case of the Lower House, the proportion of women elected declined drastically during the second Lower House election and did not improve at all until now.

In the case of the Upper House, the proportion of women elected began to improve slightly after the introduction of the proportional representation system, which had a prioritized list of candidates for the nation-wide electorate in 1983.

(c) Electorates for Parliament:

(i) *Lower House* – The electorates for the Lower House number 130. 512 members in total are to be elected by majority vote in accordance with the seats allocated to each electorate. The term of those elected is four years, unless the House is dissolved.

(ii) *Upper House* – There are two types of electorates for the Upper House. They are:

   a. Prefectural electorates numbering 47: In accordance with the seats allocated to each electorate, 152 members in total are to be elected from the prefectural electorates.

   b. Nation-wide electorate: 100 members are to be elected under the system of proportional representation with the prioritized lists of candidates recommended by each political party.

The term of the Upper House members is 6 years. Every 3 years an election is held for half of the 252 seats in the Upper House (76 for the prefectural electorates and 50 for the national electorate, amounting to 126 seats).

Distribution of seats:

House of Councillors (Upper House):

Elections	Seats	Men	Women	Percentage	
April 1947	250	240	10	4.0	
June 1950	250	238	12	4.8	
April 1953	250	235	15	6.0	
July 1956	250	235	15	6.0	
June 1959	250	237	13	5.2	
July 1962	250	234	16	6.4	
July 1965	250	232	17	6.8	(1 vacancy)
July 1968	250	237	13	5.2	
June 1971	252	238	13	5.2	(1 vacancy)
July 1974	252	234	18	7.1	
July 1977	252	234	16	6.4	(2 vacancies)
June 1980	252	234	17	6.8	(1 vacancy)
June 1983	252	231	18	7.2	(3 vacancies)
July 1986	252	229	22	8.8	(1 vacancy)
July 1989	252	219	33	13.1	
July 1992	252	215	37	14.7	

House of Representatives (Lower House):

Elections	Seats	Men	Women	Percentage
April 1946	466	427	39	8.4
April 1947	466	451	15	3.2
January 1949	466	454	12	2.6
October 1952	466	457	9	1.9
April 1953	466	457	9	1.9
February 1955	467	459	8	1.7
May 1958	467	456	11	2.4
November 1960	467	460	7	1.5
November 1963	467	460	7	1.5
January 1967	486	479	7	1.4
December 1969	486	478	8	1.6
December 1972	491	484	7	1.4
December 1976	511	505	6	1.2
November 1979	511	500	11	2.2
June 1980	511	502	9	1.8
December 1983	511	503	8	1.6
July 1986	512	505	7	1.4
February 1990	512	500	12	2.3

C. Positions of responsibility occupied by women in Parliament

1. Speaker and Vice-Speaker

No Japanese woman has ever held the post of Speaker or Vice-Speaker in either of the Houses of the Japanese Parliament. This is most regrettable because eight European countries, two Central American countries and one Asian country at present have a woman as the Speaker of Parliament or at least Vice-Speaker of one of the Houses of Parliament. They are Austria, Belize, Germany, Grenada, Iceland, India, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Britain and Northern Ireland.

2. Prime Minister or Head of the Government

No woman has ever held the post of prime minister in the constitutional history of Japan.

3. Ministers

There is no woman minister at present. There have been six female ministers since the legalization of electoral rights of women. The posts held by those female ministers included: Minister of Health and Welfare, State Ministers heading government agencies dealing with such subjects as environment, science and technology, and economic planning. The post of Chief Cabinet Secretary, which is equivalent in rank to a State Minister, was once held by a woman parliamentarian for a period of approximately six months. The tenure of all women ministers has likewise been very short, ranging from 5 to 14 months.

4. Membership in Parliamentary Committees

In the Upper House, at least one woman is found in each Standing Committee except the Committee on Construction. Comparatively larger numbers of women are allotted to the Committees on subjects traditionally associated with women such as education, labour, welfare, health and environment. The Upper House has two female committee chairpersons (one for the Communications Committee and the other for the Science and Technology Special Committee). The post of chairperson of the former Committee has been allocated to the Social Democratic Party of Japan and that of the latter has been allocated to the Komeito. Therefore, it is up to the Party leadership whether to choose a woman or not.

In the Lower House, no woman presently sits in any of the six standing committees, namely, those relating to the Cabinet, local administration, finance, transportation, construction and the steering committee for parliamentary proceedings.

Japan seems to have a long way to go before women parliamentarians become "active in all fields", as is the case of Finland which has the highest proportion of women parliamentarians at 38.5 per cent.

5. Right of initiation and introduction of bills by women

There has been no restriction on the initiation and introduction of bills by women. In the early days of women's participation in parliament, female parliamentarians took the initiative to introduce a bill to prohibit prostitution. The bill became the Anti-Prostitution Law of May 1956.

I myself initiated and repeatedly submitted to Parliament bills for equal employment opportunities for men and women, the system of child-care leave which can be taken by either male or female workers, measures for the protection of part-time workers and measures to improve Japanese ODA (Official Development Assistance).

As for the bills for equal employment opportunity and child-care leave, after the repeated submission of my bills with the support of the Komeito Party, I successfully collaborated with other opposition parties and submitted the bills to the Parliament as joint bills supported by almost all the opposition parties. The Ruling Party succumbed to that joint pressure and let the Government draw up Cabinet Bills, which were subsequently enacted. As a result, Japan now has an Equal Employment Opportunity Law and a Child-Care Leave Law, although these laws still have many points that need improvement.

As for the bill for the protection of part-time workers, a joint bill was drawn up likewise by the opposition parties at the request of the Rengo (Japanese Trade Union Confederation), and that joint bill is now before the Lower House.

As regards the bill for measures to improve Japanese ODA, it had been pending at the Foreign Affairs Committee for two and a half years until I took the initiative in organizing, in the Upper House, an "Opposition Parties' ODA Study Council", which has been working on a joint bill, despite much resistance from the Government and its Party.

6. Intra-party group of women parliamentarians

In Japan, there is a group called *"Fuji-giin Kondankai"* (Women Diet Members' Discussion Group) consisting of all women members of both the Upper and Lower Houses. The purpose of the group is to exchange information and views and, if possible, to work out policies that could be promoted on a super-partisan basis. The group meets twice or three times a year.

This Group has not been very helpful in seeking supra-partisan solutions for, or initiating a bill relating to, women's issues or other issues, because the majority of women parliamentarians are strictly bound by party lines.

D. Causes of women's underrepresentation in politics

In most of the national elections in the past, the number of women voters who came to the polls was higher than that of men. In local elections, women's turnout persistently exceeds that of men, and the proportion of women elected to local assemblies has increased steadily to reach 3 per cent at present. This is still very low, but higher than the 2.3 per cent elected to the Lower House at the national level.

Why are women still so underrepresented in Japan despite the fact that women's turnout has been higher than that of men since the 1960s?

There are many factors causing women's underrepresentation. First of all, I can point out the still-prevalent view held by Japanese men that voting is an appropriate action for a woman, but running in an election and being active in political life is not.

The following are the causes for women's underrepresentation in politics:

(1) Engrained stereotypes and the traditional image of women: The rigid concept of sex role differentiation (stereotypes long engrained in the minds of people) and the traditional image of women greatly hamper the advancement of women in politics. Assertiveness and ability to present arguments and proof and to maintain dialogue and negotiate tenaciously (all of which are necessary to succeed in politics) are considered unwomanly and inappropriate behaviour for women. Thus, role redefinition is needed.

In the Parliament, which is still male-dominated, the majority of women politicians have traditionally been associated with such matters as family, health, welfare, education, labour and social problems, and recently with environmental problems. Women parliamentarians tend to be excluded from decisions on defence, security and foreign affairs etc. Women's judgements on defence, foreign affairs, ODA etc. are often ignored by political party leaders.

The image produced by the media is also responsible for such tendencies. For example, the Japanese press describes women politicians as possessing "kitchen sense". That is, women politicians bring the problems homemakers face in daily life to the political arena.

(2) Discrimination in the selection of candidates

(3)   Continuing scarcity of women candidates

(4)   Attitude of male party leaders: The concept of sex role differentiation and the traditional image of women held by the majority of Japanese men affect the attitude of male party leaders and often results in discrimination in the selection of candidates and the continuing scarcity of women candidates. A case in point is the attitude of the leaders of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

As mentioned earlier, in Japan the proportional representation system based on prioritized lists of names has been adopted since 1983 for the nation-wide constituency in electing the Upper House, and election campaigns are conducted on a political party basis.

If women were placed in reasonably high places on the prioritized list of proportional representation, women could usually be elected rather easily.   In the last election of the Upper House in July 1992, the present leaders of the LDP gave priority to male candidates, and women candidates were mostly placed in hopelessly lower positions on the list. As a result, only one LDP woman was elected from the nation-wide constituency, while two women were elected on the LDP tickets from the prefectural electorates.

This phenomenon clearly indicates how the party leaders' attitude towards women's participation in parliamentary decision-making greatly affects women's candidacy, and the election results of women candidates.

The following is another example illustrating this point. The sweeping increases in the number of women elected (particularly from the Social Democratic Party) to the Upper House in July 1989[1], and to the Lower House in February 1990[2], were due to the increases in the number of women candidates, encouraged and strongly supported by Ms. Takako Doi, then President of the Social Democratic Party − the number one opposition party in Japan. Ms. Doi was the first woman in Japan to hold the post of president of a political party.

In the Upper House Election held in July 1992 − one year and a half after Ms. Doi stepped down from the presidency − the numbers both of women candidates and

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[1]   22 women were elected out of 146 women candidates. Their breakdown by the political parties is as follows:

LDP:	2	JCP:	3
SDPJ:	11	Rengo Sangiin:	2
Komeito:	2	Independent:	2

[2]   12 women were elected out of 66 women candidates. Their breakdown by the political parties is as follows:

SDPJ:	9
Komeito:	1
JCP:	2

of women elected, decreased. Thirteen women were elected out of 123 women candidates. Their breakdown is as follows:

LDP:	3
SDPJ:	5
Komeito:	3
JCP:	1
NJP:	1

(5) Personalization and privatization of electorates resulting in the increase of hereditary male politicians: The political allegiance and behaviour of the Japanese are based mostly on personality rather than on considerations of politics and programmes. The political process of selecting candidates − and thus the outcome of elections − is a highly personalized process. Politicians tend to cultivate their electorates by granting personal favours − getting jobs, arranging marriages, presiding at funerals etc. − and constructing roads, bridges, railways etc. in their electorates. In this way, politicians try to cultivate the electorate so that when they retire from political life because of old age, ill health or death, their male descendants can inherit the cultivated electorate and stand for election as their successors. It is rare that women descendants become successors, because of possible role strain. However, some wives of politicians, who campaigned actively for their husbands, have stood in elections immediately after their husbands died, and they have been elected by appealing to the compassion of the voters.

At the present moment, over 36 per cent of the LDP members in the Lower House (108 out of 296) are hereditary politicians. In addition to these 108 LDP members, five each in the SDP and the DSP, and the two other parties, are hereditary politicians. They occupy 120 out of 512 seats in the Lower House. In the Upper House, hereditary members total 21 in the ruling and opposition parties.

This kind of privatization of electorates in favour of male descendants of politicians is a big impediment to increasing women's candidacy and participation of women in political life.

(6) The cost of elections is too high for women: As a result of the above-mentioned practice of cultivating the electorate through personal favours, the cost of running for election is exorbitant, although officially the cost for standing in an election is not so high. The level of political ethics must be raised for both candidates and voters. Although entertaining voters and giving cash or other benefits to voters during an election campaign are legally prohibited, violations are rampant because politicians are not directly penalized, and only election campaign accountants are arrested, and they are punished with comparatively light penalties. This means that there is urgent need for drastic reform of the Political Fund Restriction Law and the Public Office Election Law, which have lots of loopholes, as mentioned above.

(7)   Shortage of support networks for women politicians: Although there are many protest groups, interest groups and citizens' groups with women activists, most of them are very small, and they do not form a united front to support women politicians.

(8)   Rising political apathy of women voters, particularly among the younger generation: Partly due to the repeated occurrence of political corruption, many women have come to condemn politics as a dirty business. As a matter of fact, the long-standing enthusiasm and the higher voting rates that women voters have exhibited since they were granted electoral rights (particularly since 1960) have been waning. In the Upper House election in July 1992, women (in particular young women) recorded the lowest turn-out for women since 1946 (50.8 per cent for women and 50.5 per cent for men).

E.   Strategies to improve the situation

It is undeniable that for various reasons Japanese women are still deplorably underrepresented in both the local and national legislatures.

What kind of strategies can be taken to increase women's representation and to ensure their effective participation in politics?

(1)   Increase the proportional representation system: Many Japanese women hold the view that the electoral system of proportional representation seems to be more favourable to women than the majority vote, but only if women are put in "eligible places" on the prioritized list of names of candidates. The burden of campaigning shouldered by candidates is lightened under this system because campaigns are conducted on a political party basis.

Without the proportional representation system, I myself would not have been elected. In my first election, I was put in third place, and in my second election I was put in second place on the prioritized list of candidates of the Komeito because Komeito leaders showed deep understanding of women's issues.

Under this system, the attitude of political party leaders has a great impact. If women candidates are placed in hopelessly low positions on the prioritized list, as was the case with the ruling LDP in the last election of the Upper House in July 1992, the destiny of women candidates will be obvious from the outset of the election campaign.

(2)   Introduction of quotas: To prevent the recurrence of the deplorable situations mentioned above, more women should be in the governing bodies of political parties. There is a desire for political parties to introduce quotas by stipulating them in the party statutes or in internal directives, or by the enactment of a law supporting a quota system.

(3)   A quota system as a positive action to facilitate women's access to parliament: There are pros and cons regarding the quota system, but I consider it can be justified as a temporary measure to facilitate women's access to Parliament.

According to the results of a survey conducted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women and Political Power", 1992, out of the 150 national parliaments surveyed, nearly all countries have domestic legislation giving women the right to vote and stand for election without any discrimination in comparison with men. Nevertheless, in most countries women are in fact in a disadvantageous position and suffer from *de facto* discrimination mainly because of social and cultural pressures.

It is therefore desirable that temporarily, and pending achievement of a proper balance, women should be given an institutional or other "helping hand" to compensate for the *de facto* discrimination they suffer.

In order to empower women to exercise their political responsibilities and effectively participate in political and parliamentary decision-making, affirmative temporary action seems to be needed.

This notion is specifically included in Article 4(1) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

"Adoption by States Parties of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating *de facto* equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination as defined in the present Convention, but shall in no way entail as a consequence the maintenance of unequal or separate standards; these measures shall be discontinued when the objective of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved".

Besides the above-mentioned need for introducing a quota system and a change in the electoral system, such as an increase in the proportional representation system to accelerate women's greater representation in parliament, the following medium- and long-term measures should be taken to ensure women's effective exercise of their electoral rights.

(4)   Strengthening of civic and political education of women: This is needed in both formal and informal education and also within the family.

(5)   Efforts to eliminate stereotypes of sex roles and redefine sex roles: The notion that politics is not feminine must be changed.

(6)   Political awareness building: It is necessary to impress upon women that exercising the right to vote is an act whereby women assert themselves as political subjects

rather than objects, assert their dignity and promote changes with regard to women's status in society.

(7)   Formation of support networks for women politicians: It is desirable to encourage the formation of support networks which women politicians are usually lacking.

(8)   Training of women aspiring to enter political life and those already active in politics: It is of utmost importance to train such women to empower them to participate effectively in politics and parliamentary decision-making.

F.   Modalities for institutionalizing regional cooperation

A country's political system is a product of its total culture. Its political system does not develop separately from the geographic, social, economic, ideological, scientific or historical elements of that culture but interacts with all of them as both cause and effect.

Thus, the political systems, institutions and climates of countries in the Asian and Pacific region are very different, reflecting their diversified cultures. However, the fact that women are more or less underrepresented in the parliamentary decision-making process at the national and local levels of their countries seems to be a common feature in all countries of the region.

Through the exchange of information, views and experiences among women, both as voters and parliamentarians in the region, we shall be able to find more similarities, and identify common needs of women in the region. Certainly, there is a great need of human resources development, including leadership training, training in the development of political skills, election campaign techniques, use of media etc., which might be commonly applicable to the countries in the region, with some modification to suit the situation in the respective countries as necessary and appropriate. The Center for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics, which has been established in the Philippines, seems to be a most timely and appropriate endeavour for such purposes. However, various problems seem to be involved therein. There appears to be a language barrier and a funding problem, among others. Each of us has to exert our utmost effort to promote the understanding and cooperation of the Government and non-governmental organizations in our own country to make that Center a success.

The IWY, United Nations Decade for Women and the Forward-Looking Strategy for the Advancement of Women Towards the Year 2000, adopted by the United Nations Women's Conference in Nairobi, have greatly contributed to the recognition that all forms of discrimination against women need to be eliminated to achieve equality, peace and development in all parts of the world.

I highly appreciate the efforts exerted by the United Nations family in this field. I particularly appreciate the efforts made by UNESCO, UNIFEM and ESCAP to increase women's representation in the decision-making process at national, regional and international levels.

Taking this opportunity I should like to express my deep gratitude specifically to ESCAP for making this Seminar possible in close collaboration with the Center for Korean Women and Politics.

I do hope a very powerful regional United Nations organization such as ESCAP will continue to help women in the region positively to ensure their greater participation in the parliamentary decision-making process with a view to achieving sustainable development based on economic equity and social justice in this region.

Let us all work together in order to bring about changes in our society and to build a better world in which all human beings, irrespective of race, creed or sex, can pursue their material well-being and spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, equal opportunity, economic security, and lasting peace.

Philippines

Anna Dominique Coseteng*

Non-governmental organizations and Filipino women leaders: fighting for our rightful share of the feast

I give you my warmest greetings from the Philippines.

Distinguished friends and colleagues, I speak to you not only as an opposition Senator in my country. I speak to you also as a sister in the women's struggle.

The story of the transformation of women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the Philippines from a protest movement against Marcos in 1983 to a highly visible force with a specific agenda might also be the story of my own political career.

Before I decided to join electoral politics, politics as I knew it had more to do with issues and causes than with horsetrading among political parties, launching campaigns and luring voters. I was Chairperson of an organization named WOMB, or Women for the Ouster of Marcos and Boycott. Like most NGOs at that time, we campaigned actively for an end to human rights violations, widespread graft and corruption, and the general socio-economic decadence that besieged our country. As Chairperson of WOMB, I became in 1985 a Member of the National Council of the Philippines' biggest, most formidable coalition of women's organizations, GABRIELA.

In December 1985, after Marcos announced the holding of snap presidential elections, the political maturity of GABRIELA's leaders was put to the test. As part of the progressive movement, GABRIELA was asked to support the opposition candidate, Corazon Aquino. A majority of the National Council voted to support Aquino. However, ideological intrigue reared its ugly head at a crucial time, and the decision was not carried. GABRIELA's

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membership was split between those for Aquino and those for boycotting the elections. Six years after Aquino became President in 1986, the ideological differences remain, although some successful instances of cooperation between the independent NGOs and GABRIELA hard-liners have been made.

Political analysts have admitted that the fall of Marcos may not have been possible without the staunch activism and visibility of the protest activities launched by the Filipino women's NGOs. Neither would post-Marcos politicians have gained any ground had women at every level not supported them.

But after a long struggle in the "parliament of the streets" during the Marcos regime, women in my country finally decided that they were ready to make their voices heard in the halls of Congress, through direct participation in elections, through legislation and governance.

In October 1986, in the presence of more than 2,000 women from all over the land, my predecessor as Chair of WOMB, Maita Gomez, and I co-founded the women's political party KAIBA (*Kababaihan para sa Inang Bayan* or Women for the Motherland). We intended to institutionalize women's political power, consolidate the women's vote and spearhead the women's agenda for change through government reform.

But after the Congressional elections in May 1987, I found myself the lone KAIBA member in Congress. The bitter lesson we learned then as activists-turned-politicians was that electoral politics had another set of rules. Mobilizing individuals and communities to vote for you was not the same as organizing people for rallies and marches.

Despite the 90-year history of women's NGOs in the Philippines, we still could not muster enough strength to get a critical mass of progressive women candidates elected to positions of power. Today, after having survived a more difficult political contest (the Senate Elections of May 1992), it is now possible for us to look back at the beginnings of the women's movement in the Philippines and assess whether or not our perseverance has been worth the cost for Filipino women NGO leaders.

The first women's NGO was established in 1906 as a civic group dedicated to the amelioration of impoverished women and their children. This was called the *Associacion Feminista Filipina* (Association of Feminist Filipino Women). A year later, in 1907, a group of landed women from the southern city of Iloilo, called the *Associacion Feminista Ilonga* (the Association of Ilonga Feminists), launched what became a 30-year struggle for the right of Filipino women to vote. Both *feminista* groups were established by educated upper-class women who, by virtue of family background and/or conjugal connections, had indirect access to power, wealth and prestige. Their leaders were outspoken and headstrong women who were also known and accepted in social and academic circles,

who conformed to the norm of being genteel, feminine and wifely, even as they fought for an issue that in other countries had incited violence or inspired ridicule.

The struggle for women's suffrage was long and tiring, crossing three decades, making cooperation among women of different generations, and provincial backgrounds necessary. In some instances, leadership qualities – and positions – were passed from mother to daughter; in other instances, leaders rose as women found new and better strategies to gain the sympathy of male legislators.

Between the turn of the century and 1936, when women's suffrage was finally won, the number of women graduating from colleges and universities increased tremendously, resulting in the entry of more women into the professions of medicine, law, dentistry, education, nursing, journalism and business. Many of these women joined community and national civic organizations, which in turn allied with national federations working together for women's right to vote. These organizations are still alive today, but because of historical developments these women, who were once called "radicals," are today considered guardians of traditional values.

It was in this context that the first outstanding women politicians emerged. Unfortunately, soon after women's first electoral exercise, the Japanese forces occupied the Philippines. Many women who had worked for suffrage turned their efforts to espionage or relief operations because war made it necessary.

While upper-class and middle-class women carried out nationalist work in this manner, peasant women in central Luzon were recruited to join the guerilla army known as *Hukbong Bayan Laban sa Hapon,* or Hukbalahap, the National Armed Forces Against Japan. Women not only organized community support systems for the armed forces; a great number of women actually went to battle. We are today still thrilled by stories of how gunless teenage girls fought fully-armed enemy soldiers using wit and foresight, and how women like Kumander Liwayway and Kumander Tapang led hundreds of male guerilla soldiers in battle after battle, helping to earn eventual victory at the end of the Second World War.

After the war, most of these guerilla women returned to work in their fields and homes. But having developed the capacity to lead during a war, they easily gained leadership status in their own communities. Having been exposed to the tenants of land reform, nationalism and socialism, many former HUKs organized groups like the SPKP (*Samahang Progresibo ng Kababaihang Pilipino,* or Association of Progressive Filipino Women) where farmers could share resources and knowledge, despite their lack of land ownership.

The formation of the SPKP in the mid-1960s reflected what had become a trend both among the traditional civic groups as well as among the political and progressive groups: the establishment of women's auxiliary corps or women's desks emanating from

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a male-dominated base organization, primarily to solicit the support of women for a male initiative.

From the SPKP emerged the present *Katipunan ng Bagong Pilipina* (Organization of New Filipinas), or KABAPA. Established in the 1970s, its members included descendants of former SPKP and Huk women. KABAPA is the foremost peasant women's NGO today, having nurtured leaders in NGO and electoral politics at the village and town levels.

But male leaders in the Philippines later learned that they got more than they had bargained for. With women's auxiliaries promoting their own activities, women leaders began pursuing an independent line.

With the introduction of Maoist thought among the intellectuals of the mid-1960s, a new activism was born, and with it the Communist Party of the Philippines. Progressive as they may have seemed for their view of economic class relations, men in these groupings remained silent about gender relations. Inevitably, women in these organizations went through a bitter ideological struggle with them.

In 1970, the activist University of the Philippines scholar Lorena Barros decided to form MAKIBAKA (*Malayang Kilusan ng Bagong Kababaihan,* or the Free Movement of New Women). Since its aims and perspectives questioned the basis of the established order, instead of seeking temporary relief for the burden of women in traditional roles, MAKIBAKA ushered in what is historically known as the second wave of the women's movement in the Philippines.

When prominent personalities joined the activists, glamour was added to the rebellion. The conversions of beauty queens Gemma Cruz (Miss International) and Nelia Sancho (Queen of the Pacific) and top fashion model Maita Gomez into activists gave the leftists their counterpart of Gloria Steinem and others. Their exploits may have encouraged many young women and men to rally behind the leftist cause, which had to regroup into the National Democratic Front (NDF) when martial law was declared by Ferdinand Marcos in 1972.

Under the regime of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos, few women leaders were allowed to hold political power. The Government then sanctioned only the blossoming of women in the arts, in academia, in the professional fields and in volunteer civic groups.

But whether it was the Inner Wheel Club, MAKIBAKA, or the Catholic Women's League, women's organizations after the suffrage movement seemed to come into being because male leaders either tolerated them or were wise enough to use the energies of women for their own agenda.

The Marcos government also made use of women for their own community-based programmes and organized women into health clubs or nutrition clubs, which later evolved into the government-sanctioned Rural Improvement Clubs (RIC), usually led by wives of town mayors or vice-mayors, and the *Balikatan sa Kaunlaran* (Shoulder-to-Shoulder for Progress), a nationwide organization involved in, among other things, beautification, family planning and income-generating projects under the then-First Lady Imelda Marcos.

At the grass-roots level, among industrial workers, the urban poor and the peasants in the countryside, community organizing by the NDF and its allies began an aggressive phase during the 1970s. Initially, women were integrated into male-dominated formations: cooperatives, labour unions and community councils. However, in the early 1980s, after women writers, artists, professionals and academics began asserting their all-women organizational identities, leftist women's groups followed suit.

Gender politics finally came into play between 1981 and 1983, when women's NGOs began to realize the need for an autonomous movement. Thus were formed Pilipina, Women Writers in Media Now (WOMEN), Kalayaan and the Center for Women's Resources. The assassination of Ninoy Aquino in August 1983 spurred the revolt of an angry nation, and women of all social and economic backgrounds marched in the streets as distinct groupings with colourful acronyms and led by famous women personalities: WOMB, AWARE, Teresang Makabayan, MARTYR, Katipuneras and GABRIELA.

These women's groups then had to face the twin problems of carrying out an autonomous agenda for women and of developing leaders who could assert their independence within their respective political organizations. This self-examination was true not only for women who considered themselves NDF, but also for those who were identified as Socialists, Social Democrats, Popular Democrats or Liberal Democrats.

The question arises: Within the context of political and ideological organizations, did women leaders rise on their own, or were they anointed by the "Central Committees" of their political organizations?

The 1985 split in GABRIELA has been attributed to the intervention by leftist male leaders in the decisions of the National Council. With the formation of KAIBA in 1986, an opportunity to make amends may have been underway, since a certain cooperation with the men in progressive NGOs was necessary. However, when KAIBA fielded its candidates for the 1987 Congressional elections, disagreement between the women candidates and the male hardliners on political strategies led to the pull-out of support by leftist trade unions, NGOs and grass-roots communities.

While the independent women's NGOs believed that they had sufficient numbers and experience to win political positions, optimism in what was called the "new politics"

was not enough to put KAIBA's pro-people and pro-women agenda in mainstream politics. KAIBA's political foray in 1987 produced only a single victory with my election as a member of the House of Representatives representing the third district of Quezon City. Several attempts to strengthen the party came to naught, and KAIBA was eventually dissolved.

Despite this, women's NGOs continued to march and work for equality, peace and development.

Women's NGOs in the Philippines have succeeded impressively in raising issues in the areas of health and family planning, children's rights, sex-trafficking and prostitution, environment and domestic violence, and women have been able to carve a niche in the national leadership through these areas. These issues are considered "new concerns," since the traditional issues of wages, labour rights, land reform, militarization and human rights have been dominated for over a decade by men. It might even be said that women leaders have been nurtured in these "new concerns" because men have not taken up these issues. But the fact is that until women brought them to the fore, these issues were ignored or belittled by male leaders and by the Government.

For instance, if the women's NGOs had not persisted in pushing their agenda for women's health and family planning under the administration of President Corazon Aquino, the Maternal Health and Family Planning programme of the Department of Health might have been completely abolished. In the elections held in May of 1992, a coalition of women's groups sought to counter the campaign of the Catholic Church against candidates who supported family planning. The Women's Vote for Health and Family Planning tried to act as a balancing force, at least in the media, for those candidates who were in favour of Family Planning and Reproductive Choice.

Until women leaders of migrant workers' NGOs exposed the ills of the labour export industry, abuse of Filipino domestic workers in such countries as Singapore and Hong Kong and the sexual exploitation of women in Japan and other countries may have continued unabated.

Up to this day, no government agency has officially acknowledged the crime of wife-battery, much less taken an official stand on the matter. It has been through the efforts of a network of women's NGOs under a project called KALAKASAN (Strength) that the mass media, Congress and the general public are finally being called to action, to form support systems and assist survivors of domestic violence. Women's NGOs have taken the initiative in all of these activities and have helped women rise from the ranks of volunteer staff members to convenors and project directors. Women's NGOs have created speakers' bureaus, advocates and managers – experts first on a single issue and then on a complex of issues and concerns. Challenges such as these provide the true-to-life clinics and workshops for future political leaders.

There is, however, the problem of training "second-liners." Most women's organizations are composed of women who are above 30 years old. It is now necessary to find innovative approaches to gender problems. We must begin looking at new concerns that are more relevant to younger women, who have become less concerned with social issues, and have turned to individual interests.

It has been rightly observed that because the present crop of older NGO leaders are usually academicians and intellectuals biased towards particular ideologies, their analysis of society is limited to their ideological paradigms. This has, in turn, perpetuated tiresome jargon and "politically correct" — but completely unappealing and elitist — activities which have no impact on the general public and alienate the youth.

A similar problem is related to the graduation of NGO leaders from "alternative" politics to "mainstream" politics. Having found for themselves a comfortable status in the NGO world, many activists still look at electoral politics and politicians with strong scepticism and narcissistic self-righteousness. Thus, women NGO leaders who make a bid for national positions through the electoral process are not automatically supported by women NGOs. It is not enough that such women have built a pro-women agenda through their statements, actions and track record. Other factors and issues seem to have been considered more important by these activists.

Ironically, as the recent elections have proved, many women's NGOs were quicker to support the candidacies of men who stood for the general political issues of human rights and debt repudiation than for those who pushed both a pro-women and pro-people agenda. Such inconsistencies seem to reveal, then, where the priorities of these women's NGOs lie when it comes to choosing national leaders. We still have to find out whether or not gender issues will ever be a significant factor for women's NGOs and women voters in future elections.

At this point, however, it would not be realistic to expect women or women's NGOs to help fund electoral campaigns of women candidates, simply because there is not enough disposable income to go to such activities. There will have to be a great leap in our economy and a drastic change in attitude so that women's work, and political role, will be given more value.

The role of the mass media cannot be ignored in the nurturing and development of women leaders. The continuing portrayal of women in stereotyped roles consigns women to a future of subservience, dependence and helplessness. How can we expect young girls to aspire for excellence and leadership if they are bombarded with images of females being battered, ridiculed and laughed at, and being objects of lust. How are we to train them to assert their rights if the media's ideal woman is one who weeps in a corner, accedes to the wishes of men or simply keeps quiet?

It is frustrating for a woman politician to have to be everything for the men in the media — because photographers, reporters and editors are still mostly men. She must look good, look smart, be the paragon of grace, intelligence, morality, dedication and commitment, but never ever lose the "feminine touch" of making men feel important. But she cannot be too pretty, or they would think she has nothing between her ears. If she has a husband, she must make sure she goes home straight from work, and if she can, cook for him, even after she has spent the day working on bills, making speeches, consulting with constituents, attending meetings with government officials and facing the press! Does the media scrutinize the private lives of male senators, representatives and government officials as much? It is still a man's world.

In the Philippines, a women's NGO called the Women's Media Circle has taken pains to develop positive images of women as leaders, professionals, workers and artists in order to counteract the deluge of negative stereotypes. It has produced a weekly television programme, "WOMANWATCH", and a daily radio programme by and about women, and it has introduced the concept of gender-sensitive programming to executives and managers of mainstream media networks.

The impact of these efforts can be seen in the change in attitude of the general public, and of media practitioners, towards women leaders and women's concerns. But how far will such "sympathy" go?

I pause to ponder a series of questions we have been asking ourselves: Do we wait for the crumbs to fall from the table? Or do we demand our rightful share of the feast? Do we paraphrase the French psychoanalyst Antoinette Fouque, when we ask: Does the women's movement succeed because we exclude ourselves from men, by reclaiming our own exclusion by them, and, thus, achieving status through opposition? Do we work to destroy an unjust system? Or do we work to cause the change of such a system from within? What is the best way to empower women?

If we must enhance the role of women's NGOs in developing women's leadership beyond the centres of political and financial power, then support systems must be established for a diversity of women's NGOs. More often than not, development agencies have concentrated their efforts and funds in institutions and establishments that deal with such projects as research undertaken by paid staff, publication of second-hand and third-hand papers (i.e., compilations of previously published publications) brain-picking sessions for action plans that are hardly supported, much less implemented, and of meetings that discuss the results of previous meetings.

Big funding agencies often prefer to give to small-impact but "manageable" projects instead of to comprehensive projects that have a larger impact on society (unless, of course, these large-impact projects are initiated by groups having ideological or political

backgrounds, similar to that of the funders). Amazingly, through self-help and through creative use of meagre resources, many women's projects have actually prospered along the way.

I have been asked to recommend concrete strategies or action plans that would help develop women leaders in the region. May I present these proposals here:

(1) Support the establishment and operation of formal and informal networks characterized by moving secretariats, a moderately rapid turnover of leaders and spokes-persons, and the assignment of regular tasks to different persons and groups. In this manner, no one person or group is either forever favoured or overburdened. All women's groups in the network will take turns developing their talents and leadership skills.

(2) Support medium-term projects that develop leadership in communities, sectors and special areas of interest. These leaders should also be given logistical support once they decide to go into electoral politics, with the endorsement of their organizations. This will make it easier to move from alternative to mainstream politics.

(3) Support medium-term projects motivated by capability-building components and short-term benefits. An example would be establishing a gender-sensitive women's media production group that could operate and manage its own radio and television station; or a response mechanism for survivors of domestic violence, that would integrate assertiveness training, self-defence, cultural transformation, media education, and inter-community and interagency cooperation.

(4) Long-term support for regional research and training institutions that focus on specific areas, instead of putting all issues/interests in one regional centre. These specific interest centres should be based in countries showing particular potential in developing experts in that field. For instance, an Asia-Pacific Research and Training Centre for Women in Media and Communications could be based in Manila; a centre for Women and Community Development based in Dhaka; another one focusing on the area of Women's Health in Bangkok; and one on Politics and Political Participation in Davao, the southern urban centre of the Philippines. These centres should link up with government agencies and allow trainees to have hands-on practice in various projects.

(5) For national, regional and international forums, conferences and workshops: suggest and support quotas for the participation of women from various localities and regions, especially those from outside the dominant culture. They should also be encouraged to participate as speakers, convenors and resource persons.

Also, two or three sets of women should be made to represent their countries, instead of the same people attending international conferences all the time.

(6) Support NGO-initiated projects that encourage cooperative participation of two or more groups of women from different countries and regions. This may take the form of co-production of a documentary video project between women's NGOs in Fiji, the Philippines, and Singapore; or a comparative research and implementation project on migrant women workers between Italy, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia and Sri Lanka; or an AIDS project between Japan, Thailand and United States. Through this system, international and regional projects will be the result of the best of all worlds, and a variety of perspectives will be taken into consideration.

Whichever strategy we choose to tackle first, the strategy must be comprehensive and holistic in approach and implementation, composed of multiple components that enhance each other. It must be integrated, by considering how each independent part works within a whole system. Lastly, it must encourage cooperation, not domination of a part over other parts.

In essence, this may also be how the women's movement in the next few years will grow. As the experience of women crosses more and more borders, as the consciousness of women expands even beyond these experiences, we discover our common natures but reaffirm our diversity. In the international community of women, we belong to only one country — the world. When we start mapping out the steps that would make leaders out of women, it might be good to remember that the greatest woman leader is one who possesses the heart of the most common woman, and the mind of the most extraordinary human.

Republic of Korea

Young-Sook Park*

Role of women politicians in promoting the status of women in society: four years experience as a lawmaker

A. The necessity of women's participation in politics

Since the time of national liberation in 1945, the Republic of Korea has experienced an anti-democratic government supported by foreign forces, several *coups d'etat* by military regimes and the subsequent suppression of human rights for the maintenance of political power. In this context, most people, especially women, have seen politics as a seesaw game to grasp political control. However, politics in its true sense is the task of creating people's living conditions; a process of enhancing the quality of life. Therefore, women, who make up more than half of the total population, should involve themselves in politics to secure the conditions necessary to improve their lives. However, politics in the Republic of Korea has long been monopolized by men. Women have been thoroughly isolated from the political sphere.

The degree of democracy in a society can be evaluated by the way women are treated and by women's working conditions. A political structure which does not consider the issues which affect women's lives contradicts democratic philosophy. At the same time, democracy cannot be achieved without ensuring the representation of women. In this regard, society as a whole should make efforts to secure women's right to lifelong work, equal opportunity and a life with human dignity. Women themselves need to participate actively in the political structure to achieve these goals. These are women's rights as well as their historical obligations.

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Women should participate in politics first because women, who are more than half the population, should be represented. Women should be able to share in creating their own living conditions. Second, women's participation in the policy-making process is necessary because women have a respect for life and a human-centred way of thinking. Third, with their higher level of morality, women may improve the current political environment, in which greed and power-mongering prevail. By forming a new power group, women can contribute to changing the present undesirable trend in politics.

The challenge facing Korean women today is how to organize themselves into a political force after long years of oppression by sexist institutions and cultural traditions.

B. The present political situation of Korean women

Through the evolution of the women's movement in the Republic of Korea, the political awareness and participation of Korean women has progressed remarkably. From the late 1970s through the 1980s and even up to the present, persistent participation in various social movements, as well as the democratization movement, has provided a solid foundation for a women's political movement. Meanwhile, the legislative achievements of the last National Assembly session, and participation in the local and provincial council/ assembly elections (which were revived after three decades) were good opportunities for women to gain practical experience in political participation. Women came to perceive quite objectively their own political capabilities and limitations through such experience. It is deplorable, however, that despite women's increasing will to participate in various elections, their activities and perceptions have not resulted in the formation of a unified political force. The fact that only a minority of the members of the women's movement join in discussions on women's participation in politics demonstrates that the women's movement in the Republic of Korea has yet to take hold in the lives of women.

When we look at the election campaign, we see that women are indispensable. They are the majority not only of the electors but of campaign activists. The problem, however, is that such participation of women does not have any influence on policy-making for women. As a result, a handful of women political leaders are required to play multiple roles. Women serve not only as lawmakers or lobbyists in the National Assembly and the party but also as political educators of the general public. They serve as bridges between organizations and political institutions and as organizing activists within political parties. The present situation in the Republic of Korea, however, does not allow them to fulfil such roles effectively.

One major problem is that women, who have long been excluded from the political arena, are in a very unfavourable position to compete equally with their male partners. The second problem is money. Politics is a job requiring considerable money, and the current atmosphere makes it difficult for women to fund their activities. Thirdly, the political

foundation is still weak. We can trace this problem back to the fact that as women politicians' advance in the political arena, the claims of the women's movement are often neglected. As a result, women political leaders have no forces supporting them. This makes women cynical about politics because they cannot see the changes that politics could make in their lives. Consequently, there is no expectation among women that their rights could be extended through political participation.

The elections for the last National Assembly, in which opposition parties enjoyed a stronger majority than the ruling party, was a victory for the democratization movement. A turning point was marked for women when women political leaders and women's organizations achieved landmark success in their legislative efforts. After 37 years of painstaking efforts, the Family Law, which had long oppressed Korean women, was amended, and the Equal Employment Act was also revised to become a practical law rather than a nominal regulation. A legal foundation was provided for the support of day-care centres by government funds. Segregated recruitment of government officials was prohibited, a woman minister was nominated to the second general assembly ministry, the Home Welfare Section was upgraded to the Home Welfare Bureau and women's participation in the administration was expanded.

All these achievements became possible thanks to the joint efforts of women political leaders, women's organizations, women journalists and male legal experts who truly believed in democracy, plus some male politicians who were sensitive to women voters. Among these groups, the role of women's organizations was the most critical. It was unfortunate that women politicians could not overcome the barriers of their respective parties even in the cause of women's issues. One result of this was the failure to adopt a quota system for women in the local council elections law. Of course, it was quite encouraging for us to achieve advancement in women's politics through policy reforms in the Assembly and to see increasing awareness of the necessity for women's participation in politics.

However, it should be noted that the number of women lawmakers in the National Assembly actually decreased. In the last general election, only 14 women candidates ran in their constituencies, and only 19 ran in the latest elections. In both cases no woman candidate was successful. Among the proportional national representatives, the number decreased from six to three, occupying just 1 per cent in the assembly. There were 10 women lawmakers in the 9th assembly (4.6 per cent); 8 in the 10th (3.5 per cent); 9 in the 11th (3.3 per cent); 8 in the 12th (2.9 per cent); 6 in the 13th (2.0 per cent); 3 in the 14th (1.0 per cent). This reality indicates that both women themselves and the men who dominate politics are responsible for this decline. Proper countermeasures should be taken to change the forces at work.

C. Prospects for organizing Korean women into a political force

The Constitution defines the equality of men and women in many words, but such words do not influence policy in institutions or attitudes in society. It is true that women are not yet fully capable of exerting their political awareness in the form of practical influence. In this regard, women political leaders are required to give priority to women's issues beyond partisan interests, while braving possible criticism that they are concerned too much with women's issues. Therefore, women politicians who take part in party activities need to promote the interests of women within the decision-making process of their party. Women need to demonstrate their interest in politics steadily and incessantly, and they must follow-up their interest with action. This is not an easy task. I, for example, suffered a "double dilemma". Not only was I in the minority as a woman, but I was a member of a minority party, where the majority prevailed. One advantage I had was that I belonged to the supreme decision-making body of my party. Because I was within that decision-making core, I could easily link women's policies and legislation. Women political leaders in the Republic of Korea need active support from women's groups who are the very root of their existence. Both women politicians, and their male colleagues as well, should realize that women politicians are not alone. When this is realized, the small minority of women political leaders will be able to achieve the political demands of half of the population. Ideally, male politicians will come to regard the voice of women politicians as the voice of all women. When women political leaders are confident that they are the representatives and window of opportunity for women, they will be better able to fulfil their role in promoting and advancing women's status.

As local autonomy takes root further in the Republic of Korea, women's opportunities for political participation and experience are expected to increase, and in turn more women political leaders will be created. Expectations are high as the role of women politicians expands. This will result not only in legislation on women-related issues, but also in women's leadership training and in revision of various institutions, including the election law, which should limit election campaign spending and thus enable women to run for election and organize as a political force. In doing so, the current practice of promoting women's policies only during the campaign period must change. To avoid such problems, the participation of more capable women must occur and women's organizations must be more actively involved.

Women's organizations for their part, should stop their practice of launching campaigns on women's participation only during elections. They should plan and carry out ongoing, regular lobbying in the National Assembly. Recently, institutes such as the Center for Korean Women and Politics have been set up to study how women participate in politics, and women's policies. It is also encouraging that programmes on political participation have become routine in women's organizations, although these are not yet fully satisfactory. Careful and systematic preparation and planning is needed so that the general public is informed of the process of legislative efforts and encouraged to participate actively.

D. Challenges for Korean women political leaders

There are a number of tasks concerning women which would improve their living conditions and which could be realized through policy-making and creating institutions. One of these is the enactment of the Special Law on Sexual violence as a measure to cope with increasing sexual crimes. However, it is time that women political leaders go beyond the tasks which are identified as women's problems.

We must recognize the fact that no political issue is separate from the lives of women and that women can contribute to the enhancement of all people's lives by using their expertise in various political fields.

The role of women political leaders in the Republic of Korea, where the Government's pursuit of quantitative development and growth-oriented policies over the past three decades has resulted in anti-life policies, should be expanded in the important environmental and welfare areas.

Education, economy and national unification — all these issues call for active participation by women politicians. Such participation will be a way to improve the political climate of the nation, as well as to promote women's status.

Lastly, let me add one more point as we are gathered here from many different countries. If we agree that the political problems of Korean women are by no means unique but are shared across the world in different degrees, I would like to propose that we pool our wisdom to solve our common problems. We also need to utilize our solidarity to promote competition among nations to come up with better policies concerning women. We have adopted this approach in the Republic of Korea, where, within our domestic setting, we have promoted competition among the various political parties for the advancement of the status of women.

Republic of Korea

Young-Ja Kwon*

The role and contribution of the Korean Women's Development Institute in developing the potential resources of women

Today, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation for the selection of the theme of this seminar "The Participation of Women in Politics as an Aspect of Human Resources Development."

In discussing the status of women, we cannot neglect women's participation in politics. Women's participation in politics is essential to their advancement. Without their voices being heard at the decision-making level, women cannot get the changes they need in education, employment, law, welfare etc. From this point of view, I would like to take this seminar as an opportunity to review the common concern of women's issues.

A. The establishment of the Korean Women's Development Institute

International and domestic situations have been changing rapidly, and such changes have resulted in the deepening stratification of people and the diversification of society.

In the course of rapid industrialization and urbanization, the Republic of Korea has experienced rapid economic growth over the past three decades. Export-oriented industries required a large female labour force. As the society diversified and the educational level of women rose, demands for skilled and professional women increased. Therefore, the participation of women in the labour market has been continuously increasing.

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At this moment in history, women's issues cannot remain as issues only for women, for there is no doubt that the balanced development of a society is simply not feasible without women's development. Women's potential power is a significant resource in our society and is directly related to national development.

Therefore, we need an integrated perspective on women's issues, since women's issues are closely interrelated with social issues. It is necessary to deal with a wide range of social issues, develop policies that respond to the needs of a wide spectrum of women and increase links and networks among different social strata.

Since the 1970s, there has been world-wide recognition that women's full and equal participation is essential to world development and peace. This is evident in the United Nations Declaration of International Women's Year (1975) and the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985). The United Nations has not only publicized the inequalities affecting women but has also recommended that governments all over the world guarantee the rights of women, exert every efforts to remove barriers in developing women's potential and help women enjoy the fruits of development equally with men.

Korean women have shared this view and have felt the need for a national instrument which could speak authoritatively on behalf of women and work exclusively on women's affairs and serve as a catalyst in opening new opportunities. The imperative was realized finally in December 1982, when the National Assembly enacted legislation establishing the Korean Women's Development Institute.

In April 1983, the Korean Women's Development Institute was formally launched as an autonomous and non-profit organization funded by the Government.

B. The role of the Korean Women's Development Institute

Since its establishment in 1983, KWDI has made a significant contribution to women's development by carrying out valuable research and studies to solve women's problems and suggest meaningful strategies for promoting the status of women in the Republic of Korea.

KWDI undertakes comprehensive research projects on the development of basic data and its integration, and policies relating to women, provides education and training programmes to raise women's consciousness and develop women's potential, and initiates various action-oriented programmes concerning women. It supports women's organizations, participates in international efforts to implement a world strategy on women and collects and disseminates information on women's issues. It also makes recommendations to the Government so that its findings can be reflected in governmental policies.

In the past, Korean women took it for granted that they were for the most part alienated from the mainstream of social and cultural development, but now they take an active interest in developing their own capacities and achieving self-realization. There has been a significant change in the general perception of the status and role of women in our society.

Korean women participate in the development of our society not merely as passive onlookers or outsiders but as active agents of development.

It is common today that women actively participate in the political, economic, social, cultural and educational sectors. Women's participation in various sectors has been continually expanded in quantity, but the status of Korean women is not yet satisfactory.

I believe that women will be able to achieve amazingly high levels of self-fulfilment if men and women are given equal opportunities for social participation and if social support systems for that purpose are legally and institutionally guaranteed.

Women as independent beings fully capable of taking charge of their own lives will provide society with valuable human resources in various fields.

I am sure that KWDI will continue supporting women in pursuit of self-realization and self development through research, education and training, publication, and resource development so that their creative energy can be channelled into a strong motivating force behind social development.

I would like to introduce KWDI's accomplishment in short.

C. KWDI's contribution to women's overall advancement in Korea

Under the President and Vice-President, KWDI's 164 professionals and support personnel are organized into five divisions: research, education and training, resource development, information and publication, and a secretariat.

Although their tasks are different and divided into specialties, all projects are closely interrelated so as to further women's development.

1. Basic research on women's issues

The KWDI engages in studies and research projects on women and provides national policy makers with the information and basic data needed to formulate policies to improve the status of women.

While approaches to women's problems have in the past been sporadic and provided only temporary solutions to isolated issues, the research and study projects of KWDI are based on the broad, long-term national development perspective and take an integrated approach to women's problems.

In the beginning, KWDI focused its research on the development of basic data and its integration. This was due to the fact that there was little reference to the characteristics of women's problems. The development and integration of basic data is the foundation to formulate policy measures for women's development.

In consequence, a "White Paper on Women" and "Social Statistics and Indicators on the Situation of Women" were published and are being widely used. KWDI also provided basic surveys such as a "Survey on the Status of Female Employment," and "Survey on the Single-Parent Family."

These studies contributed to the understanding of women's issues and are being used as basic material for the development of policy measures on women.

2. Policy research on the improvement of laws and institutions relating to women

KWDI selected various research and work projects that could recommend government policies and efficient measures to develop women's potential power. It paid attention to disadvantaged groups such as low-income women, fatherless families and rural women and to problems originated by the increase of female employment, such as child-care facilities and single mothers, and problems faced by special groups such as adolescents and the aged. It also contributed to the revision and enactment of the law and the establishment of institutional apparatus. It provided lawmakers with the results of studies undertaken at home and abroad in the process of formulating the Equal Employment Opportunity Act. It also contributed to the establishment of the Maternal Child Welfare Act through public hearings.

KWDI established medium- and long-term plans for women's development, provided clarification of the basic purposes and direction of women's issues and prepared the blueprints and strategies for the realization of a society of joint participation and joint responsibility of men and women. One achievement is the inclusion of the women's development sector, prepared by the KWDI, in the Seventh Five-year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (1992-1996) and in the Long-Term Perspective on National Development Toward the Year 2000.

KWDI will continuously carry out a variety of projects to upgrade women's consciousness and status, suggest effective measures to eliminate discrimination against women and make recommendations to be reflected in government policies.

3. Leadership training for women

KWDI provides educational programmes to qualify women to assume a wide variety of positions so that they may become self-reliant members of society.

In a move to enhance women's consciousness and help women become qualified leaders, KWDI has offered leadership training programmes since 1984 to train women leaders of various fields.

Women leaders in various vocations are encouraged to participate in training camps. In order to provide local women with such opportunities, lecture tours are also presented to women leaders in local communities.

With the rise in the demand of those programmes, in November 1989 KWDI developed a new leadership training programme, the "committed education course", to expand educational opportunities. This course charges tuition. Various women's groups have asked that KWDI provide them with these courses.

The groups include instructors for consciousness-raising programmes, chiefs of women's bureau in agricultural cooperatives, female would-be politicians, officials handling women's affairs, wives of civil servants and staff of the Korea Medical Insurance Cooperation. Most of them had previously participated in the KWDI's leadership training programme. It showed how the leadership training programme could be widely disseminated.

The case of the provincial government of Chulabuk-do shows the effectiveness of the consciousness-raising programme, as participants in the leadership training programme asked for KWDI's committed education course. Five hundred instructors from cities, counties and townships have participated in these courses since 1990, when the provincial government first requested them from KWDI.

This year, KWDI plans to conduct leadership training programmes for two nights and three days, targeting 600 leaders involved in such fields as education, administration, public health, regional activities, counselling and economics.

In addition, it carries out one-day study tours three times a year for a total of 750 regional leaders, along with the committed education through KWDI's facilities and educational programmes.

A meeting of graduates of the training is organized in six local areas each year in order to assess their activities in their respective fields as well as to establish a cooperative network.

4. Training for female political leaders

KWDI conducted five days' training sessions for female political leaders in 1989, 1990 and 1991, the first of its kind in the Republic of Korea, paving the way for women to challenge the male-dominated political world.

The training for female political leaders, in particular, was geared toward preparation for the local council elections slated for 1991. This training was aimed at female political candidates who wanted to enhance their abilities as leaders and to increase their opportunities for political participation. The training programme for female political leaders comprised theoretical and practical details concerning political participation, including election strategies.

Participants in the training numbered 100 in 1989, 87 in 1990 and 40 in 1991. The 1991 training was a retraining course for the participants of the political leadership exercises in 1989 and 1990. Most of the participants were leaders or representatives from various women's organizations or institutions across the country.

But the local council elections, conducted twice in 1991 in March and June, resulted in great disappointment for women. The total number of female candidates for small-unit local councils was 122, of which 40 were elected. Considering that 4,303 small-unit local council members were elected across the nation, 40 women accounted for only 0.9 per cent of them.

A total of 63 female candidates ran for the large-unit local elections, of which only eight were successful. 866 large-unit local council members were elected, and women accounted for only 8 (0.9 per cent) of them.

Among the participants in KWDI's political leadership training, the total number of female candidates for the small-unit local assemblies was 10 (5.4 per cent), and for large-unit local assemblies was 8 (4.3 per cent). Two of them were elected to the small-unit local assemblies and three were elected to the large-unit local assemblies.

Although there are no legal impediments to the enjoyment of their civic and political rights, women are still far from making their united voice heard and being duly recognized in appointed and elective positions. Although women in the Republic of Korea today do not face formal discrimination in the area of public rights, discrimination still exists, as shown by the limited opportunities for participation and development in politics.

5. Development of educational materials

To raise the level of consciousness regarding women's issues, extensive education materials have been published. These publications have been distributed to women's and social welfare organizations in an effort to change people's attitudes towards women.

Also, movies, video tapes and slides have been compiled to supplement existing educational materials. These audio-visual presentations on such women's issues as women and work, women and law, family relations and so on have contributed to the promotion of a new and positive image of women in society and encouraged more assertive lives.

Lending and copying services for these audio-visual materials are provided. These materials are disseminated through women's bureaus and welfare centres free-of-charge.

In celebration of the tenth anniversary of KWDI, a documentary film will be produced on the changing status of Korean women which reveals 100 years in the history of Korean women's life and labour.

KWDI will publish two books this year. One, *Equal Couples*, will deal with equal relationships between husband and wife. It will present guidelines and methods to achieve equality in marriage.

Another publication, *Women and Leadership*, focuses on the leadership of career women in an attempt to transform women from their passive roles in society to key roles in providing direction for society in the future.

6. Exchanges of information and publication on women

KWDI concentrates on the collection and dissemination of information in areas of women's concern. KWDI also acts as an information clearing-house for women on development in the Republic of Korea as well as other countries.

KWDI continues to publish the periodicals, *Women's Development News* (a monthly newsletter in Korean, 16 pages, 50,000 copies), *Korean Women Today* (a quarterly newsletter in English), *Women's Study* (an academics quarterly journal in Korean), *Women's Studies Forum* (an annual journal in English). The seventh volume in our ongoing book series providing readers with recent women's studies, *The History of Chinese Women's Movement (II)* has been translated into Korean and printed. These publications deal with various stories and articles related to women's issues and are disseminated to government agencies, women's organizations, scholars and interested women for the purpose of raising women's consciousness, informing the public of the importance of women's issues and promoting women's studies in Korea. The materials are published in English and are distributed to concerned agencies and individuals abroad.

7. Support for women's organizations

KWDI carries out joint projects with women's organizations and sponsors seminars to strengthen women's organizations and promote local community development.

KWDI seeks to inject new vigour into the activities of women's organizations by beefing up their organizational power. It also develops materials related to women's organizations while conducting joint projects with research institutes and organizations of overseas Koreans, along with projects supporting 33 organizations throughout the country. Thirty-three women's organizations in 15 cities and provinces are provided with programmes and/or financial support from KWDI to enable them to carry out a wide range of activities. In addition, some KWDI facilities are open to women's organizations for conventions, seminars and other activities.

KWDI sponsors seminars to reinvigorate women's group activities and train the leaders and the working-level personnel of women's organizations so as to beef up their organizational power and increase their influence in society. The training includes programme management, system management, finance, and communication skill.

KWDI seeks common strategies to encourage the activities of women's organizations and strengthen the network of KWDI and women's organizations in the Republic of Korea.

Through supporting and strengthening the ties among women's organizations, KWDI maintains a relationship of cooperation in order for them to function as a pressure group and as business enterprises so that the research and work projects carried out by KWDI can be realized.

8. Vocational training and counselling

KWDI provides vocational training courses for low-income women and develops non-traditional occupations. Since KWDI's establishment in 1983, five-month tuition-free vocational training in dressmaking and machine embroidery has been provided to 1,834 low-income women between 17 and 45 years of age.

As a part of a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) project on training for low-income women, KWDI offers computer training in order to provide low-income women minimum job entry skills in data processing with personal computers and to provide housewives and working women with knowledge of basic computer course-ware. It has finished around 10 weeks of intensive training. KWDI also develops four kinds of computer course-ware that can teach women computing skills.

KWDI established a counselling center in 1984 for the purpose of identifying women's problems in various fields of society and seeking solutions for them. Its function was expanded in 1986 to include the dissemination of employment information and vocational guidance.

The contents of the counselling are classified into career guidance, information service and general counselling. Career guidance has made up 71.2 per cent of the total of

25,316 cases since the centre's establishment; general counselling has covered 16.0 per cent and information service has been 12.8 per cent.

The general counselling cases include marriage counselling, family conflicts, psychological difficulties and sexual discrimination in employment. The counselling services have been provided though direct interviews, telephone interviews and letters.

KWDI continues to provide counselling, develop counselling methodology and suggest measures to eliminate sexual discrimination in employment. KWDI also continues collecting and analyzing information on women's employment as well as developing new materials for women counsellors and a model vocational guidance system.

9. International cooperation

Since its establishment, KWDI has functioned as a formal channel for women's international cooperation with United Nations bodies, international organizations and other institutions related to women's affairs through exchanges of information and programmes. It seeks to promote the status of Korean women and develop leadership in women by monitoring and evaluating the development of Korean women based on United Nations guidelines and by conducting and participating in international conferences and overseas training courses for women.

In addition to participation in the 36th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, KWDI is involved in various other international conferences sponsored by the United Nations and its related organizations. In cooperation with international institutions, two projects were carried out in 1992. The first project was an Interregional workshop on development of statistics offices (Department of Economic and Social Development, United Nations) and the second project was the 23rd EWPI Summer Seminar on Population (East-West Population Institute, Hawaii East-West Center).

In particular, KWDI surveys how the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women have been implemented in preparation for the 1995 World Conference on Women and the 1994 Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Women in Development. Overseas training programmes with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and other training courses concerning women's development are also being carried out.

D. KWDI's strategies for the advancement of women

Now a new era is opening. The 1990s is a decade of closing this century and opening the twenty-first century. The twenty-first century will be a century of challenge and new possibilities for the development of women. How should the direction and purpose of women's development be established? The future society of the twenty-first century

should be developed as a society of joint participation and joint responsibility of men and women. The ideal society that women are seeking is a society where their dignity is secured and their ability can be developed on the basis of equality and where the developed ability and leadership of women can be utilized in various fields without discrimination. Namely, "joint participation and joint responsibility of men and women" should become the basic purpose of women's development towards the twenty-first century.

In order to achieve this goal, women's occupational capacity should first be developed without any limitation, consciousness-raising should be accomplished accordingly, and the ability, leadership and attitude of women should be raised for joint participation in society. Second, in order for qualified women to participate jointly in various fields of the society, the existing discriminatory factors should be overcome and the participation of women should be expanded both qualitatively and quantitatively. Third, family democratization is required as a starting point in the realization of joint participation and joint responsibility.

The above policy issues should be implemented in order to actualize a society based on "joint participation and joint responsibility of men and women." The following strategies are necessary in the 1990s:

First, efforts to change the present consciousness of men and women should be exerted together with the change of social structure and system. Efforts to change men-leading consciousness possessed by men, especially elite men in policy-making positions, should be undertaken.

Second, women themselves have to do much to increase their participation in political activities. They should form women's caucuses to present qualified women candidates whom they could support for election and support young female leaders in high school and college with financial support to raise their consciousness on women's issues and develop their leadership capacity.

Third, a concrete theoretical basis applicable to the particular realities of each country should be developed to strengthen the research capabilities of women.

Fourth, "the principle of motherhood" based on the recognition of motherhood as a force of generosity, tolerance, harmony and creativity should be promoted to change men's aggressive, competitive, divisive and domineering character.

Fifth, systemization of women's capabilities should be cultivated by women themselves to build up women-power and establish a strong social force.

Sixth, the administrative function to plan and accomplish women's policies should be strengthened.

Seventh, cooperation with mass media should be reinforced. The participation of women at all levels of communications policy development and decision-making and in programme design, implementation and monitoring should be given high priority. Women's own cultural projects aimed at changing the traditional images of women and men should be promoted.

Eighth, international cooperation and cooperation between women's groups should be promoted. International, regional and subregional institutional network should be strengthened, particularly in relation to the exchange of information on the advancement of women and the establishment of collaborative arrangements to undertake activities with interrelated components.

In conclusion, KWDI is expected to play the major role, as a national focal point for women's development activities and information centres in Asia and the Pacific, by bringing up women's issues as social issues and by developing underutilized women's resources in cooperation with the 20 million Korean women. I would like to emphasize that, in order to become an important force in social change, we women should open our minds and share our experiences, information and resources.

We should approach women's issues with a sense of serious responsibility, since women will remain underprivileged forever unless each of us becomes aware of our situation and takes responsibility for our own lives and starts participating in society as an equal partner with men. We should unite our capabilities and efforts, promote good relationship between women and men toward building a society of joint participation of women and men, and grow up as an enormous social power that can play a major role in making this global village a better place in which to live.

Republic of Korea

Bong-Scuk Sohn*

Formulation of strategies to promote women's participation in politics and enhance their status in society

A. Why should women participate in politics?

Human beings were originally created to enjoy freedom and equality. Sexual discrimination did not exist from the beginning. But as civilization went on, the division of labour between men and women took place. This distinction in gender roles was not nature's intention but for expediency. However, with thousands years of human history, separate gender roles became a tradition and people began to assume a natural system of hierarchy between men and women. The biased beliefs, morals and laws that ensued entrenched a gender relationship verging on one between master and servant.

Our ideal is to create a world in which everyone is equal. The goal of democracy is to rid society of discrimination and inequality and realize the universal values among the members of society. A human being can be truly free and responsible when he or she is allowed to fully develop and nurture his/her individuality. The changes and progress towards democracy, social justice and freedom of humans do not happen by themselves. Required are dedicated leaders who lead society to recognize the need for change and competent followers who strive toward the ideal. Leaders cannot achieve their goals by themselves. They need the support of people who share their ideals and follow them. True leadership frees people and allows them to be creative. The democratization movement strives to realize these ideals. More than any group in society, women are victims of non-democracy and thus need strong leadership in their drive for democracy.

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For so long in human history women have been ruled by men. What is the reason behind this? Do women lack leadership qualities? What are the constraints that hinder women from advancing their leadership positions? Why should women be able to lead too, and why is leadership important to women? What are the requirements to be a leader, and what are the best ways to gain leadership positions? These questions are not only for women. Indeed, they are relevant to all victims of political discrimination who strive toward democracy.

The Korean women's movement in the past has focused on the promotion and encouragement of women's active participation in "social" activities. It emphasized demanding equal rights in legal positions, attaining equal educational and employment opportunities, and so on. Remarkable progress has been made in this respect. Now is the time for us to find effective ways to utilize these newly earned rights and opportunities in order to upgrade the level of women's political representation. In order to do this, it is imperative that more women leaders emerge and take part in politics and society. Women leaders should be included in important decision-making processes such as the ones affecting the most basic and "authoritative" allocation of values.

Women's issues are no longer only for women. They affect the happiness of the whole society and constitute the core element of democracy and national development. We need to convince the entire society, including particularly our male political leaders, that women's issues are vital elements of political reforms and democratization. To accomplish these goals, women have to lift the barriers of their exclusion from leadership roles and positions. As long as women are excluded from the political decision-making process, equality of all, regardless of sexual differences, cannot be realized. These are the goals of our effort to promote women's active participation in politics and the purpose of this meeting.

B.   Where do women stand today?

How many women are in leadership positions, and who are they? Leaders can be divided in to two categories: those who hold official positions and those who do not. When it comes to leaders, people usually imagine presidents, ministers or congressmen. Their influence over people is, no doubt, great. Although women enjoy equal rights to run for office as well as equal voting rights in most countries, the arena of this institutional politics has been dominated by the male population. A great deal of people still believe that women belong at home. The prevailing view is still that it is not womanly to have an interest in and actively participate in the political process.

There are influential leaders who do not have high official positions. Some do not even want to pursue those positions but still play roles equivalent to influential leaders. This type of leader is called a civilian leader. A lot of women leaders belong to this

type. They exercise great influence by either leading women's movements or taking active part in various social movements.

The reality in the Republic of Korea is, perhaps, the same as in most other countries; that is that the public sector exercises greater influence than the private sector when it comes to deciding on the allocation of crucial social values and resources. Yet it is in the public sector that women's leadership is most lacking. More women have to take part in the public sector so that women can better decide their own destiny by claiming their own share in politics.

Women contribute 40 per cent of the Republic of Korea's total economic output. Yet the women representatives in the political arena constitute a paltry 1 per cent of the total. While women are encouraged to contribute economically, their participation in politics is frowned upon. The average of women representatives in past legislatures in the Republic of Korea has been around a mere 2 per cent. The number has dwindled to 1 per cent in the present 14th Congress. In local legislatures, women represent 0.9 per cent of the total. For the high level government positions, there is only one woman minister. Among those above the 5th level, women hold only 1.5 per cent of all government ranks. Among the members of political parties, women constitute 40 per cent of the total membership. Yet, most of the leadership positions are dominated by men.

These simple statistics show that women's place in politics is extremely limited. This also leads one to wonder how many of women's concerns will be heard in Congress, in the Government and in political parties. Women simply lack representatives of their own sex. Despite the multiple party system and regular holding of elections, women's chances to advance in the political system appears to be very slim at this moment.

C. What are the obstacles women leaders face?

In any country women consist of half of the total population. Yet, the number of woman leaders is a lot smaller in proportion. This phenomenon is especially visible in the Republic of Korea. Why do women, the majority in number in some cases, have to be led by men, and what are the obstacles that hinder women from advancing in leadership roles?

One of the biggest reasons why Korean women are prevented from becoming leaders is the patriarchal family system. These family values rule that the man of the family will lead and regulate the rest of the members. Regardless of their age and experience, women are never allowed to have leadership in running families. With industrial development, more women began to participate in economic activities. But for other social and public activity, women are left to carry out roles similar to their domestic ones. Even in politics, women's roles are by and large limited to a supporting function or "decorative"

roles. The powerful and glamorous roles are dominated by males, and females are often left with roles that are faceless and unappreciated.

Another obstacle Korean women face stems from the structural aspect of male-dominated Korean politics. The election procedures have an appearance of democracy, but in reality they are still replete with authoritarian practices. The powerful positions are monopolized by a few male career politicians. In Korean politics, many important issues are settled in behind-the-scenes negotiations among the bosses. The more important the issue is, the more likely that it will be discussed and settled in informal settings by the exclusive few. The chances of women being included in these private informal processes are almost nil.

Political parties in the Republic of Korea are highly centralized and are run in an authoritarian manner. They are organized around a few dominant figures. They take the form of the typical patriarchal mold: the bond between the "boss" and the "underlings" is similar to that of the brothers in the family structure. Women are, of course, shut out from these network relationships. In addition, women candidates face more difficulty than men do in winning nominations of the party. Once they do, they also have a hard time securing campaign funds. These funds are usually supplied from the businessmen who would like to advance their interests through politics. They are reluctant to "invest" in women politicians since they figure that the chances of the woman politician being elected are slim.

The single-member constituency system makes it even harder for Korean woman politicians to win election. Because many candidates vie for only one seat in a district, the campaign race often becomes overheated. Running a campaign costs somewhere between 20-50 million won per month. These funds do not come from the central office. The district party manager has to raise them. In the process of raising funds, many corrupt deals can take place. This, in turn, alienates women further from active politics.

All these factors - patriarchal social order, the structural problems that invite corruption, the disadvantageous election laws and other systematic constraints - keep woman from reaching powerful positions. Additionally, social and cultural elements work against women. Although the Constitution guarantees equality for all regardless of gender, the male-dominated, authoritarian political culture discriminates against women. Throughout history, gender difference has assigned men for the public arena and women for the domestic sphere.

These deep-seated sexual biases are internalized in women through vigorous socialization processes. As a result, women themselves tend to hide away from political involvement, taking politics as "above my concern." Many women still believe that it is "unwomanly" to be a politician. These stereotypical and traditional images are also reinforced by such media as newspapers, magazines and television. Such massive social

indoctrination to "feminize" women has led women to believe that they do not deserve to rule their own destiny and even causes them to hesitate to vote for and support women candidates.

D. Twenty-first century demands women leadership

We are entering the dawn of the twenty-first century. In the next century, it is predicted that grave changes will take place in our political, economic, social and cultural life. The politics of gender, it is said, will gain increasing momentum in the twenty-first century, and this will, in turn, call for more women with leadership potentiality. There are many indications that the necessity and extent of women's participation in politics will greatly increase.

First, in the future society, issues affecting the quality of everyday life will increasingly become important on the political agenda. Political conflicts based on divisive ideology and structural cleavages will become less salient. Instead, the test of leadership and political skills will depend more on the ability to solve problems that affect the quality of the people's everyday life. One presidential candidate in the Republic of Korea has already taken note of the changing public mood to this direction and shrewdly pledged the coming of an era in which "politics will serve the people's everyday life."

The growth-oriented economic policies in the past have brought Korean society material wealth and prosperity. However, they also have impoverished our living environment. People now perceive that mere subsistence is no longer the most important political issue. Instead, issues that determine the quality of life are beginning to draw public attention. The issues concerning the quality of life - clean air, clean water, waste disposal, social hygiene and welfare - are becoming the primary interests of the public.

The more specialized the society becomes and the more complicated the government's function becomes, the more the functions and roles of politicians need to be specialized and responsive to the demands of the people. And the more issues concerning everyday life become the primary focus of the policy agenda, the more women will have a legitimate claim for their due positions in the political leadership. This is because women usually have more specialized knowledge and interests in solving these issues through their real, everyday life experience. The local autonomy that had been suspended for the last 30 years was restored in 1991 in the Republic of Korea. This has widened the political space in which more political women can fill. Issues of local politics have a more direct impact on everyday life. Thus, women will see an increasing chance to improve their participation in the political process.

Second, the prospect of women's political leadership is optimistic simply because the current state of unbalanced representation cannot continue unchanged in the future.

The world of politics has been monopolized by men until today. However, it cannot possibly go on to leave out those who are not male, not powerful, the poor, the young, and so on. On account of economic and technological development and the information revolution, all society becomes more diverse, complex and specialized. Accordingly, demands of various social groups to improve political representation and accountability will grow faster and become more intense. Women are least adequately represented in politics. Therefore, it is natural to expect that women, whose causes lie in realizing a more just and harmonious social order, will intensify their efforts and struggles to expand the scope of their leadership and representation.

Third, democratization is a world-wide phenomenon, with its effect spreading on a global scale. The wave of democratization is not limited just to Russia, the Eastern bloc countries, or the Republic of Korea. Democratization will soon improve governmental practices and its decision-making process so that political systems everywhere will become more open and democratic. Male-dominated, authoritarian, under-the-table politics have so far kept women out of politics. Under democracy, the type of politics that relies heavily on the informal, private, favour-exchanging and exclusive-networking politics will disappear, eventually widening the scope of women's political participation. When important decisions are openly debated in congress or decided in cabinet meetings instead of in obscure private homes or secret spaces, women will have a fairer chance to take part in them.

Fourth, the world has come to an end of the Cold War era. In the Korean peninsula also, visible progress is being made in peace talks. Women's role and contribution will be essential in the process of bringing the whole peninsula together toward peaceful relations. Women's leadership is wanted in achieving national unification as well. National unification cannot be the concern only of men. The Government should realize this and try to involve more women in the process. This cannot be done without boosting women's political status.

Women of the future will want to become the main partner in power. They would not remain subordinated or ruled by the opposite sex any more. They challenge the world with a new concept of power and leadership. A leader is one who gives direction to his group or society at large. A political leader is someone who offers new perspectives to the political community and helps the people to work toward it. Leadership needs power. Pursuit of leadership in the past was for power for its own sake, since politics meant predominantly the pursuit of power. Politics and leadership for power for its own sake made it harder for women to participate in politics.

Given the demands and challenge of the future society, leadership of the future will certainly mean a lot more than just the pursuit of power. When leaders do lead in the future, the people will expect that their leaders will be able to, with the power bestowed on them, diagnose and solve political problems and satisfy both the need of leaders and of those who are led. Thus, it is the duty of women who aspire to become the leaders

of the future society to be equipped with special skills and knowledge that are much more than those necessary to get power alone. Those who are afraid of change and those who hesitate to bring about change can neither become powerful nor become leaders.

What do we need to do in order to create the future as we want? How shall we nurture a new kind of future leadership for women? What is to be done to encourage more women of the future generations to be interested and get involved in the political process more actively and effectively? How do we empower the women of today to prepare better for the future?

E. What is to be done?

The patterns and practices of current political society that tend to keep women from equal access to politics are many. Some are embedded in our culture, and some in policy failures. Society is not yet ready to accept more women in leadership positions, if we sit and wait. Therefore, we should strive for reforms not only in the area of policies but also at the level of consciousness.

Traditions and thought patterns do not change overnight. In reforming existing laws and policies, we should seek changes on the cultural level as well.

Measures need to be taken to remove all discriminatory laws and policies. Then we have to promote women leaders. The government and the society should foster and train women leaders. Women's groups should join in these efforts as well. Coordination and cooperation at the international level are also to be promoted.

1. Reform at the policy level

What are the ways to bring more women into leadership positions? First, laws and policies should be reformed so that more women can be recruited in public offices. Election is one of the best and perhaps most natural ways to bring women into the political ranks. The laws and practices, both visible and invisible, which discriminate against women to run for and succeed in seats for the national and local legislatures, need to be changed. The election laws should be amended in the following ways: expansion of the size of the constituency, public management of the elections, introduction of clean campaigns, equal opportunity for political funds etc.

Political parties should provide women with more positions and higher responsibilities. They also need to nurture and aid women politicians more effectively. Until women gain enough strength to compete with men, the parties should reserve a certain percentage of their candidacies for women. Also, more women should be appointed to important government positions. If certain positions clearly indicate that it is more advantageous

to have women assigned, these should be reserved for women. Job descriptions for these positions need to be carefully analyzed and widely publicized.

We propose to the Government and private enterprises to fill a certain percentage of their jobs with women. Some might argue that this is unfair and discriminating against men, and hence undemocratic. Yet, women have not had the same kind of opportunities as men for such a long time. The temporary privilege is perhaps the only way to help women overcome the disadvantages they have suffered in the past.

To make the above propositions a reality, women and their groups can form legitimate pressure groups and demonstrate a show of organized power. Until now, many women's groups have been allowed to perform merely social functions. Government policies for women have often been criticized as relying on insincere tokenism, assigning a few symbolic positions to women political leaders. This kind of political practice should be carefully re-examined. As long as women remain passive and satisfied with the minimum offered by the present system, effective reforms cannot take place.

At the same time, it is women's (and their leaders') responsibility to prove to the public that women in power can make the world different, new, more creative and democratic. Women's organizations can also help to promote clean, moral and people-oriented images of politics as they contrast to the images made of power-oriented male politics. Women are, in general, known to respect the democratic process and are more opposed than men to authoritarian processes. Women prefer to have more cooperative, harmonious, horizontal human relationships than men do in most cases (this is reverse sexism). More women are engaged in environmental and civic movements than men in many societies. In general, women politicians tend to be more moralistic, peaceful and known to be less involved in "dirty business." These scientific findings (from what source is not known) are worth emphasizing to prove the virtues of women and their leadership.

2. Educational and training

Fostering talented women politicians requires appropriate education and plans. To produce real results, education for women demands effective and detailed curriculum development. One important educational focus should be on training for the political candidate. This training should include not only the candidate herself, but also the campaign managers and the entire supporting staff. These people need special training in various areas: preparation for candidacy, selection of the district, procurement and management of the campaign funds, analysis of the voters and campaign strategy, public address skills, image management and publicity management.

When a woman candidate decides to enter an election, she has to know about effective ways to reach woman voters. Women cannot let male politicians sneer and point to

the fact that women voters do not vote for women candidates. Another area the women candidates need training in is how to manage personal attacks and blemishes effectively when rival candidates (possibly also women?) employ such tactics. The double standard of societal values can hurt women candidates in this case. They should know when to ignore and how to strike back.

Incumbent women politicians need leadership training. They need education that can help them adjust to and work effectively under the existing political structure. When elected, the politician should know how to evaluate and formulate bills. She also should be familiar with legal jargon and procedures, and how to promote her own bills. A politician has to read voluminous documents. She has to learn how to absorb information effectively in a short period of time, and what to take seriously and what to ignore.

A politician has to maintain an ongoing close relationship with the constituency that elected her. She should continue to meet and talk with the people from her district, show what the priority projects of the district are and what she is going to do about them. She should remember to consolidate her support base and continue to expand it. Continuous communication with women's groups and social organizations will help her receive their continuous support.

The woman politician should learn how to utilize the media to her advantage. We live in the media era. It is not much of an exaggeration to say that the success of today's politicians depends on television coverage. Knowing how to portray her favourable images through the media and how to get the voters' attention can lead the woman politician to a successful career. We also need to study and monitor carefully how the media treat women politicians.

We should utilize those women who have retired from public positions, as they are often invaluably resourceful. These women have knowledge and experience to share with others. They can be good resource persons for the education of prospective women politicians. Another thing we should consider is to let women in senior positions exchange their experience and knowledge with the prospective leaders. We also need to study those who have lost elections and train them to manage their districts more effectively for the next chance.

Women and other civic groups have great potential to provide training for women's leadership development. They should actively pursue expanding their activities for women and cultivating skills for effective leadership of the future. Their education programmes should include consciousness-raising seminars for prospective and incumbent leaders as well. Most social organizations, however, lack funds so that they cannot afford to organize leadership education on their own. The Government should support them in terms of facilities and money. Women's organizations should take an active role in receiving support

from the Government and private industries. It should be noted that training of women leaders is necessary not only for the female population, but also for the betterment of the entire society. It should be taken as an important means for human resources development as well.

3. On socialization

The socialization process is the main culprit in leading many women to feel inferior to men and helpless in politics. This has to be corrected through social education and activity programmes. Changing values and attitudes requires well-conceived theories and comprehensive planning. It also takes a long time to help women to be more active and concerned in social and political issues. Women need to change their traditional views of politics. Curricula for the general education of women have to be renewed so that the consciousness level of women on political issues could be upgraded. Traditional values and attitudes can be changed also by having more women involved in various social activities and citizens' movements.

There are lots of projects in which women can become involved. Such civic movements as consumer protection, environmental movements, community activities, fair election campaigns, and voluntary work will help women develop a social consciousness and hone their leadership skills. Their leadership potential for public institutions can be greatly improved when women take advantage of the skills and talents being fostered in civic organizations.

We should also think of ways to help women support and choose woman candidates. If women elect women candidates, they can help women occupy half of the representative bodies in politics. Voting is one of the most important political acts. Women should create a voting block for themselves. Women's organizations should encourage more women to run and win in elections. They can raise funds for women candidates, campaign for them and educate voters to participate in elections and vote for women candidates. If we do not act today, the twenty-first century will be another century of non-democracy.

F. Conclusion: Agenda for international cooperation

Many distinguished women political leaders in the Asian and Pacific region are making extraordinary efforts to improve the status of women in their respective countries. Remarkable progress is on the way in some countries. This meeting is one of the first and most widely represented gatherings of distinguished women political leaders in the region. We have come to realize that fostering women's leadership is a common agenda for the whole region. The values and strategies presented in this meeting are valuable resources for all women in the region worthy of being aware and shared.

Now I propose that we tie our knowledge, efforts and concerns together to form an international networking on women and politics. We should collectively seek ways to improve the social and political status of women through more frequent exchanges and closer communications. A small step to institutionalize our efforts in the international dimension is already in progress. In Manila during early August 1992, representatives from 10 Asian and Pacific countries gathered to found the Center for Asia and the Pacific Women in Politics. Four of the participants of that meeting are present in this meeting. The objectives of the Center is to serve as a cooperative link among various country agencies working to promote women in politics and improve women's social and political status.

By way of concluding my presentation, I would like to take this opportunity to propose to organize a forum for women political leaders of the Asian and Pacific countries. The forum may be tentatively called, "Forum of Asia-Pacific Woman Political Leaders." The forum can meet every two or three years and be held in different participating countries of the region. The main activities of the forum would include exchanging various experiences, discussing research results on common problems and devising specific plans, strategies and policy recommendations.

Singapore

Ai-Mee Seet*

Role of women political leaders in community development

Singapore is a small island measuring 42 by 22 kilometres with a total area of 639 sq. km. In 1991, its population totalled 2.76 million, of which 1.36 million or 49.4 per cent were women.

Singapore is a city-state, a fully urbanized country with a multiracial and multi-cultural secular society. Singaporeans do not come from a single race with a single language nor are they inheritors of a single culture. Singapore is a blend of east and west. Singaporeans are from Chinese, Malaysian, Indonesian, Tamil Indian, Punjabi Indian, and Euro-Asian origins, with as many languages and cultures as their countries of origin. It is this multiracial blend which gives Singapore its special character. It is this mix which presents continuing community development and educational problems.

Because of Singapore's multiracial background, when Singapore became an independent Republic in 1965, the Government made the important and unusual decision of making English Singapore's working language and Singaporeans' mother tongue their other language. This policy pervades the whole educational system. The multiracial nature of Singaporeans, and the Government's desire for a united yet multi-racial community, governs Singapore's policies and actions in community building.

Seventy-six and a half per cent of Singaporeans are Chinese, 14.8 per cent Malays, 6.4 per cent Indians, and 2.3 per cent come from other ethnic groups, which include Eurasians, Caucasians etc.

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An Indian leader has stated that Singapore is one country where the majority racial group has shown benevolence in its attempts to develop and assist the growth of other racial groups.

The prudence of Singapore's multiracial, multi-religious and multi-cultural policy has proven itself over time. Since July 1964, when riots broke out during the procession to celebrate the Prophet Muhammad's birthday, Singapore has been free of racial and religious riots.

Eighty-five per cent of Singapore's population live in high-rise, high-density Housing and Development Board (HDB) estates. These HDB estates had their beginnings in the 1960s, when the Government had to build inexpensive, high-density housing for squatters and the many families displaced by fires and urban renewal. Through the years, the volume, size and quality of this government-built subsidized housing has increased. Today, HDB houses 85 per cent of the population in apartments which range from small, 80 square metres 3-room units to 4- to 6-room, 150 square metres maisonettes and apartments. Indeed, the HDB estates are often visited by representatives of foreign governments who wish to solve their own housing problems.

As a result of the Government's building and housing programme, Singapore families are small and nuclear. The Chinese, Indian and Malay extended families of the past have almost completely disintegrated.

The population enjoys modern amenities and facilities. There is an active policy to distribute all racial groups in each neighbourhood area, thus ensuring that racial enclaves do not develop in specific neighborhoods. With the infrastructure in place, the community development goal which Singapore has to achieve is the building of bridges of trust between neighbours of different religious, cultural and social backgrounds.

The Government's role in community development in Singapore is achieved through two authorities, the Ministry of Community Development, which has responsibilities in the area of social welfare and community development, and the People's Association, which draws the community together through cultural and social activities.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN SINGAPORE

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          GOVERNMENT              RELIGIOUS        RACIAL AND
         /          \             GROUPS AND       SUBGROUPS
        /            \            BODIES           (E.G. CLANS)
MINISTRY OF      PEOPLE'S
COMMUNITY        ASSOCIATION
DEVELOPMENT
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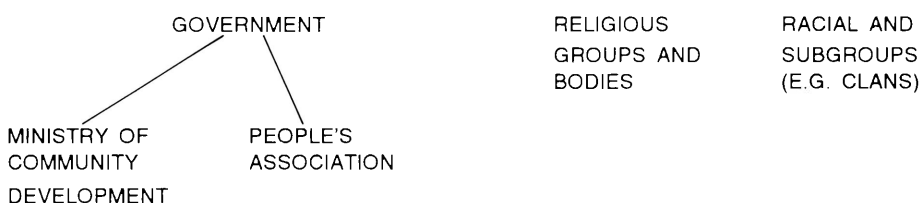
Religious groups and their activities play important roles in the community and keep the cultural-moral fabric of Singapore society together. They also attend to many welfare and other needs of the society and their activities with children, youth and the aged strengthen and support the national aims of building a strong community.

Racial and sub-racial groups (for example, surname clans or dialect groups) had their origins in the nineteenth century, when large numbers of immigrant labourers came to Singapore from South China and India. In the early years, support for settlers came from clans and village groups. The social support system was largely based on assistance by these groups. Through the years, this structure was diluted as descendants inter-married and children were born and raised in Singapore. Three or four generations later, Singaporeans find no affinity with the old traditions and they have lost their ties with the motherland of their forebears.

Attempts are now being made to revive interest in ethnic associations to provide assistance for the less able among each ethnic group. For example, MANTOUX, a Malay self-help group formed ten years ago, has been successfully contributing to the development of Malays in Singapore's society. Following on MANTOUX's success, SINDA (Singapore Indian Development Association) and CDAC (Chinese Development Assistance Council) have recently been formed. Both are dedicated to the improvement of conditions for the less able in their respective racial groups through improvement of educational qualifications and skills training. Currently, there is an on-going controversy regarding the wisdom of developing distinct racial self-help groups. Some people are afraid this will result in a breakdown of the racial harmony and national unity that has been built up over three decades.

The main objective of the Government is to achieve national unity through racial harmony and social cohesion. This is done through a system of grass-roots organizations set up from 1965 onwards with the aims of: developing leadership; improving communication; implementing community projects; and encouraging participation. It is from participation in such grass-roots organizations that future community and political leaders of Singapore arise and are identified and selected.

A. Women in politics

In the early 1950s and 1960s, women soldiered with men to fight for the independence of Singapore. In 1954, the People's Action Party (PAP), then a fledgling left-democratic socialist party, in its election manifesto, pledged to improve the status of women through nine avenues, the first two of which were: encouraging women to take an active part in politics and helping women organize a unified movement to fight for women's rights.

In 1959, the PAP relied on women members for support, and in its election campaign two outspoken women leaders were Chan Choy Siong (Mrs. Ong Pang Boon) and Kwa Geok Choo (Mrs. Lee Kuan Yew). They formed the core of the Women's Affairs Bureau, an active arm of the PAP.

The 1960s saw the introduction of the Women's Charter, an Act passed in Parliament in 1961 to safeguard the position of women. A year later, women were given equal pay for equal work after pressure from the Women's Affairs Bureau. In 1963, 10 women stood for elections, 3 were elected; in 1968, only one woman was elected to Parliament.

The 1970s were ebb years in women's political activities. There was greater educational achievement, a higher standard of living and greater economic stability. Chan Choy Siong, who bowed out of politics in 1970, commented that "the economic uplift and influence of Western cultures have turned women towards the pursuit of luxury and vanity", leading to a decline in the women's movement. The PAP Women's Affairs Bureau ceased to function in 1975.

In 1975, Chan Heng Chee wrote: "Today the common observation of a feminist and casual observer is that Singapore has a one-sex Parliament and there seems to be a lack of women interested in politics, political discussion or a women's movement".

In summary, participation of women in politics from 1950 to 1970 paled when compared with the militant anti-colonial struggles of men politicians. Yet it must be emphasized that women activists exerted their influence at a time when political awakening was at its peak.

The 1970s can be described as the decade of women's rising economic status and mobilization. Rapid industrial development in the late 1960s and rising inflation drove women into economic activity. It is therefore necessary in the Singapore context, when discussing the community and political roles of women, to include women's participation in the economy. While we can state in the 1970s that women were driven into economic roles, in the 1980s and 1990s women are taking on economic roles by choice.

For 14 years, the highest legislative body in Singapore was without women representatives, and the PAP fielded no women candidates against two fielded by the opposition Workers' Party in 1972.

The 1980s can perhaps be called the beginning of "the recovery". In 1984, six women candidates stood for election, three fielded by the PAP and three by the opposition. Dr. Dixie Tan, a cardiologist and an activist in community and welfare activities, Dr. Aline Wong, Ph.D., a sociologist who has had continued interest in women's affairs and Mrs. Yu-Foo Yee Shoon, a woman National Trade Union Congress (NTUC) activist, were elected

as PAP members of Parliament. After 14 years, problems and issues concerning women, working women, mothers and children such as child care, aged care, better and inexpensive health care, women's rights and representation were once again discussed in Parliament.

The next elections in 1988 saw the addition of one more woman to Parliament, Dr. Seet Ai Mee, a clinical biochemist and an active community and welfare volunteer. Her appointment as Minister of State (Vice Minister) in the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Community Development made her the first woman in Singapore's history appointed to ministerial office and the Cabinet.

On 1 July 1989, the Women's Wing of the PAP was inaugurated, signalling the long overdue reawakening of women's interest in politics. The Women's Wing in the first three years of its existence concentrated on issues related to educating women in politics, training women in leadership, presenting women's issues in specific forums to educate Singapore's population and, at the community and grass-roots levels, building ties among women activists by networking. All these activities are at the infant stage and the next few years will see if the efforts of women political leaders to activate political interest in women can be sustained.

The 1980s also saw the rise of a host of women's groups - some strongly feminist in outlook and aims, others service-oriented and yet others concerned with networking and meeting the needs of executive and business women. It was a decade of growing activity of women for women and for the community. Could this have been fuelled by the focus given to women as a result of the United Nations Decade for Women which culminated in the Nairobi World Conference of 1985? At that conference women from all over the world met and shared their ideas. In sharing, women spread their zeal to sisters the world over. Or, could it be that, with growing affluence and continuing education, women in Singapore have finally been awakened to the superficiality of the "pursuit of luxury and vanity" and set their sights on serving the community and the country?

The 1980s saw the birth and surge in activity of groups like the Association of Women for Action and Research (AWARE), the Singapore Association of Women's Lawyers (SAWL), the Singapore Business and Professional Women's Association (SBPWA) and the Singapore Association of Professional and Executive Secretaries (SAPES), among others. These groups were in the forefront in organizing their interest groups in education and development and in programmes for women and the community. For example, SAWL gave free legal help to the community and women lawyers went specifically to two community centres each week to meet people who had legal needs. Men lawyers outnumber women 2:1, but no similar service has been offered by them to the community. AWARE has strong feminist sentiments and for the first decade voiced these repeatedly. One and a half years ago, AWARE inaugurated a telephone hot-line for women in distress and need. Many similar examples can be cited. Suffice it to say that the 1980s saw

a rise in interest in women's affairs which resulted in participation of women in important political roles - in Parliament, in the Women's Political Wing and in the country's Cabinet.

Is there going to be a setback in the 1990s? We are only at the beginning of this decade. Yet there has already been a drop in women members of Parliament from four to two when Dr. Dixie Tan retired and did not stand for re-election in l99l. and Dr. Seet Ai Mee lost her seat in that same election. Will there be a greater push forward or a slide again into complacency?

An indication of the first was evident when AWARE, concerned for greater women's representation in Parliament, campaigned and won a place for their President as one of four nominated members to the new Parliament. Dr. Kanwaljit Soin, an orthopaedic surgeon, is Singapore's first woman nominated member of Parliament, and she has openly declared that in her two-year term, she will be there as a woman for women in Singapore.

This decade will also serve as a test for Singapore's male political leaders in their support for women's participation in politics. Will it continue to be lip-service or will they open the door for greater participation and offer greater support for women to enter politics, for women to share the dual roles of work and home, and for women to be active in community service?

B.   Women in economic life

A significant aspect of Singapore's women is the economic role they play. Table 1 presents the female employment status in Singapore. In 1991, women's participation rate in the labour force reached a high of 50.5 per cent. This, as a percentage of our total labor force, is 39.8 per cent.

Table 1. Female employment status			
	1980	**1990**	**1991**
Labour force participation rate (percentage)	44.3	50.3	50.5
Percentage of total labour force	34.4	38.5	39.8

By themselves, these statistics tell little. Table 2 shows that 76.7 per cent of unpaid family workers are women. Women constitute 51.9 per cent of government workers, 42.5 per cent are wage and salaried workers and only 19.4 per cent are self-employed. Although there is a slight increase in the proportion of working women in professional, administrative, managerial and executive positions, the majority of women continue to be in production

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work (40 per cent of the female labor force), followed by clerical (another 25 per cent) and sales jobs (13 per cent). The statistics over the last two decades, when women gained active economic roles, clearly indicate the steady progress of women towards higher economic activity. However, women in Singapore still have some distance to go in reaching equality in employment status with their male counterparts.

Table 2. Distribution of employed females by class of workers (percentage)	
Class of workers	**1991**
Self-employed	19.4
Salaried workers in private employment	42.5
Government employed workers	51.9
Family workers (unpaid)	76.7

A breakdown of labour participation rates by age is presented in figure I. The normal pattern for men is the inverted U, which has not changed much in the last decade. The pattern for women has changed and is changing. In 1980, 78.4 per cent of women between the ages of 20 to 24 years were working and only 33 per cent of 40 to 44-year-olds were working.

In 1990, 79.6 per cent of 20 to 24-year-olds were employed, and of the 40 to 44-year-olds, 51.9 per cent were working. The arms of the inverted V pattern for women's labour participation are widening as more and more women choose to remain in the work force after marriage and after having children, and also as many working women choose either not to marry, or when they marry, to have one child or even no children. Almost 80 per cent of 20- to 29-year-old women are active economically, and this trend is likely to continue as these women grow older. In due course, the female labour participation pattern by age will be similar to that of males, albeit some 10-20 per cent lower, because some women will not be working either by choice or by circumstance.

The participation of women in the voluntary sector almost equals the female labour participation rate. In the 1990 census, 84,255 volunteers were women (47.8 per cent of volunteers). The figures clearly indicate that women in Singapore today are not only active in employment, but also in community service.

Figure I. Labour participation rate (by age)
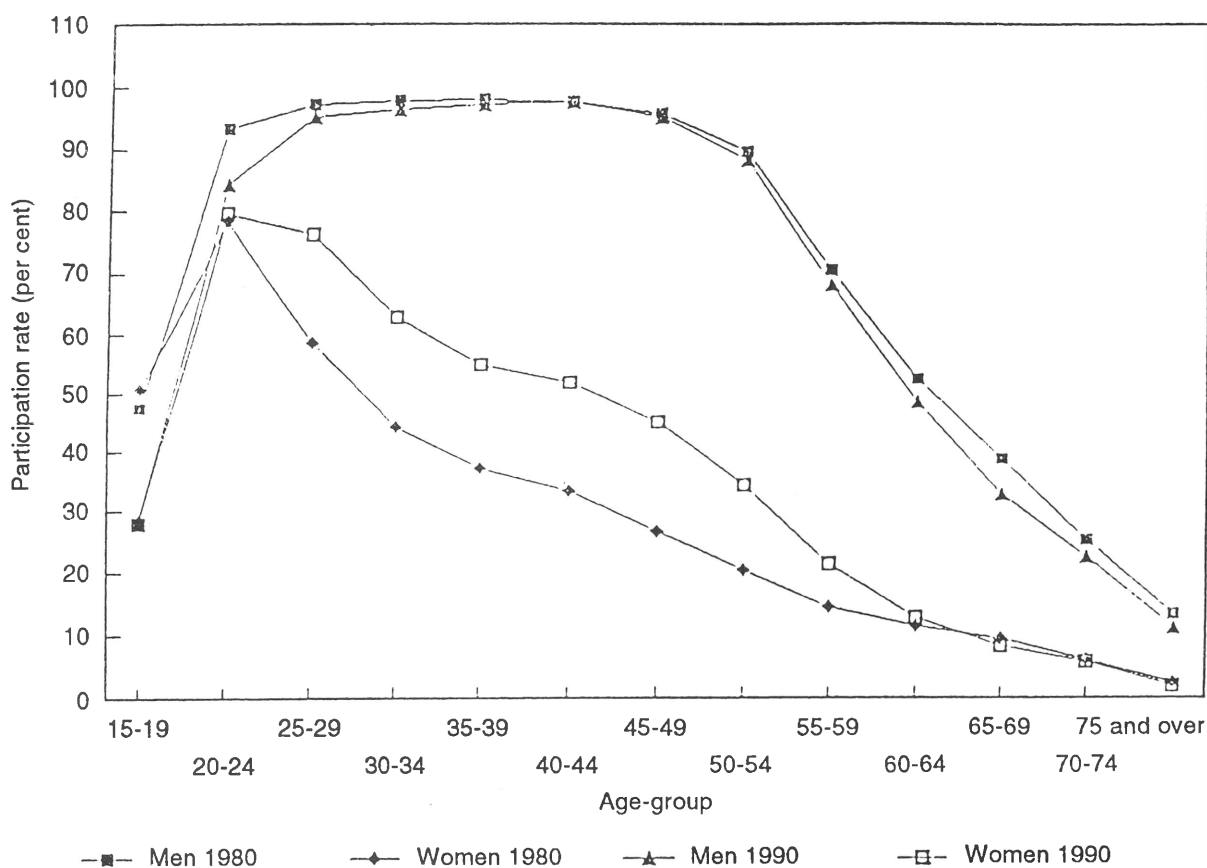
C. **Women in public life**

In a narrow sense, "public life" would mean "to be in public service or in public affairs". Within this narrow definition, the indicators to be considered should include the number of women administrative officers, politicians, volunteers and female activists (unionists).

The equipping for participation in public life is reflected in educational attainment indicators. Table 3 presents the enrolment of females in the universities and the polytechnic. In 1990, 46.7 per cent of university students were women and 34.8 per cent of polytechnic students were women. There is a healthy trend of increasing numbers of girls enrolling in technical education. The 46.7 per cent enrolment of women in university is good. The figures do not reflect the distribution across disciplines, but females are more numerous in the humanities, education and the social sciences, and males more numerous in engineering and technical areas. The current trend in tertiary education in Singapore is to create more places in the technical disciplines and skills upgrading in order to educate

Table 3. Tertiary institutions' enrolment			
	1980	**1981**	**1990**
Universities	4,038 (43.9%)	4,790 (45.1%)	11,358 (46.7%)
Polytechnic	2,494 (22.5%)	2,847 (23.8%)	10,274 (34.8%)

the engineers and technicians needed for Singapore's current phase of economic growth. Hence, the fact that females represent less than 50 per cent of the enrolment in universities is a reflection of the current technical bias.

The figures for women in the public service reflect the growing participation of women in government administration. In 1991, in the premier's administrative service, the top echelon of the civil service, 29.2 per cent of public administrators were women, an increase from 19 per cent in 1981 (table 4). Considering that 51.9 per cent of government employees are women, the statistics show that in government service there is still room for improvement at the very top.

Table 4. Women in the administrative service			
	1981	**1990**	**1991**
Administrative Service	42 (19%)	52 (28.1%)	56 (29.2%)

D. Women in elected and appointed posts

Table 5 shows the current parliamentary representation. Of 81 members of Parliament, two are women. Of six nominated members of Parliament, one is a woman. Women form 3.4 per cent of Singapore's parliamentarians, an extremely low percentage for a country where women form 39.8 per cent of its workforce and women in tertiary education exceed 40 per cent.

Among the 20 ministerial appointees, there is one women, Dr. Aline Wong, Minister of State, Ministry of Health. Of the 21 members of the judiciary, only two are women. The first was appointed a year ago and the second earlier this year (table 6).

Table 5. Female representation in elected posts			
	Total	1992 Female	Percentage
Elected Members of Parliament	81	2	2.5
Nominated Members of Parliament	6	1	16.7
Total number of Members of Parliament	87	3	3.4

Table 6. Female representation in appointed posts			
	Total	1992 Female	Percentage
Ministers	20	1	5
Judiciary	21	2	9.6

The statistical data show that while Singapore has achieved giant steps in economic development, the progress of women, while dynamic, has not been in sync. There is much need to increase the number of women at high administrative, managerial, professional, union, political and judicial levels. The numbers of women at the top of the country's pyramid pale in comparison to what Singapore has achieved as a nation in the last three decades.

E. Women in trade unions

Women's participation in union-related activities gives additional impetus to women's involvement in community development. In 1976, the Women's Programme Secretariat was formed under the NTUC. Its objectives include promoting the socio-economic status of women in the workforce and increasing the political, economic and social awareness of women so that they can contribute to national development. It conducts social, educational and recreational activities to meet the needs of its members, and these include courses and seminars relating to women's role in the family, work place and society.

In 1992, women made up 42.4 per cent (or 92,197) of the National Trade Union Congress (NTUC) membership of 217,376. A survey conducted in May 1988, among 36 unions representing 93.4 per cent of the female membership, shows that less than 25 per cent of women held active leadership posts. However, in 1992, there were 167

women (13 per cent) out of a total of 1,258 lower-level leaders. At the Central Committee level, there is only one woman out of a total of 20 leaders.

F. Women in community development

Over the years, more women in Singapore have come forward to participate actively as members and to assume leadership positions in grass-roots organizations in Singapore. Several factors have contributed to this development. These include the following:

(a) Measures adopted by Government and non-government organizations to assist women to meet the challenges in performing their multiple roles in society and thus provide them with the opportunity to offer their services to the community;

(b) Non-discrimination in community service;

(c) New expectations and aspirations of women arising from increased opportunities for education and training.

The role of women in community development can be assessed in terms of their role as they have progressed through the three stages in community development:

(i) At the first level, women are often passive recipients of services and programmes. They are seen as having specific needs for care, protection and welfare services;

(ii) At the second level, women are active in providing mutual help and in obtaining resources for themselves. They are seen as capable of doing things to improve themselves;

(iii) At the third level, women are active agents of change and improvement in community development. They are seen as competent and able to make contributions to the community.

Central to the progression in the role of women from one level to the next are education and opportunities for participation in public life. Women with little education and economic dependence and single mothers are more likely to be at the first stage, whilst better-educated women generally have progressed to the second and third levels.

In the early years of Singapore's political history, women played an insignificant and secondary role in community development. Women were recipients of services and their role was relegated often solely to the domestic arena. With progress in education and a greater awareness of the human resource potential of women and their contribution, women have been increasingly given a role in community development.

The progressive role of women is seen in their positioning in the People's Association, a major community development organization. To achieve its objective of promoting social

cohesion, amongst other things, the People's Association organizes a wide range of social, cultural, educational and recreational activities for the community. This is done through its network of 13 community clubs and 97 community centres.

The recognition of the role of women by the People's Association resulted in the creation of Status of Women's Sub-Committees in 1967. As Sub-Committees, the women organized social, cultural and recreational activities for their members and often played a supportive role at major constituency functions and events. Their contributions were often confined to those involving domestic and culinary skills.

In October 1988, an expanded role for women was recognized, and the Women's Sub-Committees were elevated to that of Women's Executive Committees (WECs). As WECs, they were brought to the same status as their counterparts in the other Executive Committees such as the Community Centre Management Committees. This progress is significant because it recognizes the role that women can play at the planning and decision-making level in the progress towards community development. Today, the People's Association has 91 WECs with a total membership of 1,430 women members. Increasingly, they are expanding the types of activities they organize to include seminars, counselling services and fund-raising projects for charity which exercise the potential of members to assume leadership positions in community development. Table 7 shows

Committee Sex	81 CCCs	401 RCs	109 CCMCs	91 SCECs	91 WECs	92 YECS	79 CSCs	81 CDCCs
Male	2007 (94.4%)	5488 (81.5%)	2221 (88.7%)	918 (68.6%)	–	836 (58.7%)	1120 (92.6%)	1097 (84.4%)
Female	119 (5.6%)	1245 (18.5%)	282 (11.3%)	420 (31.4%)	1188 (100%)	588 (41.3%)	89 (7.4%)	203 (15.6%)
Total	2126 (100%)	6733 (100%)	2503 (100%)	1338 (100%)	1188 (100%)	1424 (100%)	1209 (100%)	1306 (100%)

Table 7. Participation of women in grass-roots organizations in Singapore organizations in Singapore

Abbreviations used:

CCCs = Citizens' Consultative Committees
RCs = Residents' Committees
CCMCs = Community Centre Management Committees/Community Club Management Committees
SCECs = Senior Citizens' Executive Committees
WECs = Women's Executive Committees
YECs = Youth Executive Committees
CSCs = Constituency Sports Clubs
CDCCs = Civil Defence Coordinating Committees

that women's representation in grass-roots management committees is low, averaging 15 per cent, except for women and youth committees, which are 100 per cent and 41.3 per cent, respectively. Table 8 shows that in management committees, women play the traditional roles of assistant secretaries. Three out of 26 members in Citizens' Consultative Committees (CCCs) are secretaries and only one woman actually chairs a Citizens' Consultative Committee (CCC). Figure II shows the network of grass-roots organizations and the extent of women's participation.

Table 8. Female grass-roots leaders holding key office-bearers' positions								
Committee position	CCCs	RCs	CCMCs	SCECs	WECs	YECs	CSCs	Total
Chairman	1	27	1	5	91	16	1	142
Vice-Chairman	4	50	3	14	95	17	3	186
Secretary	3	113	7	23	88	-	7	241
Assistant Secretary	18	118	13	22	77	2	13	263
Total	26	308	24	64	351	35	24	832

Abbreviations used:

CCCs   =   Citizens' Consultative Committees
RCs   =   Residents' Committees
CCMCs =   Community Centre Management Committees/Community Club Management Committees
SCECs =   Senior Citizens' Executive Committees
WECs   =   Women's Executive Committees
YECs   =   Youth Executive Committees
CSCs   =   Constituency Sports Clubs

Table 9 shows the numbers of women in grass-roots and community women's clubs. These women are active and are often the main support for the community centres/ community clubs and residents' committees activities. The interest shown in community activities is high and women's participation is commensurate with their interest. Men's community activity groups are either not as active or non-existent.

Together with their counterparts in Residents' Committees (another grass-roots community development organization), the views of women are sought as part of the community development process. The activities which women organize today are also less gender-specific, catering both to women and the family, including men.

Table 9. Women in grass-roots/community women's clubs	
	1991
Number of Ladies' Clubs [under Residents' Committees (RC)]	74
Number of members in RC Ladies' Clubs	4,513
Number of Women's Executive Committees (WECs) [under People's Association (PA)]	91
Number of members in PA's Women's Executive Committees	1,188

Note: Programmes and activities organized by the Grass-roots/Community Women's Clubs are as follows: Social/folk dancing, educational visits, overseas tours, community services (adopt welfare homes etc.), beauty care and talks, family day/carnivals, keep fit exercises, qigong, tai chi etc., cooking classes, dressmaking classes, karaoke/community singing, civil defence activities, community support group activities, block parties, get-together parties, children's parties/activities etc.

In summary, women in Singapore have progressed: from being activity-oriented to being action-oriented; from being served to serving; and from being implementors to becoming co-formulators of plans as well.

G.   Problems and measures

However, women continue to face problems in their role in community development. Two key problems are: overcoming the subtle social prejudices about the role of women and balancing their home responsibilities and their role in community development.

Prejudice against the role of women is an ever-present attitude which women have to tackle. In Singapore, the effect of prejudice, however, is minimized by measures which safeguard the status of women, the most significant being the policy of equal rights and equal opportunity for both sexes. These basic rights are embodied in Article 12 of the Constitution of Singapore which states that "all persons are equal before the law and entitled to the equal protection of the law".

Another measure is education. There is equal opportunity in education for both sexes in Singapore. This policy has ensured parity between the sexes in school enrolment and has led to an increase in the number of girls enrolling in tertiary institutions.

With improved education, women are better able to gain employment, command wages commensurate with their education and training and contribute further to community development.

Figure II. Network of grass-roots organizations

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┌─────────────┐                        ┌──────────────────┐
│ Ministry of │                        │   Ministry of    │
│ Home Affairs│                        │Comunity Development│
└──────┬──────┘                        └────────┬─────────┘
       │              ┌─────────────────────────┼──────────────────────┐
       │      ┌───────┴────────┐        ┌───────┴──────┐      ┌─────────┴────────┐
       │      │National Community│        │  People's    │      │   Singapore      │
       │      │Organizations Council│      │ Association  │      │ Sports Council   │
       │      └───────┬────────┘        └───────┬──────┘      └─────────┬────────┘
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| 81 Civil Defence Coordinating Committees 1306 (♀: 5.6 %) | 81 Citizens' Consultative Committees 2126 (♀: 5.6 %) | 409 Residents' Committees 6733 (♀: 18.5 %) | 109 Community Centre Management Committee 2503 (♀: 11.3 %) | 79 Constituency Sports Clubs 1209 (♀: 7.4 %) |

| 91 Women Executive Committee 1188 (♀: 100 %) | 92 Youth Executive Committee 1424 (♀: 41.3 %) | 92 Senior Citizens' Executive Committee 1338 (♀: 31.4 %) |

In Singapore, women have made inroads into leadership at the national level and carved a niche for their leadership through the Community Centre Management Committees, Women's Executive Committees and Residents' Committees. In the welfare field, women are playing important roles in providing direct welfare services and managing these services.

Opportunities for women to lead and contribute to community development at the local and national level are provided by grass-roots and welfare service organizations. Women members of Parliament contribute to community development at the national political level. At the international level, the contribution of women takes the form of

representation and participation at international conferences and dialogue among women's organizations. An example of this is the Singapore Council of Women's Organizations (SCWO), an umbrella body for 35 women groups which participates in dialogue with other international organizations.

The role of women political leaders in community development can be summarized as follows: voicing women's views, needs and problems in their community development roles; ensuring that societal prejudices against women's participation in community development are removed at Parliament and all the way down to the operative Residents' Committees; encouraging more women community leaders to take on political respon-sibilities and roles; putting into practice the strategies of recruiting, educating, training and deploying women as leaders in the community and politics. Women political leaders, however, must take on high social, welfare and community development profiles. By doing so, they demonstrate the importance of community roles, ensure wide grass-roots political support and signal to male leaders the importance of women, both in community development and in the country's politics.

It is an awesome task, considering all that has been said about the dual and multiple roles of women, but in the Singapore situation, where women's parliamentary representation is 3.4 per cent and in other countries where representation is low, women leaders must be prepared to be stretched and set examples for daughters of the next age.

Women's roles gain greater significance in the light of equal rights and equal opportunity for women (especially in education). The traditional arena of domestic, family and child care must be extended to spheres of planning and public debate on national issues, including those pertaining to women.

Thailand

Supatra Masdit*

Role of Thai women political leaders in promoting the status of women

A. Women in politics

It has long been a universal assumption that politics is men's realm; this becomes an issue when women choose to enter politics as well. Why, then, do we need to talk about women in politics?

The foregoing assumption reflects one of many prevailing notions about what work women should or should not do, with no consideration about whether women have the capability or not. This is true for women in many countries. Women are not given a chance to use their abilities in politics and in many other areas of life as well. It is often forgotten that women play an integral role in a country's social, political, cultural, and economic development; women constitute half of all human resources. Indeed, ignoring women's productivity and capabilities limits the process of national development. Up until now, not enough consideration has been given to women's actual and potential role in non-domestic production and other important aspects of national development. Societies fail to achieve their full potential when contributions come from only half the population.

To correct this situation, women have to step forward and prove themselves even though it means moving beyond established social norms. Society, in turn, must give equal chances to people regardless of their gender. This is, in fact, a significant prerequisite for a democratic society which is committed to creating opportunities for all citizens. Only

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when all citizens have equal opportunities can they fully share in and contribute to the development of the nation.

In many countries, and especially those in Asia, women have proven themselves by their performance in important political positions. The first woman in the world ever to become a Prime Minister was Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka. And among Western leaders, former Prime Minister Mrs. Margaret Thatcher established herself over three consecutive terms of office as a dominant voice in international politics. These examples of political leadership demonstrate that women who have ability can take equal responsibility in guiding and leading society once they are given a chance.

B. Thai women

In Thai history, women were not involved in politics directly because it was the norm in the past that women's place was at home looking after household matters, while men worked outside taking care of public affairs. Women did not have an opportunity to contribute directly to national life. Those opportunities were for men only. However when the country demanded loyalty and courage from the people, women sacrificed their lives fighting in battles alongside men. We have a rich history of heroines who led the people in battles to save the nation. Thao Thep Kasatri and Thao Sri Sunthorn were two heroines, among others, who in 1785 protected the port town of Phuket from foreign invasion.

At present, Thai women comprise nearly half the Thai population (49.7 per cent), with the majority of women residing in non-municipal areas. However, for many reasons, including lack of opportunity, Thai women's participation in politics is still quite low. Only 4.1 per cent of seats in the House of Representatives are held by women; these are the 15 women who won parliamentary seats in the September 1992 election. But times are changing. The past rule that politics is men's realm is being shattered by the growing number of women entering politics and the transformation of society which demands, more than ever, the contribution and participation of women in all aspects of life. In order to illustrate this, I would like to refer back to the situation of Thai women in the past.

C. Thai women in the past

Before the change to a parliamentary system, Thailand was ruled by an absolute monarchy, and the country's administration was virtually entirely managed by men. The King's daughters were not eligible to ascend the throne and all the King's bureaucrats were men. The position of women in Thai society was relatively very low. Women did not have any opportunity to participate directly in politics. Worse than that, women did not even have rights over themselves and their own bodies. Women were treated as the property of their fathers before marriage and, after marriage, as the property of their husbands. Before the change of law in the reigns of King Rama IV and King Rama V, in the nineteenth century, women could not choose their husbands against the will

of their fathers, and they could be bartered and sold by their husbands. The King officially declared that the act of selling and bartering wives by husbands was illegal and subject to royal punishment. Although during that period there was an effort to provide more education for women, women were still taught to keep their place. For example, *Satriniphond,* a woman's magazine in 1914, reported that "the authority agreed that women should be better educated. However, one must be cautious and must not allow women to take over men's jobs. Women should not argue with men and should not be arrogant or proud. Educated women must be reminded to always be women."

D. After the Revolution in 1932

Major political changes in 1932 gave a very important impetus to the political rights of Thai women. Women received the right to participate in politics as equals with men. Thailand thus became the first nation in Asia to grant such rights to women.

After the 1932 revolution, great political change was attempted by the People's Party, a group of Western-educated civilian and military bureaucrats who strove to change the country from an absolute monarchy to a parliamentary democracy. Their modern views, democratic ideas and liberal attitudes paved the way for improving women's political role and status. Thai women along with their male counterparts were given political rights to enter campaigns for public office as well as to vote in elections (as per the first Election Act of 1933).

Although Thai women were the first women in Asia to be granted equal political rights, the social values and cultural environment still prevailing at the time discouraged women from full participation. Thus, it was not until 1949 that a woman won a seat in Parliament. That women, Mrs. Orapin Chaiyakarn, won election with an exceptionally high margin, in the province of Ubon Ratchatani, in the north-eastern region of Thailand.

In that same year, two other women were also appointed senators. Hence, the year 1949 marked the first time in Thai political history that women directly and genuinely participated at the highest· level of political decision-making and legislative affairs.

E. Thai women's participation in politics today

In the last national elections, held in September 1992, there were 244 women candidates among 2,169 men from 12 parties. Fifteen of these women candidates were elected, while the remaining 345 seats in Parliament were taken by men. Thus, as mentioned earlier, only 4.1 per cent of the members of Parliament are women. In the Senate only seven women were appointed out of 270.

If we look at the overall situation after the first elections in 1933, only 2.6 per cent of the members of the House of Representatives were women. In Thai political history,

so far six women, including myself, have reached top decision-making positions in the Cabinet, and that has only been since 1978. Of these six, only three women were fully-fledged politicians while the other three had backgrounds in business, academia and government service.

As for the role and status of women at the grass-roots level of politics, significant changes have taken place since 1982, when the Local Administrative Act allowed women to run for the local offices of *pooyai-baan* (village head) and *kamnan* (*tambon* or sub-district head). Within a few months of the passage of the Act, two women were elected as *pooyai-baan* with large majorities of the vote. As the heads of their villages, these two women are very active. They feel that women are as capable as men in doing any job if given the opportunity. Since 1982, the number of woman heads of villages and sub-districts has continued to multiply. So far, more than 700 women have been elected to these positions. Although this is still just a small percentage of the 60,000 positions throughout the country, the change is significant.

Regarding party affairs, every political party's executive committee includes women, but none of them is a party leader or secretary-general.

But its important to note that more and more women are now participating in politics as voters and supporters, in addition to running as candidates. In my experience, women supporters are very genuine, hard-working and reliable. Why do many women participate and work hard as political supporters but few become candidates? Is this a result of women's tendency to support others rather than seek leadership positions for themselves?

F.   Where are the problems?

As I mentioned earlier, and as statistics reveal, women do not assert themselves enough to show their capabilities. At the same time, they are denied equal opportunity in politics.

When compared to the past, the status of Thai women has clearly improved, but social attitudes concerning women are slow to change. According to research, the stereotypical image of women as weak, indecisive, emotional, dependent and less productive than men and only suited for domestic roles still persists, despite women's proven ability in many areas. Stereotypes create psychological barriers. A large number of women also accept the stereotyped image of women which undermines their own as well as other's development and achievements. These stereotypes must be changed before any significant improvement in the status of Thai women can occur.

Studies of the work place have revealed that supervisors generally perceive a women's family obligations as obstacles to efficiency. When a woman makes a mistake, others

immediately assume she made the mistake because she is a woman, ignoring the fact that men also make mistakes.

In my own experience, I have never felt I am any different from a male politician in carrying out my responsibilities. However, I must admit that I sometimes have to work twice as hard as men just to be accepted. This, I think, is because women's capabilities would not be recognized if they worked no harder than men. I have had to work hard to gain respect from others in my party. Now they value me for my performance, my ideas and my plans. They no longer regard me as just a young woman but see me as their equal counterpart.

I believe that if I try to do my best in my job, it will reflect positively on the image of female politicians. As a matter of fact, I do not believe in sex discrimination. Therefore, I normally do not like to be regarded as a woman politician but as "a politician". To me, it is only deeds that count.

There are many capable women who can do any task as well as men if they are given a chance. So far, however, not enough women with potential in politics have stepped forward to contribute their skills to the nation.

G. Working towards change

I believe that a change in attitude towards women has to take place in an integrated way which takes into account all social, economic and political aspects. Therefore, I am very concerned with projects and programmes related to women's development.

The following paragraphs review some of the projects for which I took responsibility during my tenure as a Minister in the Prime Minister's Office:

(a) *Television prime time programmes* — One of my prime responsibilities included the area of communications policy — specifically, all television programmes. I saw this as an opportunity to mobilize the media to improve the quality of life among under-served populations. To achieve this, I issued an executive order requiring all five television stations in the country to allocate one and a half hours of prime broadcasting time exclusively to programmes on career development, education and health, targeted towards improving the quality of life of the indigent, farmers, children and women by enabling them to be self-reliant.

As expected, this policy was initially met with criticism and attacks from the entertainment industry. However, we finally succeeded and went ahead with the plan. This policy remains in practice to this day.

(b) *Creative Media Foundation* — To illustrate that good programmes which promote the well-being of society, if well made, can attract a wide audience of viewers, we established a non-profit organization called "The Creative Media Foundation" in December 1989 to produce programmes for a public television station (similar to PBS), which was started a few years earlier. The objectives of this foundation were centred on two main themes: To promote and stimulate public awareness of the importance of communications in order to improve the quality of life and to promote peace in society; and to increase public awareness of social problems, their causes and their possible remedies, with a view to increasing society's well-being.

The foundation functioned as a non-governmental organization and, as the public station did not have any advertisements, relied entirely on funds raised from contributions and donations.

This proved to be a great success. We currently have the following seven main programmes, two of which have very high viewer ratings:

(1) "Different Views" — A programme which promotes liberal thinking and an open-minded exchange of opinions. The format of the programme pits well-known thinkers with differing viewpoints against each other. A general audience supplies questions. This programme implicitly conveys to the viewer the democratic idea that a diversity of opinions is healthy for society. (In Thai culture confrontation is generally avoided). This programme is highly successful.

(2) "People's Forum" — A programme which publicizes the knowledge and wisdom of local people who are seeking a better way of life. This was the first programme of its kind which allowed citizens from all walks of life to voice their opinions through television. This programme, which was shot primarily in rural Thailand, demonstrated the dignity and wisdom of the "common" people.

Both programmes required that at least one panelist of the usual three or four was a woman.

(3) "Today and Tomorrow" — A feature reflecting current issues relating to dis-advantaged children and other disadvantaged segments of society.

(4) "People's Choice" — This was started during an election year. This programme invites politicians participating in elections to talk to the public as a means of enabling the public to make informed decisions in selecting their representatives.

(5) "Hand Language" — The first news programme of its kind in the country to provide news and information to the deaf. This made the Foundation highly popular among the hearing-impaired.

(6) "The Smart Consumer's Handbook" — With the aim to promote energy conservation, the Foundation produced a book on how to easily but effectively conserve energy. We also asked the stations to cooperate in producing short media spots promoting energy conservation. This was supported by well-known celebrities and public figures.

(7) "Big Tree with Human" — A play encouraging children to see the importance of conserving natural resources.

I might also humbly add that during the recent election on 13 September 1992, we invited the Prime Minister and the leaders of the main political parties to attend the "Differing Views" programme in front of a live audience, which also questioned the participants. A later assessment showed this programme caused viewers to realize the importance of the electoral process. This programme also prompted a number of other shows to follow suit. Furthermore, this show generated a large number of viewer contributions, which have enabled us to produce other programmes as well.

I have gone into considerable detail on this particular matter because the Foundation, the first of its kind in Thailand, met with overwhelming success. I would urge similar undertakings in other countries as well, because programmes such as this effectively cover important target groups: the poor, the disabled, youth and women. In Thailand these programmes have contributed successfully to a concerted effort to elevate the status of women in society.

(c) *The National Commission on Women's Affairs* — Previously, there were a number of government agencies which dealt with women's development projects. These projects became entangled in the complex structure of the bureaucracy and resulted in duplication and redundancy. At the same time, a number of non-governmental organizations were very active in the field of women's issues, many of them truly reaching the grass-roots level. Unfortunately, not only did these organizations lack support from the Government, but in many instances they were even impeded by some local bureaucracies who feared that the initiatives of the non-governmental organizations would be more successful than theirs. Indeed this was often the case.

On 8 March 1989, the idea to integrate these disaggregated organizations into a single entity finally became a reality. In my capacity as a minister, I successfully initiated a body to address all issues pertaining to women's affairs, called the National Commission on Women's Affairs (NCWA). The main tasks of the Commission are to deal with planning, monitoring and evaluating women's programmes in various agencies. One of the eight committees under NCWA is a national committee on social and political participation which aims at developing strategies and work plans for the stimulation of women's political awareness and participation.

The Commission, which is composed of representatives from various related gov-
ernment agencies, NGOs and experts in the field of women's development, was responsible
for formulating the National Women's Development Plan. This was subsequently introduced
as part of the Seventh National Social and Economic Plan, Thailand's master development
plan from which all policy initiatives are derived. It will remain in effect from 1992 to
1996.

All this became possible because of the sustained efforts of many advocates of
women's rights, efforts which go back as much as 15 years. Through all these years,
the Democrat Party, of which I am an Executive Committee member, has included the
development of women as an integral part of the party's platform. This was also been
a guideline for my job. However, it was not until my tenure as Minister of the Prime
Minister's Office, where I was in a key decision-making capacity regarding women, that
I was able to bring these plans successfully into reality.

(d) *Training for women in politics* – One of the main obstacles facing women who
may be interested in entering politics is that they do not know how to begin. To someone
who is not already in politics it seems an inaccessible arena.

Most of my female colleagues in Parliament and I were exposed to politics through
our family backgrounds. Once we had been exposed, we realized that it was not as
difficult as one might think.

With that in mind, I organized a workshop before the general election in March 1992
to acquaint women with politics. Thirty-five women were selected from 130 applicants.

The training informed the participants about the responsibilities and accountability
of politicians, relevant laws, the party system and preparation for running and campaigning
for election. Apart from giving women the necessary information and preparing them
to start their involvement in politics, the training also consequently became a campaign
to raise awareness about women's participation in politics. It has sparked off discussion
among the public about women's potential role in politics.

Six of the trainees contested for parliamentary seats, and the rest helped their friends.
None of them won, but they all learned a lot about politics and their own weak points
so that they would be better prepared to run in future elections. General elections came
sooner than anyone expected because of the bloody May 1992 crackdown on pro-
democracy demonstrators. In September's elections, just one of the trainees ran, and
she became the first woman doctor to become a parliamentarian.

(e) *Center for Asia/Pacific Women in Politics* – Women have to overcome certain
negative perceptions about politics, as was revealed in a seven-country research project

on women in politics coordinated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1988-1990. Participants in a follow-up workshop sponsored by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and UNESCO in Bangkok underscored the need for training to prepare women for politics. Several participants in this workshop, including myself, have since explored the possibility of establishing a regional centre that would promote women's political leadership and increase the participation of women in politics in sufficient numbers to significantly affect policy nationally and regionally. This centre was also envisioned to provide training, research and support for individual women and national women's political institutes.

In Manila on 9-10 August 1992, the Center for Asia/Pacific Women in Politics was founded by a group of leading women politicians and political activists representing several countries in the Asian and Pacific region. Dr. Bong-Scuk Sohn, Director of the Center for Korean Women and Politics, who is the co-sponsor of this Seminar, and I are among the founding members.

The Center aims to promote and support women's direct participation in politics from the grass-roots to the national level. The Center, to be based in Manila, will bring together all relevant expertise, data and capacity and draw proposals from nationally identified needs to facilitate the election of women, their effective performance in government and their continuing influence on the political life of their countries. In addition, the Center will work towards persuading governments and political parties to provide opportunities for women politicians.

Funding for the Center is expected to be generated from training fees and grants from different sources. Participants attending the inaugural meeting believed strongly that a funding plan should be formulated which would make the Center as self-sustaining as possible.

I myself also plan to set up in Thailand a Center for Women in Politics for similar activities at the domestic level, as a branch of the regional body.

H. Concluding remarks

I have always been in the minority in Parliament as one of a handful of women members who represent not only the people in our constituencies, but all women in the country. My role as a politician, thus, is also to be the voice of all women, to propose laws and to implement policies that will protect and promote the well-being and status of women in society.

Certainly, one of my main obligations as a politician is to be honest with and devoted to my profession, my people and my country.

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My decision to enter politics while I was still in my late twenties meant that I had more time than many to learn how to become more effective as a politician. In the process I have achieved something without really aiming to, which has been to inspire other women to take on the challenge of politics. I have been told at different times by different people, especially women, that they see me as a role model for young and aspiring women politicians.

For example, while applying to attend my workshop, many women said they had been inspired by me to take an interest in politics. Some new women politicians also said the same thing. It has always been, "If Supatra can do it, why can't I". That really has impressed me, and that has always obliged me to live up to their expectations to be a good politician.

I believe that there are many potential women political candidates who have a strong commitment but who do not know how to take the first step. Therefore, the example of successful female politicians is crucial to encourage more women to seek public office at all levels: local, national, regional and international.

It is easier to change the negative attitudes women have towards entering politics by the example of successful women politicians, than it is to lecture women about the importance of entering politics. Doing, in this case, is better than saying. In my opinion, this is the only way to convince women.

I know the task ahead of us is not easy and will require time and a strong will. But a small step forward taken by each one of us will eventually lead to a big jump in the future. I believe this Seminar will also be part of such an attempt towards desirable change, and I am indeed very happy to be part of this event.

WOMEN MUST BE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN POLITICS BECAUSE, AS EVERYONE WILL AGREE, WOMEN ARE VERY GOOD AT CLEANING, AND POLITICS CAN BE A VERY DIRTY BUSINESS.

Thailand

Saisuree Chutikul*

Role of women political leaders in promoting the status of women in Thailand

A. Introduction

Since the institution of a democratic form of government in Thailand in 1932, there have been only five women who have held ministerial posts in the Cabinet. Some Cabinets have included one or two women at any given time, but most did not have any. The present Cabinet does not have any woman minister.

As for the House of Representatives, there have not been much more than 4 per cent of women representatives at any one time. In the present house, there are 15 women out of a total of 360, i.e., 4.17 per cent. Women senators constitute 2.6 per cent.

At the local level, about 760 women are village chiefs (about 1.17 per cent of the total) while only 65 persons (about 0.95 per cent) are sub-district chiefs. Both village and sub-district chiefs are elected posts while district chiefs and governors are appointed posts; so far no women has ever been appointed to such a post. Provincial council members and municipal council members are elected. There are about 203 females in these positions, or about 5.2 per cent of the total.

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B. Women political leaders and the status of women

Traditionally in Thailand, some women have exercised political power without even having held a formal political position. The old adage "behind every great man, there is a great woman" should not be understood contemptuously; nor should it imply some downgrading of women. At the time when the women's liberation movements had not gained global momentum, some Thai women, at least in the upper or patrician class, already felt the need to use their potential for the benefit of their country and people. Some prime ministers' or ministers' wives did not play conventionally accepted passive or subordinate roles. They worked through their husbands and directly and indirectly asserted their influence on decision-making, even though most of these decisions were related to the social and cultural spheres. The status of women was not then an issue of interest. The idea of "status of women" only gathered momentum globally after the United Nations International Year of Women in 1975.

During the past two decades, there has been a dramatic increase in awareness of women as a target group for development and development activities in general. Great efforts have been made to promote women in leadership roles. International interaction has activated new gender-related values, among which the improvement of the status of women has been an important part. In recent years the collective initiative of many women political leaders has resulted in efforts to improve the status of Thai women. Among concrete examples in the past 18 months under former Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun are the following activities:

(1) Revision of the law on nationality: The former law stipulated that children born of Thai fathers and foreign mothers could become Thai citizens automatically while those who were born of Thai mothers and foreign fathers were not given Thai citizenship. The new law has established equality of rights for Thai nationality among children whose fathers or mothers are Thai and are married to foreigners. This amendment has made it possible for Thailand to withdraw its reservation on the article on nationality in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

(2) Public debate on the advancement of women and on discrimination against women relating to the appointment of women in higher government positions: This has resulted in the decision of the Council of Ministers to review the discriminatory practices against the appointment of women in positions such as deputy district officers, tax collectors etc. The debate has also stimulated initiatives among various government departments to appoint women to higher positions such as provincial chief officer for fisheries and district chief in the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority.

(3) Revision of the regulation on maternity leave: The Council of Ministers approved the revision of the regulation relating to the length of time allowed for maternity

leave, from 60 days with full pay to 60 days plus 30 working days with full pay. The additional 30 working days can be taken from other usually unused allowances for other types of leave. In addition, another 150 days can be granted, but without pay, for those mothers who wish to spend more time with their children. The above-mentioned law applies only to female government workers and officers. Another similar law for private enterprises has been drafted and will be submitted to the present Government.

(4) The Central Registration Office, Ministry of Interior, now allows the checking of the marital status of persons: Thai law stipulates monogamy, but many Thai men are known to have multiple marriage registrations. This could be done by registering one's marriage at different district offices. There is no legal requirement to check whether a person is already married. Because of this lack of procedures, many women have been tricked into bigamous marriage. However, the first wife cannot sue for divorce unless it is proven that the man has treated the second woman as a "wife". Apart from this, the second wife's marriage registration can be annulled only by court order if the case comes to be known and raised by the first wife. In order to protect the women concerned, the Central Registration Office has been requested to open up services to check out the marital status of a man (or woman) in order to prevent unnecessary damages.

(5) Improving the status of women by raising their level of education and income: Many income-generating activities for rural women have been initiated with financial and technical support from both governmental and non-governmental sources. Training in a variety of vocational and management skills has also been made available to women both in the rural and urban areas.

(6) Bridging the gap between law and law enforcement with regard to prostitution, especially child prostitution: The law prohibits child prostitution under the age of 18; however, it is not uncommon to find young children in entertainment establishments and brothels. Law enforcement for this problem requires a close working relationship between women political leaders and those involved, such as the Police Department, non-governmental organizations, the public welfare agencies and responsible citizens. Exploitation by proprietors and pimps must be eradicated, and this also requires political commitment and political pressure.

(7) There were two general elections in Thailand within the past seven months. This provided an opportunity to promote more active political participation on the part of women. Seminars, workshops, meetings and assemblies were organized to encourage women to participate in political processes and development, for example, to become candidates for election, to vote in the general election, to encourage other members in the family to exercise their right to vote, and to vote honestly (i.e., by not selling or buying votes). Local women

political leaders met nationally to discuss the quality of candidates, the concept of clean elections and political platforms which may or may not contain women's issues. These sorts of activities are indicative of a certain level of solidarity and networking as well as a commitment to further political goals among some women.

(8) Other activities related to the status of women have been concerned with children, the elderly and the disabled. Laws have been passed to promote the welfare of the elderly and the disabled, which also affects women. Services for preschool children have been encouraged so that women can work. Children without birth certificates and house registration (which usually indicates that they are street children) have been allowed to enter school.

(9) The upgrading of the Secretariat of the National Commission on Women's Affairs from the level of a subdivision to that of a full division: This action was meant to increase the effectiveness of the Office for the Promotion and Coordination of Women's Affairs, whose work cuts across all ministries and which is a policy-making body on matters related to the status of women. Ways and means are also being sought to increase budgetary and financial support for this division and its work at the provincial level. A variety of campaigning methods are also being sought out to make women more visible; for example, the Council of Ministers approved the proposal from this Division to designate 1992 as the Year of Thai Women, as a part of the celebration of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit's 60th birthday anniversary. In this connection, a special request for an extrabudgetary allocation for each province for women-in-development activities has also been approved.

(10) The initiation of public debate on women's issues, including the results of research studies on women, equal rights, contributions of women to development and the status of women: These topics have to be kept alive in the mind of the public. It is also very useful to mobilize the mass media to discuss these issues and make sure that there is continuity in reporting about women in substantive aspects.

To summarize, women political leaders have been able to perform many functions to help improve the status of women. These have included legislative and regulatory functions, advocacy, promotional and protectional work, coordination among and between governmental and non-governmental organizations, networking among women, campaigning for value change, encouraging more research on gender issues, development of mechanisms for women's affairs, and seeking ways to increase financial allocations and budgetary support for women's activities and development.

C. Problems about the role of women political leaders and the status of women

Some of the problems encountered in promoting the status of women are described below:

(1) While some women political leaders could achieve much for women, there are still many who are not informed or sensitive to women's issues and the role of women in development. A few female politicians have in the past come right out against the women's movement; they believed that the improvement of the status of women should evolve "naturally", so to say, and that "planned" development is unnecessary.

(2) There is a misunderstanding that women political leaders are the only category of persons who could and should handle "women's affairs", and that they should do so to the exclusion of other matters. This would limit opportunities for women politicians, restricting their action to only gender issues (especially in the eyes of the public and other politicians) as well as discourage men politicians from becoming interested and involved in women's issues and concerns.

(3) In the political arena, the issue of "status of women" is still thought to be a "peripheral" matter. In some instances, the preferred and more effective approach is to work on the development of the "potential" of women for further contributions to society. Somehow this is more readily acceptable, especially to male politicians.

(4) Difficulties arise in sustaining policies related to the status of women when there is a change in political leadership or the Council of Ministers. Usually there is a change of focus; thus, the process of legal changes for the betterment of women may be interrupted and thus prolonged.

(5) When we talk about the "status of women", we are dealing with value systems which are difficult to change and require time. It must be realized that within one's comparatively short political life there is always a limit to what can be accomplished. It is believed that, most importantly, the "mission" to improve the status of women should be done in such a way that the concept reaches the widest possible audience, especially other politicians and potential politicians while a person is still in political office so that issues are kept alive in the minds of the public.

D. Further actions

Some concrete actions have been planned to continue to improve the status of women in Thailand. For example:

(1) The National Commission on Women's Affairs is to reach out to women Members of Parliament. A special seminar will be organized to expose women's issues and concerns to this legislative body. Other related topics such as children and their rights will also be included in the discussions.

(2) Better use will be made of the mass media to stimulate and generate debates and discussions on women's rights and the importance of women's contributions to national development.

(3) Action research on issues related to the role of women and the need to improve their status is being conducted to reach school and university students. For example, action-cum-study in integrating women's issues in the university curriculum; the socialization process as related to gender issues; the evaluation of textbooks and supplementary books used in primary and secondary schools etc.

(4) Training is to be provided for government and non-governmental personnel on the use of gender-based analysis in project formulation and implementation.

(5) Follow-up activities will be undertaken on issues which need legislative amendment or revision, such as maternity leave in the private sector, equal rights in terms of wages, advancement of women in career development etc.

(6) The promotion of family development would be encouraged to allow men to become more involved in child-rearing, child care, and household responsibilities. This would help ease the double burden of women who have to work outside the home.

Apart from the participation of women political leaders in improving the status of women, it should be noted that these leaders can also serve as role models in helping other women to advance in society. Political leadership is public leadership, which is readily scrutinized and evaluated by the people; therefore, it is important that the actions of women political leaders set the tone, atmosphere and direction for more challenging roles for women in society.

United States of America

Barbara J. Nelson[*]

Promoting women's participation in politics: formal, communal and civic participation from the global and United States of America perspectives

A recent study of women's political engagement in 43 countries reported that "in no country do women have political status, access, or influence equal to men."[1]

The authors went further to say that although there were many situations where women exercise political power in a particular arena, women's political power is always exceptional in some manner. Of course, the world's women do not experience their subordinate political status in the same way. In most cultures there is a complex matrix of political power composed of many social hierarchies, of which gender is only one component. Race, ethnicity, religion, class, region and language intersect with gender in complex ways to create diverse opportunities for and barriers to women's political participation.

These findings come as no surprise to those interested in women's status. Despite overall gains in women's access to formal positions of political power and responsibility – for instance, the rise in the percentage of women in national legislatures from 7 per cent in 1975 to 11 per cent in 1991 – women struggle against institutional norms and

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[1] Najma Chowdhury and others, "Redefining Politics: Patterns of Women's Engagement from a Global Perspective," in Barbara J. Nelson and Najma Chowdhury, eds., *Women and Politics Worldwide* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1993).

political cultures that do not view them as "real" or "important" political actors.[2]   This paper examines strategies to promote women's political participation by answering three questions: First, how can political participation be defined so as to recognize the varieties of ways women can and do participate?   Here the emphasis will be on the distinctions between formal, communal, and civic participation.   Second, from a global perspective, what kind of opportunities and barriers do women face in participating in these varied ways?   This discussion concentrates on both the general social conditions that promote or hinder political participation and the specific institutional arrangements that make it possible for women to translate political interest into participation.   Third, how have women in the United States experienced and transformed their formal, communal, and civic political experiences in the past 30 years, the period characterized as the "second wave" of United States feminism?   This section focuses on two distinctive qualities of political participation in the United States: the weakness of formal political institutions and the density of activities that take place outside official political structures.

A. Types of political participation

When most conventional political analysts think of political engagement, the first thing that comes to mind is participation in the formal institutions of governance, including legislatures, the government, the high civil service and the judiciary.   The most striking attribute about women's participation in these positions is that their representation is nowhere near their proportion in the population. Political systems, irrespective of ideology, form and the mobilization capacity of governments — whether democratic or dictatorial, representative or authoritarian — are based on the virtual exclusion or marginalization of women from formal political institutions.   This lack of representation fails to excite the same concern that lack of ethnic, geographic or racial representation arouses in politicians and political analysts.[3]

At the end of 1990, only 5 of the 159 countries represented in the United Nations had women as chief executives.   In nearly 100 countries men held all the senior and deputy ministerial positions.   World-wide, only 11 per cent of national legislative seats were held by women.   This figure is likely to decline because the legislative quotas allotted to women (usually 20 to 30 per cent) in the former Soviet Union and the state socialist regimes of central Europe are no longer in effect.   The democratic regimes that have

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[2]   Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Distribution of Seats between Men and Women in National Parliaments — Statistical Data from 1945 to 30 June 1991," (Geneva, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Series "Reports and Documents," No. 18, 1991) in Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women and Political Power," (Geneva, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Series Reports and Documents, Nr. 19, 1992), p. 141. The 1975 figure is estimated from information presented in bar graphs in Inter-Parliamentary Union publications.

[3]   Arend Lijphart, "Proportionality by Non-PR Methods: Ethnic Representation in Belgium, Cyprus, Lebanon, New Zealand, West Germany, and Zimbabwe," in Bernard Grofman and Arend Lijphart, eds., *Electoral Laws and Their Political Consequences* (New York, Agathon Press, Inc., 1986), pp. 113-23; and Barbara J. Nelson, "The Role of Sex and Gender in Comparative Political Analysis: Individual, Institutions, and Regimes," *American Political Science Review* 86 (June 1992) pp. 491-95.

replaced them have failed to mobilize women for legislative offices in the same proportions. Cross-national figures comparing women's representation in the top echelons of the civil service are not readily available. If the sex composition of senior managers in the United Nations can be used as a proxy, as United Nations experts on women suggest that it should, then women are very poorly represented in high administrative positions. Less than 5 per cent of the senior managers in the United Nations systems are women. Although comparative figures are not readily available, it is also estimated that world-wide less than 5 per cent of all judges are women.[4]

While there are many reasons for the low levels of women's political participation in the senior decision-making positions of formal institutions, it is important to remember that most institutions of governance were developed with the express purpose of excluding many groups from participation and power. For example, from the earliest moments of their invention, legislatures were designed to exclude all women and non-propertied men from participation as electors or representatives. The reasons for excluding all women and non-propertied men were different, however. From the seventeenth through the nineteenth century in Europe and North America, non-propertied men were believed not to have a long-term stake in the community. As such, they were thought to be too dependent on their landowners or employers in making their political judgements and too volatile in their social attitudes to deserve either the vote or the right to stand for a place in the legislature. In the same place and period, different reasons were offered for the exclusion of women from formal political institutions. Women of all classes were believed to be innately incapable of making judgements beyond the needs of their families. As such, women were seen to corrupt the representative process itself with selfish, personal needs that were in conflict with the dispassionate, general good sought by propertied men.

Because the barriers to political participation on the part of non-propertied men were located in their stake in society and not their innate capacity to participate, it was easier to argue for, and ultimately to organize for, their political incorporation into representative government than it was to bring women into political life. In the United States, although not in Europe, white men with artisan's skills, that is to say printers, barrelmakers, blacksmiths and others with expertise but perhaps without property, were the first group of men beyond property holders to get the vote and to be able, at least theoretically, to sit in legislatures.[5] Afterwards, both in North America and Europe, "unskilled" men

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[4]   The figures come from the following sources: United Nations, *The World's Women, 1970-1990: Trends and Statistics* (New York, United Nations, 1991), pp. 31-43; and Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Women and Political Power*, p. 141.

[5]   In the United States gender intersects not only with property and work but also with race and sovereignty in defining who is a citizen. It is important to remember that in the United States slavery was not outlawed until 1866. African-American slaves were considered property, not persons, and thus the status of citizen/person was also juxtaposed against a category of slave/chattel. Similarly, American Indians were, by and large, considered to be either foreign nationals or, when conquered, semi-sovereign people living within the borders of the United States.

(often industrial workers who had industrial rather than artisan's skills) won the right to vote and stand for elections. This addition to the electorate, and implicitly to legislatures, was important because it meant that the labour capacity implied in the male body became a kind of property and therefore a means of having a long-term stake in the community. The gendered link between property, work and citizenship in the pre-Second World War era meant that the first several hundred years of legislative government were built on the purposeful exclusion of women.

In order for women to win suffrage and the ability to stand for elections, it was essential to overcome the gendered link between citizenship, property and participation. Women in different settings took different routes. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, some women emphasized the similarity of men and women in terms of their potential contribution to government; others emphasized women's differences from men. Here the claim was that women's household and reproductive labour constituted a class of gendered labour that also needed to be recognized and incorporated into the electorate and legislatures. Later, women in countries winning freedom from European and United States colonialism often demanded political citizenship as recognition for their participation in nationalist struggles.[6]

While women's participation as voters and elected officials is extremely important, their inclusion was clearly only a partial accommodation by institutions whose philosophies and day-to-day activities at places of work were founded on the belief that women should not be participants. My point here is not that legislatures are somehow hopelessly corrupted by their origins and need to be replaced as institutions of governance. Rather, the job of incorporating women into legislatures and other formal institutions of governance needs to pay attention to how women are mobilized, recruited, promoted, assigned to tasks and experience their work life.

Formal politics represents only a small part of the contribution women, and many groups of men, make to political life. If women world-wide are marginalized in formal political institutions, their contributions to non-formal political institutions is a defining characteristic of their political engagement in many countries. There is now a large literature on women's participation in what are variously called "private voluntary organizations" (PVOs), "non-governmental organizations" (NGOs), and "community-based organizations"

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[6] On the original philosophy of parliament in Europe and North America see Carole Pateman, "The Disorder of Women: Women, Love, and the Sense of Justice," *Ethics* 91 (October 1980) pp. 20-34; and Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1988). On the history of legislatures and suffrage in the United States and Western Europe see for example Arnold Whittick, *Woman into Citizen* (London, Athenaeum with Frederick Muller, 1979); James H. Kettner, *The Development of American Citizenship, 1608-1870* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1978); and Aileen Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1965). On post-colonial and non-colonial suffrage and legislatures in less industrialized countries see for example Stephanie Urdang, *Fighting Two Colonialisms* (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1979); Ward M. Morton, *Woman Suffrage in Mexico* (Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 1962); and UNESCO, *Women in Asia, Beyond the Domestic Domain: Survey of Women's Outside Roles in India, Indonesia and Thailand* (Bangkok, UNESCO Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 1989).

(CBOs). In a recent review of the status of women, the United Nations suggests that women participate in problem solving outside formal political channels in areas that correspond with women's interests in their families' health and well-being. Some social movements, like those for environmental protection and peace, are led disproportionately by women.[7] This type of mobilization often begins without women questioning the current gender division of roles and tasks. Recent work by scholars of political participation further suggests that once mobilized in response to family or local issues, many women take up other issues as well, including issues that do challenge existing systems of sex/gender relations.[8] While it is not possible to estimate how many such groups exist, the conditions that promote their establishment are well known. Women have more opportunities to engage in non-governmental political activism in more secularized societies and in countries whose laws and customs do not limit group formation.

The research on women's non-governmental activism would benefit, however, from more attention to the distinction between communal and civic participation.[9] Communal activism is done in groups defined by a significant degree of social homogeneity. In such groups, people expect that most or all others in the group will have similar relevant social characteristics, such as the same sex, religion, caste, ethnicity, race or residence. Moreover, communal activism is defined by the assumption that what is valuable in the activism is the social similarity and therefore the presumed similarity of interests among the participants. Communal activism can have two kinds of objectives. The first is to solve community problems for community members. The second can be the attempt to impose communally defined solutions on the wider society. Civic activism, in contrast, assumes that public problem solving will be done by people who are socially different and will have different interests. Women's groups committed to civic activism can be either homogenous or heterogeneous in their composition. The acceptance of the political importance of acting in the realm of difference (i.e., the public realm) to solve problems is more important than the composition of the group.

Within the arena of non-governmental activism, some women's groups are communal in composition and outlook and others are civic in membership and belief. The problem-

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[7] United Nations, *The World's Women: 1970-90*, pp. 32-4. See also Maxine Molyneux, "Mobilization Without Emancipation? Women's Interests, State and Revolution," in Richard R. Fagen, Carmen Diana Deere, and Jose Luis Coraggio, eds., *Transition and Development: Problems of Third World Socialism* (Boston, Monthly Review Press, 1986), pp. 280-302.

[8] Najma Chowdhury and Barbara J. Nelson, "Redefining Politics: Patterns of Women's Political Engagement from a Global Perspective," in Barbara J. Nelson and Najma Chowdhury, ed., *Women and Politics Worldwide* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1993). I am distinguishing between sex and gender in the following ways. Gender is the social construction of the relations between women and men and among various groups of women or men. Gender is distinguished from sex, which is defined as the biological similarities and differences between and among women and men. See Barbara J. Nelson, "Women and Knowledge in Political Science: Texts, Histories, and Epistemologies," *Women and Politics* 9 (Spring 1989) pp. 1-25. This usage derives from Gayle Rubin's classic article "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the Political Economy of Sex," in Rayna R. Reitner, ed., *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1975), pp. 157-210.

[9] Harry C. Boyte, "Civic and Community Participation," in Charles F. Bahmueller, ed., *Civitas: A Framework for Civic Education* (Calabasas, Calif., Center for Civic Education, 1991), pp. 73-83.

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solving approaches and potential of civic and communal women's groups are, of course, different. Indeed, in many situations any group composed primarily of women is thought to be communal (looking out for women's interests at the expense of men's interests) in part because of the historic association of women with particularism.

B. Opportunities and barriers to women's political participation

Many of the conditions that promote or restrict women's political engagement are shared by formal, communal and civic participation. When the polity itself is under attack, regular political patterns — with all their gender coding — begin to unravel. War and civil disturbances usually diminish conventional political activity, while other types of activism sometimes take its place. The variety of women's political activism (although not necessarily its distribution) often increases during war, revolution, and insurrection, but this variety becomes more restricted when conditions return to "normal."[10]

So too, women's political participation — indeed the political participation of all people — can be greatly reduced when the conditions of everyday life are extremely harsh. It is difficult for people to participate when they do not have enough to eat, when their shelter is inadequate, when insufficient sanitation threatens their health and safety, and when medical or educational services are scanty. Overall, women have less access to the necessities of life than do men. As such, women begin their efforts at political participation from a resource deficit.

There are, however, conditions that promote or restrict each specific type of political participation. Access to secondary and, especially, tertiary education is the single most important social structural factor promoting women's participation in high-level elected and appointed offices.[11] These positions routinely assume some level of professional training in addition to other indicators of substantive competence and high social standing. Achieving a college or university education requires many things, not the least of which is learning to read and write. At a global level, girls and women comprise two-thirds of all those who are illiterate. In many countries in the less-industrialized regions of the world, fewer girls than boys get a primary school education, and the gender imbalance becomes more pronounced further up the educational ladder. Even when women and men have equal access to higher education, they are often channeled into different courses of study. The pattern of women's educational opportunity in each country greatly influences the size of the pool of women likely to feed into positions of formal political power and

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[10] Chowdhury and Nelson, op. cit., and Carol Berkin and Clara Lovett, *Women, War and Revolution* (New York, Holmes and Meier, 1980).

[11] United Nations, *The Worlds Women: Trends and Statistics, 1970-90,* pp. 45-7; Janet Saltzman Chafetz, Anthony Gary Dworkin, and Stephanie Swanson, "Social Change and Social Activism: First Wave Women's Movements," in Guida West and Rhoda Lois Blumberg, *Women and Social Protest* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 302-20; and Gail P. Kelly, "Women and Higher Education," in Philip G. Altbach, ed., *International Higher Education* (New York, Garland, 1991), pp. 297-323.

leadership. A recent analysis of the relation between national patterns of women's education and positions in the civil service in ways that are applicable to other positions of formal political power states:

In countries where the educational infrastructure is inadequate for demand and where trained employees are scarce, women are less likely to be educated, but those women who do become educated are very likely to gain entry level positions (in the public service). In countries with a well-developed educational infrastructure, women are more likely to become educated, but less likely to gain entry-level positions appropriate to their educational achievements.[12]

But if education defines the pool, the women who actually come to participate in formal positions of responsibility have other experiences and assets as well.[13] Family ties and wealth; placement in party, ethnic, or other communal patronage networks; and political apprenticeships are important supply characteristics on the part of individual women. The demand for women on the part of current leaders, their commitment to increasing opportunities for women and their perceptions of citizen support for such efforts also determine whether greater numbers of women will have access to responsible positions. In legislatures, women do better in multi-member districts than in single member districts. Multi-member districts permit parties to balance tickets by sex as well as other characteristics important to the party.

In turn, the characteristics that promote women's participation in the upper reaches of formal politics shape and are shaped by women's engagement in mass-level activities associated with formal politics, such as campaigns, elections, and sometimes demon-strations and benefit programmes.[14] Women are most successful in achieving places in formal politics if they are supported by popular women's movements. This strategy on the part of women activists – called double militancy – yields greater connections between the issues voiced by women and the policies enacted by governments than do elite or popular efforts on their own.

Beyond the active discouragement by current office holders, parties and recruitment rules, the greatest institutional limitation to women's participation in formal politics comes from political corruption. When government officials are routinely believed to take bribes

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[12] Jeanne-Marie ·Col, "Women in Bureaucracies: Putting Public Policy to Work," *INSTRAW News: Women and Development* 17 (Spring 1992), p.17.

[13] See Vicky Randall, *Women and Politics: An International Perspective,* 2nd ed. (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1987), Yael Azmon, "Women and Politics: The Case of the Political Game: Feminism and Politics in Great Britain," in Barbara J. Nelson and Najma Chowdhury, op. cit.

[14] See Hem Lata Swarup, Niroj Sinha, Chitra Chosh, and Pam Rajput, "Women's Political Engagement in India: Some Critical Issues," and Najma Chowdhury, "Bangladesh: Gender Issues and Politics in a Patriarchy," in Barbara J. Nelson and Najma Chowdhury, op. cit.

or to sell influence, women, the bearers of family as well as personal honour in many cultures, are greatly inhibited from engaging in formal politics.[15] Likewise, if male politicians are seen to be sexually adventurous, women are reluctant to engage in formal politics lest their reputations and the reputations of their families be tarnished, regardless of their individual behaviour. In cultures where women's presence in public areas automatically makes their actions sexually suspect to traditionally-minded men, women's political participation at every level is inhibited.

For women, mass-level activities connected to formal politics and communal and civic participation are encouraged by secularism and legal environments that promote group formation. It is often the case that when the state is weak or besieged (as in the current debt crisis), the existence of women's communal and civic activism is seen by governments as a way to displace social responsibilities from governments to groups. Thus, the preconditions for women's communal and civic activism arise not only in society, but also in the state.

Some of the advantages of women's communal and civic activism arise from the fact that its localism often permits women to manage child rearing and activism more easily than is the case with formal politics. In addition, women's communal and civic activism often draws inspiration from the immediate problems women face. Localism and immediacy are particularly important in mobilizing groups of women for the first time.

But the most serious barriers raised by communal and civic activism by women is their place in the power structure of a society. Women who are active in communal and civic groups justify their efforts using a variety of arguments. They take pleasure in the sociability of all-women's organizations, or they experience women's organizing as different in style and objectives from men's organizing, or they recognize that in their cultures separate spheres of responsibilities for women have great cultural legitimacy, or they know that it is communal and civic activism or no activism whatsoever, because formal politics is so restricted or corrupt. Each of these reasons suggests that women's communal and civic activism may be culturally undertood as a secondary route to problem solving in many countries. Women are thought to be powerful "behind the scenes," with the invisibility and lack of accountability that implies. The question posed by this kind of power is whether or not it allows women to address all the problems they wish to confront with all the tools available to men in society.

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[15] For a discussion of how personal and family honour influence women's opportunities for political participation, see Meena Acharya, "Political Participation of Women in Nepal," and Najma Chowdhury, "Bangladesh: Gender Issues and Politics in a Patriarchy," in Barbara J. Nelson and Najma Chowdhury, op. cit.

C. Women's political participation in the United States[16]

Understanding how the opportunities for the barriers to women's formal, communal and civic participation operate in the everyday lives of women requires careful attention to the specific conditions of each country. Over the last three decades in the United States, rising levels and changing forms of communal and civic participation on the part of women have changed how women view their contributions to problem solving. Communal and civic activism has increased women's interest in formal politics and created demands on formal institutions to recruit and retain women.

The increase in communal and civic participation — and ultimately in women's participation in positions of responsibility in formal politics — has occurred in virtually all groups of women, regardless of political ideology. But there are marked distinctions in how conservative (often antifeminist) and liberal or progressive (often feminist) women participate in the non-governmental sphere. By and large, in non-formal politics conservative women have been more consistently active in communal groups that have seen public problem solving as an extension of the solutions that are appropriate for their group. The activism of liberal and progressive women's groups has increasingly become more civic in nature, seeing public problem solving as requiring the accommodation of social differences and differences of interests. Both types of groups have firmly held beliefs and want to win in political confrontations. The groups are distinguished, however, by their toleration of diversity of opinion and their response to competing interests in public problem solving.

The recent growth of women's activism in the United States is explained in part by the intersection of weak political institutions, a tradition of activism outside government, and the economic and social conditions that brought women to demand a greater voice in politics and economics. Weak political institutions and strong organizations outside government are characteristic of America's liberal democracy. The successes and limits of liberal democracy are thus a prism through which to analyze women's political engagement in the Untied States.

Women's place in liberal democracy has traditionally been evaluated from three perspectives. The first assessment compares the United States and Western Europe in terms of state programmes for women, especially programmes for mothers. By comparison, the United States programmes are meager and not widely available. Limited state support for women is consistent with the nature of the American liberal social contract, which values freedom above reducing inequality through universally available guarantees of economic citizenship. The liberal social contract has a special meaning for women, however. Without equal access to the market and without state assistance in meeting

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[16] The case study of women's political participation in the United States rests on a revised version of Barbara J. Nelson and Kathryn A. Carver, "Many Voices But Few Vehicles: The Consequences for Women of Failing Political Infrastructure in the United States," in Barbara J. Nelson and Najma Chowdhury, op. cit.

the child-rearing obligations that fall disproportionately to women, liberal democracies require women to reconcile their economic dependency through bargains made with individual men.[17]

The second assessment focuses on women's equivocal status in the law. From the earliest days of the republic, legal liberalism, with its emphasis on the freedom of contract between equal individuals, has characterized the rights-based legal system that structured legal relationships among the elite. The legal position of many other groups — women (especially married women), slaves, servants, apprentices, the very poor and the mentally deficient — was located in an older, status-based legal system founded on hierarchical personal and social relationships.[18] Over decades of struggle some status-based groups like slaves ceased to be legally sanctioned, and others were incorporated into the rights-based arena of the law. Nonetheless, the freely contracting person at the root of the law is still not everyone or anyone, but continues to be a particular kind of person with particular attributes. We only have to imagine what labour law would look like if the universal worker were a pregnant woman, to see that the unstated universal worker is really a particular kind of person, a man, who cannot become pregnant and who does not routinely have major responsibility for rearing children.[19] The supposedly universal person of liberal legal doctrine remains a white, heterosexual, able-bodied, Christian man.[20]

The third assessment of the meaning for women of liberal democracy examines women's position in communal and civic life. One strand of liberal democratic philosophy promotes freedom from governmental interference. This tenet finds concrete expression in the fact that it is comparatively easy in the United States for like-minded people to form groups representing their views and hopes.[21] American women engage in a remarkable diversity of communal and civic activities, which have greater or lesser democratic content depending on the purposes of the groups. For instance, women have established their own ethnic associations, whose goals have been sociability and self-

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[17] See for example Helga Hernes, "The Welfare State Citizenship of Scandinavian Women," in Helga Henes, ed., *Welfare State and Power: Essays in State Feminism* (Oslo, Norwegian University Press, 1987), pp. 133-63.

[18] Martha Minow, *Making All the Difference: Inclusion, Exclusion, and American Law* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 124, 148-52.

[19] This example derives from Zillah R. Eisenstein, *The Female Body and the Law* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1988), pp. 1-5.

[20] Iris Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 96-121; and Martha Minow, op. cit., pp. 148-52.

[21] We do not mean to suggest that the government never interferes with the formation of groups in the United States. Government surveillance of the civil rights movement and to a lesser extent of the women's movement is well known. See "As the FBI Saw It..." in Suzanne Levine and Harriet Lyons, eds., *The Decade of Women: A MS. History of the Seventies in Words and Pictures* (New York, Paragon, 1980), p. 29; and *Hearings Before the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities,* vol. 6, November-December 1975 (Washington, D.C., United States Government Printing Office, 1976), pp. 98-103, 360-66, 540-85.

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help but whose outlooks have often been exclusionary. Likewise, women have also created diverse, inclusionary social movements that are schools for democratic practice and arenas of public discourse and problem solving.[22]

These traditional analyses are missing an important component, however. While the system of government and the outward form of institutions have remained remarkably stable in the United States, the functioning of formal political institutions has changed measurably over the past 30 years. Similarly, the relationships among formal institutions, communal participation and civic activities have also changed. The meaning of these changes for women has received little attention.[23]

I suggest that the political milieu in which all women's political engagement has occurred has altered fundamentally since the onset of the contemporary women's movement in the 1960s. Traditional mass-based political institutions like parties and unions increasingly fail to provide an organizational home for the discussion of issues, the development of agendas, and the formulation of strategic alliances. Legislatures have become arenas for free-spending interest-group politics, especially at the national level. Paradoxically, the partisan character of the more neutral branches of government – the courts and the bureaucracy – has intensified. The political information available to the citizenry is dominated by fifteen-second "sound bites" on television news. All of these changes occurred during a significant movement to the right, meaning that the state has become less favourable to feminist demands at the same time that popular institutions are less able to affect the state.

The decline of the effectiveness of official political institutions has been accompanied by changes in communal and civic life. Although all forms of communal and civic participation have increased in the last several decades, important differences in types of participation do exist. Voting levels have declined, as has active participation in elections. Non-partisan civic groups with political purposes, like the League of Women Voters, have also seen a decline in membership, although in this instance the decline is partially explained by changing patterns of women's work force participation. Although there has been a growth in participation in service and charity organizations, these groups routinely define their missions as an alternative to politics. Advocacy activities are on the rise as well, often polarizing political discussions into a struggle between good and evil. The number of community action groups is rebounding from a decline throughout the 1980s.[24]

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[22] Sara M. Evans and Harry C. Boyte, *Free Spaces: The Sources of Democratic Change in America*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992), vii-xxiii; and Jane J. Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1983).

[23] For an initial analysis of this problem see Barbara J. Nelson and Nancy J. Johnson, "Political Structures and Social Movement Tactics: Feminist Policy Agendas in the United States in the 1990s," *National Women's Studies Association Journal* 3, No. 2 (Spring 1991), pp. 199-213.

[24] Harry C. Boyte, "Civic and Community Participation," in Charles F. Bahmueller, ed., *Civitas: A Framework for Civic Education* (Calabasas, Calif., Center for Civic Education, 1991), pp. 73-83.

Because of these changes, women's political engagement needs to be understood not only in light of the traditional evaluations of liberal democracy but also from the current democratic crisis brought on by a failing political infrastructure. In the current context, women's organizing, especially feminist organizing, has many voices but few vehicles to translate demand into sustained action. The attenuation of processes that link the people with their government has meant, paradoxically, that feminists have needed to give more of their attention to formal politics while simultaneously sustaining autonomous activism. The consequences of many voices but few vehicles can be seen by examining the relationship between the political structure of the United States and women's communal, civic and formal political participation.

D. Political structures

In the United States, the ideal of equal opportunity and social sameness confronts the reality of highly contentious social differences and inequalities. The United States is a multiracial, multi-ethnic society with growing class divisions. The population of 246 million is 84 per cent White, 12 per cent Black, 3 per cent Asian and 1 per cent American Indian.[25] Hispanics, who may be of any race, form 8 per cent of the total population.[26] Race and ethnicity are the more visible political cleavages, gender and class the less visible ones. Women experience their lives at the intersections of these political cleavages. Being poor or a woman of colour multiplies a woman's political and economic marginality.

The United States Constitution established a political system with significant separation of power among the branches of government and considerable dispersion of responsibility through a federal system. The United States has a two-party presidential system with a separately elected chief executive, the President, and a bicameral legislature, the Congress, whose members are elected from single-member districts. Since the Second World War, it has been the exception rather than the rule for the same party to control both the Congress and the presidency. The Republicans, the party of the right, have controllled the presidency for 26 of the 38 years between 1952 and 1990. In contrast, the Democrats, the centre or liberal party, have controlled the Congress for 30 of the same years. (There is no large-scale social democratic or other left party in the United

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[25] We refer to the indigenous people of North America as Indian rather than Native American because we believe it most accurately reflectś the wide practice of indigenous people in collectively naming themselves, beyond their self-designated tribal and band names. For an elaboration see Kathryn A. Carver, "The 1985 Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act: Claiming a Cultural Identity," *Law and Inequality: A Journal of Theory and Prace* 4 (July 1986) pp. 327-54. We refer to Americans of African decent as Black or African-American, both terms being currently used for self-identification. See Lisa Albrecht and Rose M. Brewer, eds., *Bridges of Power: Women's Multicultural Alliances* (Philadephia, New Society Publishers, 1990).

[26] "Hispanic" is a term used by the government and often by individuals to describe people who self-identify as being of Spanish origin or descent. Members of these groups also describe themselves as Latinos or Latinas, or by the Spanish terms for their country of origin or the name of their people. For an explanation of the census definition, see *U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census 1980 Census of Population and Housing: User's Guide*, Part B, Glossary (Washington, D.C., Unites States Government Printing Office, November 1982).

States.) The same party has controlled both branches of government for only 14 of these years.

Power is further decentralized through a federal system of 50 states with substantial independent powers. Decentralization extends far beyond the states, however. There are approximately 83,000 sub-federal jurisdictions in the United States — 38,000 cities and town, 3,100 counties, 15,000 school districts, and many other units — most of which have the power to tax, make policy and spend.

Political organizations in the United States respond to and further shape the decentralized political system. In reality, there are 102 party structures in the United States: independent Democratic and Republican organizations in each of the 50 states as well as a national party structure for each party. The party organizations are inherently weak, are only loosely linked, operate with enormous independence and have experienced the same loss of public confidence as most other public institutions over the last two decades. The result is an electoral system based increasingly on candidates' personalities and less on party affiliation or loyalty.

The deterioration of the linkages between the governed and the government extends well beyond the shrivelling of party capacities. Voting, party identificaiton, feelings of political efficacy, and trust in public officials have all declined. In the 1968 presidential elections, 68 per cent of those of voting age cast a ballot. In 1988, the figure dropped to 57 per cent, the lowest voting rate of all industrialized democracies. Identification with the Democratic Party declined from 46 per cent to 36 per cent during the same period, while nonpartisanship grew. Belief that government pays attention to "people like me" declined from 43 per cent to 30 per cent.[27] Positive feelings about members of Congress were found in 41 per cent of the population in 1968 but in only 35 per cent of the population in 1988.[28]

At the same time, the cost of running for office increased at more than twice the rate of inflation. The average campaign for the lower house of Congress, the House of Representatives, has risen more than 500 per cent since the numbers were first collected in 1974. The average campaign for a House seat cost just under $270,000 in 1988. Of this, 80 per cent is spent producing campaign advertisements and paying commercial television stations to run them. Senate (upper house) campaign costs have escalated at an even more rapid pace, with average costs per candidate growing from $423,000

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[27] The figures on voter turnout, partisan identification, and external political efficacy come from M. Margaret Conway, *Political Participation in the United States*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C., Congressional Quarterly Press, 1991), pp. 7, 48, and 46.

[28] The questions in this comparison are not fully comparable. In a 1968 Harris poll, 41 per cent of those polled gave Congress a positive rating and 59 per cent gave it a negative rating. A 1988 Gallup poll contained the item: "Please tell me how much confidence you yourself have in Congress." Of those polled, 35 per cent answered "great" or "quite a lot."

in 1974 to close to $3 million by 1988. Elections are mostly financed privately in the United States, and the percentage of funds coming from organized interests in the form of political action committees (PACs) has increased. By 1988, PACs were contributing in excess of $151 million to congressional candidates, and 210 of the 435 House winners acquired at least 50 per cent of their campaign funds from PACs.[29] The consequence of this financing system is the perfectly legal dependency of candidates, especially incumbents, on organized special interests.

While citizen attachment and institutional responsiveness were declining in the realm of formal politics, grass-roots social action was also under attack. President Ronald Reagan (1980-88), representing the mood in the country and in the Republican Party, initiated a policy of reduced social spending that was continued by President George Bush, who was elected in November 1988. This policy not only undercut the economic security of millions of poor Americans, but also imperiled the organizations that represented their interests, many of which had come to depend in part on public funds to undertake their missions.[30]   In addition to a partisan opposition to social spending, the Reagan and Bush presidencies promoted many of the other economic policies associated with conservative parties: lower tax rates, especially for the rich, and deregulation of industries like banking and air transport. With an eye toward their chances for reelection, Republicans (with the assistance of a good many Democrats as well) failed to implement the last tenet of *laissez-faire* economic policy — fiscal responsibility. As a result, the United States has a $500 billion national debt, which acts as a brake on future social spending, as indeed conservatives planned it would.[31]

In contrast, promotional interest groups have always been strong and have recently gained more power. For example, in 1988 there were 4,800 registered PACs donating money and influencing legislators, a number that has grown 860 per cent since 1974.[32] In a political system with weak parties and strong interest groups, social movements feel pressure to develop organizations that take on interest group activities, there being few other effective ways to transmit preferences to public officials. This, in turn, creates structurally based tensions in social movements between those groups that are anti-statist and those that use the dual strategy of state action and independent grass-roots organizing.

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[29] Larry Makinson, *The Price of Admission: An Illustrated Atlas of Campaign Spending in the 1988 Congressional Elections* (Washington, D.C., The Center for Responsive Politics, 1989), pp. 9-10.

[30] Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *The New Class War: Reagan's Attack on the Welfare State and Its Consequences* (New York, Pantheon, 1982), pp. 1-39; and Mayer Zald, "The Trajectory of Social Movements in America," *Research in Social Movements, Conflict, and Change,* vol. 10 (Greenwich, Conn., JAI Press, 1988), pp. 19-41.

[31] Kevin Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor: Wealth and the American Electorate in the Reagan Aftermath* (New York, Random House, 1990), p. 130; and E.J. Dionne, Jr., "Reagan Debt Legacy," *New York Times,* 2 December 1988, p. A-11.

[32] Larry Makinson, *The Dollar Power of PACs in Congress* (Washington, D.C., Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1990), pp. 16, 163-70.

Although bureaucracies and the judiciary are indirect linkages between citizen preferences and public policy, they are traditionally quite important in shaping the content of public policy in the United States.[33] In these areas the Reagan administration also initiated an assault on governmental capacities that had significance for women. Believing correctly that the federal civil service was more committed to social programmes than he was, Reagan dramatically reduced the size of the federal work force employed in departments that administered health, social, economic and consumer programmes. Some agencies lost as much as 25 per cent of their personnel.[34] A visible group of employees committed to improving women's status had developed in the middle ranks of the domestic policy department in the 1970s, and the Reagan cutbacks significantly reduced their input into policy formation. At the state and local level, however, the higher ranks of the civil service remained more open to feminist policy-making, especially in traditionally progressive states like New York, Minnesota and California.

In the judicial realm, half of the appointments to the federal bench — approximately 400 judgeships including four seats on the Supreme Court — became vacant from 1980 through 1991. All federal judgeships carry lifetime tenure, and Presidents Reagan and Bush used their appointment powers to pack the trial and appellate courts with judges favouring judicial orthodoxy, a practice that will keep the courts tilted toward conservative views on women well into the next century.

E. Women's communal and civic political participation

Unlike many other countries, women's communal and civic participation in the United States is characterized by two complex and evolving social movements: feminism and anti-feminism. These movements are not static, but change in outlook, activity and participants over time. During the last three decades, thousands of formal and informal women's groups have emerged in the United States, responding to the needs and interests of women of different beliefs, races, ethnic heritages, sexual identities, classes, religions and regions. Women, and sometimes men, move in and out of these organizations, often taking their social movement experiences and skills into other arenas in their lives. Indeed, feminist and anti-feminist activities in the 1990s are as likely to occur in conventional organizations, such as churches or even the army, as they are in autonomous social movement groups.[35]

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[33] Joyce Gelb, *Feminism and Politics: A Comparative Perspective* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1989), pp. 5-18.

[34] On the policy outlook of federal bureaucrats see Joel D. Aberbach and Bert A. Rockman, "Clashing Belief Systems within the Executive Branch: The Nixon Administrative Bureaucracy," *American Political Science Review* 70 (June 1976), pp. 456-68. On the personnel cutbacks in federal domestic agencies see Edie Goldenberg, "The Permanent Government in an Era of Retrenchment and Redirection," in Lester M. Salamon and Michael S. Lund, eds., *The Reagon Presidency and the Governing of America* (Washington, D.C., 1984), pp. 381-404. Increases in civilian personnel in the Department of Defense offset cuts in domestic agencies. As a result the total number of federal employees increased during the Reagan administration.

[35] Mary Fainsod Katzenstein, "Feminism within American Institutions: Unobtrusive Mobilization in the 1980s." *Signs* 16, No. 1 (Autumn 1990), pp. 27-54.

The contemporary feminist movement began in the mid-1960s and had its roots in the civil rights movement and the "new left".[36] In this early period, the feminist movement was comprised of three somewhat separate efforts: mostly white radical feminists, mostly white reformist feminists and feminists engaged in anti-racist struggles, most of whom were women of colour. Radical feminists bequeathed to feminist organizing a tradition of consciousness-raising.[37] In their political activism, they concentrated their efforts in developing woman-centred, locally rooted politics. Radical women started most of the free-standing rape crisis and domestic violence centres in the United States. In this early period, much of radical feminist organizing was communal and anti-statist in nature, an outlook that made women's needs the central concern in delivering services and community activism the preferred form of political participation. The demands that radical feminists later reluctantly made on the state resulted in government support for social services for problems like sexual violence which they had placed on the political agenda. Government funding has made feminist provision of rape and domestic violence services an uneasy combination of communal and civic activisms.

Reformist women started organizations like the National Organization for Women (NOW, founded in 1966) and the Women's Equity Action League (founded in 1968), groups that tried to influence public policy as well as provide forums where women could develop a consciousness about their places in society. Reformist feminists brought new feminist perspectives to established women's organizations like the League of Women Voters, which had their origins in the women's movements that began earlier in this century. Reformist organizations and the women who worked in them always had a more civic approach to public problem-solving, an approach which dismayed some radical feminists who thought that reformists paid insufficient attention to women's unique needs. Reformist feminists were the backbone of the monumental but unsuccessful effort in the 1970s and early 1980s to pass the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the federal Constitution.[38]

The writings and practice of some white feminists articulated a universalistic view of women's interests that masked the privileges of white middle-class experience. This feminist universalism had elements of thoughtlessness and racism, but universalism was also a prominent characteristic of most of the social movements of this era. New and old left movements, Black nationalism and feminism all drew early sustenance from theories

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[36] Sara M. Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York, Knopf, 1979).

[37] The discussion of types of feminism rests in part on Nelson and Johnson, "Political Structures and Social Movement Tactics," pp. 199-213. For a discussion of the differences between radical and reformist feminism see Judith Hole and Ellen Levine, *Rebirth of Feminism* (New York, Quadrangle, 1971); Jo Freeman, *The Politics of Women's Liberation* (New York, McKay, 1975); and Anne N. Costain, "Representing Women: The Transition from Social Movement to Interest Group," in Ellen Boneparth, ed., *Women, Power and Policy* (New York, Pergamon, 1982), pp. 19-37.

[38] This was the second time an Equal Rights Amendment to the federal constitution had been proposed. The first version had been proposed in 1923 and split feminists, some of whom opposed it because it would revoke protective labour legislation. See Jane J. Mansbridge, *Why We Lost the ERA* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 8.

of social change that emphasized one master oppression — class, race or sex — and imagined a transformational period that would reconfigure society.

Women of colour began the effort to articulate a more socially encompassing and complex picture of women's places in society. Black women became active on contemporary women's issues at the same time as white women, but their experience was often different and the documentation of their efforts appeared later. Black women were frequently active in anti-racist social movements, such as the civil rights movement, the welfare rights movement and the Black nationalist movement. In some of these movements, especially in Black nationalist organizations, women's demands were viewed as secondary to the racial struggle. Experience within these movements led African-American women to a critique of the hierarchical approach to oppression.[39] In the late 1960s and 1970s, independent women's organizing increased among Black, Hispanic, Asian and American Indian women.

Among women of colour, two types of groups developed. The first were informal groups of women who wanted a safe social space to explore how gender and colour intersected. The Bay City Cannery Workers committee, which eventually became a labour organization for Mexican-American women cannery employees, began this way, with friends and co-workers socializing at breaks and lunchtime.[40] The activities of the second type of group focused more immediately on solving public problems and used strategies that were often more coalitional. The National Black Women's Political Leadership Caucus (founded in 1971) and the Organization of Pan Asian American Women (founded in 1976) are examples of this type of group.

In the 1990s, feminist thought and practice in the United States is increasingly multicultural, seeing gender-based inequities as inextricably linked to racial, ethnic and class divisions. This approach recognizes that women simultaneously share the similarities and experience the differences of a socially grounded womanhood. This recognition - - honed in conflict and coalition, and embraced in friendship, anger and hope — has led feminist movements to be important arenas for anti-racist, multicultural activism in the United States.[41] There is also less conflict between communal and civic approaches to problem solving, as feminists see each approach as useful for solving different kinds of problems.

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[39] Bell Hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (Boston, South End Press, 1981), pp. 181-90; and Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York, Morrow, 1984), pp. 414-35.

[40] Patricia Zavella, "The Politics of Race and Gender: Organizing Chicana Cannery Workers in Northern California," in Ann Bookman and Sandra Morgen, eds., *Women and the Politics of Empowerment* (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1988), pp. 202-24. "Chicana" refers to women of Mexican heritage who were born or reared in the United States.

[41] The other arenas for anti-racism work in the United States include progressive religious congregations, some neighbourhood activism, and some university settings. Interestingly, conservatives have targeted universities in their attack against multiculturalism.

Feminist theorizing and activism focus on respect for differences, the recognition of similarities and the necessity of alliances to solve social problems. A Black feminist and journalist has described the practice of multicultural feminism when she connects the independent work of a group she founded, Leadership for Black Women, and its coalitional efforts with other groups:

> [T]he leader as mediator, negotiator and visionary [is] a role often modelled by African-American women. Since we have been among the initiators of these styles, it seems appropriate for African-American women to further develop them through alliance work and programmes that challenge us to merge and stretch our ideas into new forms that will assist us and the rest of humanity. African-American women, interested in building strong alliances, must commit to a process of candid dialogue.[42]

Similarly, a white feminist and former executive director of the National Women's Studies Association describes United States feminism in the 1990s this way:

> The challenge of the nineties is to hold on simultaneously to these two contradictory truths: as women, we are the same and we are different. The bridges, power, alliances, and social change possible will be determined by how well we define ourselves through a matrix that encompasses our gendered particularities while not losing sight of our unity.[43]

The multicultural diversity of feminists has little appeal to the white women of the "new right", a loose coalition of two groups: social conservatives who support Victorian moral values and *laissez-faire* conservatives who oppose Communism abroad and big government at home. Using public forums opened to all women by the feminist movement, socially conservative white women attack feminism as antithetical to their fundamental beliefs. The approach of many socially conservative women's groups is communal, seeing their political task to make the public sphere an arena of sameness (their values) rather than difference (many values). Anti-feminist organizing began in the early 1970s, in response to the threat socially conservative women felt from the proposed Equal Rights Amendment and the Supreme Court decision making abortion legal. For white social conservatives, feminism is a self-centred attack on traditional patterns of mothering, a denial of the value of homemaking, an encouragement of government neutrality in issues like abortion and gay and lesbian rights, and an unwelcome supporter of extending governmental authority into realms where the church and family should predominate.[44]

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[42] Nora Hall, "African-American Women Leaders and the Politics of Alliance Work," in Albrecht and Brewer, *Bridges of Power*, p. 92.

[43] Caryn McTighe Musil, "Foreword," in Albrecht and Brewer, *Bridges of Power*, pp. vii.

[44] Rebecca Klatch, *Women of the New Right* (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1987), pp. 119-47.

Very little is known about right-wing women of colour. They are not prominent in national right-wing women's groups. Basic information on the denominational affiliations of African Americans is available, however. The vast majority of Christian African-Americans (about 80 per cent) belong to the seven denominations of the historical Black church. While theologically conservative, these denominations are not fundamentalist in their teachings.[45]

The Eagle Forum (an anti-Communist, conservative women's organization founded in 1975) and the National Right to Life Committee (an anti-abortion group founded in 1973) are the major women's organizations of the socially conservative right, although scores of informal groups have sprung up around issues like the ERA and abortion.[46] Beyond obvious differences in ideology, the principal distinction between nationally based, socially conservative women's groups and nationally based feminist organizations is that right-wing groups are often tied to the larger, wealthy, male-controlled political organizations of the "new right". Socially conservative women have access to the finances of these larger organizations, a relationship that permits the larger organizations to draw on right-wing women's groups in political mobilization.[47] By comparison, most feminist organizations, with the exception of the few within labour unions, are independent and do not have access to the same level of resources.

Social conservatives have not undertaken a widespread grass-roots effort to think about their racial ideologies and practices. Within conservative social activism, there is a current of racist expression toward women and families that has not received much attention. For example, in a 1982 speech at a family conference, the vice president of the Moral Majority, a conservative fundamentalist religious group (renamed the Liberty Federation in 1986), warned the audience not to accept arguments for family diversity, invoking images of the "uncivilized dark savage" that resonate on racist themes in United States political life:

> You'll hear many, many feminists and anti-family spokesmen today talking about history ...They'll tell you that down on the Fiji Islands, somewhere down on an island of Uwunga-Bunga, there's a tribe of people who have never practised family life as we know it. But they also have bones in their noses and file their front teeth ...[The feminists and anti-family spokesmen will] try to build a

[45] Nancy T. Ammerman, "North American Protestant Fundamentalism," in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, ed., *Fundamentalisms Observed* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 3; C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, N.C., Duke University Press, 1990), pp. 1-19; and Clyde Wilcox, *God's Warriors: The Christian Right in Twentieth Century America* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), pp. 55-56.

[46] It is important not to confound anti-abortion supporters and social conservatives. They do not totally overlap. See Rosalind Pollack Petchesky, *Abortion and Women's Choice: The State, Sexuality, and Reproductive Freedom* (Boston, Northeastern University Press, 1984), pp. 254ff.

[47] Mansbridge, *Why We Lost the ERA*, pp. 173-77.

historical case for the proposition that the traditional family never was traditional and never really was a dominant force in all civilized societies.[48]

Socially conservative women are not the source of these ideas, but neither have they critiqued them.

Social conservatives do not make up the whole of right-wing women. *Laissez-faire* conservative women, a much less visible group, are not necessarily opposed to feminist demands for reproductive freedom, day-care or a non-discriminatory workplace. In the political arena, they prefer that government neither regulate nor finance such activities and that policy efforts begin at the state rather than the national level. Their emphasis on individualism and achievement do not lead to an idealization of motherhood and home-making. There are no large formal groups of *laissez-faire* women, and the number of *laissez-faire* and socially conservative women is unknown.[49]

The beliefs of the vast majority of American women lie somewhere between the ideologies of feminists and anti-feminists. At a general level, feminists are winning the struggle to shape public opinion. The feminist movement — together with changes in the economy, employment and birth control — has transformed women's expectations about how they will live and work. In the years between 1970 and 1985, *all* groups of women increased their support for efforts to strengthen women's status. For example, in 1970, 60 per cent of black women and 37 per cent of white women supported greater efforts to improve women's status in the United States. By 1985, 78 per cent of black women and 72 per cent of white women favoured more efforts to improve women's status. These changes suggest that, contrary to popular belief, African-American women have always been strong supporters of improving women's position. Other data show that resistance to feminism has been most evident among white working-class women.[50]

Changes in women's abstract views about their status do not tell the whole story, however. Men's support for the changes necessary to improve women's status barely increased at all. Between 1972 and 1982, the proportion of men *strongly* supporting equal roles for women and men only improved from 33 per cent to 37 per cent.[51] Likewise, research on the division of household tasks shows that although women do less housework now than a decade ago, they still do a great deal more than the men in their households

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[48] Ronald Godwin, "The Family and the Law" (Speech presented at the Family Forum II conference, Washington, D.C., 27 July 1982), quoted in Klatch, *Women of the New Right*, 126. See also George Gilder, *Wealth and Poverty* (New York, Basic Books, 1981), p.70.

[49] Klatch, *Women of the New Right*, pp. 147-53.

[50] Ethel Klein, "The Diffusion of Consciousness in the United States and Western Europe, " in Mary Fainsod Katzenstein and Carol McClurg Mueller, eds., *The Women's Movements of the United States and Western Europe* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), pp. 26-28.

[51] Keith T. Poole and L. Harmon Zeigler, *Women, Public Opinion, and Politics* (New York, Longman, 1985), p. 184.

do. Interestingly, a major increase in household labour comes from children taking more responsibility for household maintenance.

F.   Women's participation in formal politics

As in most countries, women are not particularly visible in formal politics in the United States.   This is not surprising, given the history of democratic institution building.   The extension of formal democratic rights and the creation of representative legislatures, welcome as they were as democratic advances, were also patriarchal processes based on the exclusion of women who did not have political citizenship.   Of course, African-American slaves were not considered people, let alone citizens, and thus neither slave women nor slave men had any political rights.   In 1865, after a civil war of unimaginable carnage, slavery was abolished.   In 1870, former male slaves were enfranchised.   Both before and after abolition, however, free women of all colors were denied many political and civil rights because the law, public philosophy and social mores said that they lacked both the economic independence and innate capacity to have independent political judgement.   The reasoning that excluded women from political participation failed to acknowledge that first white men's, and then all men's, political participation was not truly independent, based as it was on the unacknowledged domestic and reproductive work and social contributions of women.   When women won national suffrage in 1920, the laws about electoral participation changed, but not the public philosophy of men's superiority or the gender division of labour on which democratic institutions are based.

The legacy of this history and the active opposition of parties to women candidates are evident in the small percentage of women who hold elected or appointed office or who have careers in the high civil service.   Women are most visible in local and state office.   In 1990, 16 per cent of mayors, 14 per cent of other municipal officials and 17 per cent of state legislators were women.   Only a tiny percentage of female officeholders were women of color.   For example, black women constituted fewer than 8 per cent and Hispanic women fewer than one per cent of women state legislators.[52]   At the federal level, only 6 per cent of the members of Congress were women (twenty-nine representatives and two senators), and only five of them were members of racial or ethnic minorities.[53] The figures for the meritocratic branch of government were not any better.   Only 9 per cent of the Senior Executive Service, the highest ranks of the federal bureaucracy, were

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[52] Susan J. Carroll, "Women State Elected Officials: Problems, Strategies, and Impact" (Paper presented at the State of the States Symposium: Women, Black, and Hispanic State Elected Leaders, Charlottesville, Va., 6-7 December 1990), p. 26.

[53] Ann L. Brownson, *Congressional Staff Directory* (Mt. Vernon, Va., Staff Directories Ltd., 1991), pp. 171-272 and 355-576).

women.[54] A handful of women have been appointed to cabinet office, but never as secretary of defense, treasury or state, where power is concentrated.

The percentage of women holding elected and appointed office has grown slowly over the 70 years since suffrage, with most of the growth occurring in the years since the creation of the contemporary women's movement. But the pace of improvement is excruciatingly slow. If the percentage of women sitting in Congress continues to increase at its current pace, it will take another 300 years for Congress to be comprised equally of women and men.[55] But there is little reason to believe that even this modest rate of increase will continue uninterruptedly. The increase in women holding office is due primarily to the climate of acceptance created by the feminist movement and the efforts of individual women candidates who struggle against the fraternalism and discrimination in political life. Parties have only had a marginal effect on recruiting more women, and then often in districts that were either considered unwinnable or, occasionally, safely liberal. In the absence of widespread party commitment, the fortunes of women candidates, regardless of their ideology or party, rest in part on the durability of the changes wrought by the feminist movement.

The transformational potential of conventional politics, and thus the propriety of engaging in it as candidate or voter, was greatly debated by feminists in the early years of the contemporary women's movement. Feminists whose benefits had roots in radical or socialist thought often viewed elections as instruments of social control and co-optation by a state whose interests were antithetical to women, and indeed, to all oppressed people. In contrast, feminists whose beliefs had roots in liberal thought viewed election as a way in which women advanced their interests. Increasingly, feminists see these approaches less oppositionally, espousing what in Europe and elsewhere has been called "double militancy," that is, a strategy of using state-directed as well as autonomous activities as the basis for individual and social change.

The increasing acceptance of women's participation in formal politics as a feminist goal has many sources. The most immediate source is the rightward movement of politics, which heightened the practical necessity of working to retain the imperfect state support for women that feminists had already won.[56] But the acceptance of formal politics as an important realm of feminists activism also grew out of the recognition of the complex

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[54] Figures for elected officials were reported in Newsletter No. 157 of the Minnesota Legislative Commission on the Economic Status of Women, December 1990, pp. 1-4. Figures for the Senior Executive Service come from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Annual Report on the Status of the Senior Executive Service, 1988* (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1989).

[55] Susan Carroll, *Women as Candidates in American Politics* (Bloomington, Ind., Indiana University Press, 1987).

[56] For an elaboration of feminist interpretations of voting in the United States, see Mary Fainsod Katzenstein, "Feminism and the Meaning of the Vote," *Signs* 10 (Autumn 1984), pp. 4-26. More recently, feminists have also viewed elections from a populist or mobilization perspective. In this view, the value of elections is in participating fully in them, thereby creating a richer civic life.

experiences and meanings of formal democratic participation. Women candidates, officeholders, bureaucrats, and judges (indeed even women voters) passionately described their struggle to participate in a politics where the unmentioned sex of leaders is always male and where the barriers to even routine political engagement are high.[57] Women's participation in politics repudiates the "natural" division between female reproductive efforts in the "private" sphere and male civic efforts in the "public" sphere. If women participate in politics, the public/private division is not natural in the sense of being inevitable, and the sphere of reproduction is not "pre-political," to use political philosopher Hannah Arendt's phrase.[58] The understanding and practice of both family and political life are thus transformed by women's political engagement.

While there is increasing agreement on the importance of political participation, feminists continue to disagree on what women bring to formal democratic politics if they do participate. Are women more sympathetic to the poor, more peace-loving and more concerned about the environment? Polling results show these kinds of differences between women and men, a difference popularly called the gender gap. The reasons for these differences are also the subject of fierce disagreement. Is it some essential female quality, like their capacity to bear life, that makes women empathetic; or is their compassion primarily a result of analogizing from their social position to the status of other people? Survey research on attitudes and policy preferences shows that feminist ideology, rather than female sex, distinguishes women and men in the electorate. In terms of ideology, feminist women are more egalitarian, more liberal and less symbolically racist in their beliefs than are non-feminist women and men. In terms of policy, feminist women are less hawkish and more likely to support egalitarian policies for women and Blacks, guaranteed jobs, affirmative action and aid to big cities than are non-feminist women and all men.[59]

These attitudinal and policy differences do not necessarily translate into distinctive voting patterns, however. Since the 1980s, women in general and feminists of both sexes have identified more strongly with the Democratic Party. This pattern continued to be true in the 1992 campaign between Republican President George Bush and his Democratic challenger, Governor Bill Clinton of Arkansas. In the past, women's increased identification with the Democrats has had little impact on presidential elections because presidential voting depends more on candidate image, and broad, cartoon-like caricatures of issue positions than on party identification. Even a woman in the presidential race could not overcome this dynamic of presidential elections. In 1984, when Geraldine Ferraro ran as the Democratic vice presidential candidate in Walter Mondale's bid for the presidency, organizations like the National Organization for Women thought that the Democrats could

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[57] Geraldine A. Ferraro with Linda Bird Francke, *Ferraro, My Story* (New York, Bantam Books, 1985).

[58] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (New York, Doubleday, 1959), p. 29.

[59] Pamela Johnston Conover, "Feminists and the Gender Gap," *Journal of Politics* 50 (November 1988): 985-1010. The design of this survey did not permit men to be categorized as feminist or non-feminist. Neither did the design distinguish between non-feminist and anti-feminist women.

capitalize on women's and feminists attachment to the Democratic Party. But President Ronald Reagan, the enormously popular Republican incumbent, won with 58.8 per cent of the popular vote. The majority of women voted for Reagan, although a lower proportion of women than men voted Republican.

In other contests, however, the greater identification of women and feminists with the Democrats acted like a sea-anchor for the party in municipal and state elections. Without these voters, the Democrats would have lost more offices as the rightward tide of politics pulled voters away from their candidates.[60] This year [1992], the attachment of women to the Democratic party may well make a crucial difference in the presidential contest. The long-term ability of Democrats to mobilize women for their presidential candidates remains uncertain, however.

Even though women voters have been crucial to Democratic victories in a number of instances, the Democrats have not particularly supported women candidates. In fact, it was the Republicans, hoping to capitalize on a gender gap based on the sex of the candidate and not her policy position, who made an effort in the mid-1970s to recruit and promote more women candidates. Democrats have not had a consistent policy about recruiting women candidates, although they have supported equal numbers of men and women regular delegates to presidential nominating conventions for almost two decades. "Super-delegates," mostly comprised of elected officials, are exempt from this rule.

The peculiar circumstances of the 1992 election season have made it something of an exception to these trends. Because of the stagnant economy and numerous political scandals, fewer incumbents are running for Congress than usual. The existence of open seats and the public's belief that women are less corrupt and more hard-working as elected officials has yielded an unusually high number of women candidates. Twenty-nine women filed for primary races for Senate seats. Eleven (10 Democrats and one Republican) won their primaries, meaning that women are running in one-third of the Senate races this year. (Only one third of the Senate stands for reelection at any one time.) In races for the House of Representative, 224 women ran in primaries, and 106 (70 Democrats and 36 Republicans) won. Women are running in roughly one fourth of all House races. (All 435 representatives run during each election.)

But even in the 1992 campaign, women candidates routinely reported that parties are less favourably disposed and less likely to give funds to female candidates.[61] Similarly, political action committees (PACs) were less willing to give to female challengers than to male challengers. However, PACs supported incumbents regardless of sex. Women

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[60] Ethel Klein, op. cit.

[61] Ann W. Richards, "Fund-raising for Women Candidates: All the Equality You Can Afford," *The Journal of State Government* 60 (1987), pp. 216-18.

also had fewer personal contacts with wealthy interests and less experience raising large amounts of money. Their ability to bypass unsupportive parties and go directly to the voters through television was limited by their inability to raise the large sums necessary to compete politically in the media age. If campaign financing laws were reformed to cap total spending and further limit PAC contributions, it would be much easier for women candidates of both parties to be elected.

In general, women elected to office hold different views than their male counterparts. In Congress and in state legislatures, women of both parties take stances more liberal than the men of their parties. Democratic and Republican women vote more frequently for social spending, equal rights and government regulation than do their male counterparts. In Congress, women of both parties lend less support to military spending than do men. But even though women are more liberal than men within their parties, Democratic women are considerably more liberal than Republican women.[62]

The unusually large number of women who ran for Congress in 1992 provides an opportunity to examine, in closing, the most immediate opportunties for and barriers to women's political participation in the United States. The unprecedented numbers of women candidates for the national legislature suggest that the United States may be entering a period where progressive legislation for women may be institutionally more possible than at any time in the past decade. There is every reason to believe that these women candidates will also be more liberal than their male counterparts. If this proves to be the case, a large group of women legislators could be a resource for passing national health insurance and parental leave, both of which have strong support in the feminist community, and indeed some support in the anti-feminist community as well, because of their pro-maternal implications. Certainly, communal anti-feminist groups and civic feminist groups will be active on these policy issues. Both types of groups and all politicians will have to contend with the barriers to pro-active government caused by a large national debt and a stagnant economy.

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[62] Poole and Zeigler, *Women, Public Opinion, and Politics*, pp. 154-74.

Annex

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* * * * *