WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING:

NEW CHALLENGES

BEIJING AT 10 :

PUTTING POLICY INTO PRACTICE

Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Critical Area G. Women in power and decision-making

Women around the world at every socio-political level find themselves under-represented in parliament and far removed from decision-making levels. While the political playing field in each country has its own particular characteristics, one feature remains common to all: it is uneven and not conducive to women's participation.

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Women's rights to political participation are enshrined in many international instruments, among them the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)[2], the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1952)[3], the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)[4] and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966).[5] Combined, these documents provide the foundation for women's right to participate in local, national and international decision-making processes.

The Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)[6], adopted in 1979 upholds the importance of women's involvement in the political processes of State Parties. Articles two to four of CEDAW call on State Parties to actively pursue the elimination of discrimination in women's political participation through legal and temporary special measures and affirmative action. Article seven of CEDAW instructs State Parties to "take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country..." It ensures women, "on equal terms with men, the right: (a) to vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies; (b) to participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government; and (c) to participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country". Article eight brings women's political rights to the international arena. It instructs State Parties to "take all appropriate measures to ensure to women, on equal terms with men and without any discrimination, the opportunity to represent their Governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations."

As of 20 October 2004, 179 countries - over ninety per cent of UN Member States - are party to CEDAW and one additional state has signed the treaty, binding itself to do nothing in contravention of its terms.[7]

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[1] Nadezdha Shvedova. "Obstacles to Women's Participation in Parliament" Chapter 2, International IDEA, 2002, Women in Parliament, Stockholm, http://www.idea.int
[2] Universal Declaration of Human Rights http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html.
[3] Convention on the Political Rights of Women http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/22.htm.
[4] International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_ccpr.htm.
[5] International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_cescr.htm.
[6] Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm.
[7] States Parties to CEDAW: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/states.htm .

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Concerned that the levels of women's participation in power and decision-making were still far too low, in 1995, the Beijing Platform for Action (PfA), built on the foundations provided in the above-referenced documents and stipulated a series of actions to be undertaken in order to facilitate the achievement of women's full participation worldwide. Moreover, the Bejing PfA recognized that "without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved."[8]

In 1997, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) adopted agreed conclusions 1997/2 on Women in Power and Decision-making,[9] which called for acceleration in the implementation of the Beijing PfA.

At the last world review on the implementation of the Beijing PfA, during the twenty-third special session of the United Nations General Assembly "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century", also known as Beijing+5[10], reports indicated that some progress had been made in Critical Area G. There was evidence of growing acceptance of the importance to society of women's full participation in decision-making and power at all levels including intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental sectors. A greater number of countries applied affirmative and positive action policies, including quota systems or voluntary agreements and measurable goals and targets, developed training programmes for women's leadership, and introduced measures to reconcile family and work responsibilities of both women and men. However, this review also indicated the persistence of the gap between *de jure* and *de facto* equality and found that "the actual participation of women at the highest levels of national and international decision-making has not significantly changed since the time of the Fourth world Conference on Women in 1995". [11] Women continued to be considerably underrepresented in decision-making bodies in all areas, including politics, conflict prevention and resolution, the economy, the environment and the media, an absence that hinders the inclusion of a gender perspective in these critical spheres of influence.

In the succeeding years, the United Nations has reviewed the implementation of the Beijing PfA and adopted resolutions on the follow-up activities to be undertaken that include the area of women's participation in power and decision-making. The General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session in 2004 adopted resolution 58/142[12] which recognizes that "women's full and equal participation in the political process and decision making will provide a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society, is needed to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning, plays a pivotal role in furthering women's equal status, including improving women's socio-economic status, and contributes to redefining political priorities and providing new perspectives on political issues."

Once again in 2005, the world's attention will be focused on the quantity and quality of women's participation in power and decision-making in 2005. In terms of quantity, updated data demonstrate that 2004 began with the highest world average of women parliamentarians ever reached: 15.2 percent in both the upper and lower houses.[13] Despite this increasing percentage, too few countries have actually achieved the target endorsed by

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[8] Beijing Platform for Action, Critical Area G. para.181. http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/decision.htm
[9] Report of the 41st Session of the Commission on the Status of Women http://www.un.org/documents/ecosoc/cn6/1997/reporten/e1997-27decis.htm.
[10] Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the 21st Century http://www.un.org/womenwatch/asp/user/list.asp?ParentID=4002.
[11] United Nations. "Report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly", also known as the Outcome document of Beijing+5, para. 23. http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/followup/as2310rev1.pdf
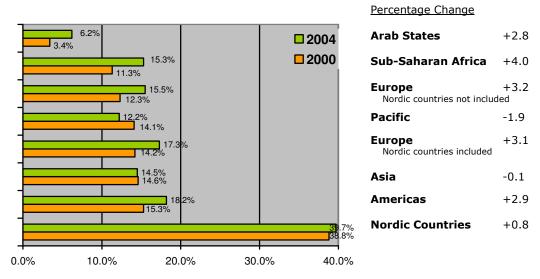[12] A/RES/58/142 "Women and political participation" http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/resguide/r58.htm
[13] International Parliamentary Union. *Women Elected in 2003: The year in perspective*, http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/March04.pdf.

the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of thirty percent women in decision-making positions by 1995.[14]

According to information collected by the International Parliamentary Union[15] (IPU) as of 30 November 2004, there were only fourteen countries -- (in ranking order) Rwanda, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, Norway, Cuba, Spain, Costa Rica, Belgium, Austria, Argentina, Germany, South Africa, Iceland, and Mozambique -- from a total of 183 surveyed, that had reached the thirty percent mark (or more) of women's representation in the Lower or single House. Only four countries -- (in ranking order) Rwanda, Netherlands, Belgium and Argentina -- had also reached this critical mark in the Upper House or Senate.[16]

Figure 1 - Regional averages of women in Parliaments, 2000 and 2004[17]

Situation in January of each year for both Houses combined, by ascending order of the percentage in 2000.

Percentage Change	
Arab States	+2.8
Sub-Saharan Africa	+4.0
Europe Nordic countries not included	+3.2
Pacific	-1.9
Europe Nordic countries included	+3.1
Asia	-0.1
Americas	+2.9
Nordic Countries	+0.8

Rather than raising percentages, some countries actually suffered setbacks in the representation of women in the lower or single house of national parliaments, including: Japan (-0.2 percent), Yemen (-0.3 percent), Monaco (-1.4 percent), China (-1.6 percent), Croatia (-2.1 percent), Belize (-3.6 percent), and Iceland (-4.8 percent) as compared to rates for the previous legislature.[18]

In terms of the quality of women's participation in decision-making processes, the picture is harder to draw. There is little information available on whether women's participation at specific levels (for example the supposed "critical mass" of thirty percent) brings about significant change in national political processes. Similarly, data are not available on whether women are able to participate "fully" in these processes, or whether they are marginalized despite holding positions of power. While numbers are a useful benchmark, they are only the beginning of measuring women's **equitable** participation in power structures and decision-making processes.

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[14] Beijing PfA, para. 182.
[15] "Women in Parliaments" International Parliamentary Union http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm
[16] International Parliamentary Union. *World Classification Chart*, http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e.classif.htm.
[17] Percentages do not take into account the case of parliaments for which data was not available International Parliamentary Union. *Women Elected in 2003: The year in perspective*, http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/March04.pdf.
[18] 18 International Parliamentary Union. *Women Elected in 2003: The year in perspective*, http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/March04.pdf.

Women's participation in power and decision-making continues to be a priority concern of the United Nations system; in fact one of the themes selected for the fiftieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (2006) is "Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels."[19]

The main focus of this review are the obstacles that continue to hinder women's full participation in power and decision-making worldwide. More importantly, this review aims to bring to light some good practices that, when replicated, could lead to achieving women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.

Strategic Objective G.1

"Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making"

Actions to be taken by governments, political parties, the private sector, trade unions, non-governmental and international organizations, and all other relevant actors include: commitments to establishing the goal of gender balance in governmental bodies and committees as well as in public administrative entities, and in the judiciary; measures in electoral systems to encourage political parties to integrate women in elective and non-elective public positions in the same proportion and at the same levels as men; monitor and evaluate progress in the representation of women; recognize that shared work and parental responsibilities between women and men promote women's increased participation in public life, and take appropriate measures to achieve this; take positive action to build a critical mass of women leaders, executives and managers in strategic decision-making positions; develop communications strategies to promote public debate on the new roles of men and women in society and in the family; implement existing and adopt new employment policies and measures in order to achieve overall gender equality, particularly at the Professional level and above by the year 2000.

To achieve gender balance in political life, commitment to equality must be reflected in laws and national policies. Affirmative action measures are seen as a necessary tool to secure a "critical mass" (thirty percent or more) of women's representation at all levels of decision making.

A common example of affirmative action measures is the establishment of quotas. Quotas can be found in candidate lists, parliamentary assemblies, or in government committees. The quota system places the burden of recruitment not on the individual woman, but on those who control the recruitment process. The reasoning behind the thirty percent mark is the need to recruit **enough** women into political power to ensure that they are not marginalized. Quotas may be applied as a temporary measure, that is to say, until the social and cultural barriers to women's entry into politics are removed.[20]

Quotas for women represent a shift from one the classic liberal notion of "equal opportunity" or "competitive equality" to the notion of "equality of result." Removing formal barriers, for example, by giving women voting rights, was initially considered sufficient; women could accomplish the rest on their own. Equality of result however recognizes that equality of opportunity does not exist just because formal barriers are removed. Direct discrimination and a complex pattern of hidden barriers prevent women from securing their share of

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[19] ECOSOC Resolution 2001/4 "Proposals for a multi-year programme of work for the Commission on the Status of Women for 2002-2006." http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/resolution20014.pdf.
[20] Drude Dahlerup. Chapter 4 "Using Quotas to Increase Women's Political Representation" IDEA. 2002. Women in Parliament, Stockholm. http://www.idea.int.

political influence. Quotas and other measures are thus a means towards achieving equality of result.[21]

There are numerous arguments both in favour of and against quotas. Those who argue against quotas consider that the measure contradicts the principle of equality as women are given preferential treatment over men; that they are undemocratic as the final decision is not left entirely to the voters; and that candidates are elected merely on the grounds of sex and not necessarily on the basis of qualifications. Those who argue in favour of quotas explain that quotas do not discriminate against men but rather compensate for actual barriers that prevent women from securing a fair share of political seats. Countering the claim that quotas are undemocratic, those in favour point out that the political parties have control over nominations and so it is not in any case the voters who decide who gets elected. Moreover, they argue that election is primarily an issue of representation, not educational qualification. Women as citizens have the right to representation and in many cases, women are equally as qualified as men but their qualifications tend to be downgraded and minimized in male-dominated political systems. Representation becomes an even more crucial issue for indigenous women, women of ethnic minorities and women of different castes.

It must be noted that all electoral systems include some type of quota. For example, many electoral systems include geographically-based quotas where more densely populated areas are given a proportionate number of seats in parliament. Quotas are also given for certain social groupings as well. However, since women are represented in all social groups, the relation between gender quotas and quotas for other social groupings is complicated.[22]

Of the 38 countries which held elections in 2003, nineteen (fifty percent) have some type of mechanism to improve women's chances of being elected to parliament. These mechanisms take the form of reserved seats in parliament, electoral candidate quotas endorsed by political parties, or other affirmative action measures. While temporary special measures such as quotas may remain a controversial issue, the results of the Rwandan elections in 2003 serve as a good example of their impact. [23] An all-time high percentage of women's representation in the Lower House was achieved by Rwanda with 48.8 percent.[24]

Care must be taken to ensure that quotas compensate for all barriers to women's participation. For example, a quota law was introduced in Costa Rica in 1997 requiring political parties to reserve a minimum of forty percent of candidacies for women. After the 1998 elections, eleven of the fifty-seven seats (nineteen percent) were held by women. Although a sixteen percent increased was achieved after the introduction of the law, it still fell short of the established forty percent quota for women candidacies. The main reason for this shortcoming was attributed to the practice of political parties placing women near the bottom of their list of candidates. Subsequently a decision of the Supreme Electoral Court was applied in the 2002 elections that required political parties to place women in eligible positions on their lists. As a result, there was a notable increase in the number of women elected to Congress. In the 2002-2006 National and Presidential elections twenty women or 35.08 percent from three parties were elected as parliamentarians.[25]

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[21] Drude Dahlerup. Chapter 4 "Using Quotas to Increase Women's Political Representation" IDEA. 2002. Women in Parliament, Stockholm. http://www.idea.int.

[22] Drude Dahlerup. "Comparative Studies of Electoral Gender Quotas" paper presented at the International IDEA Workshop "The Implementation of Quotas: Latin American Experiences", Lima Peru, 23-24 February 2003. http://www.quotaproject.org/CS/CS_Dahlerup_25-11-2003.pdf.

[23] International Parliamentary Union. *Women Elected in 2003: The year in perspective*, http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/March04.pdf.

[24] International Parliamentary Union., *World Classification Chart*, http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e.classif.htm.

[25] Karen Olsen de Figueres. "The Road to Equality – Women in Parliament in Costa Rica" case study from International IDEA *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, http://www.idea.int/gender/wip/eng_updates.htm.

International IDEA and the Stockholm University are currently collaborating on a research project aimed at the production of comparative knowledge and resources on the implementation of quotas and their impact. This project addresses the absence of an evaluation of the extent to which the form and efficacy of gender quotas are determined by the model of citizenship and political system operating within particular countries. It seeks to establish whether the precise form and perceived efficacy of quotas depend on the nature of citizenship at the discourse level, and the nature of the political system at the institutional level.[26]

In Djibouti and Jordan, the introduction of quotas significantly changed the approach towards women's participation in the political process. To some extent, these measures counter cultural and political barriers which have, to-date, precluded women's participation in politics. By law, women in both countries have had the right to vote and stand for election for some time. Yet in Jordan, only one woman had ever been elected to the House of Representatives, while in Djibouti, no woman has been elected to parliament. In both cases, strong political will and the adoption of specific mechanisms to trigger the change were required. In Djibouti, the electoral law was amended in 2002, to require political parties to put women candidates forward. The newly introduced law resulted in fourteen women candidates running for election, seven of whom were elected. In Jordan, King Abdallah announced the creation of six new parliamentary seats for women in the June 2003 elections. As a result, six women now comprise 5.4 percent of the new lower House. Women candidates received more than twice the votes they received four years ago – 33,452 compared to 13,128. [27]

Some countries have enacted legislation establishing quotas in unions. In Argentina, the Union Quotas Act (Act 25.674) was enacted in 2002 requiring that the proportion of women delegates in any unit involved in collective bargaining on labour conditions must reflect the number of female workers in the sector or activity in question. No data is yet available to measure the impact of this law. The process to establish a female quota for the national Supreme Court has also been initiated, with a bill passed in one of the two houses stipulating that the country's top ranking judicial body "may not draw more than seventy percent of its membership from the same sex. Of every two successive vacancies that arise, one must be filled by a woman.[28]

There have also been positive results from measures aimed at promoting gender balance in delegations. The Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Indian Parliament strongly encouraged the formation of parity delegations to the Specialized Inter-Parliamentary Conference "Towards Partnership between Men and Women in Politics" (New Delhi, 14-18 February 1997). As a result, seventy-eight delegations participated in the Conference comprising 121 men and 119 women.[29]

The percentage rates of female headed delegations to the United Nations are still low. As of October 2004 there were only eleven Women Ambassadors to the UN in New York (Bahamas, Cape Verde, Colombia, Denmark, El Salvador, Finland, Kenya, Kuwait, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Thailand, Turkmenistan), fourteen in Geneva (Colombia, Egypt, Ireland, Libyan Arab Jamahirya, Kenya, Lesotho, Malaysia, Peru, Rwanda, San Marino, south Africa, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Venezuela) and fourteen in Vienna (Algeria, Argentina, Australia,

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[26] Global Database of Quotas for Women Http://www.quotaproject.org/
[27] International Parliamentary Union. *Women Elected in 2003: The year in perspective*, http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/March04.pdf.
[28] Government response from Argentina to DAW Questionnaire on Review and Appraisal of Beijing Platform for Action, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/responses.htm.
[29] "Concluding statement by the President on the outcome of the Conference" also known as the New Delhi Declaration, IPU Specialized Conference "Towards Partnership between men and women in Politics", 14-18 February 1997. http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/Ndelhi97.htm.

Bosnia-Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Canada, Ethiopia, Gabon, Kyrgyzstan, Liechtenstein, Mexico, Moldova, New Zealand, Sweden)[30].

As evidenced by persistently low percentages for women's representation, quotas are often not enough; electoral systems themselves may need to be reformed. Elections constitute a continuum, in which decisions made at one stage will deeply affect the next. Thus it is important to ensure the role of women in electoral and political structures from the very beginning.[31] Research indicates that political structures rather than social factors play a more significant role in women's parliamentary recruitment. The system of elections based on proportional representation, for example, has resulted in three to four times more women being elected in countries with similar political cultures.[32] Moreover, changing a country's electoral system often represents a far more realistic goal to work towards than dramatically changing society's cultural view of women.[33]

In the Syrian Arab Republic, the League of Syrian Women conducted a study on women's participation in the development process and mechanisms aimed at enabling women to accede to decision-making posts. The League has also conducted studies on the participation of Syrian women in the political process and on obstacles to women's participation in political life.[34]

Some of these reforms would affect the way in which political parties view women. Women are often recognized as vote banks, and politicians, both male and female increasingly address issues of concern to women during election campaigns. Unfortunately, the attention to women's issues rarely survives beyond the electoral campaign. Where they exist, women's wings of political parties are seldom integrated into the central power structure of the party. Functioning mostly as mechanisms for mobilizing support for specific parties, these wings may actually further marginalize women by limiting their presence and activism to this auxiliary role, bereft of any real political power.[35]

Political parties are primarily responsible for selecting the candidates that will run for election. The most widely valued characteristic is an aspirants' track record in the party organization and in the constituency. Perhaps the strongest manifestation of this is the high rate at which incumbents are re-nominated. Even for new candidates a past history of party participation and activism is important, although not a requirement. Visibility in the community either through one's profession, holding of public office, or other activity is also highly desirable. But because incumbents and community leaders are disproportionately male, these criteria hinder women's chances of being selected. Whether the party sees women as desirable candidates who can help the

> "*It is very difficult for a woman to make up her mind to enter politics. Once she makes up her own mind, then she has to prepare her husband and her children and her family. Once she has overcome all these obstacles and applies for the ticket, then the male aspirants against whom she is applying make up all sorts of stories about her. And after all this, when her name goes to the party bosses, they do not select her name because they fear losing that seat.*"
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> Sushma Swaraj, MP India
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> Nadezdha Shvedova. "Obstacles to Women's Participation in Parliament" Chapter 2, International IDEA, 2002, Women in Parliament, Stockholm, http://www.idea.int

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[30] "Women Ambassadors accredited to the United Nations in New York, Geneva and Vienna" http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/ambassadors.PDF
[31] Carina Perelli. Presentation to the conference on "Enhancing the role of women in electoral processes in post-conflict countries" Glen Cove, 19-22 January 2004. http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/meetings/2004/EGMelectoral/Perelli-stmt.htm .
[32] Nadezdha Shvedova. "Obstacles to Women's Participation in Parliament" Chapter 2, International IDEA, 2002, Women in Parliament, Stockholm, http://www.idea.int.
[33] Richard Matland, "Enhancing Women's political participation: Legislative Recruitment and Electoral Systems", Chapter 3, International IDEA 2002 Women in Parliament, Stockholm, http://www.idea.int.
[34] Government response from Syrian Arab Republic to DAW Questionnaire on Review and Appraisal of Beijing Platform for Action, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/responses.htm.
[35] Farida Shaheed. "Politics and Power: A Gendered Perspective from South Asia", http://www.dawn.org.fj/publications/docs/prstshaheed2003.doc.

party win votes will be influenced by a number of factors, including a country's culture as well as its electoral system.[36]

Women play important roles in campaigning and mobilizing support for their parties, yet they rarely occupy decision-making positions in the party structures. Less than eleven percent of party leaders worldwide are women.[37] Moreover, those who do achieve positions of power are not always heard, or are heard but not taken seriously, as was found to be the case in Belize[38].

The Malawi constitution does not provide for a quota system as affirmative action; yet political parties are willing to include women in critical power positions as evidenced in manifestos presented at their conventions, and by the fact that some women have been appointed to the party Executive Committees.[39] In Germany, most of the political parties have introduced quota systems in order to increase the proportion of women and support equal opportunities within their organizations. [40]

Complementary measures to promote equality and remove discrimination are also required to overcome the barriers that impede women's full participation in power and decision-making. Perhaps the strongest resistance to women's access to and participation in power and decision-making is not legal but cultural. As a result, measures should be accompanied by other types of affirmative action that not only improve access mechanisms but also strengthen society's view of women's leadership roles.

Strong communications/media and advocacy campaigns must also accompany affirmative action measures. The mass media can be thought of as the fourth branch of power given the magnitude of its influence on public opinion and public consciousness. The role of the media in an election process is extraordinarily influential and yet there is a lack of global and comparative research on this role. The lack of proper coverage of women's issues and the activities of women leaders results in the lack of a forum for provoking public awareness about these issues. In turn, this translates into lack of constituency for women parliamentary leaders.[41]

The Government of Indonesia has conducted advocacy and gender sensitization activities among all relevant government sectors up to and including the legislative and judicial branches. In addition it has disseminated its gender equality policy through the mass media. [42] In Croatia the obligation of the media to contribute to the promotion of gender equality is regulated through the Gender Equality Act.[43]

In Latvia, the project "Mass media in (re)distribution of power" (Jan 2004–March 2005) focused on gender stereotypes in the media in order to raise awareness among media practitioners, policy makers and society in general. By challenging and changing existing

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[36] Richard Matland, "Enhancing Women's political participation: Legislative Recruitment and Electoral Systems", Chapter 3, International IDEA, 2002 Women in Parliament, Stockholm, http://www.idea.int.
[37] International Parliamentary Union. Women elected in 2003: The year in perspective, http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/March04.pdf.
[38] Government response from Belize to DAW Questionnaire on Review and Appraisal of Beijing Platform for Action, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/responses.htm.
[39] Government response from Malawi to DAW Questionnaire on Review and Appraisal of Beijing Platform for Action, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/responses.htm.
[40] Government response from Germany to DAW Questionnaire on Review and Appraisal of Beijing Platform for Action, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/responses.htm.
[41] Nadezdha Shvedova. "Obstacles to Women's participation in Parliament" Chapter 2, International IDEA, 2002, Women in Parliament, Stockholm, http://www.idea.int.
[42] Government response from Indonesia to DAW Questionnaire on Review and Appraisal of Beijing Platform for Action, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/responses.htm.
[43] Government response from Croatia to DAW Questionnaire on Review and Appraisal of Beijing Platform for Action, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/responses.htm.

stereotypes, the project's goal is to reach a situation where women and men are both motivated and enjoy equal opportunities to participate in decision making.[44]

In Malawi, intense awareness campaigns on the importance of having women in leadership positions were carried out prior to the elections in May 2004. As a result, there was an increasein women elected, from seventeen to twenty-seven.[45]

The Swiss Radio and Television Corporation and the Federal Commission on Women's Issues in Switzerland sponsored a study on how candidates were treated by radio and television in the period prior to the 1999 federal elections. The study showed that female candidates were given less airtime, and that the imbalance was greater on TV than in radio. In light of these results, the Commission prepared recommendations for media professionals and hosted a sensitization workshop A further study has been commissioned to examine the space given to female candidates in the media, including the written press, for the 2003 federal elections.[46]

The nature and awareness of political participation has changed over time. Today participation is understood to mean the close involvement of people in the economic, social, cultural and political processes that affect their lives.[47] Information and access to decision-making is thus critical to the entire process and partnership with women's organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) increases the chances for success.

In Bangladesh, NGOs carried out programmes for dialogues with political parties, voter education, leadership training, candidate training, etc. The specific activities of NGOs focused on raising awareness about politics and political empowerment of the rural citizens, particularly women. Several NGOs have also been advocating, among academics, activists and policymakers, for an increase in women's representation in politics.[48]

The formation of databases is a critical component of information and advocacy activities. The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) and Stockholm University through a joint project maintain an online "Global Database of Quotas."[49] The State Committee on Women's Problems (SCWP) in Azerbaijan has created a database of women working in leadership positions in the regions and in ministries and departments, in addition to a database of women who head academic institutions.[50]

There is perhaps a more urgent need for improvement in the socio-economic status of women in order to facilitate their fuller participation. At its fifty-eighth session held in 2003, the UN General Assembly recognized that "women's participation in decision-making and in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life is negatively affected by poverty, which disproportionately affects women, particularly in the developing countries." In this regard, the General Assembly called for continued studies on the links between poverty eradication[51] and the empowerment of women, particularly with regard to women's political

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[44] Government response from Latvia to DAW Questionnaire on Review and Appraisal of Beijing Platform for Action, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/responses.htm.
[45] Government response from Malawi to DAW Questionnaire on Review and Appraisal of Beijing Platform for Action, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/responses.htm.
[46] Government response from Switzerland to DAW Questionnaire on Review and Appraisal of Beijing Platform for Action, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/responses.htm.
[47] Farah Kabir. "Political Participation of Women in South Asia", http://www.onlinewomeninpolitics.org/south/2003_wip_sa.doc.
[48] Farah Kabir. "Political Participation of Women in South Asia", http://www.onlinewomeninpolitics.org/south/2003_wip_sa.doc.
[49] http://www.quotaproject.org.
[50] Government response from Azerbaijan to DAW Questionnaire on Review and Appraisal of Beijing Platform for Action, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/responses.htm.
[51] For more information on women and poverty, see INSTRAW's Progress report on Critical Area A. Women and Poverty, http://www.un-instraw.org.

participation. It also called for the compilation and wide dissemination of good practices and lessons learned.[52]

The socio-economic obstacles affecting women's participation in power and decision-making include poverty, limited access to education, and the dual burden of domestic and productive labour, among others.[53] In India for example, the practice of *purdah*, in combination with patriarchal structures undermines women's access to traditional forums of negotiation and decision-making and has become an obstacle for women's entry into formal electoral politics.[54]

Many governments have taken measures to reconcile family and professional responsibilities. In Denmark, women as well as men at the local government level are granted DKK 11,344 per year to offset babysitting expenses incurred when attending meetings. Furthermore, all members of local governments are also granted allowances for the care of sick close relatives so that they may participate in meetings. [55] In collaboration with the Gender Equality Conference of the cantons of Eastern Switzerland, a traveling exhibition entitled "Family and Career in Balance" was created. It was shown in Liechtenstein for the first time in September 2004 and was accompanied by side events (lectures, panel discussions, family breakfast, etc.).[56]

In the Netherlands, research has been conducted into the reasons behind the premature retirement of women from local politics as well as possible explanations for their shorter terms in office. The research confirmed that a relatively large number of women retire prematurely or only serve one term in the council. This research concluded that cultural factors were not the most important in explaining this phenomenon. The most important factor was lack of time and the conflict between council work and paid work and/or family responsibilities. This held true for both women and men in the age group 25 – 45 years of age who leave office prematurely. Because women still leave office significantly earlier than men, it can be concluded that the three-fold burden of work, family responsibilities and politics weighs heavier on them than on their male counterparts.[57]

Aimed at improving gender balance at the workplace in the private sector, the "Mixed" project was launched in the Netherlands in order to develop, distribute and test in practice instruments and resources that enable upward mobility of women. Using nine different instruments, the project: increases and makes more visible the supply of female talent in companies and organizations; creates the preconditions for the better use of female talent in companies and organizations; and uses the international certification instrument Investors in People to embed measures within the regular personnel policy that improve the promotion options for women. Some 30 schemes have been set up in companies and organizations and these vary in size, sector, the state of affairs relating to attention to diversity and promotion and the level of influence they exert in their own sector, as pilots. The point of departure for the pilots is that in each track special attention to devoted to the position of ethnic minority women. International exchange of knowledge and experience is

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[52] A/RES/58/142, dated 10 February 2004, http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N03/503/10/PDF/N0350310.pdf?OpenElement.
[53] Nadezdha Shvedova. "Obstacles to Women's Participation in Parliament" Chapter 2, International IDEA, 2002, Women in Parliament, Stockholm, http://www.idea.int.
[54] Farah Kabir. "Political Participation of Women in South Asia", http://www.onlinewomeninpolitics.org/south/2003_wip_sa.doc.
[55] Government response from Denmark to DAW Questionnaire on Review and Appraisal of Beijing Platform for Action, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/responses.htm.
[56] Government response from Liechtenstein to DAW Questionnaire on Review and Appraisal of Beijing Platform for Action, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/responses.htm.
[57] Government response from Netherlands to DAW Questionnaire on Review and Appraisal of Beijing Platform for Action, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/responses.htm.

also an essential element of the project. "Mixed" works closely with "Ariadne" a comparable project in Greece.[58]

Measures to promote career advancement for women have also been a concern for some governments. A working group reporting of the Minister for Parity and Equality in the Work Place in France submitted proposals in March 2003 that included 4 issues: improving awareness of inequalities, reorganizing work schedules, revising recruitment channels and conditions, and influencing career development.[59]

A Network of Ambassadors was created in the Netherlands from an initiative of the Department for the Coordination of Emancipation Policy of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of Economic Affairs. It comprises a group of prominent individuals from public and private sectors (business, universities, technical sectors, IT industry, health-care sector, municipal governments) who commit themselves for one year to promoting the upward mobility of women. To accomplish their goal they set concrete points of action, targeted at their own companies, the sector or the network. The first network focused on the service industry, the second on female talent, while in 2004 the third focused on improving opportunities for women to move into senior positions.[60]

A crucial element for the successful implementation of measures aimed at achieving women's equal access to and participation in power and decision making are monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. The Ministry for Youth, Women, Children and the Family [Ministerio de la Juventud, la Mujer, la Niñez y la Familia (MINJUMNFA) in Panama, established a monitoring mechanism to ensure that the rate of women's participation is at least fifty percent in all decision-making and public-policy negotiation bodies. This mechanism monitors the communication media, indigenous and African Panamanian congresses, unions, associations and community groups who must be governed by the principle of equal representation.[61]

In Luxembourg, a law adopted in 1998 called for the appointment of an equality delegate in private sector enterprises to be responsible for ensuring equality of wage treatment between women and men and the fair application of legal provisions in this regard. In 2003, the civil service statute was amended with the obligation of appointing a gender equality delegate in each ministerial department and in each state administration. These delegates, who must take special training to prepare them for their tasks, are expected to prepare proposals and submit complaints on any issue dealing with gender equality as it relates to access to employment, training, professional development, pay and working conditions.[62]

A new law in Sweden "Reporting Gender Distribution in Company Management" requires that all companies with at least 10 employees must report on the gender distribution of its board of directors and company management in their annual reports.[63] The Ministry for Gender Equality in Denmark is improving the visibility of local gender equality activities through a project for more women in local politics. It has created a new website [www.ligestillingidanmark.dk] where all local and regional authorities' mandatory gender

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[58] Ibid.
[59] Government response from France to DAW Questionnaire on Review and Appraisal of Beijing Platform for Action, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/responses.htm.
[60] Government response from Netherlands to DAW Questionnaire on Review and Appraisal of Beijing Platform for Action, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/responses.htm.
[61] Government response from Panama to DAW Questionnaire on Review and Appraisal of Beijing Platform for Action, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/responses.htm.
[62] Government response from Luxembourg to DAW Questionnaire on Review and Appraisal of Beijing Platform for Action, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/responses.htm.
[63] Government response from Sweden to DAW Questionnaire on Review and Appraisal of Beijing Platform for Action, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/responses.htm.

equality reports are monitored and benchmarked on the basis of various parameters. The website also provides examples of successful gender equality initiatives as inspiration to other local and regional authorities.[64]

Achieving gender equality in the United Nations is also a priority and progress in this area is reviewed each year by the General Assembly through the Secretary-General's report on the "Improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system."[65] The 2004 (?) report indicates that progress has been slow and overall, the targeted goals have not yet been met. Within the United Nations system, the representation of women in the Professional and higher categories was 36.4 percent on 31 December 2003. Women account for 37.4 percent of the Professional and higher-level staff with appointments of one year or more in the Secretariat as on 30 June 2004. "This increase of 1.7 percent compared to previous year is the most significant made since 1998."[66] In posts subject to geographical distribution, 42.3 percent of Professional and higher-level staff are women. The representation of women in senior posts, such as at the Under-Secretary-General and D-1 levels, have increased by 3.2 and 3.5 percent, respectively but still fall short of the 50/50 gender balance.

Some individual UN Departments have already achieved the 50/50 goal of gender balance, among them the Office for Human Resources Management (OHRM), the Department of Public Information and the Office of the Secretary-General. Some Departments are projected to achieve 50/50 gender balance within the next few years, while others face a more long-term projection (see Table 1). However, despite the slow progress, it is important to bear in mind that the United Nations system is a mere reflection of its Member States. Along these lines, the slow progress in women's representation can also be perceived as a reflection of the situation of its Member States.

Table 1 - Hypothetical projections by department of the achievement of gender balance based on the average annual change during the period from 1998 to 2004 in the representation of women in the professional and higher categories with appointments of one year or more in the Secretariat

Department*	Women professional staff March 2004 (percentage)	Projected achievement of 50/50 goal
Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)	46.6	2006
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)	42.5	2007
Office for Legal Affairs (OLA)	45.3	2008
Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)	38.2	2009
United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV)	40.0	2010
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)	39.6	2010
United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT)	37.0	2011
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)	35.2	2013
Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)	34.2	2013
Department DGACM (DGAACS)	44.0	2017
Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)	33.3	2019
United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP)	33.5	2027
Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS)	33.3	2032
United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON)	37.0	2047
United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG)	37.7	2072
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP)	30.1	2093
Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO)	32.1	2100

*This table shows only selected departments. For the full chart of projections
Source: A/59/357 *Improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system - Report of the Secretary-General*
http://www.un.org/ga/59/documentation/list3.html

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[64] Government response from Denmark to DAW Questionnaire on Review and Appraisal of Beijing Platform for Action, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/responses.htm.
[65] The latest of these reports is from the 59th session of the General Assembly in 2004, document A/59/357, http://www.un.org/ga/59/documentation/list3.html
[66] Ibid.

In order to accelerate progress towards achieving the goal of gender balance, the General Assembly requested that further analysis of the probable causes of the slow advance in the improvement of the status of women in the UN system be undertaken (Resolutions 57/180 and 58/144). The Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI) prepared research-based analyses that indicated an annual growth rate of only 0.4 pecent in the category of Professional and higher staff on appointments of one year or more and a growth rate of approximately one percent per year for Professional and higher staff on posts subject to geographical distribution.

As candidates for recruitment, women are discriminated against by external factors such as global limited access to labour markets, to information and communication technologies, to technical and substantive training and education and to decision-making. While many remedies have been offered by the legislative bodies on recruitment, they have not effectively addressed, in a systematic manner, the problem of the disproportionately small number of women entering the UN System. At the entry level, the current staffing system is neither sufficiently proactive nor targeted and relies heavily on web-based vacancy announcements. Current data show that far more men than women apply.

In terms of accountability, while the staffing system places the responsibility for meeting human resource targets, including geographical and gender ones, with the heads of departments or offices, they are not required to justify their decisions if they select men over equally qualified women. There is no accountability for gender balance particularly at the level of programme managers.

In order to increase women's representation in the system, several UN agencies have taken measures designed to promote gender balance (see Table 2). These include, the setting of specific gender targets and time lines, regular reporting to governing bodies on the recruitment and status of women, gender policy development, training and specific efforts to identify suitable candidates through targeted outreach to Member States, professional organizations and recruitment missions, among others.

Table 2 – Measures designed to promote gender balance in the UN System

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	since 2000 an executive directive requires that any recommendation for filling a Professional post with an external male candidate be reviewed by the Executive Director
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	recruitment target of 3:2 ratio of women to men in new hires, female candidates are to be given preference where qualifications and experience are essentially equal
World Food Programme (WFP)	at least 50% of staff recruits (international professionals, national professionals and general service staff) and 75% of all local food aid monitor recruits are to be qualified women
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	a temporary measure reduces seniority requirements at the P-3 level and above until parity is achieved
Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)	proactive recruitment of qualified women candidates undertaken
United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)	vacancy announcements are circulated among associations for professional women throughout the world

Source: A/59/357 *Improvement of the status of women in the United Nations system - Report of the Secretary-General*
http://www.un.org/ga/59/documentation/list3.html

In 2003, OHRM expanded its monitoring activities by including on-site monitoring missions, which have proved useful in sensitizing peacekeeping and peace-building missions. Management is in the process of developing a web site to provide programme managers and human resources practitioners with electronic access to interactive and updated statistical information necessary for decision-making.

A system of departmental focal points has been established. Each focal point has a role in establishing and monitoring the department's gender targets, advising on the selection of women candidates, contributing to the development and monitoring of human resource action plans and monitoring the implementation of work/life policies. OSAGI is working with OHRM to circulate new terms of reference for these focal points.

Within the electronic performance appraisal system (e-PAS) the specific behavioural indicators for respect for diversity and gender include, inter alia, "treats men and women equally" and "includes a gender perspective in substantive work". As an additional accountability mechanism, it is suggested that the performance appraisal of heads of departments and offices include a specific indicator on gender balance.

Areas for Future Action:
■ Encourage further studies on the connection between poverty and exclusion from policy making and decision making;   ■ Encourage quantitative and qualitative studies on the outcome of introducing quotas and other positive mechanisms for increasing women's access to and participation in power and decision making and wide dissemination of good practices;   ■ Promote the collection of sex-disaggregated data on women in politics and other channels of political influence, in particular on women of national minority origin or indigenous women;   ■ Encourage more research on the role of the media in political participation;   ■ Promote the creation of a social culture that is not only accepting of women in high positions but realizes the importance of women's leadership to society;   ■ Promote greater coordination and consistency in the methodology and standards applied to monitoring;   ■ Continue efforts to promote a more positive portrayal of women as leaders in the media;   ■ Encourage improved transparency, accountability and monitoring tools to ensure gender balance in the UN system.

Strategic Objective G.2

"Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership"

Actions to be taken by Governments, national bodies, the private sector, political parties, trade unions, employers' organizations, sub-regional and regional bodies, non-governmental and international organizations and educational institutions: provide leadership and self-esteem training to assist women and girls; have transparent criteria for decision-making positions and ensure that the selecting bodies have a gender-balanced composition; create a system of mentoring for inexperienced women and offer training; provide gender-sensitive training for women and men to promote non-discriminatory working relationships and respect for diversity

<div style="background-color: orange">
in work and management styles; develop mechanisms and training to encourage women to participate in the electoral process, political activities and other leadership areas.
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Increasing the number of women who are qualified for recruitment in political careers is essential as we work towards higher representation of women in decision-making and leadership. Women's leadership schools play a special role, since they link wider groups of women with women politicians and they are very often the only places where women can be prepared and encouraged for political careers in parliament. Special attention should also be given to the involvement of young women in political participation.[67]

A number of initiatives have been undertaken in training to increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership. The National Council for Women in Egypt initiated a project, being implemented by the Center for Political Empowerment of Women, which aims to build up a cadre of politically and technically qualified women with knowledge and experience to be able to stand for the parliamentary elections in 2005 and the local council elections in 2006.[68]

For the 1999-2004 People's Council Elections, the National Committee for the Advancement of Women in Vietnam (NCFAW) and the Vietnam Women's Union (VWU) organized a training course on leadership skills for 18,000 women candidates. In addition a nation-wide media campaign was also launched to encourage votes for women candidates. As a result, the percentage of women in People's Councils at all levels increased in comparison with the 1994-1999 term: 22.5 percent at the provincial level (+2.15 points); 20.7 percent at the district level (+2.6 points); 16.34 percent at the commune level (+1.94 points).)[69]

A six-month training course "Senior Women in Management" (SWIM) was launched by UNDP and the Afghan Ministries of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Finance and Women's Affairs. The objective of SWIM is to increase the participation of women in decision-making roles in governments by identifying qualified women to work at senior levels in selected ministries. The course consists of on-the-job and formal training in management, computing, language and specialized skills. At the end of the SWIM programme, candidates are encouraged to apply for longer-term employment within the respective ministries. Recruitment is being conducted by UNDP based on merit, qualifications and successful performance in examinations.[70]

A course on "Women in Politics" for women in Liechtenstein targets women who are active in institutions, chambers, parties, public bodies, organizations, clubs or initiative groups or women who would like to become involved in the future. The course aims to provide the skills and encouragement necessary for women to bring their concerns and potential before political bodies and the public.[71]

A programme of civic and political training and participation for women in El Salvador was instituted by the political parties. As a result, the training has led to the organization of forums, study groups, further training and analysis of women's situation within parties.[72]

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[67] Nadezdha Shvedova. "Obstacles to Women's Participation in Parliament" Chapter 2, International IDEA, 2002, Women in Parliament, Stockholm, http://www.idea.int.
[68] Government response from Egypt to DAW Questionnaire on Review and Appraisal of Beijing Platform for Action, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/responses.htm.
[69] Government response from Viet Nam to DAW Questionnaire on Review and Appraisal of Beijing Platform for Action, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/responses.htm.
[70] IRIN News.org, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Afghanistan: Leadership training for women", http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=43301&SelectRegion=Central_Asia.
[71] Government response from Liechtenstein to DAW Questionnaire on Review and Appraisal of Beijing Platform for Action, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/responses.htm.
[72] Government response from El Salvador to DAW Questionnaire on Review and Appraisal of Beijing Platform for Action, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/responses.htm.

In India, both governmental and non-governmental organizations are conducting capacity-building programmes for elected women members. In Kerala State, systematic gender training programmes for women in *panchayats* (village councils) have been conducted by the government in addition to technical training on gender-budgeting. In the states of northern India, NGOs train elected women members to intervene in *panchayat* meetings, to read and write, and to abandon their *purdah*, both symbolically and functionally.[73]

A leadership training programme was implemented in Barbados by the Bureau for Women in collaboration with the School of Continuing Studies and focused on "Education for Women in Politics". In 1998 the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA) together with the National Organization of Women (NOW) and the Women's Forum of Barbados hosted a two-day roundtable of women in politics "Women as Transforming Agents". The goal was to reflect on how women in politics can be a catalyst for transforming the politics, economics and sociology of Barbadian and Caribbean societies. The roundtable represented one of the key actions in the implementation of training programmes to facilitate women's participation in politics and public life.

Since March 2004 the Secretariat of the National Council on Women, Family and Gender Development in Kyrgyzstan has been participating in the implementation of the "Advancement of Gender Equality in Politics" project supported by UNDP and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). This project provides for the organization of intensive training sessions on leadership and on conducting political campaigns.[74]

The Government of Malaysia through the Ministry of Women and Family Development in collaboration with various organizations and NGOs has drawn up special training programmes and courses to equip women with skills and enable them to advance in their careers. In addition, the Department of Women's Development has conducted a series of training courses "*Nur Bestar"* aimed at enhancing women's leadership skills.[75]

Training of women candidates also occurred in the period prior to the 2003 elections in Swaziland. NGOs held workshops to train women candidates on voter outreach and successful campaigning. Fifty-five members of the sixty-five-member parliament are elected by voters while the rest are appointed by the King. In the 2003 elections, five of the fifty-five elected members were women. Two more women were appointed by the King. As a result, the proportion of women in the Swazi parliament increased by 7.7 percent to a record 10.8 percent. In a country where women are legally minors, where they cannot own property, enter into contracts or secure bank loans without the sponsorship of a male relative, this increase is particularly significant.[76]

Complementary to training for women, mentoring initiatives can play an important role in further strengthening women's leadership abilities. The Seychelles Women's Commission (comprising twelve women's organizations) organized a workshop for women parliamentarians from Seychelles and Mauritius. The workshop aimed to empower women parliamentarians to be more effective in lobbying for policy changes. Following the workshop a National Women's Parliamentarian Association was formed with the aim of

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[73] Farah Kabir. "Political Participation of Women in South Asia", http://www.onlinewomeninpolitics.org/south/2003_wip_sa.doc.
[74] Government response from Kyrgyzstan to DAW Questionnaire on Review and Appraisal of Beijing Platform for Action, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/responses.htm.
[75] Government response from Malaysia to DAW Questionnaire on Review and Appraisal of Beijing Platform for Action, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/responses.htm.
[76] International Parliamentary Union. *Women Elected in 2003: The year in perspective*, http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/March04.pdf.

encouraging members to become role models and mentors for young women aspiring to get involved in politics.[77]

The Ministry of Finance in Finland carried out a project to promote women's access to top and middle management in state administration during March 2002-December 2003. Project activities included improvements in planning for promoting equal opportunities (real targets or measures), dissemination of good practices, the formation of a network of women managers (260 participants) and a mentoring programme. As a result of the project, the percentage of women in top management in state administration was 21.9 percent (196 women) at the end of 2003, representing an increase of 6.6 percent from 2002.[78]

The Department of Gender Quality in Denmark, has prepared a leaflet to be distributed to all political parties in Demark. The leaflet offers good advice from women who were elected to local councils and are familiar with the barriers that can arise in political work. The leaflet also provides examples of "good practice" from the parties and local councils that have focused special attention on the problems. The leaflet will be published before the next local elections in Nov 2005. The Ministry will also conduct targeted media initiatives to ensure that the issue stays current throughout the period leading up to the elections.[79]

In Congo the Ministry for the Advancement of Women implemented strategic measures for the 2002 general elections which included: awareness-raising for women to encourage their vote, and support to women candidates through the production of logos and financial assistance for their campaigns. [80]

Areas for Future Action:
▪ Based on successful experiences, replicate training initiatives to increase women's self-esteem and encourage them to take decision-making positions and participate in decision-making and leadership;   ▪ Based on successful experiences, replicate training initiatives including mentoring schemes, to increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership;   ▪ Actively promote leadership and self-esteem training for women with disabilities and women belonging to racial and ethnic minorities and encourage them to participate in the electoral process, political activities and other leadership areas;

Conclusion

Excluding women from positions of power and from elected bodies impoverishes the development of democratic principles in public life and inhibits the economic development of a society.[81]

When reviewing women's participation in power and decision-making, numbers are not enough. We must also question the actual impact of their increased participation on national policies and decision-making processes. Experiences in some Nordic countries suggest that

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[77] Government response from Seychelles to DAW Questionnaire on Review and Appraisal of Beijing Platform for Action, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/responses.htm.
[78] Government response from Finland to DAW Questionnaire on Review and Appraisal of Beijing Platform for Action, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/responses.htm.
[79] Government response from Denmark to DAW Questionnaire on Review and Appraisal of Beijing Platform for Action, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/responses.htm.
[80] Government response from Congo to DAW Questionnaire on Review and Appraisal of Beijing Platform for Action, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/Review/english/responses.htm.
[81] Nadezdha Shvedova. "Obstacles to Women's Participation in Parliament" Chapter 2, International IDEA, 2002, Women in Parliament, Stockholm, http://www.idea.int

increases in women's representation do indeed lead to changes in the political realm, with male officials acknowledging and prioritizing certain family obligations and broadening the context of decision-making. This hypothesis has yet to be tested in other socio-cultural contexts such as Rwanda which recently achieved a higher percentage of women's representation in parliament than the Nordic countries.

What should perhaps be examined instead is the notion of "impact" and what constitutes impact; about which there are many differing points of view. Some would claim that merely being a critical mass with influence over issues, debates and perceptions, is one way of making an impact. Others might claim that bringing about change is an essential element of making an impact. Perhaps the focus of discussion should be on the extent to which change takes place, if at all? Azza Karam in her review of women's political participation in the 21st century[82] suggests the following types of change:

- <u>Change in perception</u> - of both women and men politicians in addition to the division of labour in society;
- <u>Change in discourse</u> - discourse in this case refers to the language, actions, means of reference, and spheres of influence, among others. Women who are politically active and lead public lives have, in some countries, managed to impact the way that women in general can and should be referred to. This is due, in part to their involvement in areas traditionally seen as 'men's affairs' or 'hard politics' (e.g. defense, finance, foreign policy, etc.), as well as their insistence on redefining and prioritizing 'soft' issues such as welfare, maternity leave and education, among others;
- <u>Change in coverage</u> - how history is written and taught, how textbooks and stories are written and read, and how media presents women in public life;
- <u>Change in policies</u> - for example, changes in the times and/or locations of meetings, speaking priorities, training measures and themes, and the availability of family-friendly services;
- <u>Change in legislation</u> - in the drafting of a new constitution bearing gender issues in mind (as in the South African experience) or in the drafting of amendments to existing laws (e.g. on citizenship rights, inheritance rights, divorce rights, equal pay, labour rights, etc.) or the introduction of new laws to include gender perspectives;
- <u>Change of institutions</u> - the creation of specialized institutions, or the establishment of departments or groups within institutions to develop, monitor and implement gender-equality within and without. Examples of this type of change can be found in South Africa and Uganda, which created specialized women's governmental departments and also set aside specific budget allocations derived from the national budgets, with monitoring mechanisms in order to review and ensure adherence.

Any combination of these changes can result from, and in, women's increased participation in decision-making and leadership. Ideally, women's participation would begin all of these changes; yet even a few of these changes would emphasize the positive impact of women's participation in power structures and decision-making processes.

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[82] Azza Karam. "Women's Political Participation" Meeting on Women and Political Participation: 21st Century Challenges, http://www.undp.ogar.org/publications/gender/karam1/index.html.