

## Women in Power and Decision-Making

### 1. Global commitments

This chapter of the *Platform for Action* focuses on achieving effective participation by women in decision-making in elected bodies, public administrative entities, political parties, the judiciary and civil society. The *Platform* sets out two strategic objectives.

- ▶ Take measures to ensure women's access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.
- ▶ Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.

Two articles of the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW) deal with women's participation in political and public life. Article 7 commits States parties to ensure equality between women and men in political and public life, including the right to vote, to be eligible for election, to participate in formulating government policy, to hold public office and to perform public functions. The Convention includes the right to participate in non-governmental organisations and other associations. Article 8 requires States parties to ensure that women have equal opportunities with men to represent their governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organisations. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women provided additional guidance in the implementation of the Convention in 1997 in its General Recommendation 23, which highlighted the application of the Convention to all levels of government and to the activities of a range of organisations concerned with public and political life, including public boards, local councils, and the activities of political parties, trade unions and professional associations. General Recommendation 23 also stated that: "It is the Government's fundamental responsibility to encourage these initiatives to lead and guide public opinion and change attitudes that discriminate against women or discourage women's involvement in political and public life."<sup>1</sup>

The Commission on the Status of Women continued to pay attention to the issue and adopted agreed conclusions on women and decision-making processes in 1997 and 2006.<sup>2</sup>

In its resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, the Security Council called on Member States to increase the representation of women in all institutions and mechanisms dealing with the prevention, management and resolution of conflict, including as special representatives and envoys of the Secretary-General and within the field operations as military observers, civilian police, human rights and humanitarian personnel.

The importance of the issue has been recognized within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals. One of the indicators for monitoring Millennium Development Goal 3 on gender equality is the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments.

The 2005 World Summit Outcome reaffirmed the commitments to increased representation of women in government decision-making bodies, including opportunities to participate fully in the political process.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Progress at the national level

Marked progress has been made since 1995 in the numbers of women elected to national parliaments. The table below includes the 20 countries that achieved over 30 per cent representation of women in 2006, which compares favourably with the very short list of 5 countries that had achieved this in 1995 (Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden).<sup>4</sup>

Rwanda achieved 48.8 per cent representation of women in the 2003 elections, a dramatic increase from the 17.1 per cent representation in 1995 that illustrated the positive results of focused and coordinated efforts to address this issue in the period of post-conflict reconstruction. Several other countries in the table are also post-conflict countries: Burundi, Mozambique, and South Africa. As noted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, for countries in transition, “the process of establishing new constitutions and institutions and rewriting the rules of the political landscape provides a golden opportunity for women to influence the process and make their voices heard, especially in the drafting of electoral and political party laws.”<sup>5</sup>

It is also notable that, in addition to the post-conflict group, there is one other country in Sub-Saharan Africa and another four in Central and South America that have passed the 30 per cent threshold and have considerably higher representation of women than a number of OECD countries with more resources and more established traditions of electoral politics, again demonstrating that the advancement of women is possible through political will and targeted action.

Almost all of the countries 20 countries included in the table have used some form of electoral quotas to ensure that women account for a certain number of percentage of candidates for office or officeholders, whether through a constitutional commitment, a provision of election legislation, voluntary action by political parties, or some combination of these.<sup>6</sup>

| Women in national parliaments, 2006   |         |                |                  |  |
|---|---------|----------------|------------------|--|
| Country   | % women | Last elections | Electoral system | If quota & type of quota   |
| Rwanda  | 48.8    | 2003           | List PR          | Yes – constitutional commitment, legislation establishing 30% reserved seats (indirectly elected)                    |
| Sweden  | 45.3    | 2002           | List PR          | Yes – voluntary party quotas for candidates  |
| Costa Rica  | 38.6    | 2006           | List PR          | Yes – legislated quota of 40% women candidates on party lists  |
| Norway  | 37.9    | 2005           | List PR          | Yes – voluntary party quotas for candidates  |
| Finland   | 37.5    | 2003           | List PR          | No   |
| Denmark   | 36.9    | 2005           | List PR          | No – but did have at times in the past   |
| Netherlands   | 36.7    | 2003           | List PR          | Yes – voluntary party quotas for candidates  |
| Cuba  | 36.0    | 2003           | Majority *       | No   |
| Spain   | 36.0    | 2004           | List PR          | Yes – voluntary party quotas for candidates  |
| Argentina   | 35.0    | 2005           | List PR          | Yes – constitutional commitment; legislated quota of 30% women on party lists; political party quotas for candidates |
| Mozambique  | 34.8    | 2004           | List PR          | Yes – voluntary party quotas for candidates  |
| Belgium   | 34.7    | 2003           | List PR          | Yes – legislated quota of 33% women on party lists   |
| Austria   | 33.9    | 2002           | List PR          | Yes – voluntary party quotas for candidates  |
| Iceland   | 33.3    | 2003           | List PR          | Yes – voluntary party quotas for candidates  |
| South Africa  | 32.8    | 2004           | List PR          | Yes – voluntary party quotas for candidates  |
| New Zealand   | 32.2    | 2005           | Mixed M & PR     | No   |
| Germany   | 31.8    | 2005           | Mixed M & PR     | Yes – voluntary party quotas for candidates  |
| Guyana  | 30.8    | 2001           | List PR          | Yes – constitutional requirement for 33% quota for women on electoral lists  |
| Burundi   | 30.5    | 2005           | List PR          | Yes – constitutional commitment, legislated quota of 30% women on party lists  |
| Tanzania  | 30.4    | 2005           | FPTP             | Yes – constitutional quota, election law quota regulation (special seats)  |
| PR= proportional representation; Mixed M & PR = combination of member and proportional representation; FPTP = first past the post; * in Cuba, the single nominated candidate must get the support of the majority of the electorate |         |                |                  |  |
| Sources: IPU (2006). <i>Women in Politics: 60 years in retrospect</i> , IPU database on women in national parliaments; and IDEA International quota database.   |         |                |                  |  |

Most countries have elected bodies at sub-national levels, some with state or provincial governments and most with elected local councils. Very little data is available for the intermediate (state or provincial level), but a database on women councillors and mayors is being developed by the organisation United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) as part of their Global Programme on Women in Local Decision-Making. UCLG's conclusions from the preliminary and partial data available in 2005 were that 20 per cent of councillors overall were women and that the participation of women in local politics was increasing steadily.<sup>7</sup>

A number of countries have used constitutional or legislative quota systems to advance progress toward more equitable representation at the local level. The Global Database on Quotas for Women provides information on 30 countries with quotas at the sub-national level, mostly low and middle-income countries but also several in Europe – France, Greece, and Portugal.<sup>8</sup> In some countries, an initiative to decentralize decision-making to more local levels have provided an opportunity to establish measures to ensure the participation of women. For example, India led the way before the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing when its 1993 constitutional amendments to strengthen local governance included a measure to reserve one third of seats in *panchayats* (local governing councils) for women. Pakistan’s Devolution of Power Plan of 2000 reserved one-third of seats for women at all sub-national levels.<sup>9</sup>

The Indian experience with reserved seats for women has been much studied, and it has been cited as indicating the way women’s presence and participation can change politics:

“In India studies of women in *panchayats* attest to the myriad ways women’s presence has changed local politics. There are reports that women have made the *panchayats* more responsive to community demands for infrastructure, housing, schools, and health. Women officials have improved implementation of various government programs, and their presence has made women citizens more likely to take advantage of state services and demand their rights. When women are the heads of *panchayats*, there is a greater likelihood that policies that are sensitive to women’s needs will be implemented. Such effects take time to register, however. In the early stages of women’s reservations, many women councilors seem merely to act as surrogates of their male relatives, but over time, they acquire the confidence and skills to act independently.”<sup>10</sup>

Other notable developments include the election of women heads of government and state in Chile, Germany, and Liberia in 2005 and 2006, joining a number of other women presidents and prime ministers (Bangladesh, Finland, Ireland, Jamaica, Latvia, Mozambique, New Zealand, the Philippines, Republic of Korea, and Sao Tomé and Príncipe).<sup>11</sup> However, this number of 13 women heads of government or state barely marks an increase compared to 1995.

Several countries reported increased representation of women in the judiciary or appointments of women to key judicial positions (including, for example, Chile, Djibouti, Egypt, Nicaragua, Slovenia, and Spain).<sup>12</sup> Four out of the nine judges on the Supreme Court of Canada, the country’s final court of appeal, are women, including the Chief Justice. This is the result of considerable change throughout the Canadian judicial system in recent decades. In 2006, 29 per cent of all federally-appointed judges were women, compared to 0.05 per cent in 1969, the year that the Chief Justice began her career as a lawyer.<sup>13</sup>

### **3. Gaps and challenges**

The developments noted above are promising and show what can be achieved. However, progress has been slow in all structures of power and types of decision-making.

#### **Under-representation in national parliaments**

Women accounted for 11.6 per cent on average of members of national parliaments in 1995, and this increased to only 17.3 per cent by May 2007 despite the target of 30 per cent that was to be reached by 1995 – a full decade earlier.<sup>14</sup> There remain a number of countries with no representation of women in parliament (including one that has not yet extended the vote to women).

Evidence suggests that a major factor influencing progress is the nature of electoral systems and the practices of political parties. Proportional representation systems result in a higher proportion of women than those with plurality/majority or mixed proportional systems: overall, the former have an average of 16 per cent women compared to 11 per cent for the latter based on data for 174 countries in 2003.<sup>15</sup> This is in large part because of the way the system interacts with the concerns and strategies of political parties: in plurality/majority systems the incentives to parties are to select the most “electable” candidate, whereas proportional systems allow for a greater number of candidates to be put forward. Even so, where women are placed on party lists also has a major influence on the likelihood of women obtaining a seat. Political parties thus play a key role in both types of system.

Even when elected, women are less likely than men to be in higher-level decision-making positions in national parliaments. The number of women serving as presiding officers in parliament decreased over the decade, down to 8% in 2005 from 10% in 1995.<sup>16</sup> They are also continue to be under-represented in cabinet appointments. While Sweden and Spain had achieved a gender balance in cabinet appointments in 2005, their performance is the exception rather than the rule – globally, the proportion was 14.3 per cent women as of January 2005.<sup>17</sup>

### **Numbers and effectiveness at the local level**

Elections at the local level offer a greater number of opportunities for women simply because of the greater number of elected bodies and positions, and participation at the local level has served as a training ground for many politicians, both women and men. Great strides have been made through the use of quotas at the local level in several countries. For example, Bangladesh introduced reserved seats for women in local elections in 1997, which resulted in a total of 12,828 women elected to these reserved seats in some 4,400 locations, in addition to 110 women elected to general seats (of which there were over 39,000) and 20 women succeeding in the election as chairpersons (less than 1 per cent). However, it remains a challenge for these women to function effectively because their participation is not yet well-accepted by their male colleagues and they face considerable resistance in carrying out functions and exercising authority. Many of the women elected to office come with limited experience in elected office and government structures.<sup>18</sup> In Bangladesh and many other countries, the challenge of ensuring that local governments are effective and accountable to their citizens – both women and men – includes ensuring that male members have the capacity to work effectively with their female colleagues, and that the women members have the knowledge and skills to use the relevant procedures and address local issues. The trend toward decentralization of responsibilities to the local level increases the importance of addressing this challenge.

### **Women’s share in public and private sector managerial positions**

Women’s representation in decision-making positions in the civil service and public sector bodies are also concerns of the *Platform for Action*. The limited information available to assess progress illustrates the challenges in this area. The European Commission’s database on women and men in decision-making is one of the few sources that focusses specifically on senior public service positions. Considering the proportion of women in the highest-ranked civil service position under the Minister, only 5 of 31 countries passed the 30 per cent threshold in 2006, although several others achieved this at the second highest level.<sup>19</sup> Occupation data from labour force surveys on the census provides another source of data, although data about the public sector may be difficult to extract as labour force surveys generally combine information from the

public and private sectors. The ILO has calculated that women's overall share of public and private sector managerial jobs (including posts as legislators, senior officials and managers) was between 20 and 40 percent in 48 of the 63 countries for which data could be obtained, a figure that remains considerably lower than women's overall share in employment.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, considering the participation of women in strategic decision-making in the private sector, the "glass ceiling" – the barriers that limit the numbers of women reaching the top of the corporate hierarchy – is still evident. In the United States, a 2005 survey of women corporate officers found that Fortune 500 companies had on average 21.8 corporate officers, of which women held on average 3.6 positions. The study found that there had been little change over the previous decade and concluded that, with this rate of progress, "it could take 40 years for women to achieve parity with men in corporate officer positions."<sup>21</sup> Another study by the same organisation found that the Fortune 500 companies with the highest percentages of women corporate officers, yielded higher returns than those with lower percentages of women.<sup>22</sup> In Europe, a 2006 study found that among Europe's top corporations, the number with at least one woman on their board was higher in 2006 than in 2004, but that European corporations were lagging behind their American counterparts, except in Scandinavia, where proactive policies had been taken. The study also found that few of the women on boards held leadership position – less than 2 percent held positions as chair of the board or chief executive officer.<sup>23</sup>

#### **Norway responds to the lack of gender balance on corporate boards**

Norway has been known as a leader on gender equality and in the participation of women in decision-making: women constitute almost 40 per cent of parliamentarians and women have held positions such as those of prime minister, supreme court justice and minister of defence. However, progress in the corporate sector has been much slower: in 2003, only 7 per cent of corporate board and executive positions were held by women.

For state-owned companies, legislation passed in February 2002 requires at least 40 per cent representation of each sex on their boards by March 2003. The private sector was put on notice that they were expected to meet similar targets and was given two years to demonstrate compliance. By July 2005, only 68 of 519 companies had fulfilled the requirements, and while the percentage of women on boards had increased to 16 per cent, this was still far from the 40 per cent target. Legislation addressed to the private sector was therefore passed, effective in January 2006. The legislation requires existing companies to comply within two years and new companies to comply in order to be registered.

Sources: [www.norway.org/news/archive/2003/200303gender.htm](http://www.norway.org/news/archive/2003/200303gender.htm);  
[odin.dep.no/bld/english/news/speeches/004021-070005/dok-bn.html](http://odin.dep.no/bld/english/news/speeches/004021-070005/dok-bn.html)

#### **4. Strategies to accelerate implementation**

In addition to setting out government commitments, the *Platform for Action* urges a range of actors to take measures in support of women's participation in power structures and decision-making. These include political parties, the private sector, trade unions, the judiciary, employers' organisations, academic institutions and civil society, among others. However, governments have a lead role in encouraging and facilitating action by others, as well as in implementing measures in the management of public sector institutions. National governments can:

- ▶ consider the potential for temporary special measures to accelerate progress toward gender balance in elected office, particularly in the context of electoral reform and decentralization;

- ▶ develop or support programmes that provide training to women candidates in the skills needed for effective campaigning, and to elected women in the skills in effectively carrying out their functions and supporting equality objectives;
- ▶ facilitate linkages among various actors seeking to bring gender equality issues and women's views into the decision-making process;
- ▶ establish specific time-bound targets and action plans for increasing women's representation in decision-making in the public sector;
- ▶ establish mechanisms to facilitate consideration of women candidates in appointments to senior positions in government and public sector boards and agencies;
- ▶ promote awareness and support for the goal of gender equality among decision-makers through public awareness campaigns; and
- ▶ strengthen monitoring, reporting and knowledge about women's participation in decision-making through improved data collection, dissemination and analysis.

Aspects of several of these strategies are discussed further in the text and boxes below.

### **Influencing the electoral process**

Electoral quotas have been an important element in achieving progress in many countries, at both the national and local levels. However, quotas are only effective if they are appropriate to the particular electoral system of a country (or the level of government to which they apply). Proportional representation systems offer a broader range of options for quotas than plurality/majority systems. Even so, a quota initiative may require constitutional change or sanction, and the opportunity to introduce a quota system would therefore only arrive in the context of larger reform processes in which broad public support for them has been mobilized – as has been the case in a number of post-conflict countries. Quotas can be useful measures, but the design and implementation must be strategically pursued.

If quotas are intended to be implemented by political parties, they must be designed so that evasion is difficult. However, as voluntary implementation is preferable to implementation under compulsion, it would seem desirable to seek to build broad public support at the stage of formulating such provisions in order to facilitate implementation. Quotas can also have a downside if the nature of the quota-based system results in women members who are seen as having less legitimacy as elected representatives than their male peers. Political parties play a key role in the electoral system. Some observers have suggested that not only are they the gatekeepers in women's access to politics, but that quotas have been most successful when they have been adopted on a voluntary basis by political parties who come to see this as being in their own interest.<sup>24</sup>

Quota systems also need to be supplemented with other policies to enable women to be effective representatives. The importance of access to training and skills development was emphasised by the United Nations Expert Group on Equal Participation of Women and Men in Decision-making Processes:

“Given that many women have had little experience with running for political office, it is of utmost importance that training be made readily available to allow women to develop and fine-tune their political skills. Once in office, women may also benefit from leadership training and mentoring to increase efficiency and ensure sustainability.

Training programmes should also target men, to expose them to the complexities of gender discrimination and the necessity of and mechanisms for promoting women in public office.”<sup>25</sup>

#### **Conditions for the effectiveness of quotas in enhancing women’s voice in political bodies**

The UN Millenium Project's Task Force report, *Taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women*, provides a good summary of four major lessons of experience about the effectiveness of quotas.

- **“A country’s electoral system strongly influences the impact of quotas.** Quotas work best in closed-list, proportional representation systems with placement mandates and where electoral districts are large – where many candidates are elected from each electoral district and parties can expect several candidates running in the district to gain a seat....”
- **“Placement mandates are critical to the success of quotas in closed list proportional representation electoral systems.** Because candidates are elected from party lists in the order in which they appear, placement on the list determines the chances of being elected. Placement mandates require parties to place women in high or “electable” positions on party lists (for example, by alternations of women’s positions with men’s on the party list). This system sets up a reasonably direct relationship between the number of women candidates and the number of women elected....”
- **“Quota laws must specify details of implementation.** Vague laws leave too much discretion to political parties to apply – or fail to apply – quotas as they see fit. ... “
- **“For quota laws to be effective, there must be sanctions for non-compliance.** The strongest sanction is to have a party’s list of candidates declared invalid and for the party to be forbidden from contesting the election. For these sanctions to work, judges must be able to monitor party compliance and groups must be able to challenge non-compliant lists in court....”

Source: UN Millennium Project (2005). *Taking Action*.<sup>26</sup>

#### **Facilitating linkages among elected women**

Women elected to parliament at the national or local level remain in a minority, and many are relative newcomers to the process, so alliances among them and with other women’s and equality advocates can be important to enabling women to be effective as parliamentarians and in advocacy for equality issues. The national women’s machinery can play a role in facilitating the formation and work of such alliances. In Rwanda, for example, seminars during the constitutional process brought together the Forum of Women Parliamentarians, the Legal and Constitutional Committee, the Ministry of Gender Issues and representatives of civil society organisations. Through close collaboration among these actors, progress was made in a number of areas: mobilization of women to participate in the constitutional drafting and in the elections as voters and candidates; sensitization of the public on existing inequalities and women’s rights; sensitization of decision-makers and planners on gender equality issues; development of a national gender equality policy; and joint work to review and advocate the repeal of discriminatory legislation.<sup>27</sup>

In Uganda, a non-partisan Women’s Caucus brought together members of the Constituent Assembly elected in 1994 and, with the assistance of the national women’s machinery, organized seminars and skills-training workshops on advocacy, campaign management, constituency building, parliamentary procedures, etc. They also formed links with key organisations such as the Uganda Women Lawyers’ Association, which assisted with the consideration of constitutional provisions, as well as with organisations that enabled the Women’s Caucus to

remain informed of the views of women at the grass-roots and to communicate with them. The experience gained through their effective interventions during the Constituent Assembly formed the basis for later work in building the capacity of women leaders at the local level and potential candidates for parliament, and in incorporating gender equality perspectives in legislation before parliament.<sup>28</sup>

Many countries have established formal parliamentary bodies to consider issues related to the position of women and gender equality. These take a range of forms and many include men as well as women. An informative on-line database on the structures and mandates of such specialized bodies is maintained by the Inter-Parliamentary Union. It includes, for example: the Gender Caucus in Burkina Faso, the Network of Parliamentarians on Gender Issues in Niger, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women in Canada, and the Special Committee on Gender and Equality in Uruguay.<sup>29</sup> These bodies provide forums for the discussion of gender equality issues among members and potentially a forum for exchanges with civil society organisations and advocates. This can be an important opportunity for another form of participation by women in decision-making by providing opportunities for women's organisations to participate in discussions of policy decisions that shape their societies and affect their lives. This is another area in which national women's machineries can play facilitating roles through, for example, bringing women's organisations to the attention of the parliamentary bodies, or enabling women's organisations to develop advocacy skills.

#### **Supporting women candidates through training, media campaigns, and guidance – Vietnam**

In Vietnam, the representation of women in national parliament has increased from 18.5 per cent in the 1992 elections to 26.2 per cent in 1997 and 27.4 per cent in 2002; in 2004 Vietnam had the highest representation of women in parliament in Asia. Progress has been supported by initiatives of the National Committee for the Advancement of Women (NCFAW, the inter-ministerial committee that is Vietnam's national machinery for women's advancement). For the 1997 elections, leadership training sessions were held in six locations for 144 women candidates. The training focused on campaigning and presentation skills, and on concrete strategies to increase chances of success. For the subsequent elections, 216 women candidates benefited from the leadership training.

For the People's Council Elections at the sub-national level (provincial, district and commune), the NCFAW and the Vietnam Women's Union (VWU) organised training courses on leadership skills for almost 18,000 women candidates in preparation for the 1999 elections, with further sessions held for the 2004 elections. There was also a media campaign to promote positive images of women in leadership and encourage the public to vote for women. Further support to the candidates is provided by the "Manual for Women in People's Councils" developed by the VWU. The manual focuses on women in leadership, the roles and functions of Peoples Councils, necessary skills and a better understanding of gender equality issues.

Source: National Report of Vietnam (2004)<sup>30</sup>

### **Engaging journalists in discussions on gender equality to increase coverage and public debate**

In Southern Africa, a set of training workshops targeting media practitioners and women in or seeking public office were held in advance of the elections anticipated in 2004 and 2005 in seven countries in Southern Africa. The workshops were planned and led by Gender Links, an organisation that promotes gender equality in and through media, as part of its gender, media and governance programme. The workshops had a number of aims including an increase in the gender awareness and skill of media practitioners, building relationships between women in politics and media decision-makers and practitioners, empowering women with practical skills for dealing with the media, and assisting the media in thinking through the gender dimensions of election coverage.

Subsequent monitoring showed a substantial increase in the quantity and quality of coverage of gender issues linked to the elections in the media organisations reached through the newsroom-based training that was part of the training in each country.

- **South Africa:** gender was a key point of analysis of the election, especially in the announcement of the new cabinet; monitoring also showed an increase in reports drawing on women as sources of news from 13 per cent in 1999 to 26 per cent in 2004;
- **Malawi:** newspapers and radio stations made a special effort to feature women candidates and to comment on women's under-representation;
- **Botswana:** the media raised an outcry when election results showed a decline in women's representation, which had a clear result on the announcement of nominated MPs and the new cabinet.
- **Mauritius:** when the ruling party boycotted a "women in politics" seminar after having faced tough questions on these issues, the media took the government to task for failing to deliver on its gender equality promises.

The workshops also resulted in links between gender equality activists, media and women politicians and thus established a foundation for ongoing dialogue and the development of news stories.

The various approaches followed and the lessons learned for future training are well documented and the initiative resulted in a rich set of resources that are available on-line. For an overview and country-specific reports, see: [www.genderlinks.org.za/item.php?id=64](http://www.genderlinks.org.za/item.php?id=64); for the resources generated and further developments with work on the "gender, media and elections" theme, see: [www.genderlinks.org.za/page.php?p\\_id=118](http://www.genderlinks.org.za/page.php?p_id=118).<sup>31</sup>

### **Making information on qualified women more accessible to decision-makers**

Ensuring that decision-makers have ready access to information about potential women candidates for senior appointments is a way of counter-balancing the more established networks that men with similar experience may have to bring their name to the attention of decision-makers. It is also a practical way to respond to the tendency of managers to assume that qualified candidates will have qualities similar to their own, or that there are no qualified women in the field – assumptions that work against women as long as they are a small minority in decision-making positions.

The development of a directory or database of women in leadership positions is an approach reported by a number of countries. A more active approach has been taken by New Zealand, which has established an office that provides a service both to government decision-makers seeking to identify potential candidates and to women with the relevant interests and skills (see box). This approach thus also addresses the information constraint often faced by women – that appointments to senior positions may be made before information about the openings reaches women who may be qualified and interested.

Sector-specific strategies may also deliver good results. For example, women who could be qualified for appointments to the judiciary may also be less known to decision-makers than similarly qualified men. An approach taken by Canada to broaden the field of candidates for judicial appointments was to shift from a top-down selection system to one in which those interested in an appointment are required to submit an application, which is then reviewed by committees composed of judges, lawyers and citizens. The committees determine whether the candidates are qualified before the names enter a pool for possible appointments. This has brought into the system many women who may have been unnoticed in a strictly top-down system.<sup>32</sup>

**In the Philippines, the Civil Service Commission revised a range of policies in support of the target of gender balance in executive positions**

The Government of the Philippines has taken a number of steps to increase the number of women at the decision-making level of the civil service. The Civil Service Commission (CSC) issued a Memorandum Circular in 1999 setting a target of 50-50 representation of women and men in executive positions and requiring regular reporting by sex on nominations, appointments and positions held. In order to advance progress in meeting the target, the CSC (in collaboration with the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW) and the Career Executive Service Board) has undertaken three programmes to increase women's capacity and skills.

- 1) Career Advancement of Women in Government Services (CAPWINGS) seeks to enhance support mechanisms, capacity building, training and other enabling mechanisms for women employees. The programme has worked on improving working conditions, preventing sexual harassment in the workplace, facilitating career advancement and advocacy. Policies enacted include: paternity leave, leaves for various family-related occasions, establishment of day care centres, flexible working arrangements (including modified maternity leave, part-time work and flexible hours).
- 2) Merit Promotion Plan, which guides promotions based on merit, and has been revised to ensure that gender biases do not obstruct recruitment and promotion and to emphasize equal opportunities for women and men;
- 3) Directory of Women on the Move, which provides information about qualified women candidates for vacancies in the Cabinet and other executive positions to ensure that appointing authorities have information and choices about qualified women for top posts.

Source: Philippines periodic report to CEDAW (2004).<sup>33</sup>

### **“Nominations Service” to support the gender balance target for statutory bodies – New Zealand**

The government of New Zealand's target for 2010 is to have equal representation of women and men in the members of government statutory bodies. To achieve this, the Ministry of Women's Affairs has established the Nominations Service, a unit with 3 staff and a budget, which focuses on identifying women with appropriate experience and ensuring these women are known to decision-makers. A stock-taking in 2004 showed that significant progress had been made: 41 per cent of the directors and committee members were women (of 397 statutory bodies with a total of 2,605 members), compared to about 25 per cent in 1993. However, there continued to be differences among sectors, with higher representation of women in social development, health and related fields, and lower numbers in sectors such as agriculture, economic development and transport.

The Nominations Service was able to learn from experience and to adjust strategies so that its advice and services are now sought after. This required that it develop a strong reputation among both decision-makers and candidates for the database. It has therefore developed “a rigorous ‘recruitment agency’ competency matching approach,” providing the links between those needing skills and those with skills, and has a proactive communication strategy with potential nominees and database members (including a website that provides further information on its procedures: [www.mwa.govt.nz/women-on-boards](http://www.mwa.govt.nz/women-on-boards)).

Sources: Panel presentation on “Women in Decision-Making at all Levels,” Commonwealth Meetings on the eve of the 2006 session of the Commission on the Status of Women.<sup>34</sup>

### **Strengthening data and analysis of issues and progress**

There continues to be a need for better data to assess issues and progress. Data are lacking on many aspects of women's participation in leadership and decision-making positions. A United Nations review of data collection at the national level found that statistical agencies in many countries do not routinely collect and disseminate statistics on women in power and decision-making, due to a lack of capacity for collection and reporting and poorly developed methodologies for the use of existing data to examine gender equality issues in this area.<sup>35</sup>

The best tracked level is the most clearly defined and visible – the number of women in national parliaments and key elected offices. The work of the Inter-Parliamentary Union has served to ensure reporting on these figures by national parliaments and the presentation of this information in an international database.<sup>36</sup> Efforts are also being made by the organisation United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), which has begun work on a database on women's participation in municipal and local governments,<sup>37</sup> but this is a more complicated task because of the greater number and variety of levels and because limited data on these levels is gathered by national agencies.

Equally important is improved data on women's participation in other types of decision-making positions in the public sector, such as senior positions in the public service appointments to the judiciary, and positions on the boards of public agencies. Data on the proportion of women in managerial jobs in the public and private sectors together is not sufficiently specific to monitor the implementation of government commitments to the increased participation of women in decision-making positions over which the government itself has the power of promotion or appointment. Better data on women in such positions at the sub-national level is also important to the elaboration of policies at that level, and is particularly urgent in those countries in which decentralization processes increase the scope of responsibilities of local governments in policy development and service delivery.

## 5. Resources

### Websites

- ▶ IDEA (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance) gender equality website: [www.idea.int/gender/](http://www.idea.int/gender/). Website with discussions of issues and developments as well as further resources on specific issues. See in particular the document by IDEA and Stockholm University, *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers Handbook* (updated 2005), which reviews obstacles faced by women entering parliament, possible solutions, and influence strategies for those elected, and presents informative case studies in all these areas: [www.idea.int/publications/wip2/index.cfm](http://www.idea.int/publications/wip2/index.cfm). Also see this organisation's work on a *Global database on quotas for women*: information and analysis on the various types of quotas in use in different countries, as well as country-specific information: [www.quotaproject.org/](http://www.quotaproject.org/) (all accessed 28 June 2007).
- ▶ The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has several sites on women's political participation: regularly updated data on women in national parliaments: [www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm](http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm); a database on specialized parliamentary bodies dealing with the status of women and gender equality, with information about the date of creation, mandate, subjects dealt with, working methods, relations with other bodies, etc. [www.ipu.org/parline-e/Instanceadvanced.asp](http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/Instanceadvanced.asp); and a searchable bibliographical database on various aspects of political participation by women: [www.ipu.org/bdf-e/BDFsearch.asp](http://www.ipu.org/bdf-e/BDFsearch.asp) (all accessed 28 June 2007).
- ▶ iKNOW Politics Network (International network on Women and Politics) is "an on-line workspace designed to serve the needs of elected officials, candidates, political party leaders and members, researchers, students and practitioners interested in advancing women in politics." It is a joint initiative of several organisations including IPU and IDEA and provides access to resources and expertise and opportunities to share experiences. [www.iknowpolitics.org](http://www.iknowpolitics.org) (accessed 28 June 2007).

### Reports and tools

- ▶ Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Women in politics: 60 years in retrospect* (2006), a set of 6 "datasheets", including comparisons between 1995 and 2006 (datasheet 2); a chronology of women heads of state or government since 1945 (datasheet 4), an overview of data on women in parliament in the same period (datasheet 5), and a paper on "the participation of women and men in decision-making: the parliamentary dimension" (datasheet 6). [www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/wmninfokit06\\_en.pdf](http://www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/wmninfokit06_en.pdf) (accessed 28 June 2007)
- ▶ United Nations, Department of Political Affairs (2005). *Women and Elections. Guide on promoting the participation of women in elections*. Handbook intended to provide a quick reference guide to assist those working to promote greater participation of women in electoral processes in post-conflict countries, inspired by an Expert Group meeting on the same theme. [www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/womenandelections.html](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/womenandelections.html) (accessed 28 June 2007).
- ▶ United Nations, Division for the Advancement of Women (2005). Expert Group Meeting on "Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes, with particular emphasis on political participation and leadership." Papers by experts, as well as the background paper and the final report are available at: [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/eql-men/documents\\_preview.html](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/eql-men/documents_preview.html) (accessed 27 June 2007).

- ▶ UNRISD, *Gender Equality: Striving for Justice in an Unequal World* (2005) has a major section on women in politics and public life, with discussions on women's participation in electoral systems, women's efforts to reshape politics, gender and good governance, and the implication of decentralization. [www.unrisd.org/](http://www.unrisd.org/) (search by title) (accessed 27 June 2007).
- ▶ Woodward, Alison (2001). *Going for Gender Balance: a guide for balanced decision-making. Good practices to achieve gender-balanced representation in political and social decision-making*. Division for Equality between Women and Men, Council of Europe, EG-S-BP (2001)1. Provides a concise overview of issues and brief case studies of promising initiatives (in European member states) in various arenas of decision-making political parties, public administration, trade unions, women's organisations), [www.humanrights.coe.int/equality/Eng/WordDocs/Document%20list.htm](http://www.humanrights.coe.int/equality/Eng/WordDocs/Document%20list.htm) (under women in politics and decision-making) (accessed 27 June 2007).
- ▶ Vinnicombe, Susan et. al. *Making Good Connections: Best Practice for Women's Corporate Networks*. Report on how to set up and run women's networks. Developed under the auspices of the Cranfield Centre for Developing Women leaders. [www.som.cranfield.ac.uk/som/research/centres/cdwbl/downloads/connections.pdf](http://www.som.cranfield.ac.uk/som/research/centres/cdwbl/downloads/connections.pdf) (accessed 27 June 2007).

## Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> CEDAW General Recommendation No. 23 (16th session, 1997), para. 28: [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm.htm#recom23](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm.htm#recom23) (accessed 28 June 2007).
  - <sup>2</sup> CSW agreed conclusions: [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/) (select session, the agreed conclusions) (accessed 26 June 2007).
  - <sup>3</sup> *2005 World Summit Outcome*, United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/60/1, para. 58. [www.un.org/summit2005/documents.html](http://www.un.org/summit2005/documents.html) (accessed 29 June 2007).
  - <sup>4</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union (2006). *Women in politics: 60 years in retrospect*, Data Sheet 2. [www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/wmninfokit06\\_en.pdf](http://www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/wmninfokit06_en.pdf) (accessed 28 June 2007).
  - <sup>5</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union (2006). *Women in politics: 60 years in retrospect*, Data Sheet 6, p.4 [www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/wmninfokit06\\_en.pdf](http://www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/wmninfokit06_en.pdf) (accessed 28 June 2007).
  - <sup>6</sup> On types of quotas, see the *Global Database on Quotas for Women*: [www.quotaproject.org/index.cfm](http://www.quotaproject.org/index.cfm) (accessed 28 June 2007).
  - <sup>7</sup> UCLG: [www.cities-localgovernments.org/uclg/](http://www.cities-localgovernments.org/uclg/) (see gender statistics) (accessed 28 June 2007).
  - <sup>8</sup> *Global Database on Quotas for Women*: [www.quotaproject.org/system.cfm#constlocal](http://www.quotaproject.org/system.cfm#constlocal) (accessed 28 June 2007).
  - <sup>9</sup> UN Millennium Project (2005). *Taking Action: achieving gender equality and empowering women*. Task Force on Education and Gender Equality, p.105. [www.unmillenniumproject.org/reports/tf\\_gender.htm](http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/reports/tf_gender.htm) (accessed 26 June 2007).
  - <sup>10</sup> UN Millennium Project (2005). *Taking Action: achieving gender equality and empowering women*. Task Force on Education and Gender Equality, pp.105-106. [www.unmillenniumproject.org/reports/tf\\_gender.htm](http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/reports/tf_gender.htm) (accessed 26 June 2007).
  - <sup>11</sup> See Worldwide Guide to Women in Leadership: [www.guide2womenleaders.com/](http://www.guide2womenleaders.com/) (accessed 28 June 2007).
  - <sup>12</sup> United Nations (2005). *Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century."* Report of the Secretary-General. E/CN.6/2005/2, para. 334.
  - <sup>13</sup> McLachlin, Beverly (Chief Justice of Canada) (2006). "Why we need women judges," Speech to the International Association of Women Judges, 8<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference, Sydney, Australia, May 2006: [www.iawj.org/what/sydney.asp](http://www.iawj.org/what/sydney.asp) (accessed 28 June 2007).
  - <sup>14</sup> Data for 1995 from Inter-Parliamentary Union (2006). *Women in politics: 60 years in retrospect*, Data Sheet 5. [www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/wmninfokit06\\_en.pdf](http://www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/wmninfokit06_en.pdf); data for 2007 from the IPU database on women in national

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- parliaments [www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm](http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm) (accessed 28 June 2007); the 30% target for 1995 was set by ECOSOC in 1990 and is referred to in the *Platform for Action*, para. 182.
- <sup>15</sup> UNRISD (2005). *Gender Equality: Striving for Justice in an Unequal World*, p 152, 2003 data for 174 countries: [www.unrisd.org/](http://www.unrisd.org/) (search by title) (accessed 27 June 2007).
- <sup>16</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union (2006). *Women in politics: 60 years in retrospect*, Data Sheet 6, p.6 (both women ministers and presiding officers). [www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/wmninfokit06\\_en.pdf](http://www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/wmninfokit06_en.pdf) (accessed 28 June 2007).
- <sup>17</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union (2006). *Women in politics: 60 years in retrospect*, Data Sheet 6, p.6 (both women ministers and presiding officers). [www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/wmninfokit06\\_en.pdf](http://www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/wmninfokit06_en.pdf) (accessed 28 June 2007).
- <sup>18</sup> South Asia Partnership Bangladesh, “Capacity profile of Union Parishad elected women member,” study funded by CIDA’s PLAGÉ project in collaboration with the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, n.d.
- <sup>19</sup> European Commission, Database on women and men in decision-making (data last updated 04-12-06): [ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/women\\_men\\_stats/out/measures\\_out55\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/women_men_stats/out/measures_out55_en.htm) (accessed 28 June 2007).
- <sup>20</sup> ILO (2004). *Breaking through the glass ceiling: women in management*. [www.ilo.org/dyn/gender/docs/RES/292/f267981337](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/gender/docs/RES/292/f267981337) (accessed 28 June 2007).
- <sup>21</sup> Catalyst (2006). *2005 Census of Corporate Officers and Top Earners for the Fortune 500.*, p.9. [www.catalyst.org/knowledge/titles/title.php?page=cen\\_WOTE02](http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/titles/title.php?page=cen_WOTE02) (accessed 28 June 2007).
- <sup>22</sup> Catalyst (2004). *The Bottom Line: Connecting Corporate Performance and Gender Diversity*: [www.catalyst.org/knowledge/titles/title.php?page=lead\\_finperf\\_04](http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/titles/title.php?page=lead_finperf_04) (accessed 28 June 2007).
- <sup>23</sup> European Professional Women’s Network, *Second Bi-annual EuropeanPWN BoardWomen Monitor 2006*. [www.europeanpwn.net/files/boardwomen\\_present\\_large120606.pdf](http://www.europeanpwn.net/files/boardwomen_present_large120606.pdf) (accessed 28 June 2007).
- <sup>24</sup> For example, see chapter 9 in UNRISD (2005). *Gender Equality: Striving for Justice in an Unequal World*. [www.unrisd.org/](http://www.unrisd.org/) (search by title) (accessed 27 June 2007).
- <sup>25</sup> United Nations, Division for the Advancement of Women (2005). *Report of the Expert Group Meeting on ‘Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes, with particular emphasis on political participation and leadership.’* EGM/EPDM/2005/REPORT, para. 58. [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/eql-men/FinalReport.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/eql-men/FinalReport.pdf) (accessed 3 July 2007).
- <sup>26</sup> UN Millennium Project (2005). *Taking Action: achieving gender equality and empowering women*. Task Force on Education and Gender Equality, pp.108-109. [www.unmillenniumproject.org/reports/tf\\_gender.htm](http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/reports/tf_gender.htm) (accessed 26 June 2007).
- <sup>27</sup> Kantengwa, Juliana (2004). “Women’s participation in electoral processes in post-conflict countries: the case of Rwanda”, Paper for panel discussion at the United Nations (March 2004): [www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/meetings/2004/CSW48Panel/CSW48Panel.htm](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/meetings/2004/CSW48Panel/CSW48Panel.htm) ; Kareen Jabre (2004). “Enhancing the role of women in electoral processes in post-conflict countries: post election support,” paper for Expert Group Meeting, United Nations, (January 2004): [www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/meetings/2004/EGMelectoral/index.html](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/meetings/2004/EGMelectoral/index.html) (both sites accessed 28 June 2007).
- <sup>28</sup> Mukibi, Benigna (2000). “Alliances for gender and politics: the Uganda Women’s Caucus,” in UNDP, *Women’s Political Participation and Good Governance: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Challenges*. : [www.undp.org/governance/docs/Gender-Pub-21stcentury.pdf](http://www.undp.org/governance/docs/Gender-Pub-21stcentury.pdf) (accessed 27 June 2007).
- <sup>29</sup> IPU database on specialized parliamentary bodies dealing with the status of women and gender equality: [www.ipu.org/parline-e/Instanceadvanced.asp](http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/Instanceadvanced.asp) (accessed 28 June 2007).
- <sup>30</sup> Vietnam (2004). National report for the ten-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*: [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/responses.htm](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/responses.htm) (accessed 27 June 2007).
- <sup>31</sup> Referenced websites accessed 28 June 2007.
- <sup>32</sup> McLachlin, Beverly (Chief Justice of Canada) (2006). “Why we need women judges,” Speech to the International Association of Women Judges, 8<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference, Sydney, Australia, (May 2006): [www.iawj.org/what/sydney.asp](http://www.iawj.org/what/sydney.asp) (accessed 28 June 2007).
- <sup>33</sup> Philippines periodic report to CEDAW (2004), para. 39, 250, 252. [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/36sess.htm](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/36sess.htm) (accessed 28 June 2007). For updated information about initiatives of the civil Service Commission, see their gender equality website: [www.csc.gov.ph/GAD/index.html](http://www.csc.gov.ph/GAD/index.html) (accessed 28 June 2007).

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- <sup>34</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Meetings on the eve of the 50<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women*, 25-26 February 2006, New York, presentation by New Zealand in Annex B-VII: [www.thecommonwealth.org/document/152447/report\\_of\\_the\\_commonwealth\\_meetings\\_on\\_the\\_eve\\_of.htm](http://www.thecommonwealth.org/document/152447/report_of_the_commonwealth_meetings_on_the_eve_of.htm) (accessed 28 June 2007). (New Zealand website referred to in box also accessed 28 June 2007.)
- <sup>35</sup> United Nations, Statistics Division (2006). *The World's Women 2005: Progress in Statistics*, p.81. [unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/indwm/wwpub.htm](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/indwm/wwpub.htm) (accessed 26 June 2007).
- <sup>36</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union database on women in national parliaments: [www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm](http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm) (accessed 28 June 2007).
- <sup>37</sup> UCLG: [www.cities-localgovernments.org/uclg/](http://www.cities-localgovernments.org/uclg/) see gender statistics (accessed 28 June 2007).