# WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

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The global movement for gender equity is one means to bring about social change leading to increased political participation by women. While formalizing equality in legislation does not instantly make a society equitable, it is a necessary first step. All countries in the Asia-Pacific, except Palau and Tonga (despite heavy civil society pressure there) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), have ratified or acceded to the international "women's bill of rights"—the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)—which enshrines international gender norms, including women's equal participation in politics. National constitutions mirror CEDAW guarantees of equality for women in most countries in the region, which accepted the convention in the following order:

- China, Japan, and Mongolia were the first to commit to CEDAW in 1980, although only China ratified that year (with Mongolia ratifying the following year and Japan not until 1985).
- The Republic of Korea committed in 1983 and ratified in 1984.
- Taiwan, China, ratified in 2007, but as an unrecognized state at the United Nations, it is only an unofficial party to the treaty.
- Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic

(PDR), the Philippines, and Vietnam ratified in 1980, just after its 1979 UN adoption, as did Thailand in 1985.

- Singapore and Malaysia did not ratify until 1995, and Myanmar (called Burma by many) followed in 1997.
- Timor-Leste acceded to the convention just after it achieved independence in 2003, and Brunei ratified only in 2006.
- Fiji was the first Pacific Island state to become a party to CEDAW in 1995, and this development increased pressure on other Pacific Island states to follow.

Bangladesh, the DPRK, India, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, the Federated States of Micronesia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam all have listed reservations under CEDAW (see appendix 1). This is not the distinguishing factor directly constraining women's political participation in those states relative to other complying states, however. There are also no reservations on article 4, which concerns political rights. International instruments, such as CEDAW, UNSCR 1325, and certain UN declarations, which establish women's political rights and rights to physical security as a "human right," have been deployed by women's organizations across the region to challenge the "normalization" of women's social, economic, and political subordination. Regional ratification of CEDAW in the Pacific and, particularly, the provisions of article 4 of the convention on political participation have provided an important political platform for women activists and government machineries to push for electoral reform that might assist women across the region.

Across the Asia-Pacific, however, progress in applying CEDAW political rights has been uneven. According to the trainers' guide *Developing Capacities for Strengthening the Application of CEDAW*, "There are wide inconsistencies between the de jure position and de facto position in each country in respect of the areas where the law is free of sex discrimination, or even where the law is specifically designed for gender justice."[1] In the Pacific, for example, a 2007 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) study of legislative (de jure) compliance in the region across 113 indicators showed that even in places such as Fiji, where rates of compliance appear high according to regional norms, full compliance occurred in just under half of the indicator areas (Foster and Jivan 2009). Laws often hit a roadblock in the region when they encounter national cultures, values, customs, and traditions that are not consistent with them. Although cultural rights are recognized as human rights within the UN Charter of Human Rights, cultural diversity is often

invoked to deny women basic rights and a voice in decision making. Culture and tradition are invoked in pernicious ways to deny women their rightful place even in secular states like India, where the laws of the land must strictly adhere to the written constitution. Men with conservative patriarchal values continue to issue diktats about women's social and political roles across the Asia-Pacific region.

In contrast to women's political representation, progress in applying CEDAW to the development of laws and policies across the region has been considerable. For instance, the outlawing of domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape, and human trafficking has recently been undertaken in many Asia-Pacific countries. Several, such as Timor-Leste and Vietnam, have introduced general legislation promoting gender equality and women's political participation. Many governments are also committed to mainstreaming gender equality perspectives in national economic and social planning, requiring that national development plans include gender equality provisions and allocating resources to developing national action plans (NAPs; UNW-CEDAW 2012). For instance, Taiwan, China, established CEDAW monitoring and reporting mechanisms and passed the "Enforcement Act of the CEDAW" requiring all government departments to consider the convention and actively promote gender equality. Another example is Mongolia's 2011 Law on Gender Equality, designed to comply with CEDAW.

CEDAW also has an optional protocol that allows complaints to the committee from individuals or organizations in signatory countries to be investigated. It has gained widespread international acceptance, and Mongolia and the Republic of Korea have acceded to it. China and Japan have not, however, signed up, and instead are observing and considering the procedures. Among other Asia-Pacific countries, only Cambodia, Indonesia, Phillipines, Thailand, and Timor-Leste have signed the optional protocol (see appendix 1 for a summary).

In sum, CEDAW is used in advocating for women's equal political participation in the Asia-Pacific both by transnational networks of gender advocates and government and nongovernment actors (True and Mintrom 2001). To implement CEDAW rights fully, however, institutional mechanisms need to be practically tailored for each country and subregion. The convention provides more of a lobbying and monitoring device, especially for addressing the most egregious underrepresentation of women, than a model for enacting political equality in diverse jurisdictions. Above all, transnational women's

networks and lobbying have been the critical mechanism in the spread of knowledge and advocacy for temporary special measures to address women's low levels of political participation (Krook 2009).

# EAST ASIA

*China, Chinese Taipei (Taiwan, China), Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Japan, Mongolia, Republic of Korea*

"Women hold up half the sky" is a Chinese proverb that has become internationally popularized to affirm women's equal contribution to society and the struggle for their rights to equity in health, education, economic opportunities, and political participation. While rising prosperity has narrowed the gender gaps in East Asia, women's political participation has not increased at the same pace as economic development. East Asia includes countries with some of the strongest economies and highest human development rankings, not just in the Asia-Pacific region, but in the world. They include the democratic nations of Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Taiwan, China. They also include the "medium human development" countries of China and Mongolia and the less developed DPRK. Overall, the ratio of women attaining decision-making positions in both the public and private sectors is still low in East Asia. Much more support is needed for them to pursue opportunities for both economic and political participation and leadership.

High human development is a necessary but not sufficient factor contributing to women's political empowerment. Together, customary practice, socioeconomic conditions, political systems, and political culture create different gender roles and expectations that both facilitate and inhibit women's political participation and leadership. These factors combine to have different effects in particular national and local contexts, creating significant variation across East Asia.

The indicators used to analyze the situations for women in each country are limited and do not consistently cover the same information. States make political choices about which data to collect and then what to make available, according to how they want to present their countries' situations. Identifying gender inequity clearly is very difficult if indicators are not applied or are obscured in some way or when they are hard to measure—for instance, when one wants to distinguish meaningful political participation by women from

symbolic inclusion. Because of the political situations of Taiwan, China, and the DPRK in this region, data are not always available, and when available they are not always independently verifiable.

## *Patterns of Women's Political Participation*

Women's formal political representation is influenced by a number of institutional political factors, such as the type and longevity of the political system, and other factors that include economic opportunities, the role of state equality policy and ratification of international gender norms, education, culture, and civil society mobilization. While processes of democratization are certainly important for women's political representation, they do not necessarily increase their participation or representation, nor is democracy the only political system through which representation can occur. The one-party Communist states of China and the DPRK have many more women in their national legislatures than the democratic states of Japan and the Republic of Korea, for example, and this comparison holds true for other parts of the world. In Mongolia the proportion of women in office plummeted from 25 percent to 4 percent during the process of democratization that followed the end of Communist one-party rule in 1990 (echoing similar patterns in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union at the same time).

Chinese electoral law dictates that the National People's Congress (NPC) and local people's congresses should include women deputies, and that their numbers should increase gradually. In the NPC, whose members are indirectly elected by provincial congresses, 635 of the 3000 seats (21.32 percent) are filled by women, placing China sixtieth in the world on this indicator of political participation (UN Women 2012). Yet the real centers of political power in China are the provincial communist parties, where women only count for 10 percent of delegates and have few chances of attaining leadership positions. Political bias in China is a major barrier to women's equal political participation (Su 2006). In the DPRK, women are represented in government and the National Assembly, although, similar to China, men dominate the upper echelons. While women make up approximately 20 percent of the deputies to the Eleventh Supreme People's Assembly and 30 percent of the local people's assemblies, relatively few occupy decision-making positions in the judiciary and the civil and foreign services (UNDP 2011d).

*Key Enablers of and Obstacles to Women's Political Participation*

The following sections list the main elements that both enable and constrain women's equal participation in formal politics, particularly in legislative institutions, and in public life in East Asia.

*Rapid economic and human development*. In many societies in East Asia, rapid economic development has enhanced women's education, health, and well-being and reduced fertility rates and reproductive duties. These improvements have given them more time and ability to pursue economic and political goals outside the home. Yet societies can experience substantial growth and development without producing equivalent gains for women's economic or political empowerment. For instance, with a population of over 1.3 billion, China is the world's most populous country and has the world's second largest economy. Japan follows with the next largest economy but a much higher per capita income. Yet in Japan, fewer women are represented in politics than in China, mirroring their similarly lower labor market participation rate (Leblanc 1999). Even Mongolia, a medium human development country (ranked 110th worldwide), now has higher representation of women in parliament (12 percent, discussed more fully below) than democratic, affluent Japan (UNDP 2012), where women remain only 11.3 percent of members of parliament (ranking 106th worldwide) and roughly 8 percent of representatives in local and regional bodies. In the Republic of Korea—also a very high economic and human development country (ranked 15th)—women occupy only a slightly better 14.7 percent of parliamentary seats (ranking 87th).

*Culture, civil society, and change*. The worldwide predominance of women's domestic and reproductive roles over other, more community-oriented and public roles is especially marked in East Asia, where entrenched social and gender practices block women's political participation. The gender attributes associated with their roles as wives and mothers, such as gentleness and passivity, are seen as incompatible with a more public and vigorous economic and political life. In China, for instance, women's underrepresentation has been explained as the outgrowth of feudal attitudes that portray women as inferior and incapable of leadership. The official national women's organization, the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF), has implemented programs to address these gender stereotypes, using a twofold strategy. The first part targets sexist attitudes and feudal thinking by both men and women and promotes a discourse of equality. The second materially

increases women's political skills through training programs, although it is impeded by structural barriers that remain within political institutions (for a comprehensive account, see Howell 2006).

*Economic opportunities*. When women do enter the workforce, they face greater challenges than men. They are often expected to maintain heavier burdens of domestic work and child care. Many studies have shown that most national economies depend upon women's unpaid labor in the home. Women in Mongolia are concentrated in low-pay and low-productivity sectors, such as education and caring and service industries, while men generally occupy better-paid and higher-level positions in government and business that provide common pathways to political influence and recruitment for political positions. The Republic of Korea, with its highly developed economy, is also male dominated; 50 percent of women participate in the labor market, compared to 72 percent of men (UNDP 2011a), and the country has one of the largest gender pay gaps in the world, with women averaging only 57 percent of the men's pay (UN-ENSCAP 2010). The CEDAW committee has noted "the persistence of patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in [Korean] society," which translate into disadvantage for women in the labor market (CEDAW 2007). Male political leaders and business elites comment that women are not appropriate candidates for leadership roles in public or private spheres, since their family responsibilities render them unavailable for the "night work" they say is required by these roles (True 2008).

Japan's gender inequity, too, is apparent in the labor force participation rate of women (47.9 percent) compared to that of men (71.8 percent) and is reflected in Japan's 2012 Social Watch Gender Equity Index (GEI) score. The index is an independent measure that can quantify gaps between women and men in education, economic participation, and political empowerment. A value on the GEI of 0 would apply to a country or region in which no woman is educated, employed, or empowered and all men are, while a GEI of 100 indicates perfect equality (Social Watch 2012). Japan's score is 57 (made up of education, 93; economic participation, 65; and empowerment, 14), compared to the scores of, for instance, the United States (72) and New Zealand (82).[2] Japan's overall score is dragged down by the economic score but more so by the empowerment indicator, which is measured according to the gender gaps apparent in the Parliament and senior executive positions and other high-level positions in society (Social Watch 2012).

In the private sector in particular, many professional women drop out of the workforce when facing the transition from middle to senior-level management. These dropout rates are as high as 70.2 percent of professionally employed women in Japan and 52.9 percent in China (Tuminez 2012). While the DPRK has made substantial gains in bringing women into the labor force (with their participation still at only 55.1 percent, compared to 77.5 percent for men), their access to management positions is limited, and the time and attention they devote to customary obligations and duties in the private family sphere curtails their participation in the public sphere (UNDP 2011d). These economic disadvantages only compound women's political disadvantage.

*Education*. Women's formal political participation and empowerment are built on the prerequisites of education and economic opportunities. Mongolia is one of the few places in the world where women have higher educational attainment levels than men: 83 percent versus 81.8 percent have completed secondary school (UNDP 2011a). Yet female participation in the labor market (67.8 percent) lags behind men's (78.2 percent), meaning educational advantage has not yet translated into better employment outcomes for women. Similarly, in Japan, the level of secondary education attainment is high, with little disparity between men and women (80 percent versus 82.3 percent), but this is reflected in neither economic nor political participation. In the DPKR, too, women have equal access to primary and secondary education, but only one in twelve women completes college, compared to one in seven men. These examples suggest that, by themselves, educational attainment and economic participation are not sufficient to ensure women's political empowerment, in either socialist or democratic countries or countries at higher or lower levels of economic development. Other measures are needed to change societal expectations of women and assist them along the path to greater political participation.

*Electoral systems*. Electoral systems have considerable impact on the representation of women. For instance, women's political representation averages 22.6 percent in proportional electoral systems globally, compared with 18.1 percent in majority or "plurality" systems.[3] Three types of temporary special measures (TSMs) to increase women's representation are possible within different electoral systems. First, in proportional systems, parties are encouraged to nominate women, on the basis that inclusive party lists will broaden and increase their electoral appeal. Thus, proportional systems allow for quotas for the number of female versus male candidates on

the party list. Second, in majority or plurality systems, gender quotas can be achieved within parties as a certain percentage of the total number of candidates running for office. Third, any political or electoral system may reserve parliamentary seats for women or any other traditionally underrepresented group, for which all parties can compete (Krook 2010; Reilly 2012).

Compared to China and the DPRK, the representation of women in Parliament in democratic Japan is very low—they hold only 13.6 percent (52 out of 480 seats) in the lower house and 10.8 percent (45 of 242 seats) in the upper. Women fare a little better in ministerial appointments at 11.8 percent, or two out of seventeen. Japan uses a semiproportional system (180 of the 480 seats in the lower house are proportional). While the predominance of majority seats goes some way toward explaining the very low level of women's representation, cultural factors and a lack of institutional remedies, such as quotas and temporary special measures, are also key obstacles to women's political participation both in Japan and the East Asian subregion more generally. Women are largely absent from decision making not just in Parliament in Japan, but at all levels of society: in higher education, only 16.7 percent of lecturers and faculty of higher rank are women; in government they represent 2 percent of heads of departments; and in business they are only 4 percent of CEOs. The recent economic, demographic, and environmental crises in Japan in particular have revealed a deeply gendered society and an urgent need for more gender-inclusive decision making (Kano and Mackie 2012).

In 2010, the CEDAW committee urged Japan to use affirmative action to improve women's participation in government, the bureaucracy, and business. The government responded with a plan aiming to increase the share of women in leadership positions to at least 30 percent in all fields by 2020. It has implemented special measures and, in some instances, has reached the 30 percent target for women's appointment to national advisory boards and public offices. Changes to personnel practices and the introduction of mentoring programs are having some effect on public services, and programs to assist and encourage private industry to abide by the Equal Opportunity Law have also been undertaken, along with public awareness–raising activities (UN CEDAW C/SR.890 2009).

*Fast-track policies: Gender quotas and temporary special measures (TSMs).* Women currently hold only about one-fifth of parliamentary seats globally and an even smaller share of senior decision-making positions. At existing

incremental rates of increase, it will take a century and a half for their parliamentary representation to reach parity with men's (UNDP 2012, 17). The effectiveness of introducing "fast-track" policies, notably of gender quotas and other institutional reforms, is borne out by the rapid growth in women's representation in legislatures, such as Mongolia's threefold rise in the 2012 election (see below). Quotas are seen by advocates, including the United Nations and some governments, as a transitional measure that will lay the foundation for a broader acceptance of women's representation (Scandinavia has been a leader in these strategies). In addition, political parties may be encouraged to adopt their own internal quotas for women—the TSM most commonly used to promote the participation of women in political life (Reilly 2012).

In 2004, the Republic of Korea introduced legal quotas into candidate selection processes to promote greater gender balance in parliamentary representation. Half of those included on political parties' candidate lists for the 56 seats elected proportionally must be women. For the other 243 representatives elected by plurality vote in single-member districts, a party official may recommend that 30 percent of the party candidates be women. Despite this TSM, however, the CEDAW committee noted in 2007 that the change in women's representation in Korea had been slow, with levels remaining low in decision-making positions in the government, judiciary, foreign service, and academia and in the private sector. It recommended the further implementation of TSMs and an expansion of skills and leadership training programs for women leaders and called for programs to raise awareness of the importance of women's full and equal participation in decision making in society (CEDAW 2007; although the recent election of Korea's first female president, Park Geun-hye, is a hopeful precedent for women's political participation, her success reflects the traditional, elite female pathway to politics—following in the leadership footsteps of a father, husband, or brother). Continued poor representation of women in the Parliament may require a reserved seat provision, one of the three forms of TSMs for parliamentary representation mentioned above.

Taiwan, China, is an advanced industrial economy and is ranked highly in terms of freedom of the press, health care, public education, economic freedom, and human development, as well as the development of national machineries for women and gender mainstreaming in the bureaucracy (APEC 2010). It is significant for its established constitutional practice of reserving seats in Parliament for women, who are now winning more

seats than the minimum (Sun 2004). By 2000, the proportion of reserved seats ranged from 15 to 25 percent, depending on the size and level (local or national) of the electorate. For the 2008 election, Taiwan also changed to a mixed electoral system, with fewer seats than previously in the National Parliament (73 of the 113 seats are determined by plurality vote and 34 by second ballot proportionally by political party; 6 seats are reserved for minorities). The system was also strengthened more recently by the introduction of gender quotas for presidential appointees, legislative candidates, and positions within political parties (Huang 2012). Political parties have taken up these gender quotas to different degrees. Out of the 80 representatives in Parliament from the Nationalist Party (KMT; one of the two largest political parties), 20 (or 25 percent) are women, as are 12 out of the 27 (44.4 percent) from the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP; Gelb 2012). In 2009, women comprised 33 of 113 members (29.2 percent) of the National Parliament. If internal figures are accurate, Taiwan now has one of the highest levels of women's political representation in Asia—28 percent across the three levels of legislature.

Increasing the number of women representatives in legislatures and parliaments at local, regional, and national levels will lead, in turn, to the appointment of women to leadership or executive positions as ministers, party leaders, or heads of state and governments. Legislative bodies vary greatly in power, and parliaments can be weak, "rubber-stamp" institutions where members lack the capacity to be effective (Fish and Kroenig 2009). Even in largely ceremonial assemblies, the inclusion of women might begin as a token gesture. Nevertheless, it is a gesture with symbolic value that provides them with experience in political office. Women's inclusion by candidate quotas and other temporary special measures is essential to increasing their opportunities to gain such experience in the short term, while improving the quality of their substantive political contributions and encouraging an inclusive political culture in East Asia.

**CASE STUDY 1**

*Mongolia's 2012 Elections: New Electoral System and Quotas*

Concerned with the low representation of women in politics—they comprise just 3 percent of elected members of the State Great Khural—the government in Mongolia recently changed its electoral system. The election law of 2012 contained new regulations that included the introduction of proportional representation for 28 of the 76 seats, and a minimum of 20 percent of electoral candidates contesting seats had to be women. In the leadup to June elections, the proportion of female candidates was well above the quota at nearly 32 percent, but some parties put almost all their women candidates toward the bottom of party lists, ensuring male candidates a much higher chance of being elected. Despite the unfavorable listings, four women won the election through the proportional system, suggesting that voters made conscientious candidate choices, and seven women were elected directly in the 48 first-past-the-post seats. Women now constitute approximately 12 percent of the new Parliament—a significant step forward and an example of how fast-track gains can be made. Aside from any effects of the quota system, Li Narangoa (2012) attributes this result to an increasing disillusionment with corruption associated with male-dominated leadership and the perception that women are more trustworthy and principled than men. Women MPs now face significant challenges to collectively pursuing common gender-related goals and forming alliances with male parliamentarians to achieve them. The creation of a women's caucus to assist in this is underway. Opportunities to communicate with women counterparts and tap into collective experience internationally will also be important, as will be attending to the composition of cabinet and standing committees to make sure women are equitably represented at these higher levels (Narangoa 2012; Dierkes 2012).

## SOUTHEAST ASIA

*Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Vietnam*

Women are said to have high status in Southeast Asian societies, yet the gender disparities in these societies are pronounced compared with the rest of the world, and levels of female political representation are low. The persistence of patriarchal attitudes and gender stereotypes discourages women in these countries from participating in politics. Much variation exists in the region, however, and an understanding of how gender relations

operate within each particular cultural, social, and economic context is necessary to explain this heterogeneity.

Traditional attitudes limiting women's political participation are reinforced by unequal human development and their poor access to food, land, assets, finance, technology, education, training, and economic opportunity in developing countries, where these resources are generally scarce. Marriage, divorce, inheritance customs, and levels of gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health affect not only women's well-being—especially that of poor or marginalized women—but also their capacity to engage politically. Of particular concern is how societies and governments deal with personal status and/or family-related injustices, and the extent to which women themselves advocate for changes in norms and laws to redress them.

## *Patterns of Women's Political Participation*

Women's formal political participation in Southeast Asia is influenced by the interaction of socioeconomic inequalities, race/ethnicity, and religion, as well as a range of formal, institutional political factors, especially the diversity and age of political systems in this subregion. Vietnam emerged from decades of war as a one-party Communist state, similar to Lao PDR. Brunei remains a sultanate, where neither women nor men have the right to political representation. After years of military rule, Myanmar is in an early transitional phase of democratization. Singapore and Malaysia, older parliamentary democracies, are dominated by ruling parties that have governed since independence and maintain significant state control of citizens. Intense political party rivalries reflecting regional enmities make Thailand's older democratic system vulnerable to military dictatorship. The Philippines and Indonesia have also maintained democratic systems susceptible to dictatorship and corruption. Cambodia and Timor-Leste are building new democracies after long and destructive periods of armed conflict.

Manon Tremblay's (2007) cross-national study of women's representation finds that the most important factor explaining women's parliamentary representation in new democracies is the voting system, whereas within well-established ones, it is an egalitarian conception of gender roles. In Southeast Asia, the duration and integrity of the democratic experience and the type of electoral system both have a major bearing on the level of women's political representation. Only the Philippines can be described as a longstanding democracy with an above-average rate of women in

Parliament (23 percent). Countries with low liberal democratic ratings have varied percentages of women in their parliaments; Singapore has 24.4 percent, Malaysia 10 percent, and Thailand 15 percent (see IPU 2012, table 1).

Women's political representation in legislatures varies greatly in new or recently renewed democracies, as well, from Myanmar (1.8 percent) to Indonesia (19 percent), Cambodia (20 percent), and Timor-Leste (38 percent). This variance is affected largely by the electoral system, with higher representation in countries where proportional voting systems are in place and have been strongly advocated for (UNDP 2012, 11, 31). Proportional systems provide an incentive for parties to maximize their appeal by including candidates from all social groups. Cambodia, Indonesia, and Timor-Leste have all seen rises in women's representation over the last decade under this type of system and with the introduction of gender quotas. In Southeast Asia, however, the increase overall has been slow, and, at the rate of the last decade, women will take more than a century to reach parity (UNDP 2012, 20, 21), although special measures have been shown to speed up these processes, as will be discussed below.

Adversarial party politics is not a system women have designed or flourished in. Newly emerging democracies in particular, like Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, and Timor-Leste, suffer from a dearth of women candidates. Parties typically avoid females, as they come with access to few campaign resources (wealth, knowledge, or networks) or links to influential constituencies (UNDP 2012). Women are also less experienced than men in public roles and must juggle their "triple burden" (of reproductive, productive, and community work), leaving little time for politics. Women's electoral success requires support from political parties and placement in "winnable" positions (IPU 2011).

### Elite Women's Political Participation and Gender Attributes in Southeast Asia

Although Southeast Asia has produced an exceptional number of impressive women leaders, many are closely associated with men who were national leaders. Corazon Aquino (eleventh president of the Philippines, 1986–92) was the first female president in Asia and widow of assassinated senator Benigno Aquino. After his death she continued a "People Power Revolution" to topple corrupt president Ferdinand Marcos and restore democracy to the Philippines. Megawati Sukarnoputri (fifth president of Indonesia, 2001–4)

opposed corrupt dictator president Suharto and replaced him after his downfall. Both Megawati and Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma (an opposition political leader and now member of Parliament) are daughters of the "founding fathers" of their countries, who were deposed by military coups and replaced by dictatorships, which both women opposed. Thailand's new and first female prime minister, Yingluck Shinawatra, is understood to have been voted in to redeem and replace her brother Thaksin, the prime minister overthrown in a 2006 military coup.

Whether these women are mere symbols of their fathers, husbands, or brothers—simply "leaseholders of patriarchal power"—has been much debated. Yet they have succeeded in political office where their male relatives have not. They also represent the elite strata of societies with strict social hierarchies, and this status may trump gender, especially in times of national crisis. When corruption and dictatorship are dominant, women are seen as more trustworthy than men—a perception that may reflect the region's deep belief that honesty, self-sacrifice, and fortitude are feminine and maternal attributes, and the valorizing of these attributes. This attitude is summed up in a well-known Cambodian characterization of politics as the art of "riding a buffalo through a muddy field"—something that is only useful in a time of crisis (Jacobsen 2010, 207).

### Key Enablers of and Obstacles to Women's Political Participation

The following sections explore the conditions that contribute to women's equal participation in formal politics in Southeast Asia, particularly in legislative institutions and public life, as well as those conditions that have become the most significant obstacles to this parity.

*Women's movements and socioeconomic divisions among women*. Pressure from women's movements and the mobilization of local women's advocacy organizations on substantive issues of concern to women may also be bringing about improvements in their political representation. Women's movements in Southeast Asia have had to overcome colonial regimes, defer to movements for national independence, and survive authoritarian and patriarchal state rule. Resistance to women's movements may be high after war or crisis, when the familiarity of established patriarchal systems may be appealing. National women's movements can also replicate existing patterns of social hierarchy and gender roles and be seen to represent elite rather than diverse groups of women overall; this has been the case

in Cambodia, Indonesia, and Timor-Leste (Jacobsen 2010; Blackburn 2010; Niner 2011, 427). Some women's movements, however—notably in socialist Lao PDR and Vietnam and the Philippines, where "people power" has prevailed—have been more successful in forming coalitions of women across socioeconomic divisions and creating greater change for all (Roces 2010).

*Increased economic engagement*. Although the need for more equitable gender relations and the importance of women's autonomy and contributions to the economy have been acknowledged across Southeast Asia, in local economies women's productive work is often an extension of their home-based activities, and it has not increased their public engagement but, rather, reinforced restrictive social conventions. Today rapid global economic change in Southeast Asia, furthered by government goals for building knowledge and export economies, has increased the numbers of young women working in factories across the region and of female entrepreneurs and employers among the middle class (Elias 2011). But women's economic empowerment has yet to lead to significant political empowerment that might address—for instance, through women's advocacy and substantive political input—the exploitation of vulnerable women working as migrant domestic servants in largely unrelated sectors or in illicit prostitution and sex-trafficking industries.

*Grassroots political participation: Education, employment, and empowerment*. While observing and encouraging women's formal political participation are important, so is understanding their informal or grassroots participation and how it is influenced by education and employment. Again, we can see the gaps between men and women quantified in measures like the Gender Equity Index (see above). Regionally, Europe has the highest and best GEI at 73, and the Middle East and North Africa the lowest at 31 (the values averaged together to arrive at the latter value are education, 56; economic participation, 23; and empowerment, 14). South Asia is only slightly better off than North Africa at 39 (education, 67; economics, 36; empowerment, 14), and East Asia and the Pacific score much higher at 69 (education, 95; economics, 70; empowerment, 42). As overall equity for women increases, education appears to be the first indicator to rise, followed by employment, and, last, political empowerment.

Reproductive health is also crucial for women's equity and empowerment. It is reflected in UNDP's Gender Inequality Index (GII), on which 0 is complete equality and 1 is complete inequality. The GII is based on measures of

reproductive health, empowerment (which takes into account educational achievement), and economic activity.[4] Reproductive health refers to women's ability to control the number and spacing of their children and to have more time and resources to engage in activities other than their reproductive work in the family household. Good reproductive health increases women's (and children's) well-being and allows them to spend more time on productive or economic engagement, as well as community and, potentially, political activities.

*Fast-track policies: Gender quotas and temporary special measures (TSMs).* The three types of TSMs mentioned previously—(1) establishing internal party quotas, (2) electoral party-list gender quotas and targets, and (3) reserved seats and quotas in parliament—are among recommendations to compensate for the obstacles to women's formal political participation and to fast-track their representation in legislatures. Other possible measures include reviewing political party processes for recruitment and nomination; building the political capacities of women candidates and representatives through civil society initiatives; and designing gender-sensitive parliaments that facilitate women's caucuses—by, for instance, providing family-friendly sessional hours and facilities (UNDP 2012,11). The Philippines provides reserved parliamentary seats for women; in Indonesia, gender quota legislation for political party candidate lists was introduced in 2003 (30 percent of candidates must be women) and then made compulsory in 2008, which has increased women's national political representation to 18 percent.

In the Timor Leste case, as discussed in case study 2, a formal gender quota was eventually mandated in the 2007 National Election Law, establishing that one in every four candidates should be a woman. Following an amendment to the law in 2011, candidate lists must now include one woman for every group of three candidates (EUEOM 2012). Today women representatives hold 21 of the 65 seats (32.3 percent) in Parliament, ranking them twenty-second in the world and the highest in the Southeast Asian sub-region (UNDP 2011b). Women also hold three of the thirteen ministerial positions in the government (23.1 percent; United Nations Women World Map 2012). This remarkable outcome must be reconciled with substantial gender inequity, however, illustrated by the higher rates of malnutrition and illiteracy among women than men. Women are also less likely to participate in the paid workforce, and those who do usually hold lower-level positions and earn one-eighth the salary of men (Asian Development Bank 2005, 23). Fertility rates are among the highest in the world (5.9 children

per woman), and, compounded with poor health services, contribute to extremely high maternal mortality rates (370/10,000). The predominance of Roman Catholicism may account for the high fertility rate, along with cultural conservatism concerning gender relations, stressing women's roles primarily as wives and mothers.

**CASE STUDY 2**

*Timor-Leste: Highest Political Representation for Women in Southeast Asia*

Timor-Leste offers a positive example of the use of temporary special measures (TSMs). In 1999, after a long and destructive period of armed conflict, Timor-Leste became an UN-administered territory, and for a decade the UN provided it with security, administration, and humanitarian and development assistance. In 2000, in the leadup to independence, the East Timorese Women's Congress set a goal of women holding 30 percent of seats in all decision-making bodies. Rede Feto, the national women's network, made the campaign for gender quotas a priority for the 2001 Constitutional Assembly elections. The UN Electoral Affairs Division refused to use quotas, however, despite the advocacy of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), on the grounds that they were not "democratic." But they did establish a proportional electoral system (see True and Hall 2009). To compensate for having no official gender quota, local women advocated for affirmative action and successfully lobbied for international funds to support and train women candidates. As a result of these efforts, Timorese women won 25 percent of seats in the new assembly.

The main challenges for women in Timor-Leste now lie in fulfilling not strategic, but practical, gender needs—the result of deep poverty and conflict. Advocacy is needed for opportunities for poor, rather than elite, women to participate in social, economic, and political decision-making processes and improve outcomes for women (UNW-CEDAW 2012).

Human development is a necessary, albeit insufficient, condition to guarantee women's representation and gender equity. Increasing women's political participation in Southeast Asia in the medium term requires the forging of an egalitarian political culture that promotes and values their participation. Singapore's strong economy and high Human Development Index (HDI) translates into high levels of parity in health and education but not in the economy, as measured by labor market participation (53.7 percent for women, compared to 75.6 percent for men), especially at senior

levels, or in politics; Singapore is also the only country in the subregion with no female ministers (IPU and UN Women 2012). Malaysia also has a high HDI but low parliamentary representation for women (14 percent) and relatively low educational attainment (66 percent of women reach secondary or higher education, compared to 72.8 percent of men) and labor market participation (44.4 percent of women are in the labor force, compared to 79.2 percent of men; UNDP 2012b). Islamic women face discrimination, particularly with respect to personal status, marriage, and family relations. While Malaysia has declared a commitment to having women in 30 percent of decision-making positions, concrete affirmative action, such as mandatory quotas, has not been undertaken. In Indonesia, which has a much lower HDI and an Islamic majority, quotas have been introduced, and women are guaranteed equality under the constitution; women's parliamentary representation is significantly higher as a result (18 percent), and four out of thirty-five ministers are women (IPU and UN Women 2012).

The relationship between high human development, democratic political systems, and increased women's political participation must be reconciled with high levels of women's representation in the one-party socialist states of Lao PDR (25 percent) and Vietnam (25.8 percent), which are underscored by these countries' having the most equitable labor market participation in the region (in Vietnam, 68 percent of women, compared to 76 percent of men; and in Lao PDR, 77.7 percent of women, compared to 78.9 percent of men; UNDP 2011b). Vietnamese and Laotian women have the highest levels of formal participation in the subregion—second and third, respectively, only to the special case of Timor-Leste, as discussed—and all three, socialist and democratic, have established temporary special measures to increase women's participation. The Vietnam Women's Union Central Committee proposed to increase the proportion of women to 30 percent in the National Assembly and the People's Provincial Councils. Similarly, in Lao PDR, the People's Revolutionary Party Congress in March 2011 established a target of 30 percent women in the National Assembly and 15 percent in decision-making positions. The targets have not yet been reached, but Vietnam's Law on Gender Equality (2006) guarantees women's equality with men. Nonetheless, in the reality of women's lives, discrimination continues. Political gains are hampered by low (though equitable) rates of educational attainment, high maternity mortality (56/100,000) and adolescent fertility rates (26.8/1000), perhaps reflecting low HDI (UNDP 2011b). In Lao PDR, poverty and inequity are apparent in educational attainment (22.9 percent of women achieve secondary or higher-level education, compared to 36.8

percent of men). Yet the worst of Lao PDR's indicators is the maternal mortality rate of 580/100,000—the highest in the subregion—combined with a high adolescent fertility rate of 39/1000 (UNDP 2011b).

Women surely cannot thrive under such conditions, let alone achieve equal political participation with men. Their social and economic rights and equality need to be prioritized—if not made the single driver—in efforts to attain their political empowerment and participation.

## SOUTH ASIA

### Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka

With the presence of two nuclear-armed and hostile states, and torn by violent intrastate ethnic conflicts, South Asia is one of the most volatile regions of the world. Countries in this region share certain predominant features: postcolonial state formation, centralized governments, socioeconomic inequalities, intrastate divisions, and conflicts based on class, gender, religion, language, ethnicity, and caste. For the past sixty years, political systems have varied from democracy in India and Sri Lanka (with varying degrees of authoritarian tendencies) to outright military dictatorship, theocratic autocracy, and democracy in Bangladesh and Pakistan. Nepal has made a democratic transition from a monarchy that was overthrown by a Maoist revolution, but it faces problems consolidating its democratic base. Maldives is a small island country that was declared a republic in 1968, bringing an end to more than eight hundred years of monarchy. Early this year, the president, Mohamed Nasheed, was allegedly ousted in a coup, and presidential elections were held in 2013. Afghanistan has had a long history of coups, monarchy, and dictatorship and is now an Islamic republic with a president and a bicameral National Assembly. This region has four Islamic republics, two democracies with Buddhist majorities, and two secular democracies with Hindu majorities.

### Patterns of Women's Political Participation

To understand women's political participation in South Asia, one has to take into account the different forms of governance and political mobilization, as well as the size of the population and the socioeconomic and cultural

factors that shape gender roles. The first thing that stands out about the region is its impressive record of women serving as heads of state: Sirimavo Bhandaranaike and Chandrika Kumaratunga in Sri Lanka, Indira Gandhi and Pratibha Patil in India, Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan, and Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina in Bangladesh. Women leaders are found across the political spectrum in these countries from the left/ultra-left parties to the mainstream centrists, and also within the radical right. Right-wing political forces, like the Jamaat-e-Islami[5] in Pakistan and Bangladesh and the Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) and Shiv Sena with their highly patriarchal policies that place women in more traditional gender roles, have mobilized women in large numbers at the grassroots as well as the leadership levels. BJP's Sushma Swaraj, who was once the information and broadcasting minister in India, is a potential prime ministerial candidate. One can safely conclude that the highest positions in the government and the state are not out of reach for women in South Asia. (Maldives is an exception. It has banned women from holding the highest leadership positions of president and vice president and has been heavily criticized for its antiwoman policies.)[6]

Women's participation at all levels of government is not unusual in South Asia, given their long history of political activism, their participation in anticolonial struggles, and the strong influence of the women's movement. The proportion of women in national parliaments in the region is below the global average of 20 percent, however, despite affirmative action carried out in most South Asian countries. Yet those who do manage to get into parliament have often climbed the ladder to occupy ministerial positions, including heads of state. Women who are politically active are considered "exceptional" due to their family backgrounds or connections. At the grassroots/community level, more women are in leadership positions, but tracing the political career of any woman at a higher or national level who succeeded without any male mentorship or family connection is very difficult. Mamata Banerjee, India's former railway minister and West Bengal's current chief minister, is possibly an exception to the rule.

*Key Enablers of and Obstacles to Women's Political Participation*

While the obstacles to gender parity are considerable in South Asia, parity is, at the same time, encouraged by education and access to opportunities and by fast-track policies, such as gender quotas and temporary special measures, which are explored next. The most significant obstacles to women's equal participation in South Asia are lack of intraparty democracy,

gender prejudices and cultural factors, violence against "political" women, and lack of economic and political resources.

*Lack of intraparty democracy.* Lack of democracy within political parties is the biggest impediment to women's political participation in South Asia. The most notable trend in South Asian politics is the passing of the leadership of all major parties from one generation to another in the same families, with the Bhuttos, Nehru-Gandhis, Rajapakases, and others all in control as family units. Since the leadership is strictly a family matter, it may get passed on to women family members as well as men. This has happened in several South Asian countries:

- In India, Sonia Gandhi, the current leader of the Congress Party, is the widow of former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi and the daughter-in-law of Indira Gandhi. Her son, Rahul Gandhi, is now the powerful leader of the party, and no intraparty democracy exists in terms of choosing leaders other than members of the Nehru-Gandhi family.
- In Pakistan, slain leader Benazir Bhutto's son, Bilawal, adopted his mother's surname—an extremely unusual action in that country—to seek legitimacy as the anointed heir of the Pakistan People's Party, founded by his grandfather and former prime minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Bilawal's father and Benazir's husband, Asif Ali Zardari, serves as the current president of the country.
- In Bangladesh, former prime minister Begum Khaleda Zia is the wife of former president Ziaur Rahman, and current prime minister Sheikh Hasina is the daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, nationalist politician and founder of the country.
- In Sri Lanka, the Rajapakase family currently holds all important offices.

If more women from nonelite families are to participate in politics, parties will need to be democratized. As long as they are family controlled, even quotas for women will not achieve the desired results.

*Gender prejudices and cultural factors.* Resistance to temporary special measures such as gender quotas is based on the notion that only some affluent women with powerful connections will benefit from them. It is also based on deep-rooted gender prejudices held by male politicians who,

ironically, do not mind their own female kin serving as members of parliament but are hesitant to include women more structurally and systematically. In India, for example, Mulayam Singh Yadav, head of the Samajwadi Party and former defense minister, recently commented on the Women's Reservation Bill, stating, "Only girls and women from affluent class can go forward. . . . Remember this . . . you [rural women] will not get a chance. . . . Our rural women do not have that much attraction."[7] This is a comment from a man whose daughter-in-law, Dimple Yadav, has been contesting elections and in 2012 was elected unopposed to the lower house (Lok Sabha) of Parliament as a member from Kannauj, Uttar Pradesh. This is not the first time Yadav has made disparaging comments about women's political participation. In 2010, he declared that if the Women's Reservation Bill were passed it would fill Parliament with the kind of women who invite catcalls and whistles. Yadav is not alone in these views, either; they are often made public by politicians who have encouraged female members of their family to contest elections and hold ministerial positions. According to Ahsanullah Waqas, a member of Pakistan's Parliament, "Women have been brought to the Assemblies as a sweet dish of democracy. They should prove their worth instead of sensationalizing the Assembly" (Bilal Ahmed 2010; Ahmad 2012).

As sociologist Gail Omvedt (2005) has suggested, the most intractable obstacle to women's political participation in South Asia may be the deeply embedded patriarchal social and cultural life. The view that a woman's place is still in the home and political life is for men is still held by many in this subregion. Except for those who come from political families, women are usually discouraged from public life and political roles.

*Violence against "political" women.* Violence against women who choose the political path is an increasing concern in South Asia. The assassinations of Indira Gandhi (in India in 1984) and Benazir Bhutto (in Pakistan in 1997) and attempts on the lives of Chandrika Kumaratunga in Sri Lanka and Sheikh Hasina in Bangladesh are examples of violence against women in positions of power. Granted, these women were targeted also for their policies and political positions, and men with similar policies and positions would likely have met the same fate. In general, however, violence against women with political aspirations is common and a reflection of deeper systemic violence against women.

Violence against women and girls in South Asia begins in the womb with the selective abortion of female fetuses and continues throughout life with infanticide, dowry deaths, sexual harassment, assault, and domestic violence. Rigid patriarchal norms work in tandem with caste, class, and religious oppression in most of the countries in the region.[8] Recent incidents in India have included a gang rape episode on a Delhi public bus on December 16, 2012, and the subsequent death of the twenty-three-year-old victim, which brought thousands of Indians into the streets in Delhi in protest.

The conditions in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka are no better than in India. In Afghanistan, Halima Askari, deputy head of the Maidan Wardak Provincial Council, has talked about the violence and insecurity that affects women in that country outside of their homes, in the streets and on the way to school and work, and their concerns about what will happen when US troops leave the country.

Violence against women remains not only the single biggest concern in the region in terms of gender justice, but a major concern as well for increasing women's participation in the public and political sphere. Moral policing and violence against those who do not conform to traditional religious, ethnic, and caste practices does not end when women acquire political power. This explains why even successful leaders like Indira Gandhi, Benazir Bhutto, Sheikh Hasina, Sushma Swaraj, Uma Bharti, and Sheila Dixit have all endeavored in observable ways to make themselves acceptable as good wives, daughters, daughters-in-law, and religious women of virtue.

Acts of violence by various perpetrators against women with public profiles have been reported in a number of South Asian countries. For example, in 2012, Rumi Nath, who represents the Borkhola Assembly constituency in Assam, India, was beaten up by a mob after it was revealed that she married Jaki Jakir, a Muslim, and converted to Islam.[9] Shortly before this writing, a municipal councilor in West Delhi's Nangloi area hanged herself at her home after strangling her baby daughter. Twenty-seven-year-old Satyam Yadav was elected to the municipality in April 2012 and was serving as a councilor from ward 43 in Nangloi (East). Dowry harassment was listed as a reason for her suicide, and Yadav's family members registered a complaint against her husband's family, alleging she was murdered because of her dowry.[10]

Sri Lankan politician Salma Hamza, a member of the Urban Council and chief executive director of the Women's Empowerment and Development Forum in Kattankudy and the first Muslim woman politician in Sri Lanka's entire eastern province, has had fuel bombs thrown at her vehicle by opposition members.[11] According to Hamza, "Many women are greeted with violence if they even want to get their names on the nomination list for Parliament."[12] In Pakistan, militants and religious fundamentalists have repeatedly threatened such high-profile women as Asma Jehangir and Sherry Rehman for taking progressive stands. In Afghanistan, women's affairs official Najia Sediqi in Laghman province was killed in December 2012, and the Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack.

Violence and the threat of violence against women in public spaces and who speak out in public, including women politicans and human rights defenders, has become an increasing trend in South Asia in recent years. Much violence against women in Afghanistan and Pakistan has gone unreported or underreported since 2008, because of political pressure to reconcile with the Taliban—a dangerous trend that completely ignores the reality of women who have to live under the Taliban. Pakistan's National Assembly passed a resolution on April 13, 2009, approving the Nizam-e-Adl Regulation, the aim of which was to impose Sharia law in the Swat Valley in the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan. The imposition of this regulation marked the beginning of a series of murky "peace" deals between the government of Pakistan and the Pakistani Taliban. Under the "peace for Sharia" deal, the Taliban were expected to stop their armed campaign in the region and surrender their arms in exchange for the legal enforcement of Sharia law in Swat. Sharia courts would interpret civil rights according to Islamic strictures that would render women invisible and inflict unprecedented violence on them.[13] The deal subsequently collapsed, due to the Taliban's lack of commitment to disarming, but since then, several efforts have been made to negotiate peace deals with the "good" Taliban that would have disastrous consequences for women's rights. In Pakistan, the Sunni Tehreek expressed serious concerns over the appointment of Sherry Rehman as Pakistan's ambassador to the United States in November 2011. The central leader of the Sunni Tehreek, Shahid Ghauri, said Rehman was already following "policies of the U.S. and the Jewish lobby as she tried to abolish the country's blasphemy laws."[14] Rehman resigned as federal information minister in 2009, due to differences of opinion with president Asif Ali Zardari on imposing restrictions on the media. Her security was threatened, particularly when she took a public stance against the blasphemy laws of the country.[15]

*Lack of economic and political resources*. The lack of material resources available to women is another significant factor that constrains their political participation. In South Asia, politics is about money, power, and political networks. It is almost impossible to contest any election without adequate financing and access to political know-how and training. Because women are less integrated into powerful political and economic networks, they find it especially difficult to participate in large numbers or to play an important role in political decision making. South Asian women are both economically disempowered and discouraged by gender prejudices from cultivating political contacts early in their educations and careers to prepare them for political roles in the future. Some parties have separate women's wings, but rather than empowering women or demonstrating their solidarity, they often marginalize them further. In Kashmir, for instance, the Muslim Khawateen Markaz (Muslim Women's Organization) is the only women's party within the Hurriyat Conference (an amalgam of separatist groups). Not only are the women excluded from any decision-making positions in Kashmir, but female stakeholders and participants are absent as well from the bilateral India–Pakistan peace talks, which are dominated by men from separatist political parties and mainstream politics and even by former militants.

*Education and access to opportunities*. Education is often mentioned as a prerequisite to women's greater political participation in South Asia. While this popular notion may be valid to the extent that education makes women more aware of opportunities and of the gender imbalances in their societies, many have come into the political arena without formal education or training. Rural women, for instance, despite their lack of education, are frequently very politically aware and informed. Rabi Devi, Bihar's chief minister three times over, is a case in point. Although widely criticized as an illiterate rural woman from one of the most underdeveloped states in India who gained office by replacing her husband after he was arrested for participating in a scam, she has stood her ground and embraced her political role for many years with ease and confidence. True, formal education in South Asia provides greater access to economic opportunities, but lack of it does not necessarily affect political aspirations and performance. Significant increases in rural women's political participation at the *zila parishad* (district) and *panchayat* (village) levels as a result of gender quotas (discussed below) are evidence of this.

On the other hand, the educated sections of South Asian societies often espouse the most reactionary, conservative, patriarchal, and fundamentalist

politics. Even much of the violence women confront, like dowry harassment and female abortion, is rampant in the urban class despite its higher levels of education.[16]

In short, more than formal literacy is required to promote women's political participation. The focus should be on more holistic education that directly engages with issues of gender hierarchy and women's empowerment.

*Fast-track policies: Gender quotas and temporary special measures (TSMs).* Although some have argued that gender quotas and other forms of affirmative action tend to benefit only those women who have (male) family members in positions of power, they nevertheless have helped increase women's political participation. TSMs have helped women get elected to national parliaments and local government in most South Asian countries.

In Afghanistan, for instance, the democratic system of governance that was introduced through the 2004 constitution has led to an unprecedented expansion of women's political participation. Article 83 of the Afghan constitution gave women 25 percent of seats in the lower house of the National Assembly, and article 84 guaranteed them almost 17 percent in the upper house.[17] According to Oliver Lough and others, "In the years that have followed, millions of women have turned out to vote in successive rounds of presidential, legislative, and provincial elections" (2012, 1). Marked improvement in access to services, such as education and health care, along with long-term migration to countries like Iran and Pakistan during the country's conflicts and the work of aid agencies and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), have allowed ideas and alternatives to be debated. "The current internationally backed regime has instituted a number of constitutionally and legally constituted safeguards protecting women's equal rights as citizens and as participants in the country's democratic system, while the 2008 National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA) sets out an operational framework for furthering women's empowerment and gender equality under the government's overarching Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS)" (Lough et al. 2012, 1).

The challenges are far from over, however, despite these initiatives. For instance, the CEDAW committee in its forty-fifth session in 2010 expressed regret and concern at the exclusion of women from executive decision-making roles and the absence of strategies to protect women's rights in Afghanistan.[18] Prevailing cultural norms, insecurity, corrupt and

inefficient regimes, and the rise of conservative factions interested in peace deals with the Taliban have generated anxieties about women's future.[19]

In Nepal, affirmative action for women's political representation was incorporated into the new interim constitution, which was adopted in January 2007 (Falch 2010). Article 63(5) guarantees one-third of the seats in the Constituent Assembly to women. As a result, in 2008, the unicameral Parliament was 33 percent women—the largest proportion of women parliamentarians in South Asia.[20] In Pakistan, 60 of the 342 seats in the National Assembly (17.5 percent) are reserved for women. They are allocated to the political parties proportionally from the provinces, according to the electoral result.[21] In Bangladesh, quotas or reservations are seen as practically the only way women can get into the legislature. One can argue that quotas have had limited success there for the substantive representation of women, however. While political representation is reasonable—19 percent in the National Parliament (the Jatiya Sangsad)—and good legislation exists for the protection of women from violence,[22] both representation and protection have eluded minority women, who continue to be marginalized. In Pakistan the quota system has also been quite successful, despite having provided political access only to women from elite backgrounds.[23]

In India, the upper house passed a bill in 2010 reserving 33 percent of parliamentary seats for women, but it is still to be cleared by the lower house. While a number of people have questioned the logic of a 33 percent reservation when 50 percent of voters are women, the bill provides for quotas within quotas to include representation of *dalit* and other women from marginalized sections of the population. Furthermore, the 33 percent parliamentary reservation follows the model at the *zila parishad* and *panchayat* levels, which has been very successful in terms of descriptive representation. UN Women notes that "more than 40 percent of local council leaders are women" as a result of quotas.[24] Evidence suggests that the one-third *zila parishad* and *panchayat* reservations have improved the substantive representation of women, with more women-friendly policy outcomes on water, criminal justice, security, and education correlated with the change in gender-based representation (Beaman et al. 2010; Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004).

Maldives has not adopted any quotas for women, and the representation of women in its Parliament is very poor at 6.5 percent, with women banned from the highest leadership positions.[25] Sri Lanka has also made no effort

to legislate quotas for women, and, despite women having held leadership positions in the country, their overall parliamentary representation remains extremely low at 5 percent.[26] Bhutan adopted universal suffrage after a new constitution was adopted in July 2008, and all adult Bhutanese women will be able to vote in the next general election. Since 2004, women have consistently held 9 percent of the parliamentary seats in Bhutan.[27] They also comprise 9.3 percent of legislators, senior officials, and managers. Bhutan has debated over the low level of women's political participation but has yet to legislate for quotas.[28]

Quotas, therefore, have had mixed results, and the overall number of women representatives in national politics is still dismal in South Asia. The estimated regional distribution of women parliamentarians is summarized in appendix 1.[29]

South Asia is strong on constitutional provisions to ensure women's political participation; they are in place in most states in the subregion, except Sri Lanka and Maldives. Participation is constrained, however, when cultural norms and patriarchal values continue to be invoked to prevent women from taking on more public roles. A recent example is the Delhi gang rape case mentioned above, after which many politicians, leaders, and public figures declared women should behave "appropriately" to avoid violence against them. These statements reinforce a mentality rooted in a strong patriarchal tradition that, irrespective of caste, creed, religion, clan, or ethnicity, is still unwilling to accept women in the public space.

Current regional initiatives seek to redress this mentality and bolster women's political participation in South Asia. In May 2012, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) organized a trip to Britain for a delegation of women parliamentarians from Pakistan. The women discussed forced marriages with Muslim parliamentarians in the United Kingdom and interacted with the Pakistani community there. They also discussed specific legislation enhancing women's rights in Pakistan.[30] Several other exchange programs and studies have been conducted under the supervision of the UN and donor agencies, and, in July 2012, more than one hundred delegates from South Asian countries attended the South Asia Women Parliamentarians' Conference in Dhaka, Bangladesh, to debate the issues in the region.[31]

Although women's political participation is considered essential in a subregion that holds over one-fifth of the world's population, all states need

to be more proactive in enhancing it and increasing their roles in decision making. South Asia's record in gender mainstreaming and protecting women's rights is particularly poor. Cultural norms endorse patriarchal control of every aspect of women's lives.

Under the circumstances, one can argue women have done reasonably well, owing to a long history of political mobilization and women's movements in the region. Gender quotas have improved their participation, particularly at local and national levels. Unstable political regimes and the fact that parties largely remain family-run political enterprises have been major barriers, however, along with corruption and the dominance of money and extortion-ary tactics during elections. Political reform, especially to democratize party structures with more intraparty elections and address corruption, is needed to raise women's participation. Quotas will help only if parties decide to field women candidates and have more women working within their insti-tutional structures. Collaboration between local NGOs and women's move-ments and continuous international pressure through aid diplomacy can help address gender stereotypes that women are "apolitical" or not suited for political roles.

Moreover, sexist political leaders and candidates with serious allegations of rape, violence, and sexual assault against them should be named and shamed by their parties. Transnational feminist networks in the region should leverage the widespread anger in India (against the gang rape), in Pakistan (against the shooting of Malala Yousufzai), in Bangladesh (against violence faced by minority and indigenous women), and in postwar Sri Lanka (where internally displaced Tamil women are subjected to violence) to start a serious campaign about violence against women and the impor-tance of their political participation. The scale of the protests in India and the self-reflection in the regional media provide reason to be hopeful.

# PACIFIC ISLANDS

*American Samoa, Bougainville, Cook Islands,*
*Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam,*
*Kiribati, Marshall Islands, New Caledonia, Nauru, Niue,*
*Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands,*
*Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu*

Among all the four subregions in the Asia-Pacific, Pacific Island parliaments continue to be the most resistant to the inclusion of women. According to the most recent IPU statistics (2012), women in the Pacific region represent, on average, 12.7 percent of all members elected to single- or lower-house parliaments, but this figure includes the parliaments of Australia (at 24.7 percent) and New Zealand (at 32.2 percent). Excluding these two countries, the average proportion of women in the parliaments of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) member states as of November 2012 was only 3.65 percent (or 16 MPs out of 438).

## *Positive Trends in Women's Political Participation*

Without discounting developments occurring in the region's nonindependent political territories, where some advancement on this issue is indicated, general claims that politics in the region is "men's business" (Huffer 2006, 45), that women are "politically invisible" (Thomas 2002, 3), and that socio-political and economic structures are responsible for this situation can be made with good reason. Yet there is cause for optimism. In regional politics, a vigorous discussion is now taking place about the desirability of having women representatives. Pacific women's organizations and government machineries, regional intergovernmental institutions (particularly PIF), and international development agencies engaged in the region are driving the agenda to increase women's political participation, and the effort is supported by a range of international policy instruments—most importantly CEDAW—that challenge women's subordination.

In practical terms, a number of positive trends can also be noted: the numbers of women candidates contesting elections are rising in many Pacific Island countries; some Pacific Island governments are demonstrating a willingness to discuss the implementation of electoral mechanisms that will allow greater representation of women; and important regional lessons

are being drawn from those nonindependent, Francophone, Pacific Island territories where women's political representation has increased in the last decade.

### Key Enablers of and Obstacles to Women's Participation

Some of the main enablers of women's equal participation in the Pacific Islands are the implementation of fast-track policies and international support for these temporary special measures. As we explore below, legislative track records can be good indicators of the effectiveness of these measures. The main obstacles to women's equal political participation in the Pacific Islands include custom and religion, economic structures, state fragility, and democratic structures.

*Fast-track policies: Gender quotas and temporary special measures (TSMs).* As discussed earlier, the ratification of CEDAW debates in the Pacific have had mixed results. Solomon Islands ratified CEDAW in 2002, and in 2008, Ethel Sigimanu, head of the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children, and Family Affairs, called on the government to institute TSMs to address the lack of women's political representation and government noncompliance with CEDAW. At that time, just one woman had held office at the national level since independence. A TSM campaign was developed and a Women in Leadership Working Group formed. Despite recent survey data suggesting broad public support in the country for reserved seats for women, however (McMurray 2012), these efforts did not translate into broader government support for a proposed bill to create ten women's seats within the National Parliament (*Solomon Star*, July 25, 2011).

In 2011, Dame Carol Kidu, at that time Papua New Guinea's (PNG) only woman in Parliament, spearheaded a drive to see 22 seats reserved for women within the country's 111-seat National Assembly. Her efforts won strong public support and seemed headed for success when a constitutional amendment passed Parliament in preparation for a later reading of the TSM bill (*Sydney Morning Herald*, November 24, 2011). The latter attempt failed, however, and the TSM bill has not become law. Moreover, the three women elected to Parliament in the 2012 PNG election have stated they do not support TSMs in PNG and will withdraw from the government if the bill is reintroduced. One of these three, Loujaya Toni, argues that women cannot expect to be handed "respect on a golden plate." Respect has to be earned, she claims, by getting "your hands dirty like the guys" (Toni 2012).

In March 2012, the Samoan government introduced a bill to amend the constitution to reserve five seats for women. Detractors argued that the bill's provisions were undemocratic and amounted to Samoa's "following orders from the UN" (Levaopolo Talatonu cited in Tauafiafi 2012). The implication that reforms to promote women's political representation are an imported agenda and ill-fitted to the local context replicates Pacific criticisms of CEDAW and women's human rights norms (see previous sections). However, despite a contentious debate, Samoa passed a bill in 2013 that will give women five "floating" reserved seats in the next assembly when elections are held in 2015. This means that if no women are elected 5 seats are added to give the assembly 54 seats overall. If one woman is elected outright, 4 seats are added, if two women are elected outright 3 women's seats are added and so on. The seats are to be filled by those unsucessful women candidates who have received the highest number of votes (Ah Mu 2013).

Recently, during constitutional negotiations in advance of Fiji's 2014 elections,[32] women's organizations issued a regionally radical demand for half of all parliamentary seats to be reserved for women. Citing the post-conflict example of Rwanda as an important global precedent, Tara Chetty from the Fiji Women's Rights Movement argued that, rather than simply relying on a few elite women or female civil society leaders to enter Parliament, such a move would allow a "critical mass of women" to attain political office (cited by Chetty, 2012).

In the region's Francophone territories, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, and Wallis and Futuna, gender parity provisions require political parties to field candidates by alternating the names of men and women from the bottom to the top of the party list. In French Polynesia and New Caledonia, these reforms have resulted in a dramatic increase in women's political standing, from 17 percent to 46 percent in the Congrès de Nouvelle Calédonie and from 12 percent to 48 percent in the Assemblée de Polynésie Française (Bargel et al. 2007).[33]

*International support*. Women's participation in politics in the Pacific Island countries has received increased attention from intergovernmental institutions, academic institutions, and multilateral and bilateral development agencies operating in the region. Studies have been commissioned to obtain a better understanding of the barriers to women's political participation; programs have been developed to assist the ambitions of women candidates; and increased media attention has been devoted to the women-in-politics

agenda. The Pacific Islands Forum, regional agencies of the UNDP and UN Women, advisory bodies such as the Canberra-based Centre for Democratic Institutions, and Australian and New Zealand aid agencies are working with each other and with Pacific civil society networks to develop programs that will increase women's political participation (see appendixes 2 and 3 for details). These programs have increased awareness of the lack of female representation in Pacific parliaments and deliberation on how to remedy the status quo. Overall, increased information, financial commitment, and practical programming by international agencies are helping build regional momentum for reform.

**CASE STUDY 3**

*Quotas in Bougainville Both Enable and Limit Women's Participation*

Constitutional negotiations during Bougainville's post-conflict reconstruction process sought to recognize the matrilineal structures of Bougainvillean society and the important role women had played in the peace process, which provided the territory with constitutional autonomy from PNG in 2004 (Fraenkel 2006, 90). Three seats were reserved for women in the new territorial assembly (with three seats also reserved for ex-combatants).

Although sitting member Elizabeth Burain, elected to the Bougainville Assembly in 2010, argues that the provisions have encouraged wide acceptance of women parliamentarians (Radio New Zealand International, March 28, 2011), women contesting the thirty-three open seats have been something of a rarity. In the most recent election in 2010, five women stood for open seats but were soundly defeated, with the most successful winning only 21 percent of the vote.

Some evidence suggests Bougainville's voters are disinclined to support women campaigning for open seats, believing the quota system gives them sufficient electoral representation. While quotas do enable women to overcome the barriers that would otherwise exclude them from electoral politics, they may also create resistance against those trying to increase their parliamentary representation beyond the stipulated quota level (Kelly 2010).

*Civil society support*. Faith-based, women's, and labor-oriented civil society organizations have provided an important training ground for Pacific Island women with political aspirations. Trade union involvement has proved a particularly effective pathway to attaining Labour Party endorsement in Fiji

and has enabled figures such as 'Atu Emberson Bain (a former senator) and Lavinia Padarath (former minister for women, culture, and social welfare) to be elected as representatives. Additionally, some women's organizations have worked in national and regional capacities to support the political empowerment of women. For example, since its formation in the 1980s, the Fiji Women's Rights Movement has regularly audited the policy platforms of major political parties competing for office prior to elections, examining their commitment to women's political representation and the impact their policies will have on the standing of women more generally (George 2012b). The women's organization Vois Blong Meri has performed a similar information dissemination role in Solomon Islands.

Many Pacific Island countries (including Fiji, Kirbati, PNG, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu) have national councils of women (NCWs) that represent the diverse range of women's groups active in each. These councils often work closely with government machineries for women on key aspects of gender policy. Regional observers have noted the constructive role NCWs might play in promoting greater awareness of the women-in-politics issue by building government support for electoral reforms that might assist women's political prospects, as well as popular support (among women) for prospective candidates (Lee 2009). Yet these assessments ignore the breadth of interests that are often brought together under the NCW umbrella and the divisions and organizational competitiveness that sometimes result, which often undermine the broader political impact of NCWs and their ability to promote gender-sensitive reform (Lee 2009; George 2012b).

Despite these challenges, NCWs in seven Pacific Island states (Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, PNG, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Tuvalu) have formed a regional network, the Pacific Foundation for the Advancement of Women (PACFAW), which, as part of its broader commitment to advancing women's status, seeks to highlight the benefits of their political empowerment. The Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law, and Development (APWLD, see references) has also worked with regional civil society groups toward this goal. Momentum has proved hard to sustain within these regional networks, however. In the past five years, the PACFAW governance program appears to have stalled, with little recent evidence of targets reached. Similarly, the APWLD appears to have restricted its outreach into the region, as demonstrated by its 2011 Timor-Leste regional conference on women in politics, which attracted participation from only Fiji and PNG. This contrasts with the increasing regional momentum generated on this issue by the UNDP

and UN Women agencies based in the Pacific. To avoid the accusation that initiatives promoting women's political participation are "imported," Pacific governments need to provide institutional support to regional civil society initiatives.

*Legislative track record*. Women parliamentarians do not always enact inclusive, gender-focused political agendas, even when they are charged with overseeing government machineries for women. Fiji's minister for women between 2001 and 2006, Asenaca Caucau, often publicly admonished women for pursuing professional ambitions and neglecting familial responsibilities. As part of a strongly nationalist indigenous bloc within the Parliament, she also used parliamentary privilege to make notoriously racist comments vilifying Fiji's Indian population (George 2012b, 155).

Expectations that the three female parliamentarians recently elected to PNG's Parliament might support the TSM bill have likewise been disap-pointed. The scarcity of women parliamentarians elsewhere in the Pacific Islands has generally meant they have limited resources behind them, even when they choose to promote transformative political agendas. This helps explain the failure of Dame Carol Kidu's first TSM bill in PNG in 2011.

**CASE STUDY 4**

*Pacific Women's Legislative Track Record: A Francophone Success Story*

Developments in French Polynesia and New Caledonia provide cause for optimism, although it is still hard for women to gain traction on gender issues within parliament or access to high-level appointments within government. Parity provisions adopted in 2001 in these territories have improved substantive as well as descriptive representation of women. The women themselves have brought a new seriousness to the role of political representative in these assemblies and a dedication to questions of financial management and par-liamentary committee work (Bargel et al. 2007). In New Caledonia, women's increased participation has allowed them to mobilize state funding for a series of agencies devoted to women's well-being known as "*La secteur de la condition féminine.*" The provisions have also enabled women to assume high political office. Between 2004 and 2008, an indigenous Kanak woman, Déwé Gorodé, held the office of vice president in New Caledonia, and European Marie-Noëlle Thémeraeau was territorial president from 2004 until 2007. Déwé Gorodé currently serves in the territorial assembly as government minister for culture, citizenship, and women's affairs.

Table 1 indicates the number of women who hold ministerial office within Pacific Island government. Except in New Caledonia, women are generally given typically "feminized" ministerial portfolios in areas such as health, welfare, culture, education, and community development, as had been the experience worldwide until recently. Women have not been entrusted with areas of ministerial responsibility considered highly prestigious and requiring more technical skill, such as finance, treasury, trade, or foreign policy (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008).

**TABLE 1**: Pacific Women Currently Holding Ministerial/Cabinet Posts

| Country (including non-independent territories) | No. | Ministry/Post |
|---|---|---|
| American Samoa | 0 | |
| Bougainville | 1 | Minister for culture and tourism |
| Cook Islands | 0 | |
| Fiji | 0 | |
| French Polynesia | 1 | Minister for culture, family, and status of women |
| Kiribati | 2 | Vice president; minister of education |
| Marshall Islands | 1 | Minister of education |
| New Caledonia | 1 | Minister for culture, citizenship, and women's affairs |
| Niue | 1 | Minister for health and community |
| Palau | 0 | |
| Papua New Guinea | 1 | Minister for community development |
| Solomon Islands | 0 | |
| Tonga | 1 | Minister for education |
| Tuvalu | 1 | Minister for home affairs and rural development |

*Custom and religion*. Despite the rich cultural diversity in the subregion, Pacific women's political participation is shaped by some common sociopolitical factors. It is frequently argued that "patriarchy has become entrenched" in Pacific societies as a result of colonial and missionary influences, affecting even matrilineal cultures in Palau (Wilson 1995) and

Bougainville (Hermkins 2011), where women in the past had a legitimate influence on public decision making (Huffer 2006, 33). Those who challenge the masculine dominance of formal politics often encounter "pervasive resistance" from men—and other women—who fear that "traditional" customary power structures and ideas about women's "place" are under threat (Huffer 2006, 34). The few Pacific women who seek political office are often accused of "inauthenticity" (Jolly 1992), of having inflated ambitions, and of acting "above themselves," or *bikhet* (Macintyre 2012, 247). Those who are successful in their bids for political office are accused of losing touch with tradition and their "real," grassroots sisters and constituents.

A view of custom as fixed in Pacific Island societies overlooks how customary values have been modified through communities' contact with colonial, missionary, and other globalizing influences (Douglas 2002). Prior to European contact, matrilineal political and economic structures were present in tribal societies in many parts of the region. They favored women's land rights, their rights in decision making, and their role in economic exchange (Jolly and Macintyre 2010). These structures were generally undermined as colonial governments created legal systems that replicated the "patriarchal, hierarchical and hereditary" structures of their own societies (Huffer 2006, 33). Additionally, through their participation in mission church groups, women were often encouraged to take up domestic activities considered more feminine and "appropriate" for them (Douglas 1999). The combined legacies of these colonial and missionary influences devalued women's household and agricultural work as "subsistent" rather than economically "productive" and celebrated the "productivity" of men's public economic and political capacities.

Religion constrained women's political participation in other ways. Early post-independence political leaders in many parts of the region were missionary educated, and some were ordained. Their political and customary perspectives on governance were highly influenced by religious values. In the Melanesian countries of Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu, Christian values have remained closely intertwined with customary protocols and institutionalized within state constitutional structures (Douglas 2002). This has further contributed to a masculinization of the political realm, as male leaders frequently invoke religiously oriented discourses about the "rightful" roles of women. At times they have also adopted strongly moralistic tones to discredit female candidates, as Afu Billy, a

divorced woman, found when she stood for election to National Parliament in Solomon Islands in 2001 (Billy 2002, 57).

*Economic structures: "Big manism" and* wantok *obligation*. Politics in the Pacific Islands is generally understood as governed by a "big man culture" (Pacific Institute of Public Policy 2011). Although the term is more commonly used to describe power relations in the Western Pacific (the Melanesian region), where political candidates demonstrate their capacity for political office through personal achievement, clan-based exchange, and material accumulation (Rich 2008; Fraenkel and Grofman 2005), it has been commonly applied to politicians across the Pacific. "Big manism" is also used pejoratively to convey the idea that politicians in the region use resources at their disposal to cultivate their status through the sharing of wealth with *wantoks* (clan-based networks).

While the "big man" style of politics blurs the lines between customary resource distribution and "vote buying" (Sepoe 2002), it especially disadvantages potential women parliamentarians. Women tend to lack the required credentials—wealth and status—perceived as necessary to represent constituents effectively in parliament. This view was reflected in a statement from a woman candidate in Papua New Guinea's 2012 election: "They say women don't stand up in a sing-sing place and speak out on behalf of the clan or tribe, and therefore women can't stand up and speak for us in Parliament" (Margareth Tini Parua, quoted in Macdonald 2012).

Gender-disaggregated economic data for the region indicate the types of economic obstacles that prevent women from acquiring the equivalent of "big man" status. For instance, the majority of women work in subsistence food cultivation, agriculture, or fisheries, averaging between 54 and 66 percent in most countries, but rising to 95 percent in Papua New Guinea (SPC 2004, cited in Huffer 2006, 38; True 2012). Patrilineal systems of hereditary land and wealth transfer and gendered expectations that normalize women's work in both the domestic and subsistence spheres prevent them from getting access to the capital, credit, education, and knowledge that might improve their economic standing (YWCA 2000, 5). Even when employed in the wage economy, women are often ghettoized in low-skilled, low-income, feminized occupations, such as factory production-line work (for example, in fish canneries and garment manufacturing), teaching, and nursing and other caring professions, as well as low-scale clerical work (Bowman et al. 2009). More men participate in paid employment than women and at higher

professional levels. For example, in Fiji, where statistics are indicative of regional trends, 44 percent of female workers earn incomes below the poverty line of F$60 per week, compared to 34 percent of male workers. The proportion of women living below the poverty line increases to 67 percent within the informal, cash-based economy (Narsey 2007, 128).

Women's subordinate economic status has negative implications for those who stand for election (Huffer 2006; Scales and Teakeni 2006; Thomas 2002). Across the region, women have trouble gaining endorsement from political parties for their candidacies. They frequently have to finance their campaigns as independents from their own limited resources or through their own fundraising (Billy 2002). They also have difficulty meeting the material expectations of their electorates (Thomas 2002, 5).

This lack of economic status and resources helps explain why, as in Asia, it is often only women from high-ranking or politically successful families who are able to achieve parliamentary success in the Pacific. Australian-born Dame Carol Kidu, who between 1997 and 2011 was PNG's only female MP, has argued that she owed her initial electoral success to having been the widow of former chief justice Sir Buri Kidu (Kidu and Setae 2002). The recent victory in a by-election by Vika Lusibea in North Malaita, Solomon Islands, was unexpected but perhaps explained by the fact that this seat was formerly held by her husband. Likewise, Adi Asenaca Caucau, Fiji's colorful minister for women between 2001 and 2006, no doubt owed part of her political success to the fact that her father, Ratu Isiraeli Caucau, was a former president of Fiji's Methodist Church. Across the region, many successful women candidates have been able to build on their work within church organizations or women's civil society groups as alternative routes to developing parliamentary careers. Yet, even in these cases, they have benefited from being backed by families with high institutional or chiefly political standing—a reality particularly pronounced in Polynesian countries and territories such as Samoa, American Samoa, and Tonga.

*State fragility and democratic structures*. It has become commonplace to argue that recent conflicts occurring in Bougainville (1990s) and Solomon Islands (early 2000s), along with a history of coups in Fiji (1987 onward) and ongoing tribal fighting in the PNG highlands, are evidence of a contagion of state weakness across the Pacific Island countries (Reilly 2000). In some places, democratic values are described as "foreign flowers," and state interventions are sometimes seen by Pacific Islanders as challenging their

everyday customary and religious norms (this is particularly so in remote settings and more marked in some Melanesian countries).

Where these challenges are pronounced, women may be disinclined to become involved in politics. Furthermore, in the Pacific as in South Asia, serving in office can come with a risk of exposure to violence that dissuades women from assuming a political profile. For example, until 2006 women made up 11 percent of Fiji's Parliament, reflecting an acceptance of women representatives that was unique in the region. When civilian rebel forces invaded Fiji's Parliament in 2000, women MPs were detained for a number of days by coup perpetrators and subjected to threats of violence. The military coup that occurred in 2006 again led to the dismissal of the national Parliament and the city councils. Women within provincial councils, labor unions, and civil society organizations who criticized the government were subjected to military threats of arrest and intimidation (Kepa 2011; George 2012a).

These episodes are the regional exception rather than the norm. Within the majority of Pacific Island states, governance structures are upheld and democratic processes respected. Yet these processes are often shaped by customary norms that can frustrate women's political ambitions. In Tonga, for example, the only Pacific Island country governed by a constitutional monarchy, appointment to the Parliament was at the request of the king and his nobles, who selected twenty-one out of the thirty members. Constitutional reform undertaken between 2005 and 2010—made more urgent after periods of violent civil protest in 2005–6—put in place a new electoral structure: nineteen representatives are now elected to the Parliament, and up to thirteen are nominated by nobles or the king. These reforms have not improved women's political participation, however. Currently, Tonga has only one female parliamentary representative, 'Ana Maui Taufe'ulungaki, appointed by the king and also serving as the minister for education.

In Samoa, a system of hereditary privilege limits women's political participation, with only customary chiefs, or *matai*, able to stand for political office (Fraenkel and Grofman 2005, 261). While women may inherit chiefly titles according to Samoan custom, it is less common than for men and thus undermines their standing in electoral politics (*Samoa Observer*, February 5, 2011). Endemic levels of political corruption also make it difficult for women with limited financial resources to succeed in electoral politics. In the 2012 elections held in Vanuatu, a great many women candidates contested seats

in urban and rural areas. The losses of all in the elections later prompted some to identify corruption as a key factor influencing voter behavior and the conduct of electoral office, preventing women in particular from winning (Cooney, 2012).

Many barriers restrict women's meaningful participation in Pacific politics, but they can be challenged. First, the energies of women's and civil society organizations must be more effectively harnessed to encourage positive national and regional debate about the desirability of increasing women's participation in governance. International agencies tend often to focus chiefly on increasing the electoral and parliamentary skills of prospective women candidates and encouraging the emergence of women leaders. Engagement with women's and civil society organizations (with strong records on reform in areas such as violence against women, the need for women's machineries within government, and CEDAW ratification) on the women-in-politics issue will likely generate a greater level of popular acceptance of potential women parliamentarians. Advocacy by local civil society organizations on the benefits of including women in decision making will also help to challenge the idea that this is an "international," imported agenda.

Second, more informed debate is urgently needed about the benefits of gender quotas and temporary special measures that might help women win elections, since they are often viewed with suspicion across the region and frequently misunderstood. For instance, the noteworthy successes achieved by women in the Pacific's Francophone territories need to be given much greater attention than they currently receive at the regional level in civil society, in the aid and development sectors, and in academic circles (George 2012b). The important lesson from the territories that is relevant to the whole Pacific region is that women can achieve innovative, gender-sensitive reform through legislation and policy when they have a critical mass of representation inside the parliament.

Third, the development of networks of male political advocates for women's political empowerment is vital to women's future political success. Across the region, political gains for women are initially only made possible when male political leaders are willing to recognize the need for reform. The example of Samoa is instructive in this regard and contrasts with the lackluster response to TSM propositions in the PNG Parliament. Programs working exclusively with potential women candidates and women aspiring

to positions of community or political leadership should be expanded to in-clude men. Working with male leaders to demonstrate to them where and how the promotion of women could assist their own political ambitions would help break down their resistance. Male political leaders might be harnessed to help drive national agendas of electoral reform to increase women's participation in electoral politics. Moreover, individual male men-tors could be trained to help develop the political acumen of women deci-sion makers. Many possibilities exist for raising women's political participa-tion in the Pacific, and opportunities are open for advocacy and learning on this issue across the region.

## CONCLUSION

Despite the differences between the four subregions described above, the entire Asia-Pacific region shares common traits. For example, in all subre-gions a strong resistance to women's participation in public life is evident in the formal statements of leaders and politicians and in the publicly ex-pressed attitudes of the broader societies. Cultural, customary, and reli-gious discourses are frequently used to moralize that the "rightful" place of women is not in politics. Furthermore, violence against "political" women who speak up in public, defend human rights, or seek political office is very common, especially in conflict-affected countries and regions across Asia and the Pacific. Both that violence and the constant threat of it strongly dissuade women from participating in public life, let alone seeking political office.

Although the present discussion has highlighted significant obstacles to women's equal political participation in the Asia-Pacific, it has also taken note of some encouraging signs coming from the region. For example, women's mobilization about electoral systems and politics through political parties, civil society, and church and other religious organizations can build alternative pathways for their political representation. This is particularly important when we consider that women's representation in all of the four subregions discussed here is below the global average.

Gender quotas and reservations have also significantly improved women's political representation at national and local levels, with notable results in Afghanistan, Mongolia, Nepal, New Caledonia, Timor-Leste, and the nonindependent territories of French Polynesia. Political and post-conflict transitions provide special opportunities to institutionalize quotas, while the

parity principle avoids the use of quotas and reservations to limit women's representation rather than to achieve equal representation. These types of measures, however, also face obstacles: high-level women and men may undermine them in political debates. For gender quotas to be successfully adopted, women's movements must be consolidated and supported to get behind them, as in the Timor case. Similarly, political parties—especially in unstable regimes across the Asia-Pacific—are often family-run enterprises that enable elite women's participation but serve as major barriers to that of nonelite women.

Based on these findings, we can bring forward ten key recommendations for increasing women's political participation. First, comparable data must be collected and monitored in an Asia-Pacific women's census of political participation at different levels (local/village, provincial/state, national) and in different jurisdictions (legislature, executive, judiciary, bureaucracy, and opinion-leading institutions, such as universities and think tanks).

Second, indicators should be created to measure meaningful outcomes of women's political participation, in addition to counting women in public life and politics. Governments should be required to provide these data, and data analysis should be independently verifiable.

Third, gender quota lessons from transitional states should be applied in established political systems, and affirmative actions should be supported across jurisdictions at local, national, and regional levels. Constitutional provisions that guarantee women's participation should be supported.

Fourth, electoral mechanisms known to increase women's representation in the Asia-Pacific should be supported. Especially, proportional represen-tation systems with closed ("zippered") lists, which alternate the names of male and female candidates, should be advocated for by regional organiza-tions (UN ESCAP, ASEAN, APEC) for all countries in the Asia-Pacific.

Fifth, active measures must be undertaken to change societal expectations of women and to open nonelite women's pathways to political participation through political parties and trade unions and religious, media, and civil society organizations.

Sixth, political parties and civil society organizations need internal democratic reform to attract and promote women's representation, given

that women have less access than men to economic resources and political networks.

Seventh, women's civil society advocacy should be strongly supported by international actors to ensure ordinary women accept and encourage women's political participation.

Eighth, antiwomen political discourse should be directly challenged and states held to account under international law and by peer states and civil society actors, drawing on CEDAW and UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which mandate women's participation in peace processes and political decision making.

Ninth, states should engage in structural reform of the police and security sectors and the judiciary to protect women's public access, security, and political participation and to prevent violence directed against political women. All states should accept requests from the UN special rapporteur on violence against women for country mission visits to investigate harassment and violence against women in the public sphere (India, Bangladesh, and Nepal have all rejected requests for missions).

Finally, although they do not increase at the same pace, improvement in women's economic status and participation is a necessary, if not sufficient, precondition (bringing resources, access to public networks, and know-how) for increasing women's political participation. Therefore, initiatives to promote women's economic empowerment must be pursued in conjunction with efforts to increase their political participation in the Asia-Pacific, and where possible integrated. For instance, women workers and business-women in the region should be educated in their political as well as civil, social, and economic rights and mobilized as an important political constituency for supporting women representatives and leaders.

## APPENDIX 1: WOMEN'S POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN THE LOWER HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

| Country | Last Election | Women Elected | No. Seats | TSMs | CEDAW Reserve | CEDAW OP |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *East Asia* | | | | | | |
| China, National People's Congress | 2008 | 635 (21.32) | 3000/2978 | Reserved seats (indirect) | No | No |
| Japan, House of Representatives | 2012 | 38 (7.92) | 480 | None | No | No |
| Democratic People's Republic of Korea | 2009 | 107 (15.57) | 687 | Reserved seats (indirect) | Yes | |
| Republic of Korea, National Assembly | 2012 | 11 (14.86) | 300 | Candidate quotas | Yes | Yes |
| Mongolia, Great State Hural | 2012 | 11 (14.86) | 76/74 | Party list quotas | | Yes |
| Taiwan, China | 2009 | 33 (29.2) | 113 | Reserved seats and party list quotas | | |
| *Southeast Asia* | | | | | | |
| Brunei Darussalam | (no representative legislature) | | | | | |
| Cambodia, National Assembly | 2008 | 25 (20.33) | 123 | | | Yes |
| Indonesia, House of Representatives | 2009 | 104 (18.57) | 560 | Party list Quotas | Yes | Yes |

| Country | Last Election | Women Elected | No. Seats | TSMs | CEDAW Reserve | CEDAW OP |
|---------|---------------|---------------|-----------|------|---------------|----------|
| Lao People's Democratic Republic, House of Representatives | 2011 | 33 (25) | 132 | Reserved seats (indirect) | | |
| Myanmar, House of Representatives | 2012 | 4 (1.79) | 224 | | Yes | |
| Malaysia, House of Representatives | 2008 | 23 (10.41) | 222/221 | | Yes | |
| Philippines, House of Representatives | 2010 | 65 (22.89) | 287/284 | Reserved seats | | Yes |
| Singapore, National Parliament | 2011 | 24 (24.24) | 99 | | Yes | |
| Thailand, House of Representatives | 2011 | 79 (15.08) | 500 | | Yes | Yes |
| Timor-Leste National Parliament | 2012 | 25 (38.46) | 65 | Party list quotas | | Yes |
| Vietnam, National Assembly | 2011 | 122 (24.40) | 500 | Reserved seats (indirect) | Yes | |

| Country | Last Election | Women Elected | No. Seats | TSMs | CEDAW Reserve | CEDAW OP |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *South Asia* | | | | | | |
| Afghani-stan | 2010 | 69 (27.7) | 249 | Reserved seats (2 women per province) | | |
| Bangla-desh | 2008 | 64 (18.5) | 345 | 13 percent | Yes | |
| Bhutan | 2008 | 10 (13.8) | 72 | | | |
| India | 2009 | 59 (10.8) | 545 | Reserved seats 33 percent, still be passed by lower house | Yes | |
| Maldives | 2009 | 5 (6.49) | 77 | | | |
| Nepal | 2008 | 197 (33) | 594 | Reserved seats 33 percent | Yes | |
| Pakistan | 2008 | 76 (22.2) | 342 | Reserved seats 17.5 percent | | |
| Sri Lanka | 2010 | 12 (5.3) | 225 | | | Yes |
| *Pacific Islands and Nonindependent Territories (territories are shaded)* | | | | | | |
| American Samoa | 2012 | 1 | 21 | None | | |
| Bougain-ville | 2010 | 3 | 39 | 3 reserved seats | | |
| Cook Islands | 2010 | 1 | 24 | None | No | Yes |
| Federated States of Micronesia | 2011 | 0 | 14 | None | Yes | |
| Fiji[a] | 2006 | 13 | 103 (2 houses) | None | No | |

| Country | Last Election | Women Elected | No. Seats | TSMs | CEDAW Reserve | CEDAW OP |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| French Polynesia | 2008 | 24 | 57 | Parity laws | | |
| Guam | 2012 | 6 | 15 | None | | |
| Kiribati | 2011 | 4 | 42 | None | | |
| Marshall Islands | 2011 | 1 | 33 | None | | |
| New Caledonia | 2009 | 24 | 54 | Parity laws | | |
| Nauru | 2010 | 0 | 18 | None | | |
| Niue | 2011 | 3 | 20 | None | | |
| Palau | 2012 | 3 | 29 (2 houses) | None | | |
| Papua New Guinea | 2012 | 3 | 111 | None | No | No |
| Samoa | 2013 | 2 | 49 | Floating Reserved Seats | No | No |
| Solomon Islands | 2010 | 1 | 50 | None | | Yes |
| Tonga | 2010 | 1 | 30 | None | | No |
| Tuvalu | 2010 | 1 | 15 | None | | |
| Vanuatu | 2012 | 0 | 52 | None | | Yes |

Sources: Inter-parliamentary Union, PARLINE Database on National Parliaments, http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/parlinesearch.asp; QuotaProject Global Database of Quotas for Women, http://www.quotaproject.org/uid/countryview.cfm?ul=en&country=178.

[a]Since 2006, Fiji has been governed by a military regime that dissolved the country's elected Parliament. This was the country's fourth coup since independence in 1970. The regime is currently overseeing constitutional negotiations in preparation for new elections scheduled to be held in 2014.

# APPENDIX 2: GENDER MEASURING TOOLS

The following global measures are useful in gauging regional or country performance on gender equity.

## *Women in National Parliaments: Inter-parliamentary Union*

IPU maintains a database of women's representation in national parliaments and a program to assist women parliamentarians around the world.

http://www.ipu.org/iss-e/women.htm.
http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm.

## *Quota Project: Global Database of Quotas for Women*

The database provides information on the various types of quotas in existence today, detailing the percentages and targets in countries where they are applicable. It is intended as a working research tool—that is, it will continue to expand as more information becomes available and is verified. Only countries with electoral gender quotas will be found on this website.

http://www.quotaproject.org/.

## *UNDP Gender Inequality Index (GII) Tool*

The Gender Inequality Index (GII), maintained by UNDP, shows the loss in human development due to inequality between female and male achievements. (It replaces the Gender-Related Development Index and the Gender Empowerment Index.) The GII reflects gender-based inequalities across three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment, and economic activity. Reproductive health is measured by maternal mortality and adolescent fertility rates; empowerment is measured by the share of parliamentary seats held and the attainment of secondary and higher education by each gender; and economic activity is measured by the labor market participation rate for each gender.

http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/gii/.

*Social Watch Gender Indicator: Gender Equity Index (GEI) Tool*

Since 2007, Social Watch has been developing the Gender Equity Index (GEI) to make gender inequities more visible and monitor their evolution in different countries. The GEI, which is based on information available for comparison internationally, makes it possible to classify countries and rank them according to a selection of gender inequity indicators in three dimensions: education, economic participation, and empowerment. Calculation of the GEI is intended to reflect all situations unfavorable to women. Social Watch measures the gap between women and men, not their well-being. Thus, a country in which young men and women have equal access to higher education receives a value of 100 on this particular indicator, as does a country in which boys and girls are equally barred from completing primary education. This does not mean the quality of education in both cases is the same; it just establishes that, in both cases, girls are not less educated than boys.

In addition to education, the GEI measures the gap between women and men in the economy and political empowerment. Social Watch computes a value for the gender gap in each of the three areas using a scale from 0 (where, for example, no women are educated at all and all men are) to 100 (perfect equality). The GEI is the simple average of the three dimensions. On education, GEI looks at the gender gap in enrollment at all levels and in literacy; for economic participation, it computes the gaps in income and employment; and for empowerment, it measures the gaps in the holding of highly qualified jobs and parliament and senior executive positions.

http://www.socialwatch.org/node/14365.

*International Labor Organization: Global Employment*
*Trends for Women 2012*

This report examines the conditions of women's engagement in the labor market by estimating and analyzing five key gaps, or gender differentials, between women and men that disadvantage women: in unemployment, in employment, in labor force participation, in vulnerability, and in sectoral and occupational segregation.

http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-employment
-trends/WCMS_195449/lang--en/index.htm.

# APPENDIX 3: REGIONAL TOOLS AND RESOURCES

## *Asia-Pacific*

United Nations Women Asia and Pacific Office: http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/.

ASEAN Confederation of Women's Organisations (ACWO): This framework is used to bring together women's organizations in the ASEAN region. http://acwoentrepreneur.com/.

Asia Pacific Women Watch-Linked Organisations: http://www.apww-slwngof.org/.

Asia-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW): http://www.arrow.org.my/.

## *East Asia*

Asian Association of Women's Studies Links: This website provides many links to Korean and Chinese women's organizations. http://kncw.or.kr/.

All-China Women's Federation (English websites): http://www.womenof-china.cn/.

National Alliance of Taiwanese Women's Associations: http://www.natwa.com/page/aboutus.html.

Republic of Korea—National Council of Women: http://kncw.or.kr/.

New Japan Women's Association—Shin Nihon Fujin no Kai (Shinfujin): http://www.shinfujin.gr.jp/c_4_english/1_what/index.html.

## *Southeast Asia*

Regional overview of CEDAW in action in Southeast Asia: http://cedaw-seasia.org/regional_overview.html.

Kongres Wanita Indonesia (Indonesian Women's Congress) (KOWANI): http://www.kowani.or.id/.

Aisyiyah (a large, religious, membership-based organization): http://aisyiyah.or.id/.

Solidaritas Perempuan (Women's Solidarity): http://www.solidaritas perempuan.org.

Timor-Leste Women's Congress Rede Feto (with list of twenty-four members): http://redefeto.com/member/.

Philippines GABRIELA Women's Network (and members list): http://gabriela_p.tripod.com/home.html, http://gabriela_p.tripod.com/1-org profile/members.htm.

Singapore Council of Women's Organisations (and members list): http://www.scwo.org.sg/, http://www.scwo.org.sg/index.php/membership/our-members-alphabetically.

National Council of Women of Thailand (NCWT): NCWT provides a focal point for coordinating, promoting, and supporting all the activities of women's organizations throughout Thailand. http://www.thaiwomen.or.th/en.html.

Cambodian Women for Peace and Development (CWPD): This local NGO cooperates with the government and the civil and private sectors. http://cwpd.net.

National Council of Women's Organisations, Malaysia (NCWM): NCWM was formed in 1963 as a consultative body with seventy-two member organizations. http://www.hati.my/women/national-council-of-womens -organisations-malaysia-ncwo/.

Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation (MWAF): http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myanmar_Women's_Affairs_Federation.

Singapore Council of Women's Organizations (SCWO): This is the national coordinating body for women's organizations in Singapore. http://www.scwo.org.sg/.

Vietnam Women's Union (VWU): Founded in 1930, the VWU represents all women and promotes women's rights, advancement, and equality. http://hoilhpn.org.vn/?Lang=EN.

## South Asia

www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm.

http://www.manushi.in.

http://wcd.nic.in/.

http://www.guide2womenleaders.com/.

http://www.ifes.org/Content/Events/2010/Promoting-Womens-Political-Participation-in-South-Asia-Afghanistan-Nepal-and-India.aspx?p=1.

http://asiafoundation.org/in-asia/2012/07/11/south-asia-women-parliamentarians-take-lead/.

http://genderinglobalgovernancenet-work.net/comment/the-world-economic-forums-global-gender-gap-report-a-critical-commentary/.

http://www.cpahq.org/cpahq/Mem/Women_MPs/Mem/About_Us/Organisation/Commonwealth_Women_Parliamentarians/Commonwealth_Women_Parliamentarians.aspx?hkey=4bf32fba-284a-43f8-9016-a996f8ced2ec.

http://www.cpahq.org/cpahq/Mem/Resources/Documents/Gender_Issues/Mem/Document%20Library/Gender_Issues/Documents_on_Gender_Issues.aspx?hkey=bc99ca33-b7ba-46e6-a592-e16f85c0f656.

Figure 4.2 from UNICEF's *The State of the World's Children 2007: Women and Children: The Double Dividend of Gender Equality*: http://www.unicef.org/sowc07/docs/sowc07_figure_4_2.pdf.

Mahbub ul Haq Human Development Centre: http://www.mhhdc.org/.

"Electing Dragons," International Museum of Women: http://www.imow.org/wpp/stories/viewStory?storyId=1699.

National Women's Association of Bhutan: http://www.nwabbhutan.org.bt/aboutus.html.

*Pacific*

Space on the Mat: http://wilgpacific.org/.

Website examining the roles and profiles of Pacific women in local government: http://womensuffrage.org/.

Website including valuable statistics on women's suffrage in Oceania: http://www.pacific.clgf.org.uk/index.cfm.

Commonwealth local government project in the Pacific Islands: http://www.pacwip.org/.

UNDP (Pacific) outline of program priorities to promote Pacific women's parliamentary representation, including a range of resources on TSMs, lobbying, and campaigning: http://www.unwomenpacific.org/pages.cfm/our-programmes/advancing-gender-justice/gepg-design/.

Centre for Democratic Institutions—Gender and Political Leadership Program: http://www.cdi.anu.edu.au/__GENDER_Home.htm.

Policy paper on perceptions of women in electoral politics in Solomon Islands: http://www.cdi.anu.edu.au/.SI/2011-12/D/2011_12_RES-PPS9_SOLS_WMN_PPLS_SRVY_McMurray/2012_01_PPS_CM_SIPS.pdf.

Policy paper on Bougainville elections 2010: http://www.cdi.anu.edu.au/.AP/2010-11/D/2010_11_RES_PPS8_BGV.SOLS_Kelly/PPS_2010-02_NK_BGV_SI_FIN.pdf.

Series of articles from 2002 examining gender, civil society, and political participation in the Pacific Islands: https://crawford.anu.edu.au/rmap/devnet/devnet/gen/gen_civil.pdf.

Foundation for Development Corporation, Women in Politics Briefing Note: http://www.fdc.org.au/data/Briefing_Note_No_11_-_Final_e-version.pdf.

Secretariat of the Pacific Community report on impact of parity provisions in the Francophone Pacific Island territories: http://www.spc.int/hdp/index2.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&gid=76&Itemid=44.

Progress in Pacific Islands 2011. This human development report provides regional economic, social, and political data. http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2011/11/03/2011-human-development-report-pacific-islands-progress-jeopardized-by-inequalities-and -environmental-threats.html.

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3. See the Inter-parliamentary Union's Parline database on national parliaments at http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/parlinesearch.asp.

4. The GII shows the extent of gender inequality in human development. Reproductive health is measured according to maternal mortality and adolescent fertility rates; empowerment is measured by the share of parliamentary seats held by each gender and by attainment of secondary and higher education; and economic activity is measured by the labor market participation rate for each gender. GII scores are not calculated for Brunei and Timor-Leste, because they lack relevant data. See http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/gii.

5. See http://www.currenttrends.org/research/detail/gender-ideology-and-the-jamaat-e-islami, accessed November 20, 2012.

6. See http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs//2007/wom1597.doc.htm, accessed November 20, 2012.

7. See http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-11-09/india/350 16070_1_rural-women-mulayam-singh-yadav-samajwadi-party-supremo, accessed November 19, 2012.

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stories, accessed November 21, 2012.

11.       See       http://www.peacewomen.org/news_article.php?id=4798
&type=news, accessed November 21, 2012.

12. Ibid.

13. See http://intellibriefs.blogspot.com.au/2009/04/pakistan-when-peace
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14.   See   http://tribune.com.pk/story/296301/blasphemy-sunni-tehreek
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15. See http://dawn.com/2011/11/23/sherry-rehman-profile, accessed No-
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16. For example, sociologist Ashis Nandy, responding to a comment by the
leader of the Hindu right-wing political group RSS (Rashtriye Swayamsevak
Sangh) that rape happens in urban India but not so much in rural "Bharat,"
argues that violence of the kind seen in the recent Delhi gang rape demon-
strates that the anonymity of organic cities will breed a culture of vio-
lence. See https://soundcloud.com/#tehelkaradio/ashis-nandy-on-mohan
-bhagwats, accessed January 3, 2013.

17.    See    http://www.parl.gc.ca/content/LOP/ResearchPublications/
prb0734-e.htm#representation, accessed November 18, 2012.

18. For more details on CEDAW application and reports by each individual
country, see http://cedawsouthasia.org.

19.    http://www.unwomensouthasia.org/assets/Country-Reviews-Women
%E2%80%99s-Political-Participation-in-South-Asia.pdf.

20.     See     http://www.quotaproject.org/uid/countryview.cfm?Country
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30. See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8V5jMftz3a4, accessed Novem-
ber 22, 2012.

31. See http://asiafoundation.org/in-asia/2012/07/11/south-asia-women
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32. This will be first election since Fiji's 2006 military coup resulted in the
abandonment of the 1997 constitution.

33. Fraenkel (2006) argues that for parity provisions to assist the
representation of women, a stable party structure needs to be in place, as
well as a proportional voting system. The success of parity provisions relies

upon most of the vote going to only a few parties, with the result that a large number of candidates will share out the seats according to the party list order. In Wallis and Futuna, a fragmented party system has led to up to twenty-nine parties contesting twenty seats in any given election and only one or two winning more than two seats.

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