Quotas for women in elected legislatures: do they really empower women?

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Summary: The demand for reserving 30% of seats in electoral bodies for women has escalated in the last decade and has produced significant increases in women legislators in many countries. By exploring both the electoral systems that produce this result and the methods by which women are selected as candidates, the paper helps explain why increased numbers of women have thus far had only limited impact on policy. Party loyalty, legislative culture, and societal constraints remain obstacles for women legislators. Despite these factors, women are having influence on decision-making, especially in local elective bodies.

Keywords: women's representation, election systems, election quotas, reservations, political parties, empowerment

Political participation of women is currently a major goal throughout the global women's movement. The Fourth World Conference for Women in Beijing restated the importance of women in political as well as economic and social decision making. Representation in legislative bodies is believed essential in order for women to protect the expansion of their rights and opportunities by enshrining them in laws and constitutions. Frustrated at the slow pace of change, women are demanding special provisions to enable women to be elected or appointed to high level decision making positions, and promoting the idea that 30 % of membership is necessary to provide a critical mass that would allow significant changes in policies and procedures.

This demand for quotas has escalated in the last decade as the UN's Division on the Advancement of Women and the European Union debated the concept (Gierycz, 2001; Jaquette, 1997). The 30% target quickly became a goal at the 1995 Beijing conference. UNIFEM's *Progress of the World's Women 2000* notes that "The Beijing Platform for Action affirmed the target previously agreed upon by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) that women should have at least a 30 per cent share of decision-making positions" (2000:9) Such a demand would seem to be the next logical step in an empowerment process that has altered the status of and opportunities for women in every country around the world. Over 25 countries have adopted legal or constitutional quotas for women in legislatures, primarily at the national level but also at the local level.[i]

The Inter-Parliamentary Union happily tabulates the success of this pressure for numbers of women and posts results on its website (www.ipu.org). The Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance in Stockholm tracks elections globally (www.idea.int). The latest published date indicates that women hold at least 30 percent of the seats in ten countries, with another fluctuating based on appointive seats. As of March 2002, those legislatures with the highest percentage of women are: Sweden 42.7; Denmark 38.0; Finland 36.5; Norway 36.4; Iceland 34.9; Netherlands 32.9; Germany 31.8; Argentina 31.3; New Zealand 30.8; Mozambique 30; South Africa 29.8 (HDR, 2002:226-229). Another 23 countries have at least 20 percent of the seats occupied by women. These countries expand the European coverage both south and east, adding Canada, Australia, three Caribbean islands, two Central American states, four more in Africa, four communist countries, and Turkmenistan.[ii]

This global rush for quotas for women in elective bodies is widely supported and little examined. Do numbers of women in legislatures in fact translate into power to implement a feminist agenda? Or is the purpose of more women in elective offices to offer exposure of more citizens to the reality of compromise and governance? Or is the idea to bring the housekeeping and nurturing skills of women into corrupt and ineffective councils, especially at local levels, so that roads are paved, schools built, and water provided? Or are women only window-dressing in legislatures controlled by a single party? Or are women considered

merely a front for men unable to run for whatever reason or for relatives who already hold power locally or nationally?

The answer to these questions depends on the justification offered for quotas. If the argument rests on the concept of equality, then numbers, not outcome, register success. However, this justification begs other questions. If equality means that all citizens should be able to participate in decision-making, why should women have a different type of access to election success than that provided for other under-represented groups? After all, women are seldom a minority of citizens; why do they need distinct treatment?

On the other hand, if the justification is based on the concept that women have distinctly different priorities in life and in governance, then the impact of women in the legislature should lead to a different outcome than would have been true in an overwhelmingly male body. Clearly the campaign to elect women launched by the women's movement expects that an increased number of women legislating will lead to a feminist agenda.

What factors increase the probability that having more elected women will result laws that enhance women's rights? Outcomes are greatly influenced by the type of electoral system. How the women candidates are chosen and by whom, how the electoral system operates, and the external support for feminist goals in the nation are all essential factors in evaluating the utility and possibility of quotas for women. Other factors that affect the ability of women to alter the priorities of the legislature include the characteristics of the party system, the level of government requiring quotas, the local political culture, and the underlying social system that determines the prevailing relationships between women and men.

This article first presents various arguments for quotas. The second section analyzes the major electoral systems in current use around the world and how women candidates and feminist issues fare under them. The third section reviews problems encountered by women both as candidates and as legislators in the face of male resistence and structures. The next section addresses the question of women's power and
asks whether the instituting of quotas will really make a difference in the political decisions in elected bodies by themselves. In conclusion, the essay addresses two basic questions. First, to what extent does the method of ensuring a quota and the

electoral system itself strongly influence the power women members have in a legislature, and over what type of issue? Second, how does a vibrant women's movement influence both the legislature and the wider public to support a feminist agenda?

Why quotas are considered necessary to increase women's political participation

Despite the fact that the Constitutions in all the newly independent countries proclaim equality for women in civil matters, entitling them to vote even before some women in Europe were granted that privilege, the numbers of women in decision making positions actually diminished compared to their roles in the nationalist movements or liberation struggles. Over time, women – whether elite leaders such as Ambassador Vijaya Pandit or Judge Annie Jiaggi, or the soldiers in Eritrea or Zimbabwe -- were sidelined as men reenforced patriarchal privilege and power to bolster their nationalist claims (Jayawardene, 1986). Indeed, most women, as well as men, seemed to assume that men are the more fit to act in public spaces and to govern, women to nurture in the privacy of the home. Yet, today the voting public, disgusted with widespread mal-administration and corruption, has begun to consider women in politics as acceptable, even desirable, because they are perceived as being more concerned with outcomes than the accumulation of power.

<u>Equality vs difference</u> The Women in Politics committee of the International IDEA discusses quotas in their *Women in Parliaments: Gender and Democracy.* Druda Dahlerup, in her section, writes that "The core idea behind quota systems is to recruit women into political positions and to ensure that women are not isolated in political life." She notes that critics argue "Quotas are against the principle of equal opportunity for all, since women are given preference" while supporters say "Quotas do not discriminate, but compensate for actual barriers that prevent women from their fair share of the political seats. " This argument for quotas perceives that women and men are the same. Women are half the population so it is only fair and right that women have equal representation in legislatures that make decisions over their lives. Because of historical reasons, affirmative action such as quotas may be needed to ensure that women achieve greater representation, if not parity (Gituto & Kabira, 1998).

Yet quotas also appeal to the idea that women's experiences are distinct; that women are different from men and bring to governing distinct and insightful attributes that encourage a more compassionate and less corrupt society. Gro Harlem Bruntlund, when she was Prime Minister of Norway, argued to the author that women needed to be in the government because of their distinct viewpoint. In Latin America, the difference argument is often referred to as maternalist, a definition that limits women's distinctive viewpoints to motherhood issues.

The essentialist argument presents a quagmire to many women scholars who have argued the society, not genes, creates the difference. Yet, current biological research is increasingly demonstrating that boys and girls are to some extent hardwired differently. Opponents of this argument that women are more attuned to women's needs recite the list of powerful women prime ministers such as Margaret Thatcher or Golda Meier; the note the economic corruption attributed to Benizer Bhutto or power grabbing of Indira Gandhi. Radha Kumar suggests that the startling number of women heads of state is South Asia[iii] can be attributed not only to dynastic politics; the dangerous power of the goddess Kali, "who came to earth to destroy demons and drink their blood," is intermixed as well (1995:59).

Thus the justification for quotas relies on two conflicting arguments: equality versus difference.[iv] These arguments suggest first that women deserve to share power in decision-making roles in government and in elected bodies as an equity concern, and secondly that women's distinct viewpoints need to be considered and that their influence is good. In practical terms, these positions are conflated and the philosophical niceties are often ignored. Indeed, if a person's gender is constructed from the many facets of an individual's life, then a woman may feel equal in some settings and distinct in others. However, the debate has policy implications, according to Jaquette who ties the difference versus equality positions to how women view power and the state (2002). Yet the demand for quotas illustrates the widespread acceptance of working within the government to improve women's lives.

Proponents for quotas assert that "women leaders better represent the interests of women citizens, will introduce women's perspectives into policymaking and implementation, and help expand women's opportunities in society at large" (Htun 1998:15). Dahlerup suggests that such an argument represents a shift

from the classic liberal notion of equality as 'equal opportunity' to the concept of equality of result (2000). Few call this a feminist agenda, but clearly the drive for quotas by the global women's movement assumes women friendly policies.

Mechanisms to increase the numbers of women in legislatures

Today, quotas for women in elective office have been introduced either at national or local levels, by laws, executive orders, or party directives, in at least 45 countries. How these quotas are applied varies by the type of electoral system utilized in each country. These arrangements also influence how effective the quotas have been in increasing the numbers of women elected and whether a critical mass of women in legislatures can really make a difference.

The most efficacious method for ensuring that women are elected to legislatures is through the party list system with parties distributing the seats through proportional representation (PR). Under the basic PR method, contesting parties draw up lists of candidates for the electoral district: a country, province, or country.[v] Each district is allocated a set number of seats for the legislature. After voting, the total ballot count is divided by the available seats. If 10,000 votes are cast in an area with 5 seats, then a seat requires 2000 votes. Parties are allocated seats by their vote count. Very small parties lacking a certain per cent of the vote are usually disqualified. Since the party controls the list, they also control whom from the list is selected. Unless agreement is reached that the candidates are selected by their place on the list from top to bottom, women or other minorities may appear on the list and not be selected.

The other major electoral system used for free elections is the single member constituency or first-past-the-post system (FPTP); candidates stand in a particular territorial area and are elected to represent the voters in that specific district. The winning candidate is the person receiving the highest number of votes; where three or four people are standing, the winner may not even enjoy a majority. In some countries, a run-off election between the highest two candidates is required when no candidate has over 50% of the votes. In the past, parties have often been reluctant to assign a seat to a woman under the assumption that some voters will switch loyalties to vote for a man. Gradually, where parties have become convinced of the importance of women legislators, they have adopted

quotas. But the competitive nature of single constituencies, where local loyalties may be a critical as party platforms, has resulted in fewer women candidates than under the party system.

Critics of this majority rule complain about the "wastage" of votes in this system and noted how difficult it is to elect women or minorities. Some countries create multi-member districts; voters may cast all their votes for one candidate, or spread them in any manner. Under this "block system" it is easier for minorities to gain a seat since the number of votes per candidate is less. In the US, districts have often been gerrymandered to allow elections of African-Americans or Hispanics. Several countries have adopted reserved seats for women and minorities, some in addition to the general seats.

In an exhaustive analysis of electoral systems, the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), reports that "Just over half (114, or 54% of the total) of independent states and semi-autonomous territories of the world which have direct parliamentary elections use plurality-majority systems; another 75 (35%) use PR-type systems.." Another 10% combine these two major systems. In terms of population, the plurality-majority systems represent 2.44 billion people in contract to the PR systems with 1.2 billion people. The mixed systems account for just under half a billion. "In our survey the seven countries which do not have directly-elected national parliaments constitute 1.2 billion people, but China makes up 99% of that figure" (IDEA 2002:2). Additionally, the handbook notes that elections are free in only 98 of the countries in transition; another 36 are established democracies (IDEA 2000).

All of the eleven countries with over 30% membership of women use proportional representation (PR) utilizing the party list system but it is moderated in Germany and New Zealand by a dual voting arrangement called the Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) system. Interestingly, both New Zealand and South Africa switched from the single member constituency to PR in the last decade. South Africa adopted PR in the 1994 Constitution to create an "atmosphere of inclusiveness and reconciliation" in the post-apartheid era and allow an ethnically heterogeneous groups of candidates, many of them women, to be elected (Reynolds, 2002). New

Zealand also adopted PR to allow greater ethnic representation while retaining a constituency base. The 1996 elections, the first under the new MMP system, resulted in more Maoris, Pacific Islanders, and women being elected (Roberts, 2002). In all these instances, the high percentage of women was due to quotas established within the parties. Under regular PR, voters cast their ballots for a party rather than an individual. Candidates are expected to follow the party line, if elected. To alter party policies women must lobby within their parties with leaders who allocated the party tickets to them.

Elections for reserved seats for women in national legislatures utilizing the single member constituency system have been established in Taiwan and Uganda; Pakistan has reservations for local and national seats. Quotas for seats in local bodies are also being instituted. India passed a Constitutional Amendment in 1993 to require that one-third of all seats in local councils must be filled by women. France required parties to nominate women for 50% of mayors with the result that 48% won seats in 2001 as compared to only 9% in the national assembly which had not quota (Kramer, 2000). In the Philippines, an executive order recommends a 30% quota for seats in the baranguy councils.

Historical and contemporary use of reservations and quotas for women

Little attention has been given to earlier experiences with ways that representation for women has been attempted. A look at the various approaches for representations that predated the 1995 Beijing conference and the subsequent campaign for women's representation provides a useful context for analyzing contemporary efforts and their possible impact on legislation.

South Asia. Colonial India, faced with an amazing diversity of population, first utilized separate categories for representation in 1892. These lists were both for communal/religious groups and for special interests.[vi] When women were given the vote in 1928, they became another special interest category: such voters were allowed two votes.[vii] Under this system, about six million women were enfranchised, about one fifth of the total of male voters (Tinker, 1954). This system of "double franchise" continued in Pakistan until 1965, when indirect elections were instituted and the number of reserved seats reduced (Zafar, 1996). Women's quotas were filled by votes of sitting candidates in the elected legislature

in question, not by popular vote. After Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan) became independent in 1971, the indirect representation of women continued until 2002; no further provisions have been made to date for women's special representation. Indeed, with women leading the two major parties in that country, the case is more difficult to make for direct quotas for women.

The present government of Pakistan has increased the number of seats reserved for women in all elected legislatures.[viii] In previous elections, women were elected by the sitting members of an elected body, a system which Farzana Bari believes allowed "the continuing domination of feudal-cum-capitalist male election in our political party structures" (2002:1). Most women in the local governments were neither vocal nor assertive, as they were often brought into the local bodies to serve the political agenda of the male members of the councils.[ix]

The current system is an amalgam of both directly and indirectly elected seats. The Union Council, the lowest assembly, exists in both rural and urban areas and is made up of 26 members -- General Seats: 8 men, 8 women; Workers/Peasants: 4 men, 4 women; Minorities: 1 man, 1 woman. Union Councillors elect women to the district level assemblies. In the local and district elections of 2000-2001, a total of 2,621 women competed for the 1,867 reserved seats, or one-third of seats in local governments (Weiss & Bari, 2002). Weiss and Bari note that "These women were no longer the complacent surrogates of male politicians of a generation ago. They were educated (the minimum education requirement to contest these elections was a matric degree, or tenth grade) and generally had a good grasp of issues that were confronting women in their constituencies (Weiss & Bari,2002:22).

The elections in October 2002 reserved only 17% of the seats in provincial and national assemblies for women. These reserved seats were filled by separate party lists of women by province; winners were elected through a proportional representation system of political parties' lists of candidates on the basis of total number of general seats won by each political party in the National Assembly. Thus women are beholden to the party to get a spot on the list. Mixing PR with the single constituency electoral system distances women from the electoral process, according to Bari, and reinforces "their dependence on male leadership of

their parties." She argues that direct elections are preferable and supports additional separate ballots for women in each province (2000:2).

India maintained special representation for both Scheduled Castes [untouchables or *dalits*] and Scheduled Tribes its 1950 Constitution. Unlike separate lists, however, all voters voted in their constituency; reserved seats meant that all candidates in that constituency had to be from the particular depressed group. Because of the presence of strong women leaders in post-independence India, no special provisions for women were thought necessary at that level. However, when a system of local elected councils, or panchayats, was introduced in India in 1959, the law provided for the nomination or co-option of women in the absence of elected women. This system was fraught with patronage; a few states rejected that system in the 1980s and introduced directly elected reserved seats for women (Centre, 2001). A national law was needed; the Constitution was amended in 1993 that required a 1/3 membership of women in all panchayats; these women were to be elected by popular vote. Furthermore, one third of all panchayats must elect a woman as chair. Attempts to institute the system of quotas at the national level has thus far been unsuccessful (Tinker, forthcoming).

<u>Communist countries</u>. Both communist and fascist countries utilized the corporate approach by giving representation to constituent groups within their one-party systems. USSR and Eastern European countries guaranteed seats for women in their national legislature through the mass organization for women of the communist party; these arrangements collapsed when these communist regimes fell; none of these countries have retained quotas (Jaquette & Wolchik, 1998). In China, Vietnam, and Laos (with representation of women in the legislature respectively at 21,8%, 26%, and 21.2%), women's mass organizations continue to exist, but because decision making power resides in the party, not the legislatures; the women in the mass organizations have little influence and tend to be looked down on by strong women leaders within regular party ranks.[x]

Yet a UNIFEM publication on the 1993 elections in Cambodia bemoans the lack of women elected to the communes. "Women also lost politically with the shift to democracy. Perhaps surprisingly, interviews suggested that Vietnamese socialism was generally unpopular with women, yet the socialist system has propelled many women into local leadership positions. Under the socialist system

every commune council had at least two female members. By contrast, women standing for election in 1993 found themselves passed over in favour of men in the face of strong competition between the main contending parties'' (Miller & Ramage, 2001:9-10).

An exception to this generalization that democracy reduces women's representation would seem to be Bulgaria where women's representation in parliament went from 10.8% to 26.2% in the June 2001 elections. This jump occurred because the former King Simeon of Bulgaria decided to return home; when his attempt to run for President was rejected by the Constitutional Court, he ran for parliament instead. Because the election date was imminent and most politicians had joined one party list or another, the king set up a new party, the National Movement Simeon the Second (NDSV), in coalition with a little known women's party. Apparently tired both of the former communists and the neo-liberal parties, the citizens overwhelmingly elected Simeon's movement with 43% of the vote among the 138 participating parties.[xi] Women and students studying abroad, many quite young, have provided new faces in the legislature; the Deputy Prime Minister who is also the Minister of Labor and Social Policy is a woman. Furthermore, 36.5 percent of the NDSV's seats in parliament were given to women. (Ghodsee, 2002 and personal communication Oct, 2002).

Latin America In Argentina, under the presidency of Juan Peron,1946-55, women were not only given the right to vote for the first time in 1947, they were granted a share of seats through the women's branch of the party. Since the Peronist Party had three branches -- men, women, and trade unions -- women held 21.7% seats in House of Representatives in 1955 and 23.5% in Senate in 1954 (Bonder, 1995). Eva Peron herself gave visibility to women in politics; her legacy continues today, whether she is idolized or demonized.[xii]

By the 1990s, when democratic governments were being promoted in Latin America and Eastern Europe, many in the increasingly influential women's movement began to demand quotas for women as the only way to ensure women benefitted from democratic rule. With amazing swiftness, 12 nations in Latin America introduced some form of quotas. ''There is tremendous variation in the success of quota laws. The details of the law and the nature of the electoral system determine whether quotas get more women elected'' (Htun, 2001:16). While all

Latin American countries utilize the party list system at the national level, many variations exist. Some use the mixed system that combines single member constituencies with large multimember districts that utilize PR (Jones, 1999). A combination of the closed list system where winners must be selected as presented to the voters, results in more women elected; for example, women must listed as every third candidate in Bolivia, every fifth in Paraguay, or placed in *electable* position as in Argentina.[xiii] When women are placed at the bottom, or where voters can select among candidates on the list as in Brazil, women generally fare less well unless they are very well known. This was the case in Peru where voters are allocated only two preference votes. In the 2000 election, "four of the 10 individuals with the highest number of preference votes were women...women's presence in the Peruvian Congress doubled (from 11 to 22 percent)" (Htun,, 2001:16.)

Many countries in the region have introduced quotas at lower governmental levels. Argentina extended quotas to the 21 of its 24 provinces using PR; the remaining use single member constituencies. Regardless of the version of PR used, all provinces increased the representation of women (Jones, 1998). Elsewhere, decentralization of powers plus locally elected officials has resulted in the replacement of weak or appointed mayors with stronger elected heads of both rural and urban areas thus providing new opportunities for women throughout the region and for indigenous candidates in Andean countries.

Quotas do not only apply to national legislatures. Colombia introduced a law requiring a 30% quota for women in appointive posts in the executive branch of government. The result is that 5 of the 13 person cabinet of Alvaro Uribe are women while only 19 of the 166 members of the legislature are women; further a woman is now minister of Defense (Christian Science Monitor 28 Oct 02).

The early euphoria about the rapid introduction of quotas in Latin American has been replaced with caution by many observers. As male resistence becomes obvious, some ask why men should give up their power, seeing the increasing numbers of women on party lists as "sacrificing" men. Mala Htun and Mark Jones confront this issue, saying that "With the exception of Argentina, quotas have been a relatively painless way to give lip service to women's rights without suffering the

consequences'' (2002:15) Yet Argentina's current crisis reflects badly on political parties and may result in a new type of electoral system without quotas.

Africa South Africa has the highest percentage of women members in its parliament in this region. Pressure for broad representation of all groups led the framers of the 1994 Constitution to replace their former system of single member constituencies with a proportional representation for the parliamentary level. When the April 1994 elections for parliament were conducted under proportional representation, 25% of the members were women. The percentage was increased to 29.8% women in the 1999 elections. Uganda has chosen a different approach to ensuring women are elected to parliament: Uganda has 45 districts, each with one woman elected by women. Some women have also been elected in general seats (Goetz & Hassim, forthcoming).

In Kenya and Tanzania, appointed seats in parliament are available to women, but not exclusively so. The current parliament in Kenya, consisting of 210 elected and 12 nominated seats, has 17 women members, 8 of whom were nominated, an increase from 9 women, 5 nominated, in the previous body. Kenyan women have become increasingly vocal in their demand for greater representation, bolstering their activities through the Collaborative Center for Gender and Development. An Affirmative Action bill, introduced into parliament in 1997, would require that 33% of all seats in elective legislatures at the national and local levels be reserved for women.[xiv] To have this result, each of the eight province would elect two women from a women's only list just preceding the general election as is done in Uganda and Tanzania. In 2001, the bill was referred to the National Constitutional Conference. Because the draft constitution proposes the mixed member proportional representation, women are lobbying the parties to make half of their candidates women in future elections, reminding them of their internal agreements to ensure that women participate in party politics. Leading this effort is the women's mobilization network which consists of women councillors, women party coordinators and party leaders. (Gituto & Kabira, 1998; Kabira et al, 2000; personal correspondence from Wajiku Mukabi Kabira 10 Feb 2003).

Problems facing women politicians

The adoption of quotas or reservations in so many countries was seen by many activists as the solution to increasing women's political participation. As with any panacea, many problems have arisen. First, even in countries with constitutional mandates for quotas through party lists, women are not always winning seats in the legislatures because of the distinct ways the elections are run. Htun and Jones write that "male resistence to quotas is increasing, especially in Latin American where interpretation of laws allows their intent to be subverted by placing women low on party lists (Htun & Jones, 2002). In Brazil, for example, the open list system allows voters to select an individual not a party; with excess votes cumulated for a second round. Thus even if a party lists a woman, she may not be elected in the first round and the party is free to select winners in the second round.

When Ecuador approved its quota law in 1998, the authors expected to avoid this wiggle room. The law set the minimum percentage at thirty percent with the stipulation that the quota increase in every subsequent election by five percent (5%) until the goal of fifty percent (50%) is achieved. Further, the law requires that women candidates be listed sequentially and alternately to men candidates with a quota law starting at 30% but increasing to 40% and then to 50% in subsequent elections. As a result of the quota, women's membership in the legislature jumped from 3.7% in 1996 to 13.22% in 1998 and 17.89% in 2000. Shortly before the 2002 elections, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal proposed changes to the quota law that would undermine the sequential/alternate placement on the party list through the concept of "symmetrical space" which would allow women to be placed anywhere on the list. While this change is still under discussion, the ambiguity surrounding the law encouraged parties to disregard the sequential mandate. The women's movement challenged this interpretation which the Tribunal eventually accepted after the elections during which almost all parties ignored the rule. In response to the Tribunal support for quotas, one political party introduced a bill to eliminate quotas (personal communication from Jennifer Myles, UNIFEM-Andean Region office, Oct. & Dec. 2002)[xv].

In New Zealand, the MMP system was introduced to increase the number of minorities and women, but in the 2002 elections the number of women in the

national legislature fell below 30%. Having compared the success of women under the single member constituency system with that of the MMP, Rae Nicholl writes "We are starting to wonder if women's representation has plateaued in New Zealand, as the results from our local government elections have shown a similar trend" (personal communication November 2002). This trend is counter that in most countries where any form of PR *increases* the representation of women. In Germany, which was the model for the MMP system, fewer women were elected when that system was extended from the federal to the state system of elections.

A rich source for listing obstacles to women's increased political participation may be found in the International IDEA publication *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers.* These encompass, besides the topic discussed above, the cultural and social attitudes (Shvedova), methods of candidate recruitment (Matland), and the institutional and procedural traditions in the legislatures (Karam & Lovenduski).

The cold climate for women in chambers are well known. Women elected to Congress found few women's toilets, a barber shop but no beauty shop, no access to the pool or fitness center. In England, the first female Speaker of the House was able to avoid wearing the heavy wig, but sessions continue to be scheduled in the late afternoon and evening, a time not convenient for most women with family responsibilities. As a result, many of Tony Blair's "babes" who ran in the 1996 elections, did not run again. Such issues are more acute in developing countries. As one of the first black women in the South African parliament, Thenjiwe Mtintso writes in her essay "From Prison Cell to Parliament" that "Sitting in Parliament is a far cry from the experience of exile and imprisonment, solitary confinement and banishment, which was the price paid by many of us who dared oppose the apartheid regime." She calls parliament "a male domain... from its facilities (toilets, gym, childcare centers and so on) to its language, rules, sitting times, and attitudes" (1995:103). All of the activist women are finding parliament a difficult terrain, she complains, and sums up their apprehension by quoting her colleague Jenny Scheiner: "The post-election South African situation has within it both the seeds of women's emancipation...and the seeds of entrenched patriarchy" (1995:117).[xvi]

Globally, the issues of sexual harassment have reflected relationships between powerful men and women staff. In Uganda, even women members of parliament

complained that the practice was rampant (Tripp, 2001). Clearly, in many other legislatures, the male political culture of the institution remains a major obstacle for women's power.

Impact of women in legislatures

Nonetheless, women are making a difference. They address issues of daily concern to the voters. In India, elected women at the *panchayat* or local levels of government, have focused their energies on local needs from water to schools to housing. Their main impact "seems to be on increasing effective implementation of various government programs and schemes (Kudva, 2001:11). This in contrast to wide spread mis-use of funds by male leadership. In Uganda, women have tried to affect traditional clientelism at the local levels so that more resources are directed toward women's needs, often without success (Tripp, 2000:235).

While overseas data are sparse, recent research in the US supports this general position. A study of community based organizations in nine sites in the U.S. found that those community organizations controlled by women generally espouse a broader social agenda than those run by men (Gittell et al., 1999). These groups expanded the narrow neighborhood focus on housing and enterprise development to encompass community participation, child and elder care, leadership training, and outreach beyond the immediate community to networks serving battered women. In Minnesota, a 20 year analysis of women in the state legislature found that once the number of women was more that 20% and women had become senior enough to chair committees, new policies were evident. While the study does not insist such policies would not have emerged anyhow, it does document the role women legislators have in drafting and passing the laws (Minnesota Women's Campaign Fund, 2002).

The Institute for Women's Policy Research conducted a comparative study of women in electoral offices by state in the US during the 1990s included governors, various elected state offices, state legislatures, and the congressional delegations.[xvii] These numbers were compared with levels of women-friendly policies in the state. In addition, the analysis considered other indicators such as overall levels of women's political participation, cultural attitudes, resources available, and party strength. Importantly, the study finds that the cultural climate regarding women in politics

interacts with elected women to support women policies relevant to women's lives. "Having women in elected office cannot guarantee better policy for women, but it clearly helps" (Caiazza, 2002:19).

Corruption Yet another argument for electing women is the belief that women are less corrupt than men. Several studies show that women, confronted with corruption, opt out of electoral politics. Tripp quotes an unsuccessful candidate in Uganda who was disillusioned not only by the extent of corruption but by the way voters had come to expect politicians to hand out money (Tripp, 2000:232). Further, because women in Uganda are so alienated by the system they have less to lose by opposing it (Tripp, 2001:151).

In fact, recent studies have shown a correlation between significant rates of women in government and lowered levels of corruption at both the national (Dollar et al, 1999) and local levels (Kudva 2001). In their extensive analysis of independent data sets, Swamy, Knack, Lee, & Azfar (2001) found that not only are women less involved in bribery, but that this finding was more robust where women were well represented not only in the legislature but also in the labor force. They further explored whether the type of electoral system used in the country affected women's propensity to avoid corruption. These authors specifically state that "we do not claim to have discovered some essential, permanent, or biologically-determined differences between men and women. Indeed the gender differences we observe may be attributable to socialization, or to differences in access to networks of corruptions, or in knowledge of how to engage in corrupt practices, or to other factors" (2001:2). Despite this caveat, the authors conclude that these gender differentials in corruption will persist.

Political climate: the dilemma of in or out Many leaders of women's movements in the South have been hesitant to join the government in either elected or appointed positions for fear of being coopted by disinterested and possibly corrupt party leadership. In both Chile and Argentina, the return to democracy in the 1980s caused a split among the women who had been active in oppositional politics. Many women found it difficult to give up their autonomy which allowed the advocacy of a women's agenda. They faced a dilemma: working within the new democratic governments would mean compromise; lobbying outside would reduce them to interest groups (Jaquette, 1995).

East African women began in the 1980s to form their own organizations separate from all political parties. Their goal has not been to oust the ruling regime, as was true in Latin America, but to affect widespread political reform (Tripp, 1996). For many years, awaiting such reform, women were reluctant to get involved in politics, and often focusing on community development projects. Jaquette compares this type of "exit" strategy with the autonomy argument utilized in Latin America and concludes "..strategies of autonomy can usefully be interpreted as forms of engagement, part of a larger process of gender negotiation that is taking place at many levels, public and private" (2001:117).

In South Asia, the distaste for participation is even stronger among the educated elite. Verghese comments about India: "The minuscule presence of women in politics can be partly attributed to the increasing criminalisation of politics. With the rampant corruption and the oppressive presence of religious fundamentalism in party politics, women are retreating into the shadows..." (1997:314) Women in Pakistan talk about the criminalization of politics, but are also aware "that if women want to see substantive changes in their lives, they must be enabled to voice their perspectives and priorities in national policies and programs. Indeed, they must be physically present in the political decision-making bodies, though the process of getting there has been increasingly wrought with corrupt methods" (Weiss & Bari, 2002:10).

This dilemma, whether to work inside of the government, or lobby outside for change, has been faced throughout the world. During the 1970s, when much legislation benefitting women was passed by the US Congress, we talked about the symbiosis of in and out: women inside the government helped us testify before House and Senate committees and told us where to appear for regulatory meetings (Tinker, 1983). A similar strategy involving the legislators as well as activists and bureaucrats is the basis for many alliances in Latin America. Yet laws can be changed; increasingly women activists call for women in positions of political power, and argue that a critical mass of 30-35% women participants is necessary "in order to bring substantive differences into decisionmaking in terms of content and priorities, as well as style and working climate" (Gierycz, 2000:25).

Even asking for quotas has an impact, according to Mala Htun, who has written extensively about women and leadership in Latin America. She argues that

the symbolic effect of having quotas must not be overlooked. "Since women gained the right to vote..., no policy measure has stimulated such an intense debate about gender equality in politics and decision-making" (Htun & Jones, 2002:15).

Further, women question the exclusive membership of many political parties which tend to represent a single class or group or area. Rigidified by the functioning of political structures with their entrenched male dominance, party loyalties divide the electorate and the parliament. In some countries women have sought alliances across parties to counter their lack of numbers in any one party. Elsewhere, women have established broad-based organizations outside traditional parties in order to lobby all parties and so have some impact on decision-making. Especially in countries where appeals for votes are based on ethnicity or religion, such coalitions of women provide a basis for civility and compromise. Such alliances bridge class and occupation, and reflect the strength of the women's movements around the world.

Where are we now?

Most of these quotas are too recent for adequate analysis about the impact of all these women legislatures. Much of what has been published is based on cursory observation and is often ideologically motivated, with the educated elite often arguing that most women are simply not able to function in elected bodies. Especially in countries where poorly educated women are being elected as in India or Africa, women's organizations have addressed this complaint by launching major programs to train women in their duties and rights, for example, in India, Philippines, Taiwan, and Uganda (Kudva, 2001; Tripp, 2001; HDR, 2002).

Decentralization of government functions is, along with elections, seen widely as a path to democracy, and to greater representation of women and minorities. Yet too often, locally entrenched male interests become, if anything, stronger as power and resources are transferred; local legislatures often pass laws that reenforce patriarchal controls over women. Efforts to introduce *sharia* law in Nigeria have led to deadly riots in many Kaduna and Abuja .[xviii] Decentralized power in Indonesia has led to attempts to reintroduce *adat* or customary laws (Robinson, 2001). Summing up this point, the 2002 Human Development Report (HDR) writes: "..local officials are not more immune to elite capture than officials

in central government...A recent survey of 12 countries found that in only half was there any evidence - some quite limited – that decentralization empowers more people..'' (HDR, 2002:67).

Quotas have been seen as one way to dilute male privilege. Yet among the staunchest supporters of quotas there is a growing realization is that numbers alone, while necessary, are not sufficient to women to make a significant difference in policy initiatives and political goals (Karam, 2002). The 2002 HDR writes that ''Quotas are primarily a temporary remedial measure, and are no substitute for raising awareness, increasing political education, mobilizing citizens and removing procedural obstacle to women getting nominated and elected'' (HDR, 2002:70). In Taiwan, scholars complain that the 10% quota is now seen as a ceiling (Chiang, 2000).

Htun & Jones (2002) argue that it is not quotas, but broad based political alliances that also work with women in the bureaucracy and executive, that will produce laws benefitting all women. In Uganda and Kenya, women organize across ethnic lines to support women legislators and to lobby the government (Kabira, 2001; Tripp, 2000). The Women's National Coalition in South Africa, which successfully challenged the primacy given customary law over civil law in the Constitution, crossed urban-rural boundaries as well as class and ethnicity (Kempa et al, 1995). In countries as diverse as China and Bolivia, educated elite women are trying to bridge the gap with those women striving for election by running training courses for them.

To have alliances, organizations must exist. Throughout this essay the writers assume women's organizations. But the way that organizations can impact on electoral politics or on policy clearly varies. With strong party list systems, alliances of women across parties within the legislature as well as among women in other parts of the government have produced results, especially in Latin America. Alliances among women inside government and outside are characteristic of single member constituencies where party control of the bureaucracy or even individual members has less influence.

Many countries have instituted equality of leadership positions within the party. The resultant strength of the Labour Women's Council within the New Zealand Labour Party has ''compelled the party to take women very seriously since

the mid-1980s," according to Rae Nicholl. She notes that "We have a very strong and popular woman Prime Minister, Helen Clark, who is now in her second term" (personal communication Nov 2002).

How to link grassroots groups to alliances or coalitions is an on-going problem that varies by country and electoral system. Ali Mari Tripp writes about this issue with great insight, adding the even more confounding problem of how to change the institutional culture. "The case of Uganda is an important one, because it brings to light a dilemma in institutional change: new players – namely women – are brought into the game, but the rules, structures, and practices continue to promote the existing political and social interests." Women told to play along with old rules. "This inability to tailor the rules to meet women's needs helps explain why even though the local council system has given reserved seats to women in Uganda, they have a difficult time asserting their interests in these structures." The problem is how to develop "meaningful mechanism to translate this participation into policy-making within the state" (Tripp, 2000:219).

For any pressure to exist, whether to achieve quotas, to find and support candidates, to influence policy in the legislature, or to turn out the vote, women's organizations are necessary. Women in strong party list countries will need to work within the party itself; but outside influence remains important. Women within to become candidates in FPTP systems might use their experience in women's organizations or other NGOs to achieve a nomination for a seat. Party caucuses inside the party help in obtaining nominations and in influencing policy.[xix] Because women continue to be a minority in the political arena, they have tended to form coalitions across ethnic and class boundaries much more frequently than men.

Once in the legislature, a critical mass is important to begin to address the patriarchal character of the body itself. Quotas clearly result in more women in legislatures. But whether they support a feminist agenda is a different matter. Perhaps those issues need to be separated. More women in a legislature will warm the chilly climate, insist on childcare and more family friendly meeting times. On these and many other issues of particular concern for women, women legislators often agree, and form alliances across party lines. For policy to become law, even broader alliances are essential, with both women and men, so that issues can be reformulated to show their importance for the national as a whole. And for laws to

be implemented and enforced, they need broad citizen support which civil society organizations can produce. Overall, women in politics practice the same networking skills that has brought the global women's movement to its powerful position today.

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[i].As of March 2000, between 20 and 30 per cent of seats at some level of assembly are to be filled by women in: Argentina, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Eritrea, Finland, Ghana, Guyana, India, Mexico, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal, Norway, Tanzania, Uganda, and Venezuela. Finland requires equal numbers of candidates of political parties; Philippines has an executive order encouraging 30 per cent representation in local elective bodies (UNIFEM 2000:76).

[ii].The 23 countries: Belgium, Switzerland, Austria, Spain, Poland, and Bulgaria in Europe; Canada and Australia; Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, and Sao Tome and Principe in the Caribbean; in Central America, Guyana and Nicaragua; in Africa, Namibia, Tanzania, Uganda and Rwanda; communist countries of Cuba, China, Laos, Vietnam; plus Seychelles, Turkmenistan,

[iii]. In Bangladesh the heads of the two major, and intensely competitive, parties are women. Both have served as the prime minister, neither espouse feminist causes, and both come from political dynasties: Khaleda Zia is a widow of an assassinated prime minister; Sheikh Hasena is the daughter of a nationalist leader. When Benazir Bhutto, daughter of another martyred prime minister, was in power in Pakistan, her ability to ameliorate the *Hudood* was circumscribed, but she supported women in their preparations for Beijing. Indira Gandhi, as India's prime minister, kept aloof from the feminist movement; after her assassination her son Rajvi became prime minister; after he was also killed, his wife Sonia –albeit an Italian by birth– was made head of the Congress Party and is being groomed for high office should the party win the elections. Sri Lanka is unique in having had

both mother and daughter as leaders: Sirimavo Bandaranaika, the widow of an assassinated prime minister, was the first woman prime minister in the world. Her daughter Chandrika Bandaranaika Kumaratunga is Sri Lanka's president but was also a prime minister; her husband was also assassinated.

[iv].Jane Jaquette, 2001, discusses the scholarly feminist debate which fragments the women's movement, in her view. Women candidates tend to appeal to both arguments and do not see the ideological divide that scholars perceive.

[v]. Analyses of electoral systems list as many as 14 types that combine elements of the two basic types – proportional representation and single member constituency that is often call "first past the post" – in a variety of ways.

[vi].From 1892 until 1909, communal representatives were nominated. Until 1919, voters eligible to cast ballots for all special lists had a second vote for general candidates. After that, communal voters had only one vote, a system that exacerbated communal tensions and contributed to the eventual partition of India. Separate interests retained a double franchise. In the Act of 1935, twelve separate lists were recognized at the national level and fifteen in some provinces. See Tinker 1954.

[vii]. Double voting was common in England until 1956 when the business vote, which allowed owners to vote in the constituency where the business was located, was abolished.

[viii]. See President Musharraf's March 23, 2000, press conference statement in Islamabad entitled
"Devolution or Power and Responsibility: Establishing the Foundation of Democracy":
http://www.pak.gov.pk/public/govt/reports/pc_Mar23.htm

[ix]. "In a study of women union councillors conducted by Farzana Bari (1997) in six districts of the Punjab, she found the following characterized the majority of them: from rural areas; were over forty years old; more than four-fifths were married; nearly three-quarters were illiterate; forty percent had over seven children; and the majority were from fairly poor families. In nearly all of these cases, women did not make the decision to become union councillors but were rather asked by their male

relatives or other influential men of the community to put their names forward for the position, which was then determined by the overwhelmingly male-dominated union council membership'' (Weiss & Bari: 20).

[x].Personal interviews. The Women's Federation ceased to exist for a time in China. Nonetheless the National People's Congress suggested a 30% quota; in some areas in the southern part of the country, local leadership was actually higher than that.

[xi]. Only four of the 138 parties contesting the election received the requisite 5% of the vote to qualify for a seat in the parliament.

[xii].Bonder (1995:184) argues that Eva Peron continues to be a model for ''women's expression of their desire for political power.'' Martha Farmelo (2002), studying gender issues in Argentina under a fellowship from the Institute for Current World Affairs, quotes from Eva Peron's *La Razon de mi Vida* to underline the mixed messages emanating from her own writings: that feminism means to do good for women who were born to constitute homes; but she also championed a monthly subsidy for housewives.

[xiii]. Political turmoil in Argentina in 2002 may well result in the scraping of the party list system entirely for the single member system; the impact on women is uncertain.

[xiv].Maria Nzomo was the first Kenyan women to discuss the idea of a critical mass of 33% of women's seats in a paper presented to AAWARD (Association of African Women in Research and Development) in 1992.

[xv].See also UNIFEM Currents of July-August 2002 unifem-currents@udp.org. For further information on this controversy, contact unifem.ecuador@undp.org.

[xvi].Nearly half the sitting parliamentarians did not stand for the second elections in 1999 but others helped push women's representation nearly to 30 per cent of the seats. Many felt they could contribute more doing community work. (Tripp 2001)

[xvii].This study is part of a long term research agenda on women's civic and political participation in the US. A list of available research reports is available on

www.iwpr.org.

[xviii].Newspapers are full of the attempts of local officials in Nigeria to impose state-based legislation stoning women for adultery, for example. Several contestants to the Miss World contest, scheduled for Abuja in October 2002, boycotted the event over a sentencing of a woman to death. Although the other contestants went to Nigeria, controversy erupted and became the cause of more riots. The contest was moved to London.

[xix]. Women's power in the Labour Party in New Zealand was explained by Rae Nicholl as an important source of power. Arvonne Fraser argues that women's power grew once the Democratic Party agreed to equal delegates (personal communication).