

POLITICS: WOMEN'S INSIGHT

Analysis of the IPU survey by:

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FOREWORD

Why do we need women in politics? What difference does it make to politics and society in general?

The Inter-Parliamentary Union had the idea of asking women politicians themselves to respond to these commonly heard questions – not because they alone are capable of giving the right answer but because they are primarily concerned, since their collective credibility as politicians and shapers of the future in politics depends on how these questions are answered and evaluated.

Basing itself on its longstanding experience of democracy in general and the issue of women in politics in particular, gleaned through a variety of studies, surveys, research and debates involving men and women politicians, the world organisation of parliaments resolutely affirmed in 1997 that *"the achievement of democracy presupposes a genuine partnership between men and women in the conduct of the affairs of society in which they work in equality and complementarity, drawing mutual enrichment from their differences"* (principle 4 of the *Universal Declaration on Democracy*). The Inter-Parliamentary Union thus stated in bold terms the idea of a specific political identity for women and a specific female contribution to politics that complements and enriches that of men for the common welfare of society.

The next step was to substantiate its claim through hard facts. And that is precisely what the following study has achieved. We can now assert that, wherever women are present in sufficient numbers to represent an embryonic political force, they are beginning to initiate a change in the political environment and decision-making process and to influence the outcome of political activity.

On the other hand, the life stories of women compiled by the Inter-Parliamentary Union show that the world of politics, which is intrinsically conflictual, is still broadly unwelcoming to women. They have to fight hard for every inch of ground and their encounter with power politics, the constraints of party discipline and disparaging media coverage is often a bitter experience. Women have to learn the rules of the game and the language of politics, while fully preserving their identity as women and avoiding the pitfall of demeaning imitation of their male counterparts. They are also engaged in a permanent "balancing act", seeking to do political work without sacrificing their family life and incurring severe criticism for putting their political ambitions before the welfare of their children.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union gathered its data direct from about 200 women politicians in 65 countries who took the trouble to respond to an extremely complex written interview. We wish to extend our heartfelt thanks to all the women who agreed to share their experience, their vision of democracy and their assessment of their contribution to the democratic process. We thank them not only for the time

they devoted to a demanding exercise, notwithstanding a clearly very busy schedule, but also for their remarkable sincerity and courage and for the deep sense of conviction and hope that their responses convey to the reader. As we read their innermost thoughts and opinions, we can no longer doubt that something new is afoot in the realm of politics throughout the world.

The complexity of the interview questionnaire, the extraordinary diversity of the culture and experience of the respondents, the mass of data compiled (some 900 pages of text and a sizeable database of statistics) as well as the need to protect the respondents from any criticism or harassment on account of freely shared views made the process of conducting an analytical study particularly difficult. A whole range of talent and experience had to be amassed to meet the challenge.

The task fell to Dr. Marilyn Waring, a former MP and the youngest woman elected to parliament in her country, New Zealand, and today a renowned expert on women's issues, to Ms. Gaye Greenwood, an expert from the same country, and to Ms. Christine Pintat, Assistant Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. They were assisted in their work by a team of committed collaborators. The overall structure, balance and spirit of the study and the statistical and factual data it contains are the product of this teamwork, but it was Marilyn Waring and Gaye Greenwood who wrote the basic text, which was reviewed by a reading committee composed of men and women.

In addition to the remarkable achievement represented by the study, the team successfully rose to the challenge presented by the distance of several thousand kilometres separating its two halves and interacted in a spirit of the fullest complementarity and friendship. Despite the pressure of deadlines, all members of the team worked with enthusiasm and dedication. I should like to say a special word of thanks to the two experts from New Zealand, who displayed not only extraordinary skill and commendable scientific scruples but also unflinching commitment and open-mindedness.

I also wish to stress that the Inter-Parliamentary Union could never have undertaken the project without the financial support of the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). It is not the first time that the IPU has been able to count on its support for projects highlighting women's contribution to politics. It deserves our warmest thanks.

It is doubtless the first time, on the other hand, that women representing such diverse cultures have recounted their experiences in such a sincere, direct and comprehensive way. Hopefully, their stories will encourage people to take a more balanced view of the world of politics: behind the words, we glimpse the individual women, expressing their aspirations and ideals for the society in which they live alongside their emotions and difficulties of daily life in politics.

It is to be hoped that this study, which is addressed to men no less than to women, will inspire and stimulate women who are tempted to get involved in politics and, above all, that it will highlight the contribution of women to the democratic process and show how vital that contribution is if politics are to respond to the interests and visions of the two components of the human race.

Anders B. Johnsson
Secretary General



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GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE SURVEY

The objective

Having for decades observed the many obstacles encountered by women the world over when it comes to taking part in politics on an equal footing with men, the IPU has tried with this survey to go a step further. From statistics and the comments of women politicians, it has sought to identify what change is attributable to the ever greater presence of women in politics and what their qualitative impact has been on political circles and processes and on society at large.

The questions at issue are:

- ▶ How does women's participation in political parties, parliaments and the Executive bring about change in political priorities, processes and outputs?
- ▶ How far does women's involvement in political structures developed and still dominated by men generate a qualitative shift in the traditional political language and approach and in the prevailing, well-established electoral and other practices?
- ▶ How are women affecting the institutional environment?
- ▶ What difference does it all make to the daily life of the ordinary citizen?

Anyone seeking to understand the underlying shift in the political process generated by the gender factor, a shift discernable throughout the world at the close of the millennium, should find some answers to these recurring questions in this book .

This background material will come just from women politicians themselves as they alone were surveyed. In today's state of affairs, the "burden of proof" seems to rest mainly on women, as though women were still expected to provide evidence that their participation in politics is not only a right but something necessary, useful and effective. Quite clearly, however, men should be asked the same questions as well. Still, this survey was devised to be debated by both men and women, as politicians or as analysts or observers of the political process, with the aim of identifying ways of anchoring the democracy of the future in both genders' visions and talents.



The basic material

The survey is based on written interviews of women politicians worldwide. As explained in the Annex entitled "Research Design, Survey Method and Method of Data Analysis", the interviews were carried out by means of a questionnaire devised by the IPU in consultation with participants in its twice-yearly Meeting of Women Parliamentarians. Close on 200 women politicians from 65 countries, in all regions of the world, agreed to offer their personal views and recount, with the freedom and even intimacy that confidentiality permits, how and why they entered politics, the obstacles and support they met with, their experience in their political parties, their Parliaments and their governments, and their contacts with the media and the NGO community. The respondents include both junior and seasoned politicians, most of them with parliamentary experience, ministers or former ministers and party members or leaders. Their main characteristics are to be found at the start of this book.

The guidepost

Gender parity and partnership in politics are central to the functioning and strengthening of democracy. Indeed, only joint and equitable political action by women and men can guarantee that politics truly interprets and responds to the needs and aspirations of society as a whole. Men and women bring to politics a different flair and different political priorities. Society as a whole stands to benefit when women are involved in the political process in more equitable numbers. This vision of democracy permeates the book and emerges very clearly from the experience and the comments which women politicians the world over shared through their interviews.

The content

The study focuses on ways in which women make a difference in politics and is divided into ten chapters and supporting appendices. In the process it opens a window seldom opened – and in any case never yet opened so wide – on the day-to-day experience of women holding political posts, their views of society and of the impact of relations between men and women on the conduct of politics, their hopes, the moral and material limitations they encounter and how they reconcile their political commitment, the demands of their private lives and their emotional lives.

1 Chapter one

Chapter one introduces the survey respondents, identifying their backgrounds by region, age and civil status, family size, level of education, and ideology.

2 Chapter two

Chapter two discusses democracy, equality and power as analysed by women and focuses on participation. Respondents believe that women are less involved than men at all levels of political life, but they see an equal partnership as the foundation of political freedom and democracy. The survey highlights

the historical, legal and cultural reasons women give for this state of affairs. The respondents discuss the changes in the dynamics of power required for progress towards partnership.

Chapter three focuses on how women make a difference. It outlines specific policy areas where change has occurred and how and why women's priorities differ from those of men. Barriers established by the dominant social values, language and mores are specified. Women discuss their responsiveness to women's needs and to people's needs, and compare their own views and practices on transparency, improved governance and a conciliatory approach to politics, with those of their male colleagues.

3 Chapter three

Chapter four describes party politics, electoral systems and women politicians' responses to the experience of quotas. A recurrent theme of this chapter is the gap between rules and actual practice. But women talk of steady albeit slow progress in their party's attention to issues of concern to women voters, and of structural changes to encourage female participation at higher levels of the party bureaucracy. Most of them, however, report and regret that measures such as adjusting starting and ending times of party political meetings to suit women, particularly as regards their family commitments, have so far not been taken.

4 Chapter four

Chapter five examines the motivations and circumstances for women to become political candidates and their experiences in running for office. The respondents report that their main motivation in becoming a candidate was a sense of service, an overall desire to do something for the community. The chapter compares the various channels of entry: family background, the trade union movement, the NGO channel, the political party channel and the political circumstances of the country that may spur the initial decision to run for political office. Shortage of money and other resources and a lack of training for campaign preparation are major concerns. There are specific ideas about the kind of support needed for women candidates, and about changes in party practices to enable women to run as candidates on an equal basis with men. On becoming a candidate, women generally had major inhibitions in regard to constituents, public speaking, contact with the media and defining a campaign image. They take the view that preparation both for their campaign and for their future role as a member of parliament would have been of great use in their legislative work and for the analysis of the national budget. Generally, they also think that incoming women politicians can benefit from the direct support and advice of seasoned politicians, especially women.

5 Chapter five

Chapter six reflects on the experiences of women in parliament and the support received and obstacles encountered once they have achieved their MP rank. Respondents generally report how challenging and difficult they find it to adjust to the conflictive culture of parliament. They feel, however, that their pressure has brought about changes in how questions are addressed and resolved in parliament, in addition to a marked improvement in legislation concerning the status of women. They reckon that the presence of women ultimately results in men using more respectful parliamentary language and in limited but encouraging modifications of the established rules and practices. They discuss the influence of a woman presiding officer and, where they have known such a situation, they tend to say that a woman in the chair makes a difference in parliament in more than one respect. They generally report that there are

6 Chapter six

no written rules on the principle of equitable distribution of men and women in the bureau of parliament, arguing that there should be women on the standing committee of parliament and on all parliamentary committees and discussing the existence of a committee on women's status. The chapter identifies the importance of positive role models and the mentoring of women politicians as they enter parliament. The respondents also feel that a gender balance in decision-making posts in parliamentary support services is important as a matter of principle and would improve the working climate within Parliament and the quality of the work done.

7 Chapter seven

Chapter seven highlights the almost universally low numbers of women in the Executive while demonstrating how a few women, or even just one, begin to make a difference. It examines the portfolios held by women and the areas in which women make a difference. It discusses how having women at the level of the Executive can enhance the gender sensitivity of government action. It also analyses how the presence of women at that policy-making level can act as a strong incentive for other women and alter the outlook of men.

8 Chapter eight

Chapter eight asks whether women consider they have a special responsibility to represent the needs and interests of other women. While women believe they should be advocates for other women, this is not their only interest. The gender analysis approach to legislation and policy is a major concern. The continuing under-representation of women lends added emphasis to continuing links with the women's NGO community and how such co-operation can be encouraged. Women politicians are also highly aware of their representing other women as role models and are sensitive to the expectations others have of them in the public arena.

9 Chapter nine

Chapter nine records how women politicians are constantly up against reconciling their family and professional commitments, and it illustrates the social and cultural chasm between male and female experiences. Women frequently still care for a husband, children and ageing parents, besides running the household generally. While planning and managing time with great care, they still experience the guilt and anxiety of separation from their families for long periods of time.

10 Chapter ten

Chapter ten explains how women politicians view their personal interactions with the media. Sensationalism, marginalisation and trivialisation are common themes of the examples from respondents' experiences, where the media on the whole treat politicians differently according to gender. Most women, however, view their interaction with the media as good and analyse ways in which their relationship may be improved and enhanced.

The common cause

Over 80% of the respondents are confident that women change politics and restore the public's trust in it.

They consider that women have a conception of society and politics differing from that of men and that the fact of politics being shaped and led as much by

women as by men would be a guarantee of democracy. This would also be more likely to offer a better response to the needs of society as a whole than a politics shaped and led entirely or dominated by men.

The same proportion of respondents believe that there exists a specific contribution from women to the democratic process. They nevertheless consider that changes brought about by women in the outputs of politics are vitally dependent on how many women have a hand in policy-making.

While they tend to identify themselves as politicians with a mission towards society as a whole, they consider that, as women politicians, they are specially responsible for representing the needs and interests of other women and of the under-privileged and believe that the action of women inside their political party, in Parliament or at the level of the Executive is bringing about a changed perception of the respective roles of men and women in politics and in society in general.

Conclusion

A saying from the Comoros puts it very graphically: *"You cannot clap with only one hand"*. In the same way, women do not claim their share of a privilege or try to wrest something from men. They simply affirm that it takes two to achieve democracy and, through the wealth and variety of their experience, they bear out the validity of principle 4 of the Universal Declaration on Democracy¹. This is not simply a matter of justice; it is both common sense and good governance.

Yet, while gender equality is generally embodied in the law, the actual barriers and difficulties faced by women in politics are clear evidence that the principles of parity and equality in a democracy continue to be thwarted by well-established sets of rules and practices which have been developed in the absence of women. These difficulties cannot, however, be solely blamed on men; women, too, may act against women's interests through being blinded by selfish interests and ambitions or overwhelmed by the divisiveness of politics.

Women can nevertheless clearly identify ongoing changes generated by the mere fact of their presence on the political scene or resulting from their individual and collective political action, all of which slowly builds a democracy based on gender equity. They can point to tangible achievements signifying an improvement for society as a whole and for women and the weakest sectors of the population in particular. These achievements are to be found, more especially, in the areas of social security, gender equality, the fight against violence and abuses against women and children, employment, services or the environment and, to a lesser extent as yet, arms control or conflict resolution.

In fact, the collection of individual "testimonies" from women of all cultures and political backgrounds that served to prepare this survey confirms a degree of communality of experience and perception among women, irrespective of where they live. It shows women to be convinced that they bring to politics different perspectives and values than those of men and that they thus heighten and extend the process, making it more democratic. It also points to the existence of a strong underlying current in politics which, sooner or later, will lead to radical changes in how politics is conducted and possibly to a partial

“The achievement of democracy presupposes a genuine partnership between men and women in the conduct of the affairs of society in which they work in equality and complementarity, drawing mutual enrichment from their differences.”

Universal Declaration on Democracy,
adopted by the Council of the
Inter-Parliamentary Union, Cairo,
16 September 1997



shift in its outcomes. Yet a core question remains for women, and indeed may increasingly exercise men: how can politics and family life best be reconciled?

In the next steps towards change women should not be expected to bear the entire burden of the process. Partnership demands the active and equal involvement of men, with demonstrations of will on their part, both in politics and in the home, to realise a democracy where *"political policies and national legislation are decided upon jointly by women and men with equitable regard for the interests and opportunities of both halves of the population"* as the IPU advocated already in 1992.

¹ Inter-Parliamentary Union, 16 September 1997: in *Democracy: Its Principles and Achievements*, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Geneva 1998, ISBN 922-9142-036-0.



INTRODUCING THE SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Number and origin

A total of 187 women from 65 countries replied to the 1999 IPU survey of Women's Political Experience and their Contribution to the Democratic Process¹.

-
- ▶ Albania, Algeria Andorra, Angola, Australia, Belgium, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominica, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mexico, Mozambique, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Norway, Peru, Poland, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Seychelles, South Africa, Spain, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Tunisia, United Kingdom, Vanuatu, Zimbabwe
-

Political status

The respondents included cabinet ministers and holders of junior Executive posts in a ministry (Minister of State, State Secretary, Under State Secretary, Parliamentary Secretary).

Respondents further included presiding officers of parliament and elected and appointed parliamentarians from upper and lower houses. Most of them had entered parliament in the last five to ten years and nearly half of them had served only one term in parliament.

▶ Entry of respondents into parliament:

1950 - 1959	1
1960 - 1969	1
1970 - 1979	9
1980 - 1984	12
1985 - 1989	19
1990 - 1994	57
1995 - 1998	66
No response	*22

▶ Parliamentary term served by respondents:

One term	68	45%
Two terms	43	28%
Three terms	20	13%
Four terms	13	9%
Five terms	3	2%
Six terms	3	2%
Seven terms	1	0,7%
No response	*36	

Respondents in the Executive:

-
- ▶ 29 holding an executive responsibility at the time of their interview
-
- ▶ 6 having held such a responsibility in the past
-
- ▶ Some of these respondents had been the first women in their countries to hold a Cabinet position, or the first women to hold that particular post
-

It may be noted that, in October 1999, women are represented in 170 of the 179 existing parliaments and occupy 5,010 of the 38,643 seats for which the gender of the parliamentarians is known. Women total 13% of members of national parliaments round the globe and 11.7% of the world's members of the Executive. There are 10 female heads of State or Government and 25 women preside over a house of parliament².

► **Women in parliament
October 1999**

Parliaments with at least one woman	95.0%
Woman presiding officer of parliament (25)	10.2%
Women in parliament	13.0%

► **Women in government
August 1999**

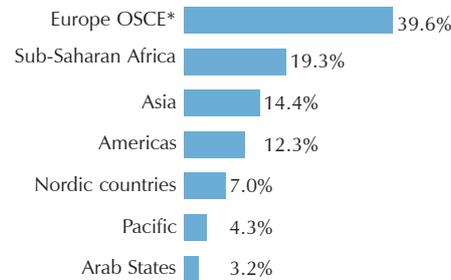
States with at least one woman in the Executive	76.3%
Women heads of State or government (10)	5.3%
Women members of the Executive	11.7%

Regional origin

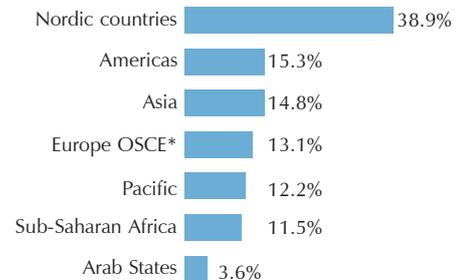
The largest group of respondents were from Europe* (39.6%).

Responses from the Arab region (3.2%), America (12.3%) and Asia (14.4%) were closest to the proportion of women in parliament in the regions concerned.

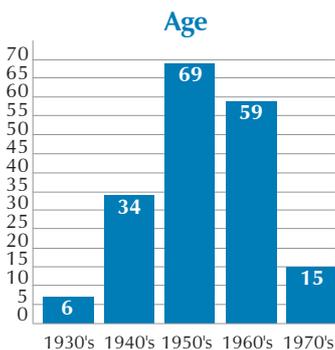
Respondents by region



Regional average of women in parliament, October 1999



* Europe : OSCE member countries minus Nordic countries



Age

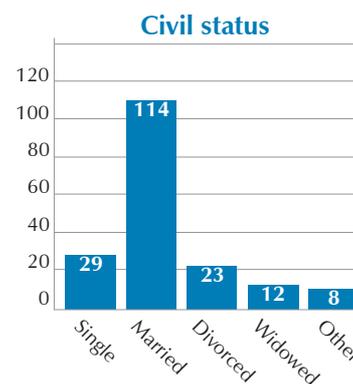
The majority of respondents were born between 1941 and 1960. The oldest was aged 70 and the youngest 31.

When the six eldest women in the survey were born, women had attained the right to vote in only 42 countries.

Civil status

The largest proportion of respondents (60%) were married, a close proportion were either single or divorced, and a smaller proportion were widowed.

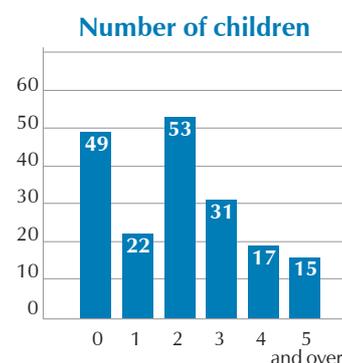
Those assigning themselves to the "other" category may have been engaged, separated or in a de facto relationship.



Children and dependents

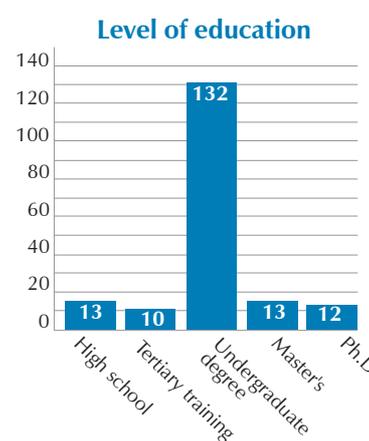
Seventy-three per cent (138) of the women parliamentarians were mothers, with a total of 381 children. Just over half of these mothers had one or two children, while three respondents had seven, ten and thirteen children respectively.

Thirty-four respondents were responsible for the care in their homes of one or more older people, and five were responsible for people with major disabilities.



Level of education

The women had all had access to education. 7% had a high school diploma; 6% had tertiary training; 14% held postgraduate degrees and 73% had an undergraduate degree.

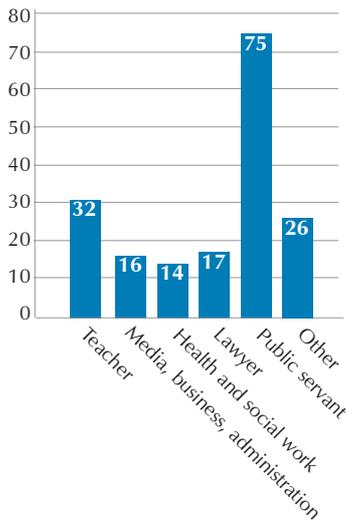


Professional background

The largest group of women graduates had held professional positions as public or civil servants before entering parliament (42%).

Teaching had been another major employment area (17%), the majority of respondents having held posts in the tertiary branch. Six respondents were journalists, 6 were doctors, 4 were nurses and 4 were social workers. Ten percent of the respondents were lawyers, and there was one accountant.

Profession



The category "other" could have ranged from farmers to engineers. At 14%, this category is intriguing since 40% of respondents reported that they continued to practise their profession while in office.

Ideological background

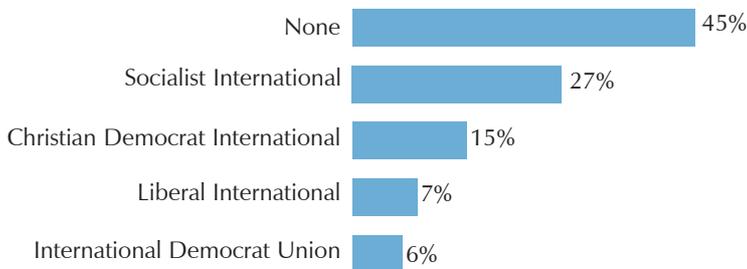
The respondents were asked to locate their party on the traditional spectrum: left, right, centre, far left, far right. They were further asked to state whether the political party to which they belonged was affiliated to:

- ▶ The Christian Democrat International
- ▶ The International Democrat Union
- ▶ The Liberal International
- ▶ The Socialist International

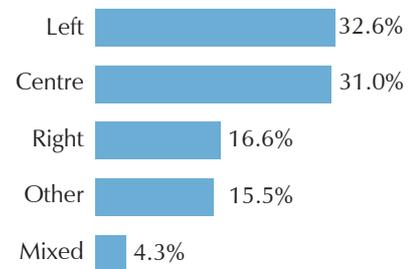
Ideologically the respondents reflected the general expectations of commentators on politics and parties which promote women, i.e. that women are more likely to be 'admitted' to representation from the centre or the left.

The largest proportion of respondents identified themselves as being on the left of the political spectrum (32.6%), with a slightly smaller proportion in the centre (31%). There are 16.6% of respondents on the right. 4.3% identified themselves as "centre right" or "centre left". The "other" category of 15.5% included women in appointed positions without party affiliation, and women belonging to a party whose primary identity was religious or ethnically based.

Affiliation of the political parties of respondents



Self attributed ideological background of respondents



1. The fact that some questions were unanswered explains why, in some of the graphs presented in this chapter, the total of 187 is not always reached.
 2. See chapter 7, *Women Making a Difference in the Executive* pp. 123-134.

The Party Chief Whip

Eastern Europe

Born in Eastern Europe in 1953, PCW is married with one child. She has a Ph.D. and has worked in the media all her professional life. PCW does not consider that women enjoy the same legal opportunities as men to participate in national political life, although in practice they are as active as men.

"Men in a post-totalitarian, post-soviet state continue to consider politics as their sole right. But with great difficulty things do change, and this depends also on women. If the party leaders are intelligent, they take advantage of the presence of women, for the latter often have an unforeseen promptness, a certain balance. But their promotion in the managerial organs, for example for the post of party vice-president is blocked, despite the efforts."

PCW believes that thinking and acting politically is independent of an individual's sex. *"Women and men have a similar conception of society and politics and similar political priorities. Women know how to adapt to the power relationships that characterise politics."* However she does think that compared with men, *"women have special talents or advantages for working effectively, which can change the nature of politics, and help restore the public's trust in politics."*

"The presence of women moderates extreme positions, decisions are more weighed, especially given that our women have strength of character. Men tend to accept women's contributions when a lot of work is required. The idea that women must work from A to Z while men must be in charge persists. Bearing in mind that competition between men and women is very hard on the women, the women who penetrate the areas said to be dominated by men are of better quality, that's why they contribute more."

Men shape and lead politics in PCW's country. *"If women exercised the same influence, the principles of equality and the guarantee of democracy would be better served, and there would be a better response to the needs of society as a whole."*

"Practically, there is a battle between the knowledge that mentalities must change and the actual state of things and the opposition to carry it out and because there are more men in the managerial organs, they vote what they please. A solidarity exists among them. But I think the situation will change."

"Women's increased participation in political life does change the output of politics, but it also depends on the woman's character. It seems to me that women are more organised, less indifferent, more disciplined and sensitive. There are even cases in which men believe in the obligation to promote women, because women, above and beyond anything else, also have to raise children."

"A minimum of solidarity among wise women makes the men withdraw. The men often demonstrate weakness in the presence of women."

PCW believes change is a matter of time, but sees a 35% quota as a minimum percentage of women needed to bring about change. *"A minimum of solidarity among wise women makes the men withdraw. The men often demonstrate weakness in the presence of women."*

PCW's own route to politics was through her political party and her family culture. *"Encouragement always came from wise men who were active and hard-working, who can appreciate a woman's sacrifice. Encouragement has always come from the family - my husband and daughter."* But there were obstacles in personal and public life : PCW was included on the list of the party's candidates *"in spite of the acid opposition of weak men"*.

PCW does not have domestic services at home, but believes they are essential for a woman to reconcile her family life and political commitment. She has not practiced her profession since being elected.

PCW's political party is to the right on the traditional spectrum and belongs to the Liberal International. While her political party has a structure receptive to women, she does not believe that political parties are generally structures in which women feel at ease. *"Women active in the party have modified the basic texts of the party, but rules and practices concerning election to decision making positions within the party are not fair to men and women."*

There is no Women's branch of the party. *"I was requested by the party's management to develop it. I do not agree with this. In practice, the cause proved not to be viable; in addition the men themselves have contempt for this situation. This reality is the expression of the battle that is taking place in their conscience."*

PCW's main motivations to become a candidate were an overall desire to do something for the community, the challenge of the position, a taste for risk, and encouragement from her immediate family. She describes her major obstacle as the cultural values and attitudes hostile to a woman's participation. But there was a further consideration which may explain PCW's reference to a taste for risk. She had held a major public media position for four years. *"The risk was one of exposure which could have eliminated me from the political race."*

PCW was elected in a majority electoral system, and while she thinks such a system favours women, in her country a mixed system would be most conducive to the election of women. Yet during the campaign the party ensured that all candidates freely received preparation in conducting the campaign, relating to constituents, and in legislative work and budgetary analysis.

PCW entered parliament in 1993 and she has been the leader of her parliamentary group for several years. She does not consider the distribution of women on parliamentary committees to be satisfactory, and considers the presence of women on all committees to be a better situation. *"Every man wants his daughter to live in better conditions. But not every man is aware of the effectiveness and opportuneness of having women on each parliamentary committee. There is no Committee on Women's Status in the parliament. Such a committee must be*

“ If decision-making positions were distributed in a balanced manner between men and women, the quality of the work, and the working climate of politics would be enhanced. ”

established, but not without the presence of men. If women continue to lament their situation, without the presence and the involvement of men, it isn't worth the effort."

Within the parliament, the fields of action in which women's presence is the most marked are education and culture, legal and constitutional matters and social affairs and health. But the presence of women has not brought any marked change in how problems are addressed and solved, or improvements in legislation or special interests concerning the status of women. There has not even been a change in parliamentary language and behaviour. PCW considers that *"if decision-making positions were distributed in a balanced manner between men and women, the quality of the work, and the working climate of politics would be enhanced."*

PCW describes her relations with the media as good. In her experience, they view men and women differently, and this works to women's disadvantage. The media is also run by men.

In respect of her relationship with the NGO's, PCW describes them as being sufficiently in contact with her and offering the necessary information, but not supporting her effectively in her parliamentary activity. *"The events they organise take place at the same time as plenary sessions. We cannot be absent. Secondly, there is no barrier in the relationship between the women deputies and some NGOs. I cannot accept that. Yet, lately NGO's have helped greatly to change men's attitudes."*

"For now as I have already said, women are a product of a harsher competition than men, they are scholarly, responsible, serious, with a very decent behaviour. Men are aware of this reality, but do not acknowledge it publicly. In the future there must also be greater solidarity among women. Men must have more character and women politicians must have more intelligence to win over those who envy them." ■

2

WOMEN'S VIEWS ON DEMOCRACY, EQUALITY AND POWER TODAY

At the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in September 1995, it was determined that women were not always receiving their share of the benefits of economic and political change. Evidence of that situation was women's under-representation in the executive and the legislature and at other decision-making levels of political participation. The lack of women's political participation was identified as a key barrier to genuine democracy.

Eighteen months later, at the New Delhi Conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, 121 men and 119 women from 133 political parties and nine independents engaged in dialogue on *Towards Partnership between Men and Women in Politics*¹ across a broad spectrum of political and cultural backgrounds. In the concluding conference statement (at para. 44) the President of the Conference noted that:

"The imbalance between men and women in politics is undeniable, and consensus between men and women has arisen here on the urgent need to remedy this situation I wish to assert here our commitment to take up this responsibility to the full. Democracy and the development of our countries are at stake."

The Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Union later adopted the Universal Declaration on Democracy², which places special emphasis on greater partnership between men and women in politics with a view to more representative democracies. It also urged Governments and Parliaments throughout the world to be guided by its content.

The first principle of democracy was stated as being

"... a universally recognised ideal as well as a goal, which is based on common values shared by peoples throughout the world community irrespective of cultural, political, social and economic differences. It is thus a basic right of citizenship to be exercised under conditions of freedom, equality, transparency and responsibility, with due respect for the plurality of views, and the interest of the polity."

In addition, Principle Six of the Declaration states that *"Democracy is inseparable from the rights set forth in the international instruments"*. These include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

“The achievement of democracy presupposes a genuine partnership between men and women in the conduct of the affairs of society in which they work in equality and complementarity, drawing mutual enrichment from their differences.”

Universal Declaration on Democracy, adopted by the Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Cairo, 16 September 1997

CAN ONE SPEAK OF DEMOCRACY WHERE WOMEN ARE NOT INVOLVED IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS?

Women's participation in public affairs is central to the functioning and strengthening of democracy and also crucial to the struggle against oppression, comments a woman from Central America.

However, when questioned in this survey about the overall participation of women in politics, an overwhelming number of respondents (82.5%) commented that women did not take as active a part in politics as men.

This claim was backed by a comparison between the proportions of women and men in Parliament (see Chapter 6).

- | | |
|-------|--|
| ▶ 75% | of the respondents believed the low proportion of women in government (see Chapter 7) was also evidence of a less active role in national political life |
| ▶ 40% | believed that there were other reasons for women's current level of participation |
| ▶ 39% | believed voter participation was a significant indicator |
| ▶ 77% | a resounding number of participants identified prevailing values about gender roles to be of significance in the lower participation of women in national politics |

Women participants in the survey stated that democracy was an ideal which embodied the notion of participation. Their vision of democracy required women's involvement in political decision-making. Without women's participation there could be no democracy, stated many respondents:

Put simply, ... if women are not present at policy and decision-making levels, there is a democratic deficit. Decisions taken without women's perspective lack credibility in a democratic context. (Western Europe)³

Democracy is participation. Therefore, by their participation, women broaden the democratic arena. Democracy is the free expression of opinion ... Democracy is a collection of values - respect for the opinion of others, tolerance and dialogue, and women participate by expounding and developing these values, beginning within the family and passing through the professional world, to apply them in a general manner to the social world. (North Africa)

The democratic process was viewed by respondents as a constant participatory condition. Democracy encompassed methods, substance and outcomes. Respondents described democracy as a process, as a condition, as a goal and as an outcome, as part of the same continuum. What distinguished each component was the right to participation at all stages:

The mere participation of women in the political life of a country is an important step in its democratic life. It offers equal opportunity practically and not only theoretically. It leads to a new perspective and a diversity of contributions to policy-making and to priorities of development, and it gives the female population a role in deciding the future of their country and the rights and opportunities for their gender. (Middle East)

Given the sometimes long battle for suffrage⁴, women respondents to this survey noted that they understood why democracy involved full participation across a diverse spectrum of political opinion:

“You cannot clap with only one hand.”

A proverb from the Comoros

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979

Article 1.

For the purposes of the present Convention, the term “discrimination against women” shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

Article 7.

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

- (a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;
- (b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government;
- (c) To participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.

Article 8.

States Parties shall 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.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

Article 2.

1. Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to respect and to ensure to all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction the rights recognized in the present Covenant, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.
2. Where not already provided for by existing legislative or other measures, each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to take the necessary steps, in accordance with its constitutional processes and with the provisions of the present Covenant, to adopt such other measures as may be necessary to effect to the rights recognized in the present Covenant.
3. Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes:
 - (a) To ensure that any person whose rights or freedoms as herein recognized are violated shall have an effective remedy, notwithstanding that the violation has been committed by persons acting in an official capacity;
 - (b) To ensure that any person claiming such a remedy shall have his right thereto determined by competent judicial, administrative or legislative authorities, or by any other competent authority provided for by the legal system of the State, and to develop the possibilities of judicial remedy;
 - (c) To ensure that the competent authorities shall enforce such remedies when granted.

Article 3.

The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all civil and political rights set forth in the present Covenant.

Article 26.

All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

... in Switzerland women were kept away from political life for a long time, they are more sensitive [than men] to questions of democracy and to questions concerning respect for minority opinions. Women have had the vote in Switzerland since 1971. (Western Europe)

In those countries where there had been a recent reform of discriminatory policies, participation was looked on eagerly as the key to democracy:

The participation of women and the mass mobilisation they bring about are of inestimable value in achieving democracy. The contribution of women to a country's democratic process cannot be overemphasised. Since the events of 1991, the women of my country have proved their organisational capacity every day, taking private initiatives and setting up countless women's organisations. (West Africa)

NO PARTNERSHIP IN POLITICS WITHOUT GENDER EQUALITY

Politics illustrates the dominant values of any given society and reflects the qualities of the partnership between men and women. The Inter-Parliamentary Union asserts that what is needed in a democracy "is *nothing less than a new social contract in which men and women work in equality*"¹⁵.

Principle Four of the Universal Declaration on Democracy (1997) states:

"The achievement of democracy presupposes a genuine partnership between men and women in the conduct of the affairs of society in which they work in equality and complementarity, drawing mutual enrichment from their differences."

Similarly, respondents to this IPU survey noted that genuine partnership in a democracy implied gender equality:

A democracy which excludes women, or in which women are represented only marginally, is not a real democracy. Women's participation in policy-making is a question of justice and equality. (Western Europe)

Some of them noted that equal partnership between men and women should reflect the proportion of both genders in the population:

From the moment a development policy is defined to the time it is implemented, the opinion of 51% of the nation's population cannot be ignored. It is an inescapable fact which must be accepted by all aspects of society. (West Africa)

In the experience of other respondents, equal partnership between men and women was the basis of political freedom:

The fact that politics is defined and led by women as much as by men is a guarantee of freedom as well as a source of diversity and richness in all areas of life. Through my experience as an activist in a party which believes in democracy as an indispensable tool to guarantee freedom, my vision in politics is inspired by our revolutionary history in which women fought side by side with their brothers, with the men. It is the same fight which must be continued today at all levels in order to permit the essential complementarity between men and women in all areas of life, including politics, to find its full expression. (North Africa)

Respondents emphasised that difference should be welcomed in the political partnership between men and women. They noted that men and women had different methods of achieving goals but such diversity was central in improving political proceedings:

... men and women's vision is different and ... the method of developing political action is also different, I think it is important that there should be room in politics for both views, as they are not contradictory but rather mutually enriching. (Central America)

They stressed that co-operation between men and women in politics enhanced democracy:

Democracy is improved by the efforts of both sexes; it is a complementary process. (Western Europe)

EQUALITY AS THE FOUNDATION OF DEMOCRACY: FROM LAW TO PRACTICE

Of the one hundred and eighty-seven respondents to this survey, 84.0% believed that equal shaping and leadership of politics was one method of guaranteeing democracy.

It would be undemocratic to exclude women from the democratic process and I, therefore, consider their contribution undisputed. I cannot see how women would not contribute to this process in their capacity as citizens. Moreover, their role within the family has often proved crucial since they have, on many occasions, supported men in their fight for democracy. (Southern Europe)

To most respondents, the concepts of equality and democracy were founded on equal participation in the socio-political process:

Equality between the sexes is the only democratic way - and the way to ensure that different kinds of experience are represented at all levels. If policies were shaped and implemented by women as much as by men, it would be important in relation to the principle of equality, which guarantees democracy, and would also be able to respond to the needs of society as a whole; unlike the policies which are drawn up and decided entirely by men or dominated by them. (West Africa)

Principle Seven of the Universal Declaration on Democracy highlights the importance of equality under the law when it states:

"Democracy is founded on the primacy of the law and the exercise of human rights. In a democratic state no one is above the law and all are equal before it."

In the context of legal equality, men and women are treated in the same way. However, the respondents to this survey repeatedly identified the limitations of the assumption that equal legal treatment produced equality in practice:

Although legally we are on an equal footing, in practice women are relegated to second or third place because they do not take part in the decision-making process. (Central America)

The combination of efforts on the part of all of society's components is indispensable to tackle and resolve the problems facing society. Emphasis should thus be placed on two complementary concepts: the concept of **parity** which reflects the fact that persons of one or the other sex are different but nonetheless equal; and the concept of **partnership**, which shows that a creative synergy can be created between men and women so as to tackle the community's problems effectively.

Plan of Action to correct present imbalances in the participation of men and women in political life, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Paris, March 1994

Such observations did not simply relate to case and statutory law; they were far-reaching. Women noted that while basic statutory texts stated the right to equality, in their experience their rights were not always realised:

Constitutionally we have the same rights and responsibilities, but in practice that is not the case. (Central America)

The concluding statement of the President of the IPU New Delhi Conference noted (at para. 12) that nearly all male and female delegates had highlighted that while the Constitutions of their countries provided for equality between men and women, legal and actual equality did not always concur:

"All those who spoke affirmed that, in politics, there was a huge gap between law and practice with regard to the principle of equality."

The gap between law and practice was ascribed by some women to women's lack of political status. In spite of wide political participation, in some nation States, women did not hold powerful positions of authority:

We have the highest women's representation in the world (43%) but men still dominate as party leaders and in the most "heavy" positions. The party I belong to has for the first time a majority of women in Parliament (10 out of 18), so when I marked "no" in the above questions it means only a slight difference. The civil society is not as equal as in our Parliaments and I believe we have to make more progress there to make real equality in politics. Women's political power is increasing - still not equal. (Nordic country)

Almost all respondents (94.4%) claimed that politics was not led and shaped by women as much as men. This followed the historical pattern where women and men have not been treated identically, as one respondent explained:

Men initially designed politics, and it has been that way for a long time and does not have principles of equal rights and participation. Democracy must be redefined to be more participative and less exclusive. I think it should be redefined on a gender-equality basis. Politics must keep pace with global change and cannot be static; it must be more participative, for women, for indigenous and young people. If something has gone wrong with politics it is that it was not conducted from a woman's point of view or from the point of view of our country's cultural diversity. (Central America)

Respondents to the survey identified cultural practices as reasons why legal equality did not always produce equality in practice for women:

The Constitution of [my country] guarantees ... 100% identical rights. But the traditional practices of the people, the religion and the prevailing system of education result in differences in the participation of women and men. (Southern Africa)

It was suggested by many women that equality in practice was problematic because women's experiences were different from those of men.

There are more women than men in my country, but men dominate public life. For example: 10 MPs are women out of a total of 180; two female ministers out of more than 30 ministers or secretaries of state. To a certain extent, for cultural reasons men continue to attach more importance to the prime and noble role of the woman as homemaker and mother. They still do not have an innate sense of the value of her intensive participation in public life. (West Africa)

“... women's political rights must be considered in the overall context of human rights and cannot be dissociated therefrom. Men and women politicians, governments and parliaments must pursue their efforts towards the recognition of these rights and the implementation of the international instruments which relate to them. What is basically at stake is democracy itself.”

Concluding Statement, IPU Conference "Towards Partnership Between Men and Women in Politics", New Delhi, 14-18 February 1999

Legal equality assumes that by removing gendered legal barriers, men and women have the same opportunities and same successes. Yet legal equality may ignore economic, social and culturally entrenched inequalities or social and economic differences between groups and individuals. Legal equality appeared to be gender neutral, but could allow perpetuation of the power of a socially privileged group :

Legislative equality of rights between women and men in [my country] does not improve the problem of equal opportunities for participation by women in political life. (Central Asia)

Viewing equality from the position of "practice" exposes the experiences of those who are excluded in spite of policies which enunciate legal equality:

Men and women in [my country] have equal rights and opportunities in the Constitution. Yet the actual participation of women in the political life of the country has been minimal. Although the participation of women as voters has registered very high numbers, women have not been able to succeed as candidates for Parliament. Because of the low level of participation in two important bodies, Parliament and Cabinet, the influence of women has not been felt yet in spite of their high standard of qualifications. The number of influential women in political parties is also very limited. (Middle East)

Equality in practice requires an examination of the actual conditions experienced by groups and individuals:

To accept women in charge [is difficult] in some regions where they say that women must not put themselves ahead of men: in the north, our sisters are finding it difficult to join in areas dominated by men. (Central Africa)

Viewing equality from the "practice" perspective takes in the aim of eliminating socially created discriminatory barriers:

As a member of the executive committee of the party I am often kept out of important decisions and even meetings with the President of the Republic. I am supposed to look after the social problems of the party. My suggestions are often ignored given that I speak my mind, which bothers some people. (East Africa)

Respondents consistently reiterated that historical and cultural values perpetuated inequality in practice:

In spite of a long tradition of active participation in the work force by a vast majority of women, both women and men see motherhood and marriage as the most important goals in a woman's life. A common standpoint is that "politics is a man's business", and that women are too emotional to deal with affairs of the State. The reasons for this are not to be found in education, with women in [my country] being as educated as their male counterparts. It is simply because of the stereotyped and traditional structure of society - northern [part of the country] having a typically Central European and the southern part a typically Mediterranean tradition, both quite patriarchal. (Central Europe)

In the experience of some respondents a lack of practical support was a disadvantage which had an impact on equality in practice:

When a draft constitution is drawn up, for example, women are absent. In political parties where women are used for meetings and marches, to fight campaigns and to vote for the party's candidates, they are not promoted to decision-making positions. Nor are they allowed to give their points of view on

important problems in the country and it is impossible for them to be candidates for specific posts because they receive no support. (West Africa)

It was common for respondents to highlight the fact of fewer women representatives in political power as evidence of legal equality failing to produce equality in practice:

There seems to exist a big gap between law and practice in [my country], because although women enjoy by law absolute equality with men, in practice there are many disparities, especially in decision-making positions. Voting is compulsory but it seems that not even women vote for women. Women hold only 5.6% of parliamentary seats and there is no woman member of the government. I believe it is a question of time. We have to fight prevailing values and traditions which determine different roles for men and women. (Southern Europe)

WOMEN AND POLITICAL POWER

In a message to the IPU New Delhi Conference in 1997, Mr Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations, linked power with democracy. He noted that even in recent history the legal right to participation had not always empowered women:

"In practice power for women remains elusive, despite the widespread movement towards democratisation in the past decade and despite progress in women's higher education."

Discussing power as a principle of democracy the Inter-Parliamentary Union stated as the fifth principle of democracy:

"A state of democracy ensures that the processes by which power is acceded to, wielded and alternates allow for free political competition and are the product of open, free and non-discriminatory participation by the people, exercised in accordance with the rule of law in both letter and spirit."

Respondents suggested that democracy involved transparency. By transparency women did not just mean the ability to evaluate what had gone on after an event; they expected transparency at all stages of the process, governed by a sense of ethics and inclusion, in procedures that were themselves ethical. But this was not always their experience:

The general practice is that in my party we hold an internal selection process which comes up with one candidate for the general elections, and it is in this party process that women are generally discouraged if one is not strong because men use dirty political campaigns. (Southern Africa)

Others claimed politics was not gender specific:

Politics understood as a care for common welfare does not depend on sex... We can find differences between man and woman, and we can find differences between two women and also between two men. (Central Europe)

"The fact that there is equal opportunity for access to political power is a guarantee of internal democratisation in all social structures. We can say of no country that it has a genuine and authentic democracy while discrimination continues against half the world's population."

Respondent from
Central America

WOMEN SHAPING POLITICS TOGETHER WITH MEN: DOES IT MATTER?

A minority of fifteen per cent (15%) of the respondents said that politics led and shaped as much by women as by men was of no particular consequence to society:

The results of politics depend on ideas; and on the concepts which are disseminated within the parties. It isn't because there are more women that there is more equality, or more democracy. For me, gender has nothing to do with this sort of debate. (Western Europe)

Women respondents spoke of having experienced marginalisation in parliamentary and government procedures:

Today in most African countries politics is dominated by men, and women, even if they are more and more numerous in politics, can only follow the line set by men. Even if they take part in the debates, men have sewn it all up from the start. What they won't do to get power! (West Africa)

They noted that women's policy and legislative ideas were not always negotiated with ease at the political level:

I had a battle getting the male-dominated department to agree to include an acknowledgement that rape could take place in marriage and that sexual harassment be outlawed in legislation dealing with domestic issues. I succeeded chiefly with the very strong support of women prosecutors who gave excellent evidence and helped the decision. (Southern Africa)

They highlighted the need for training women to deal with political processes. It was suggested that the competitive nature of politics involved women learning new skills:

When women start to participate in politics, they copy the men's style. They do not have the skills to compete for power, but they are slowly getting them. When they manage to get a position, they do the job just as well as or better than men. (Central America)

The political ranking or position that women politicians held was cited as crucial to the political process. Power rather than critical mass was important according to some respondents:

What position with what power is often more important than numbers. In [my country] we are very equal when it comes to the representation of women and men in parliament/government. But these numbers are not representative of the political system as a whole; it is sometimes a mistake to believe that it is the number in itself that gives or guarantees equality. It can be misleading and "a hostage" for not having to do more! Numbers in themselves are not the whole truth! (Nordic country)

There was a clear theme throughout the data that leadership in politics was an important feature of the principle of equality:

At the end of the National Conference on Sovereignty (June 1991), many [people] were expecting to live in a democratic state in which respect for the plurality of opinions and the common interest were paramount. Unfortunately, as the political leaders are only men who constitute the majority in all decision-making institutions, the mechanisms to put a genuine democracy in place are taking a long time. (West Africa)

POWER BEHAVIOUR: A MALE FEATURE OR SOMETHING THAT TRANSCENDS GENDER VALUES?

Respondents shared their observations of political leadership and women's use of political power:

Many women reach positions of power behaving like men and giving no consideration to the needs of women. In that case, access to power becomes irrelevant to the objective of achieving a true democracy. (Central America)

Many of them suggested that women were "different" from men but politics had elicited the "same" behaviour on occasion, when power was at issue.

By tradition politics is identified with the male sex and this leads men to behave in a certain way with which most women do not agree. However, I believe that provided we have a substantial number of women in a national parliament (a minimum of 20%), these women can influence politics and can improve the standards of political behaviour. If, on the contrary, the number of women politicians is small as in the case of my country, politics may change women because, in order to survive politically, women may copy the men in their methods and behaviour. (Southern Europe)

While eighty-one (81%) per cent of the respondents claimed that women had a different conception of politics, it was apparent that power changed the political behaviour of both men and women. Abuse of power was a manageable risk for politicians, according to some respondents:

Politics and power change women. As women we change before we govern, we have different perspectives, projects, but we know what the State's policy priorities are. Sometimes for the better: as women rise to the challenge they develop greater strength of character and become more effective. Sometimes for the worse, as in the case of many women who reach power, then forget their solidarity with other women and seem to become just another man. The general public thinks that we are influenced by our emotions rather than by the facts, that we fight with our hearts rather than with our heads. I, of course, think they are wrong. The challenge is to prove it. (Central America)

It was reported that the use and abuse of power was related to social and cultural conditioning:

... thinking and acting politically is a personal, individual matter: there are women who do just like men and others who don't. I believe that it is mostly related to upbringing and orientation rather than a gender-related matter. In my country men think and act more politically than women in general because of their socialisation process and their respective upbringing. Although women are put off by power relationships as outsiders, I believe they know how to adapt to them once they become involved, but I do not believe they have mastered the art of using their power relationships yet, because of the short history of their participation and the still limited numbers of women in politics in my country. (Middle East)

Clearly for many of the respondents the socialisation and cultural processes which conditioned the ways in which powerful politicians behaved, were gender-specific:

Power and politics are designed and identified as a male sphere. The public sphere is a male sphere. Women have to stay at home. This changed during twelve years of the armed struggle for national liberation, but it has not been

easy to change our culture until now. There are a lot of women who are involved but that does not mean that the gender or power relations have changed. Power and its language are still male. The patriarch, the "androcracy", is dominant and so we must change society and capitalism. (South-East Africa)

In many countries the historical, social construction of men as powerful political leaders continued, despite recent democratic reforms:

Men in a post-totalitarian, post-Soviet State continue to regard politics as their exclusive right. But with great difficulty things do change, and this depends also on women. If the party leaders are intelligent, they take advantage of the presence of women, but their promotion in the managerial bodies, in the post of party vice-president, is blocked in spite of efforts. (Eastern Europe)

In the experience of some respondents, women did not enter politics for power "over" outcomes; rather women were interested in "power for", "with" and "to" the people:

Women generally do not wish to seek power. A lot of women enter politics because of a desire to effect change and are supportive of those able to improve quality of life. Thus there is a general lack of appreciation of how to adapt to and utilise power. Women are put off from participating in politics because they identify politics with men. They have not become aware of their power to change politics. (West Africa)

Respondents talked of bringing about social change in the way power operates and this meant being true to oneself rather than being concerned about images constructed by others:

The challenge is to remain a woman first and foremost, i.e. not put on a man's face, or show it to other women, or apply it to issues which preoccupy them more than others. This risk really does exist because women are afraid of being accused of being feminist, with its underlying implications of limited vision and aggression. (North Africa)

Constructing the image that respondents wished to portray as a politician to the public and their political peers was a significant factor in the way power operated:

The image of [my country's] political world is sad and doesn't encourage people to join in. Grey, dull old men, a heavy, stiff atmosphere, protocol, an abyss between the political world and the citizens, late nights, and timetable problems in relation to family life. A lot of us political women have cast ourselves in the male mould, hoping to gain more respect. We must impose our style, our physical differences, our way of dressing, but must also allow our emotions to show. Men certainly have emotions but they suppress them, which results in a cold, slightly contemptuous atmosphere divorced from the world's suffering. (Western Europe)



TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES AFFECTING POLITICS

The strongest theme to emerge across regions from the data was the concern that traditional gender roles and cultural values affected women's access and contribution to the democratic process:

Australian culture is very male, alcohol, sport and war-focused. Cultural differences such as art focus, community involvement, concern about social justice, concern about environment, are devalued. Social values that it is women's role to be wives and mothers are still strong in Australia. This creates psychological and emotional barriers to women participating in formal politics. Yet women are active participants in the less formal or informal politics of Australia in that they comprise 35% of workers for community services and members of management committees. There are also physical barriers and structural barriers to women's participation in politics, e.g. lack of child care services in Parliament House. (Pacific)

In this survey seventy-six per cent (76%) of the respondents replied that the prevailing values about gender roles, of men and women, limit the participation of women in politics:

Women have always been responsible for the home and for the education of the children. According to the cultural context her place is at home. Therefore, as a result of family responsibilities, few women become involved in political life. For example, in 1974, one of our friends was proposed as minister for social affairs. She declined the offer because she had decided to look after the education of her young children. Another woman was then considered for the same position. Her husband was against it, stating that her place was at home. Eighteen years later, i.e. in 1992, this woman attained high state office because she had divorced her husband. (Central Africa)

A vast majority of respondents (94.7%) claimed that an equal partnership between men and women in politics, in the leadership and shaping of politics by women as much as men, would be likely to provide a better response to the needs of society than politics shaped and led entirely or dominated by men.

The data confirm that women's political role is critical to democracy. Eighty-two (82%) per cent of the respondents affirmed that women have a specific contribution to make to the democratic process.

The survey findings confirm the validity of the assertion in the IPU New Delhi Declaration that what is at stake in the partnership between men and women in politics is "*democracy itself*" and that, as stated in the Universal Declaration, democracy is "*inseparable from international instruments*", the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. They confirm that democracy means the full and active participation of women as partners with men in politics and that such participation is not currently in evidence.

While these assertions endorse the notion that democracy presupposes gender equality, respondents have affirmed the UN Secretary General's observation that "*power for women remains elusive*".

These survey data confirm the IPU New Delhi Conference statement that "*the imbalance between women and men in politics is undeniable*". The respondents

to the survey overwhelmingly claimed that legal equality did not guarantee "equality in practice"; traditional, culturally constructed gendered roles perpetuated gender discrimination.

Article one of CEDAW states:

For the purposes of the present convention, the term "discrimination against women" shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men or women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

The United Nations Human Rights Committee's general comment [A/45/40, 1990,v.1, Annex vi, pp.173-175] on discrimination adopts the CEDAW concept of equality to be understood to imply, "any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference on the grounds of sex which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by all persons on an equal footing of all rights and freedoms". Achievement of "equality in practice" means taking action to remove all practices which prevent the full and equal exercise of women's partnership with men in politics.

“ To differing degrees, the cultural and religious values of civilization tend to assign - more or less rigidly - specific roles and tasks to men and to women. Thus, they tend to limit women's participation in political life or even to exclude women from politics, and action in this area remains the most delicate and long-term of all. Nonetheless, it should be possible, without destabilizing cultures or imposing values foreign to the national culture, to enhance or re-enhance women's dignity at the social level and allow the emergence of a more balanced image of the capacity of men and women to participate in the management of both private and public affairs.”

Plan of Action to correct present imbalances in the participation of men and women in political life, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Paris, March 1994

¹ *Towards Partnership between Men and Women in Politics*, New Delhi, 14-18 February 1997, Series Reports and Documents, N° 29, Geneva 1997, ISBN 92-9142-034-4.

² See text of the Declaration adopted by the Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Union at the 161st session in Cairo, 16 September 1997, in *Democracy: Its Principles and Achievements*, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Geneva 1998, ISBN 92-9142-036-0

³ While only a few respondents requested complete or partial confidentiality in their replies, a decision was made to omit from this book any references from commentary which could clearly identify a respondent to her political opponents. In this respect, references to the names of parties, countries and sometimes other clearly identifiable personal characteristics or positions held, have been omitted, unless the commentary was a general one that might have been made by any one of a number of women representatives. Respondents' comments have been identified only by region.

⁴ The World Chronology of the recognition of women's rights to vote and to stand for election may be found on the IPU Website: <http://www.ipu.org>

⁵ See *Men and Women in Politics: Democracy Still in the Making*, Series Reports and Documents, N° 28, Geneva 1997, ISBN 92-9142-024-7.

The Backbencher

Central America

Born in Central America in 1968, BB is the youngest survey respondent. She gained an undergraduate degree and became a school teacher before being elected to parliament. She was elected to Congress for her first term in 1996, in a very prominent position on the national list. Her family were very supportive: *"my parents, my friends (male and female), uncles, cousins, the family in general"*.

In BB's country, constitutionally men and women have the same rights and responsibilities, but in practice that is not the case. Women are not as active as men in national political life as voters, nor are they proportionately represented in parliament or in the Government. Prevailing values limit the participation of women. Yet BB believes that thinking and acting politically is independent of gender, and no longer identified with men only. Women do know how to use the power relations that characterise political work, and the talents and advantages needed to work effectively are independent of gender. *"As women we change before we govern, we have different perspectives, projects, but we know what are the State's policy priorities. Politics and power change women, though. Sometimes for the better: as women rise to the challenge they develop greater strength of character and become more effective. Sometimes for the worse, as is the case with many women who reach power, then forget their solidarity with other women and seem to become just another man. The general public thinks that we are influenced by our emotions rather than by the facts, that we fight with our hearts rather than with our heads. I, of course, think they are wrong. The challenge is to prove it."*

BB believes there is nothing special about women politicians to restore the public's trust in politics, but women do bring a different conception of society than men to politics, and have different priorities. Men still shape politics, and this has an impact on the current lack of equality, the nature of the democracy, and the inadequate response to the needs of society as a whole. Women do make a specific contribution in the political process. *"Since there are more women in Congress now we have the domestic and intra-family violence act, initiatives are taken on women's issues, and there is legislation on education for adult women."*

Women's presence does make for a change in the political culture. *"They have realised how faithful, organised and efficient we are, that is why they want us to keep participating. They are also interested in our opinions and that « political flair » which we women have."* But the rate of change is related to the number of women taking part in the decision-making process. Today it is a challenge for political parties to have more women members because we are a majority that can no longer be ignored. Also, women know that if they make the effort and work they have the opportunity to be involved in politics as in any other profession. *"It doesn't*

“The general public thinks that we are influenced by our emotions rather than by the facts, that we fight with our hearts rather than with our heads. I, of course, think they are wrong. The challenge is to prove it.”

matter whether there are only 3, 5 or 7 of us at the outset; the important thing is that we be given the opportunity to be present."

On the question of quotas, BB is non committal. Quotas are a temporary option that worked in other countries. *"We do not yet have legal quotas, although my party has 40% women in the Executive Committee, in Congress and in the Central American Parliament. This is the result of work and the presence of women, as men recognise our abilities. Rather than a quota, there should be work and commitment to duty, although we know that women have to participate more since we represent 50% of the population."*

BB does consider that she has a special responsibility to represent the needs and issues of other women. *"But there are other representation issues as well. It is an honour for me to represent the people who elected me. That is why I learned an indigenous language. I speak English, French and Spanish. But in my country 70% of the population is indigenous. It is very nice to speak with and understand them! This costs money, time and effort, and has brought me enemies, people who are against my position and political thinking."*

BB's road to representation was through party political activism. In the late eighties she took part in civic youth movements. The party she belongs to was formed in 1990 and BB headed the Youth Section. Throughout the next 5 years she held party executive positions in the women's branch, on the national executive, and finally took a position with the party in paid employment in the Congress.

While BB is relatively young, and single, she has domestic help and finds this essential: *"I have major responsibilities in my party which take up a lot of my time and there are many meetings scheduled almost back to back. For this reason I generally do not have time to see my friends or go to the cinema. They complain that I am always busy. On the other hand, the only thing I do is go grocery shopping because I shop for my parents and myself. But my time and itinerary are always booked up."*

BB describes her party as centrist, and not aligned to any political formation. With her experience BB feels that her party structure is receptive to women, and that political parties in general are structures in which women can feel at ease. The party rules and practices are fair to men and women, and perhaps because the party is not yet a decade old, there has been no need for rule changes regarding gender and representation. The party has a women's wing with branches throughout the country and its members of the most active and most present of all. *"This is not the traditional women's co-operation branches; we promote action and commitment. Even in its short history the party's perception of the roles of men and women in society has changed, in part because of the activities of women within the party. Along with this has come a change in the party's attitude towards women voters."*

On becoming a candidate, one of BB's major difficulties was to balance the amount of time to be devoted to private life, to professional life, and to her political activities. Sometimes she experienced insecurity; at other times problems were fatigue and logistics. *"Since I was a candidate on the national list, I had to travel to all the towns all over the country, sometimes overland, sometimes by air. Most of those present*

were men, which did not help logistically. Sometimes the steps leading up to the platforms were very high, there were no bathrooms, or even time to go to the bathroom. If I got up feeling sick I couldn't say, «I'm not going today». Everything had been prepared and the people were waiting."

In preparing to be a candidate and a parliamentarian BB received advice and assistance from her party, NGO organisations, and from experienced men and women on how to conduct a campaign, on her future role as an MP, and on legislative work and budgetary analysis.

While BB feels that voters in her country are generally willing to elect women to parliament, their presence there has not altered the rules and practices to any great extent. *"Sometimes the language and behaviour of some male colleagues is more restrained. Very few know how to use a type of language based on equality. On a practical level the Speaker had restrooms installed for female parliamentarians, as had been requested during several earlier sessions. Parking spaces were also assigned to female parliamentarians."*

In her first parliamentary term BB has been appointed the Deputy Chair of a parliamentary committee. She does not consider the present arbitrary distribution of women on committees to be satisfactory; women should be present on all committees to effect legislation and other matters. There is a Committee on Women, but it does not deal with issues of parity or equality, it deals with women's and children's affairs, the intra-family violence Act, important resolutions on women's work, legislative initiatives on harassment. etc. It is enough (for that Committee). *"The challenge is to get all women from all parties to support wider initiatives."*

The presence of women in parliament has brought about a marked improvement in legislation concerning the status of women in BB's country, and an allowance, whenever appropriate, for the specific interests of women, whatever the field of legislative action. But there has not been any change in the process and methods by which problems are addressed.

BB has good relations with the media which she describes as very important and positive. Members of the communication media should be given more training in gender issues. Some of them are very sensationalist and go into unnecessary detail, for example the clothes women MPs wear, their marital status, their hairstyle, etc. This doesn't happen to men.

Finally, what would BB advise other young women contemplating entering political life? *"The most important thing is education so that women understand the responsibility for the future of the country and the importance of obtaining power. Every woman must be secure and internally strong to persevere in the face of pressure, stress and outside competition. In parliament you cannot cry, you have to bring effort and hard work to the job every days."* ■

“Every woman must be secure and internally strong to persevere in the face of pressure, stress and outside competition. In parliament, you cannot cry, you have to bring effort and hard work to the job every day.”

3

WOMEN'S VISION OF HOW THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Respondents to this survey agreed that women have special talents for working effectively in politics and that women's contributions change the nature of political processes and procedures. These observations were reflected in commentaries and reinforced by the high proportion of women who agreed that women's talents brought about change, restored trust and offered different perceptions in the context of politics at the national level.

“We can say that one of the qualitative effects of women's political action is greater awareness among men of the role of women. Women are now players and sometimes even major players.”

Respondent from West Africa

- ▶ Women assessed that their perception of politics was different from that of men: according to 81.7% of respondents women held conceptually different ideas about society and politics.
- ▶ 92.6% of the respondents agreed that women's greater participation would bring about change.
- ▶ 80% of the respondents believed that women's participation restored trust in politics.
- ▶ 86% of respondents consistently claimed that their participation in the political process changed the nature of politics by bringing about positive changes in form, political behaviour and traditional attitudes, substance, processes and outcomes.
- ▶ In addition to changes in political priorities, respondents commented that in the cultural sense women's political participation would lead to changes in:

- Values:	65.0%
- Language:	61.8%
- Mores:	68.3%
- ▶ For 87.4% of respondents, women's participation in the political process significantly changed political outcomes. However, changes were due to the numbers of women participating as political actors in national parliaments (94.4%), besides being governed by the participation of women at all levels over time, according to 75.2% of respondents.
- ▶ In general, participants in this survey believed that a higher representation of women at all levels of national politics would result in better decision-making and hence better outcomes for citizens.

The survey commentary highlighted the important role of women as political actors in positions of responsibility, for example in the following terms:

In my experience, the fact that I was a congressional leader (third Vice-President of Congress) allowed me to have an influence on women's issues or legislation and to put them on the daily or weekly agendas of the committees. I always had backing to obtain the job I was entitled to under the standing orders. (...)

There are also more women who aspire to hold public positions and who make their voices heard, which they couldn't in the past. Today they are heard in the media, in civic organisations and in political parties. (Central America)

A politician from the first nation State to win the suffrage for women, in 1893, was proud of the high level of women's leadership at the national political level:

New Zealand has a woman Prime Minister and woman Leader of the Opposition. Women members under Labour held five Cabinet posts, the corresponding number under the present Government being two. Women have promoted bills as members. We also have a Ministry and Minister of Women's Affairs. (Pacific)

However, almost seventy per cent (69.9%) of respondents believed that politics also changed women's behaviour.

I think that, as women participate, there is always a male and a female vision in the conduct of our party's political platform. For example, in my party we try to make sure the women are not just a form of window dressing; that our presence transforms the image of politics from the inside out. (Central America)

A SHIFT IN POLITICAL PRIORITIES AND OUTCOMES

Respondents consistently painted a portrait of women as conscious of different priorities compared with those of men. They observed that women were committed to putting new and different issues on the political agenda. Often women were most likely to be those addressing social issues, with an emphasis on the deconstruction of power and money, tone and language, process and status.

Politicians who identified this theme of social consciousness, awareness or sensitivity suggested that women politicians were likely to act as advocates for many other sectors of society other than those concerned with female status. This theme was reinforced by the frequency with which women parliamentarians had been channelled into politics through their interest and participation in social work (39.7%), non-governmental organisations (33.9%) and trade unions (18.4%).

Participants believed women made a particular difference to the social, economic and environmental responsibilities of governments. It is indeed quite impressive to note the consistency of vision that emerges from comments in that direction made by women from cultures and political environments as diverse as those of Andorra, Australia, Belgium, Cameroon, Canada, Congo, Comoros, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Jordan, Luxembourg, Mali, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Peru, Poland, Republic of Korea, Seychelles, South Africa, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and Vanuatu.

All of them concur in saying that women's priorities and the areas in which their political action will be increasingly felt in the future include, more particularly, the following:

- Sustainable development
- Human-centred policies
- The fight against poverty
- The fight against unemployment and for employment for future generations
- Education for all
- The family code
- The health of the whole family
- The fight against violence within the family and in society, including sexual harassment
- Food for all
- Medical and technological developments
- Technology
- Agriculture and mechanisation
- Environmental issues
- Defence of the weaker members of society, including the handicapped
- Defence of minority rights
- Promotion of human rights in general

Solutions, not power

The following quotes selected at random among respondents from different parts of the world will provide a flavour of their vision and show at the same time how they compare with men:

- ▶ *Women's priorities are directed towards social well-being; for men, profit and power. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *Women will humanise politics and development will follow suit. Women are better managers than men are. They will get through and adopt legislation in favour of women - the family code, which gives no rights to widows, will be amended and corrected, as will the problems of polygamy. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *Women think about the country's development; the fight against poverty and unemployment, our children's future (education, jobs, etc.); the people's health (pre- and post-natal medical tests), medical aid, medical insurance, the improvement of farming methods (since it is women who cultivate the land from morning till night) and mechanising farming. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *Some major decisions should be taken to stop certain practices: early marriages; marriage with the consent of the two future spouses non-existent until now. The adoption of a family code in all countries, especially in developing countries or Muslim countries ... (East Africa)*
- ▶ *Women are the first to become aware of economic, educational and health problems. Women are more aware of the country's problems; you can start out with a minor problem that ends up being major. (Central America)*
- ▶ *[Women have] a lesser tendency to use political influence for their own or their family's benefit. They are apt to deal with issues that men do not tend to deal with, such as family violence, health and education, discrimination, etc. The result is more responsible action with greater*

- respect for the dignity of others. There is greater reference to social issues and the family's well-being, and hence greater commitment to the fight against poverty, which generates or exacerbates obstacles to progress, peace and the promotion of women. (South America)*
- ▶ *In social matters, in particular, women's sensitiveness is much greater than that of men. This is not just because of women's lifestyle; I think that traditionally women are much more sensitive to social problems, especially those related to poverty and raising children. I have found that at present women like to specialise in matters of human rights, because women's present state is very similar to that of the minorities, even though women represent a larger proportion of the population than men. (Central Europe)*
 - ▶ *Increased participation of women in politics will result in governments taking greater interest in the following issues: securing the minimum income, providing larger outlays for health care structure and culture, and assistance in bringing up children, in addition to keeping the peace in the country and worldwide. (Central Europe)*
 - ▶ *I believe that women are very much led by social aspects and caring for the needy. Their experience gained during children's education, family work and taking care of older family members gives them a different outlook and has an impact on their decisions. Most women concentrate on solving problems, not on gaining power. (Western Europe)*
 - ▶ *Women have a greater sensitivity towards the weaker members of society and towards any minorities; a general view of society rather than consideration of economic aspects alone. (Western Europe)*
 - ▶ *I believe that women's political priorities are different. They give priority to social issues such as public welfare, health, education, culture, environmental issues and questions of law. Their priorities are in short more human-centred. (Southern Europe)*
 - ▶ *With the economic difficulties in Korea, businesses and financial institutions have been cutting down their management, and during this process many organisations have been dismissing female employees first. When participating in parliamentary inspections of government-run banks and government organisations, I raised such issues in an effort to reverse the trend of firing women first. [Also:] My activities focus on preventing the dissolution of families, securing a sound environment for the younger generation, and creating various welfare systems to prepare for the coming senior citizens' society. (South-East Asia)*

Samples of change around the world

Respondents mentioned specific ways in which a woman's approach had made a difference for the people in their daily lives.

In a number of countries, women claim to have been mainly instrumental in bringing about wide-ranging legislative and other changes introduced.



Women in Australia have put new issues on the political agenda: childcare, sex discrimination law and women's health, breast cancer, etc."

Canada

Canada

The impact of government policy and programmes on women has led to much greater consideration of gender impacts; more beneficial treatment for public service employees facing lay-off; greater awareness of pay equity and employment equity; reversal of a decision on retiree pensions that would have adversely affected women.

El Salvador

EL Salvador

We have approved legislation such as the Law to Prevent Violence against Women, the Requirement of Paternal Solvency to hold a position in the legislature (moral settlement), and payment of bonuses to children in receipt of maintenance. This has led to an expansion of women's sectors and prompted political and legislative initiatives: family legislation against violence; the establishment of the Women's Institute; laws on duty-free zones; A.L. regulations; electoral law.

Ethiopia

Ethiopia

The problem of the women in our country is poverty and backwardness. To alleviate women's poverty a land distribution law was ratified; the right to 90 days of maternity leave was ratified; overseas employment provisions, mainly concerning girls and women, were also ratified to improve living standards and ensure the benefit of rights under the federal Constitution, etc. The above-mentioned ratifications were followed by the Women's Affairs Committee of Parliament, with 13 members: 4 men and 9 women.

Germany

Germany

Such issues and topics as how to manage family life and a profession, violence in families, and equal opportunities in pay and work have been discussed more frequently and have influenced the legislature.

Greece

Greece

I think that legislation on drugs, together with work on committees for the purpose, and legislation on single-parent families, conditions of incarceration and many similar topics have been influenced by the presence of women in Parliament. [Also:] All legislation since the 1970s has taken account of women's considerations.

Ireland

Ireland

Mandatory reporting of child abuse - arising out of child abuse cases. Establishment of a tribunal of inquiry into hepatitis C infection. Establishment thereafter of a compensation tribunal on a statutory basis to compensate victims - primarily women - who were by negligence of a State body infected with deadly virus. Legislation to allow access to information on abortion and exercise of right to travel to another jurisdiction for services not lawful in Ireland, i.e. termination of pregnancy. Legislation followed a referendum arising out of a case. Decriminalisation of homosexual acts between consenting adults.

Legislation to allow condoms to be available without prescription. Reducing discrimination in the workplace. Taxation policy, social welfare.

Israel

Israel

A series of bills were passed over the years in the areas of social equity, women's rights and constitutional rights.

Jordan

Jordan

I believe women's participation in all parliamentary committees can influence legislation, on some if not all occasions. The presence of women in the Senate of 1993 was able to influence legislation on the issue of housing for divorced women. Legislation on the environment was also amended owing to women's influence in the committee. The fact that there are few women in the Senate, however, limits their presence in all the Senate committees and even their power to lobby and rally votes.

New Zealand

New Zealand

Very strangely, a change in language, a change in some of the subject matter debated, with relevant experience or a different perspective, from war to domestic violence, from reproduction to ageing, from transportation to basic needs. Also a genuine desire, if not always fulfilled, for more transparency and less nepotism and corruption. New expenditure items, especially for maternal and child health, women-specific health (e.g. breast examination, cervical smears), provision of assistance for rape crisis and refuge centres; policy advice from Women's Ministries; changes in legislative priorities to address marital rape, custody, maintenance, matrimonial property, parental leave, removal of regulatory barriers to workplace participation.

Peru

Peru

In my country, new items were included in the agenda, making women's problems issues of national importance, thanks to «cross- and extra-party alliances». The Women's Committee started out as a special committee in the 96-97 legislature; in the 97-98 and 98-99 legislatures it was an ordinary standing committee able to draft legislation. It was the Women's Committee that gave a formal opinion for the approval of the Quota Act. As a standing committee, the Women's Committee drew up legislation amending the code on children and adolescents so that pregnant adolescents could not be prevented from starting or continuing their studies, as it was customary to take them out of school. The Women's Committee also approved the text of the "DNA law", amending the Civil Code so that DNA tests could be used to prove paternity.

Russian Federation

Russian Federation

Intense debate is under way on the federal budget, particularly where specific childhood and maternity support programmes are concerned. Russian legislation in the sphere of social policy, especially in labour and social security, and protection of children's rights, and a number of constitutional laws regarding culture are prepared by women, either as authors or as leaders of working groups.

South Africa

South Africa

Women in our Parliament have led the search for change. They have firmly influenced policy, have ensured gender issues are on the national stage and have developed strategies and frameworks for integrating gender into major policy decisions. Because of the overall awareness of gender issues, and the number of women members of the legislature, there is an ongoing monitoring of all matters from a gender perspective. Discrimination against women in terms of salaries and conditions of service is no longer permissible. (It occurred before 1994.) Maternity leave is catered for in employee conditions of service. Women who have married in community of property have greater rights than formerly. Legislation in a range of fields has been written to include women in statutory bodies, the restructuring of parastatals and the composition of their boards. In appointments, owing to the presence of female politicians, much more attention has been given to appointing women at all levels - including senior levels.

A number of key areas of change

A number of other comments identify very specific fields in which the life of ordinary people may have been improved as a result of action by women politicians, especially women legislators or ministers. For example:

Peace

Peace and conflict resolution

The presence of women on negotiating teams in (N. Ireland) peace talks was crucial - not only in terms of gender representation but also in outcome. Both governments had a female minister on the team. Women were present in all parties (apart from unionist parties). The Women's Coalition also played a key role representing women on a cross-community basis and across class.

Arms control

Arms control

- ▶ *Identifying the social impact of particular policies was frequently the role of women. Gun control (in Canada) would not be as stringent were it not for the women in parliament. The impact of government policy and programmes on women has led to much greater consideration of gender impacts.*
- ▶ *I raised the matter of the ratification of anti-personnel landmines. (West Africa)*

Support services

Support services

- ▶ *Women's contribution has been to address social problems and a fair and just society in place of an emphasis on status, power, money and awards. (In Australia) Lobbying by women's groups led to the creation of support services for families and the growth of the community services section (e.g. the Women's Electoral Lobby's role in the 1970s and 1980s in funding and developing local-based and accessible services).*

- ▶ *Forcing of Government to change legislation relating to access to full payment of new assistance to some disadvantaged groups. Legislation still being amended. Sexual harassment in defence force addressed. (Pacific)*

Labour

Labour/Employment

- ▶ *Maternity leave was only 45 days: ratification completed for increase from 45 to 90 days. (East Africa)*
- ▶ *We have succeeded in passing a proposal which facilitates part-time work (which particularly concerns women) because we, three women from three different governmental parties, got together and defended the subject. (Western Europe)*

Education

Education and health care

- ▶ *Health, education and social matters are areas in which women invest a lot in society. Their massive involvement in politics will have a catalysing effect in those areas. Anyone familiar with the impact of health, education, a healthy environment and social values on society's development will say that the result can only be positive. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *The final wording of the draft legislation on the education framework strongly reflects the presence of women in parliament. (West Africa)*

Environment

Protection of the environment

The few women in the Senate have been able to affect legislation on environmental issues and, to a lesser extent, some legislation in the field of family issues. (Middle East)

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse and sexual harassment; domestic violence

- ▶ *Private Members Bill on individuals who commit serious assault (sexual or non-sexual) to be tested to see whether they are psychopaths. (North America)*
- ▶ *Some special legislation on, for instance, marital rape, rape in childhood, and abortion. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *Since there are more women in Congress, we now have the domestic and intra-family violence act, initiatives are taken on women's issues, and there is legislation on education for adult women. (Central America)*
- ▶ *As deputy Minister of Justice, I had a battle getting the male-dominated department to agree (in 1993) to include an acknowledgement that rape could take place in marriage and to outlaw sexual harassment in legislation dealing with domestic issues. I succeeded chiefly with the very strong support of women prosecutors who gave excellent evidence and so helped the decision through. [Also:] Legislation: e.g. repealing of tax provision which discriminated against married women; introducing*

domestic violence legislation, including rape in marriage as explained above; abortion-on-demand legislation. (Southern Africa)

- ▶ *The passing of legislation penalising sexual and physical violence against family members, the abolition of the householder system, the projects to shelter sexual abuse victims, and the protection of young girls against violence, abuse and sexual exploitation are all results of increased female participation in politics. (South-East Asia)*
- ▶ *Legislation: Action against violence where women and children are victims. (Nordic country)*
- ▶ *Continuous participation in the drafting of legislation to prevent sexual abuse and family abuse. (South-East Asia)*
- ▶ *Domestic violence within families has been reduced; there is better legal protection for human rights in general. (Southern Africa)*

Children's rights

Children's rights

- ▶ *Sex discrimination legislation and a focus on childcare would not have happened without women in parliament. Women parliamentarians have lobbied for changes to legislation on care for the elderly, childcare and income support (social security) and obtained some position changes. (Pacific)*
- ▶ *In 1964, a government bill was introduced in the National Assembly with the aim of protecting young under-age girls, whereby any man getting a young girl pregnant was liable to imprisonment. The Assembly, in which women were in the minority (3 women out of 125 MPs), changed the substance of the law to make the girl and the man caught in the act both punishable; they were liable to imprisonment. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *Nine bills changing things for children - giving them greater rights. (Western Europe)*

Gender equality

Gender equality and women's rights

- ▶ *Women have been the driving force behind draft legislation of benefit to women, even though some of that legislation was proposed by our male colleagues (for example, the sexual harassment act). (Central America)*
- ▶ *Within legislation, there have been a lot of changes, for the better, to protect women. (Nordic country)*
- ▶ *Good efforts have been made to eliminate discrimination from existing legislation. They have not been successful in everything. (Central America)*
- ▶ *Women in South Africa are a strong pressure and lobby group for recognition of female equality to males and effective governance. When discussing education legislation, for example, the same rules will apply to the boy who makes a girl pregnant while at school. [Also:] I was instrumental in getting an amount set aside in the provincial budget for Gender Affairs for the first time this financial year - 1997/1998. I also set up a committee of representatives of the different departments to involve themselves with equality in their departments.*
- ▶ *We non-governmentally pushed for the passage of CEDAW and influenced the Representation of the People Act. (Pacific)*

- ▶ *In terms of legislation, I was the author of drafts of the "Quota Act", the "Municipal Defendants of Children and Adolescents Act", and the "The Pregnant Adolescent Act"; I proposed the "Maternity Protection Act". (Central America)*
 - ▶ *Specific laws to correct imbalances: quotas, access to military, police institutions, contracting of women as advisers and technicians. (South America)*
 - ▶ *The women in my parliamentary party group have achieved significant advantages for women with children in the statutory retirement pension system. They also monitor all proposed legislation to determine whether or not it will result in disadvantages to women. (Western Europe)*
 - ▶ *Of course, we have for example demanded that school texts use equality and not sexist language, and that men and women not be identified with specific occupational roles. In places with a large indigenous population, people are still not used to women speaking in public, but in recent years they have grown used to seeing and above all hearing us. (Central America)*
 - ▶ *Still more to be done but the good work so far has enabled the National Policy on Women to be passed by Parliament in 1989. The National Policy on Women has spurred a lot of action plans for the advancement of women in [my country]. (South-East Asia)*
 - ▶ *The [legislation] was amended to include equality between men and women as partners in marriage. (Southern Europe)*
-
- ▶ An analysis of the survey comments highlighted a wide range of policy and legislative issues where women's specific contribution had altered the traditionally male approach:
- Social welfare
 - Health
 - Legal protection
 - Human rights
 - Work conditions and reduction of discrimination in the workplace
 - Peace talks mediation and negotiation
 - Incarceration conditions
 - Gun control
 - Modification of the criminal code
 - Victim compensation legislation
 - Legislation regarding drugs
 - Mandatory reporting of sexual abuse
 - Redressing gender imbalance and monitoring of sexual harassment in the defence forces
 - Modification of rules governing the appointment of officers
 - Domestic violence policy and legislation
 - Provision of refuges and shelters for victims of domestic violence
 - Development of family advocacy and support systems
 - Heightened awareness of family law in general
 - Protection and education programmes for the girl child
 - Legislation on civil weddings
- .../...

CHANGING THE POLITICAL PROCESS

Most respondents argued that women's involvement enriched and broadened the political process and brought to it new skills, styles and visions.

Some respondents felt that women's ability to integrate economic and social managerial qualities in the decision-making process was not always acknowledged or utilised politically. They were inclined to believe that traditionally gendered roles played a part in that state of affairs:

Traditionally in [my country] women have been concerned with social problems, education and health care. Women have never been allowed a hand in solving macro-economic and financial problems. To my mind, the process of democratic reforms and formation of a civil society would be considerably more rapid if such a tradition could be changed in favour of appointing a women to the post of plenipotentiary representative on human rights (in Russia). (Eastern Europe)

Some participants noted that applying women's priorities to political decision-making would promote the awareness needed to change attitudes about traditionally gendered roles:

Women's greater participation would impact upon the traditional values held by men. Sharing of power and responsibilities would become reality. Political meetings and programmes would be scheduled to take into account domestic responsibilities of both men and women. (South Asia)

A SHIFT IN POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR AND PRACTICES

Respondents claimed that, in practice, equality rhetoric and formal or legal equality did not result in equality of outcomes. Women suggested that male practices were barriers to women's political participation in decision-making and they did not want such practices to go unchallenged.

They described many cases in point as backing for their claims, including:

- the old-boy network
- back-room deals
- deals with the devil
- use of public funds to buy real estate
- lying
- settling of scores
- assassination of opponents
- seeing politics as a competitive game
- enjoying monopolies
- reluctance to give power
- only seeing issues through men's eyes
- discouraging women through dirty political campaigns
- male-dominated systems

Some women politicians identified repeated patterns of negative male political behaviour that could be verified by historical fact and contemporary examples:

During the (38) years since we (the Congo) became independent, the same group of men has been fighting over the running of the country. Their disputes seldom take the interests of the majority into account. They are usually tributaries of their clan and region. That is why we think that if we had more women in politics, it could lead to a qualitative change in the outcomes. Since ancient times, for instance, women have been feeding the population despite the lack of modern means (such as mechanisation). Women represent 70% of the agricultural labour force. So they could surely succeed in politics if they had some support for their involvement. We would achieve results other than war, famine, illness, rape, looting, etc., especially in our country. (West Africa)

Others inferred that male politicians were more likely to use their political influence for personal gain rather than the good of their constituents:

Women have a lesser tendency to use political influence for their own or their family's benefit. They are apt to deal with issues that men do not tend to address: family violence, health and education, discrimination, etc. The result is more responsible action with greater respect for the dignity of others; greater reference to social issues and the family's well-being, and therefore greater commitment to the fight against poverty, which generates or exacerbates obstacles to progress, peace and the promotion of women. (South America)

“ If women were more involved in politics, the whole nature and quality of politics would change. [This would concern] language, behaviour, timetable, calendar, attitude, beliefs, values, power-relations, and relationships.”

Respondent from the Pacific

Many respondents noted that women brought different qualities to policy-making and that those qualities could be used to change the culture of politics. Some observed, however, that women risked being co-opted into traditional power conflicts and from time to time behaved in a manner traditionally associated with unethical male behaviour:

Although, generally speaking, women politicians contribute to the public's trust in politics, it is also true that one corrupted woman in politics can turn the tables in that respect. (Central America)

A BROADER AND ENRICHED POLITICAL PROCESS

The most frequent observation to be highlighted by respondents was women's ability to link policy areas, in a cross-cutting approach, when addressing the social needs of the community:

Women see all of the aspects of a problem: political, economic and especially social and domestic. The representation of women in the democratic process will bring about copious debate in areas such as health, delinquency, the child and the family. (East Africa)

Women's participation in the democratic process could result in greater tolerance in society and radically influence people's thinking. According to many participants, women's different life experiences prepare them for effective participation in the political processes. This respondent encapsulated the ideas of many others:

Because of cultural differences women often have different experiences and different views on certain issues. That means that as women move into previously male-dominated positions, new perspective and new competence are added. The presence of women in parliament is bringing much more than effects on certain types of laws and the distribution of posts and responsibilities within Parliament and committees. The presence of women in parliament means new skills and different styles in politics; it means transforming the political agenda and creating a sense of solidarity between women. It also brings a new vision, which ultimately leads to revisions of laws in order to improve existing ones. Most of all, they (women) serve as role models for future generations. (Central Europe)

.../...

- Consideration of issues to do with maternity leave
 - Women's reproductive freedom, particularly access to abortion
 - Constitution of departments and ministries of gender affairs
 - Maintenance
 - Matrimonial property
 - Parental leave
 - Removal of barriers to participation in the workforce.
 - Workforce policies and a reduction of discrimination
 - Policies which encourage part-time and regular work for women with children
 - Maintenance and child support
 - Policies and legislation on childcare and care for the elderly
 - Statutory retirement pensions
 - Reduction of discriminatory taxation policies
 - Monitoring of social welfare policies for discrimination
 - Promotion of gender equality in governance and management
 - Education of male politicians and bureaucrats to be gender aware when designing policies and legislation
 - Highlighting the issues faced by rural women
 - Protection of the environment
 - Encouraging transparency in management and political practices
-

POLITICS MORE RESPONSIVE TO THE PEOPLE'S NEEDS

In general, respondents emphasised that if partnership were increased between men and women, both in politics and in society at large, politics would better meet the needs of society as a whole. Here is a typical comment:

In my opinion, there is no doubt that if policies were jointly decided and implemented by men and women together, there would be a better response in terms of catering to the needs of society. (West Africa)

Respondents consistently took the view that women brought a more compassionate expression to the political world:

- ▶ *I would hope that politics could take on a more human face, particularly because women looking after children cannot be available 24 hours a day. This would force us to become more effective during our meetings and set up structures that would allow men and women to share political, professional and civil life. Politics would thus move closer to the citizen. The way of looking at politics would change, too, since women's approach to problems often differs from that of men. They contribute more essential qualities than men, such as the ability to listen, to communicate, to work in a team, and so on. These skills are extremely important in the current social context (with people more isolated, social marginalisation, poverty, etc.). (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *Women look at problems differently; their approach is closer to society. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *Women have a more humane view of development issues. They never forget the need to take into account the situation of the most vulnerable groups, including women. Women are more in touch with problems of solidarity, the notion that national wealth must be distributed equitably, and the management of public assets. They are very much affected by corruption, by the misappropriation of funds and by white-collar crime. They are more particular about the ethical and moral values that underlie society. (West Africa)*

Respondents believed that greater participation for women at the national political level would create a better perception of the political process. Better gender relationships across society would result in more gender-balanced representation. The two areas were interwoven and inseparable. In addition, if parliament reflected the gender balance in society then voters would feel their needs were better reflected in political decisions:

- ▶ *Policies jointly adopted would respond more to the needs and priorities of society as a whole. It is only natural that as societies are made up by men and women and very often women account for more than half, policies adopted predominantly by male politicians would not be just and equitable. (Southern Europe)*
- ▶ *Politics consists of a series of decisions and priorities, and either the decisions or ... emphasis can be closer to ... society's needs if women and men participate in the decision-making process more or less in equal proportions. If a greater proportion of women took part in politics, decisions might get closer to life and our social and economic everyday life. (Central Europe)*
- ▶ *A better representation of both sexes would lead to an optimal democratic situation, with more equality and a better response to the needs of society. (Southern Europe)*

More women in politics would mean:

- ▶ *Greater partnership between men and women in political life would mean first of all that politics would provide better responses to the needs of society as a whole. Secondly, it would mean a different choice of priorities. Thirdly, women's sensitiveness would help solve men's social problems. And in countries where women are denied cultural opportunities, a strong presence of women in the highest political posts would certainly lead to equal access to education, which is the key to equal opportunities in any field. (Southern Europe)*
- ▶ *A greater connection [is needed] between the people's daily reality and the priorities of the world of politics. The down-to-earth realities of women's lives at all levels of society would then also be taken into account. (Western Europe)*

Needs specific to women as mothers were consistently referred to in the survey comments. It was clear not only that women's needs differed from those of men, but also that women political players had a responsibility to address needs of special relevance to women's lives.

A BETTER RESPONSE TO WOMEN'S NEEDS

As will be seen in greater detail under Chapter 8, a responsibility to represent the needs of women was keenly felt by participants. In this survey, 89.1% of all respondents replied in the affirmative to the question: Do women have a special responsibility to represent the needs and interests of other women?

It was repeatedly suggested throughout the survey that women representatives need actively to break down the barriers to equality and justice for all women.

The entry of a large number of women into the political process can radically change the existing situation. If more and more women are associated at different levels, it is bound to affect public policy. Women's issues need to be transformed into societal issues. The most critical role for women would be to oppose those barriers that resist equality and justice, not just for women but for everyone. (Central America)

Responding to other women's needs was seen as a method of working towards substantive gender equality, for women, by women and with women. This was inclusive of women of different ethnic groups, abilities, sexual orientations, and age groups.

A better understanding of the needs of all sorts of people demands a closer look at those particular needs of women in all walks of life. This has proved more effective when done by and for women, particularly at the political level. (Asia)

Some respondents emphasised that, because of their experience and past work, women politicians were particularly well prepared to help offer suitable political responses to women's needs:

All the problems we women have been dealing with for years have given us a different perspective on social, economic and political reality. This is why more women should be put in decision-making positions, with a view to ensuring that plans, programmes and policies reach those who need them most. In

other words, only by involving women in politics can we ensure that women's needs are truly taken into account. (East Africa)

A MOVE TOWARDS TRUE GENDER EQUALITY

Participants identified the place of human rights conventions in the establishment of equality and justice for women:

With respect to human rights, in my view women have a specific contribution to make with special focus on women's rights as human rights. Furthermore, I think that population development issues, such as education and health services for women and the girl-child, are areas of special concern to women. We need to motivate more women into active political life, make better use of the potential and intellect of the population, and establish better understanding between men and women overall, which will have a positive impact on society as a whole. (Central America)

Inclusion of a woman's perspective in political problem-solving was an important step towards equality for women in everyday life:

The political status of women can be defined by the degree of equality and freedom enjoyed by women in the shaping and sharing of political power and the value given by society to this role. Women's equality has given women full and equal participation in nation-building activities. Women's unique experiences and perspectives enhance and alter definitions of problems and solutions. (Central America)

One respondent warned of the risk of forgetting the importance of women's solidarity. It was suggested by some participants that, while the practice and concept of equality was generally understood, the implementation of equality as a continuum was vulnerable to resource decisions, which would need to be consistently monitored to ensure gender equality:

We must ensure that equality becomes irreversible in our society, which is still not totally immune to the threat of extremism, and also ensure a more equitable distribution of resources between men and women. A political culture imbued with more sincerity, more honesty and less demagoguery would be more directed towards the citizen's essential concerns. (North Africa)

A recurring major theme of the qualitative remarks provided by participants was the need for women political representatives to remember not only that women were different from men, but also that women and men from different groups had differing expectations and needs. Real equality meant:

a more united society, a society which respects the differences, not only between men and women, but also between men, between women, and between nationalities, countries and nations. (Southern Africa)

The obligations of nation States to accommodate equal participation of women in democratic governance was clearly articulated throughout participants' replies.

BETTER DEMOCRACY, INCREASED TRANSPARENCY AND IMPROVED GOVERNANCE

Women participants in this survey overwhelmingly noted that greater inclusion of women would lead to better democracy, increased transparency and improved governance. Some typical and straightforward comments in that connection were:

- ▶ *There would be more transparency in management. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *There would be more democracy. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *There will be a lot of changes: more transparency and justice. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *The increased participation of women in political life brings more credibility to the values of the Republic and makes democracy more accessible because of their «softer» approach to problems. They bring a maternal vision to social relations, their desire to be useful, to allow everyone to participate, to be served, to be involved. (East Africa)*

When thinking about women's contribution to democracy, respondents clearly believed that women's participation in politics had an international influence:

Democracy demands the involvement of all, ideally, in the representation and delivery of the society all people embrace. A greater representation of all constituents of society contributes to global competitiveness for the country and a worldwide global solution base for increasingly interconnected problems, such as environment, economy, peace and development; in short, to better governance. (North America)

The macro and the micro aspects of economics, management and governance were important areas where women's contribution was valuable to the democratic process.

As well as being mother, wife and teacher, women's specific contribution to the democratic process will be seen at the level of community management, in a both material and moral sense: for example, good governance and the introduction of mechanisms leading to lasting peace, non-violence against the population, and a culture of tolerance and respect for others. Seldom indeed would female leaders buy arms and then turn them against the people who elected them. (West Africa)

A CONCILIATORY HUMAN APPROACH TO POLITICS

A less confrontational approach to politics was strongly advocated by participants in the survey: *I would expect over time that politics would be less confrontational*, typically states a respondent from North America. *A greater humanisation of the political world*, hopes a South American respondent. *A more consultative and consensus-based approach to problem-solving. A focus on community rebuilding and creating real security and opportunity for citizens*, confirms a respondent from the Pacific.

The role of discouraging war, encouraging peace and mediating in disputes was a repeated feature of women's commentary about their political priorities.

The aim of peace for communities, families and nation States was highlighted as a consistent goal of women politicians.

This would have wide ramifications for the general public with "fewer wars and conflicts and killings, more cooperativeness, cohesiveness and community services". (Pacific)

Where women are involved politically, there is more likelihood of compromise and resolution of disputes or contentious matters:

Women are, all in all, less adversarial and more consensus-driven [than men], seeking solutions to problems rather than scoring political points. Most women I know in politics are radical and passionate about politics. They are engaged in politics to "make a difference". It might be the environment, a justice issue or a childcare issue. Few women are enrolled just for the sake of it, although there are some who fit into that motiveless category. The notion of public service is one frequently cited by women. Women are less likely to seek to use influence for their personal gain. Most women find it difficult to get elected and stay elected; to do so they have to be very good. Mediocrity is acceptable in male politicians but not amongst women politicians. (Western Europe)

Equal participation of men and women inferred a more successful mediatory process for issues involving conflict:

Women are often brought in when mediation is taking place. (West Africa)

Mediation and wider participation in consultation processes were in fact recurrent themes of many commentaries about the difference made by women in political office. A woman's style brought:

A more consultative and consensus-based approach to problem-solving; a focus on community rebuilding and creating real security and opportunity for citizens. (Pacific)

MORE CONFIDENCE IN POLITICS FROM CITIZENS

Women's greater participation in political life would lead to a higher level of confidence in politics, democracy and gender equality. As the public experiences wider representation of diverse views politics would then be more likely to be seen as an ethical process.

More citizens have greater confidence in the consultation processes when women politicians are involved. Many commentaries were consistent across differing cultures on this theme:

- ▶ *Thanks to women the public is beginning to trust in politics again. Women are often brought in when mediation is taking place. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *The principle of the equality of men and women in local management could become a reality for both. We could move towards a democratic state where peace and respect for human rights prevail. The participation of the other half of the population would increase. (West Africa)*

Some participants, however, noted that where women suffered setbacks in their political activities, the level of tolerance for mistakes was lower than in the case of men:

Public faith in women comes from the fact that the public often recognises that women work hard and seek to achieve concrete results. I also observe, though, that the public is less tolerant of female failure. (Southern Africa)

AN EVOLUTION IN POLITICAL AND PARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE AND MORES

Language is the means by which we communicate our values and beliefs. Language is a persuasive political tool. Political rhetoric exposes the attitudes and beliefs of political players. The traditions and values exposed in parliament through language identified a long tradition of a male political culture:

A change of government has led again to use of some sexist language, e.g. from Chair or chairperson back to chairman. (Pacific)

There was evidence in many countries that attention was being given to eliminating sexist language and there had been albeit slow progress:

Indeed, Labour women forced Hansard to record exactly what we said and not edit it to third person masculine! It took a while, but we women did it. (Pacific)

However, survey participants consistently mentioned language as an indicator of male bias and behaviour that some women found offensive:

It would be appreciated if greater care were taken with male language in the presence of women. (Western Europe)

Canadian participants in particular consistently reported that progress had been made in reducing male-biased language. This was reported to have been a gradual process:

- ▶ *The tone, language and process has changed - but all too slowly. (North America)*
- ▶ *There has been a virtual elimination of sexist language. There have been incidents in our Parliament where women MPs have been called «slut», «bitch», «baby». A woman MP was laughed at for raising the issue of violence against women. There is still a tendency to discount the contribution when women raise issues of particular relevance to women. (North America)*

Women reported that it was unlikely that there would be any preoccupation with the need for gender-neutral language so long as women were formally considered to be the minority voice:

- ▶ *The behaviour of our male counterparts and their artificial majority are hardly conducive to a change in parliamentary language or mores. The way they neglect their obligations towards inter-parliamentary organisations is an obstacle to women's participation in the debate on the world's political, economic and social life. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *Women are very much in the minority in Parliament. It is hard for them to bring about any fundamental change in parliamentary language or mores. (West Africa)*

Some participants suggested that women parliamentarians needed gender training to monitor the discriminatory use of sexist language:

“ I can state that in Parliament's working meetings certain deputies' language can be insulting or demeaning to women. I often remind them of this and recall that society is made up of men and women, even though there are few women in Parliament. ”

Respondent from East Africa

It has not been easy to change the use of sexist language. I believe this is due to the lack of training of women deputies who do not consider language to be one of the mechanisms for giving women greater visibility. (Central America)

One woman acted through standing orders to educate her colleagues in the monitoring of sexist language:

I strongly protested whenever I heard derogatory remarks being made of women, in private or in public, by other National Assembly members. As a result, male members are now careful when calling or speaking to a female counterpart. This is one issue that is also being checked by other women in the assembly and in citizen's groups. (Asia)

“ Without denying the difference between men and women, the language used in legislation should aim to put men and women on an equal footing, eschewing any discrimination based on the idea of male superiority over the female sex. It is accordingly recommended that basic texts such as the Constitution should be reviewed in order to eliminate any terms or wording which tend to suggest sexual stereotypes. In this connection, legislators can play a decisive role by using their right of parliamentary initiative. In some languages it is necessary to have laws drafted using both the masculine and feminine forms. ”

Plan of Action to correct present imbalances in the participation of men and women in political life, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Paris, March 1994

Other respondents noted that their male colleagues were making clear attempts to change sexist language and behaviour patterns in political life:

- ▶ *The men are more careful. Their attitude has changed. There will be more moderation, less passion and more objectivity. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *In a way, men tend to behave more formally in the presence of women. (Central Europe)*

Participants suggested the proportion of women in parliament was an indicator of the likelihood of change:

I don't see a greater participation of women in political life. Hence, I hardly see a change in the traditionally male "values", "language" and mores of politics. (Southern Europe)

Where there were relatively few women in parliamentary positions, the mores and language of politics were less likely to be inclusive of women:

We are very few (3 out of 50) to make a difference. We are bound to see changes in the traditional male values and mores of politics if women's participation is substantial in number because I believe that a less than 20% participation cannot reflect the special values and idiosyncrasies of women. (Southern Europe)

One respondent noted that change occurred across a wider area of the state sector. This suggested that politicians alone could not inspire change in attitudes, language, mores and values:

Both in the police force and in the military force, as well as in Parliament, the whole tone and style has had to change. (Nordic country)

Women leaders who had experienced sexist behaviour would play an important role in changing the traditions and language of politics, according to one participant:

So far, very few women have risen to high levels without sacrifice, suffering or discrimination. Change must come when women achieve such positions, stay on and exercise women's visions and leadership, and create an enabling environment for free and fearless participation of women in working towards a just and equitable order. (Central America)

Some respondents observed that changes to the basic rules and regulations which govern procedures of governance were significant factors in the transition from a male to a gender-neutral culture:

In 1944 the Legislature's Rules of Procedure used terms in the masculine to describe deputies and leaders. A women president was elected. I suggested that the language be changed to include women, and since then the use of

terms in the feminine has become more frequent. In plenary meetings it has now become almost routine to speak of "diputados y diputadas", which was not the case before. (Central America)

Particular political incidents have highlighted sexist behaviour that has led to wide public debate about male values and traditions in some nation States:

The confrontation between the virulent present Minister of Justice and his female "shadow" counterpart has remained famous, for it was the last outbreak of an attitude considered dead a long time ago. (Southern Europe)

In some instances women's experience of the political culture was variable within the same country. One woman believed there was positive change and that women were included in male discourse:

Changes have occurred, in that now the presence of women is more respected; language has changed and women are more involved in jokes. Also, there is greater solidarity; there are men who talk about the value of women whereas before nobody expressed any support for women's demands. (Central America)

Another woman from the same Parliament explained that her experience was less favourable:

Sometimes the language and behaviour of some male colleagues is more restrained. Very few know how to use a type of language based on equality. (Central America)

It was apparent that age, class and culture influenced behaviour and the values of male politicians:

In general, especially above a certain age, men are polite and gallant towards women. Having said that, younger generations display a certain laxity, in the name of the equality demanded by women. My experience was particular for two reasons: I was 48 years old, and therefore belonged to a certain age group; I was the wife of the President (of the Republic). I must stress that my colleagues' respectful and deferential attitude was probably influenced by those two factors, but was also in keeping with the basic courtesy characterising relations between men and women in my country. (Central America)

Gender-neutral language was not the only factor that women participants noted as influencing attitudes and behaviour. Some drew attention to concepts and emotions that were more likely to be imparted by women than by men:

Sadly, women's presence has not had the required effect on the language and mores of Parliament. Women are more professional, calm and tolerant than men, but they do not have any real effect on the mores. (Central Europe)

Gender differences were highlighted in the comments about language and values. Women argued that their world-view simply differed from that of men:

Language used by women is fundamentally different. "Love", "empathy", "consensus", "accommodation", "respect", "reconciliation", "diversity" - all these themes are regularly used by female speakers and leaders. (Western Europe)

Some participants noticed that women's physical presence in Parliament usually elicited different behaviour from men:

- ▶ *The presence of women in Parliament brings about restraint in men's behaviour. They speak more correctly and more politely. (Central Asia)*

- ▶ *Absence and abusive words are minimised, generally at least, but not always; sometimes women have to bear the language used. (South-East Asia)*

Respondents consistently reported that male behaviour was influenced by the context of interaction. Women observed that the political importance of an activity influenced behaviour:

It depends on personal culture. More frequently, the size of the gathering or the more or less official status of the meeting has greater impact on politicians' behaviour. (Central Europe)

One respondent noted how the use of specific terminology could prevent discriminatory practices:

Now people refer to "men and women", "diputados" and "diputadas", "senadores" and "senadoras". (Central America)

In the experience of one participant, language was purposely reduced to the level of sexist humour in an effort to be politically popular in the constituency:

There is an opinion in my country (Russia) that the briefer, simpler and ruder a man's speech is, the more acceptable and understandable it is to people. This is a paradox, but a prime minister and a president speaking bad Russian are endearing; their linguistically incorrect phrases become jokes and anecdotes. (Eastern Europe)

One respondent noted that being careful about sexist language was an active and conscious attitude for some men. Suggesting that sensitivity about non-discriminatory gendered language did not come easily to some men, she wrote:

Men try to 'watch' their pronouncements on gender issues much more carefully, as well as bad or abusive language. (Southern Africa)

African respondents consistently provided commentary that was clear about the impact of discrimination, suggesting that the eradication of racial discrimination policies may have led to a wider consciousness of gender discrimination in Parliament:

Since the democratic process is new in [my country], legislative bodies are still in their first term of office. In my experience, women members are very firm and consistent in their responses to gender-discriminatory comments, whether supposedly subtle and covert, or overt, and they raise objections immediately if any indication appears of a trivialising of such issues. (Southern Africa)

Women mentioned their responsibility for encouraging change by modelling appropriate behaviour:

- ▶ *I hope that the behaviour of the women Parliamentarians can be an example to the men. (Central America)*
- ▶ *There has been a study on women's and men's different ways of expressing themselves. Women speak more to the point and are briefer in their statements. But I don't know whether or not this has had an influence on the way men speak. (Nordic country)*

Comments overwhelmingly suggested that women provided a more humane model for political behaviour:

I've noticed that the participation of women leads to less-ritualised speaking, more accessible to the people. Women are "humanising" the political world. They are also unmasking pretentious attitudes. (Western Europe)

Women's ability to lead by example and teach other political players was expected to influence gender relationships across a wide spectrum:

By contributing their specific abilities acquired mainly in the social context, which requires women to be concerned primarily with human relations and care and education, women are indeed changing political customs. The values are different, even though women are entering male professional domains more and more. (Western Europe)

This would influence political parties and Parliament from the backbenches to cabinet. According to respondents, gender relationships would improve across society if the partnership between male and female political players were enhanced. That process will be examined in the subsequent chapters, canvassing women's experiences of the political process from candidate selection through to representation in Parliament and the Executive.

HOW WOMEN ENVISION FUTURE POSSIBILITIES OF GENDER EQUALITY IN POLITICS

As already observed, when answering the IPU questionnaire eighty-one per cent (81%) of respondents believed that politics was not currently shaped or led by women as much as it was by men; and that women's participation at the leadership level was an important feature of gender equality (94.7%) and democracy (84.0%). There would be positive consequences for society if women played a greater role in *the concrete realisation of the aspirations of the people. (West Africa)*

Respondents noted that the advantages of greater political participation by women included recognition of the wider dreams and aims of communities and the provision of basic needs:

Women in politics ensure that the needs of society as a whole will be respected. Women extend the view on the existing needs of society. (Central Europe)

Other respondents reflected on women's influence on the economics of governance:

Politics consists of a series of decisions and priorities, and either the decisions or the definitions can be closer to the living society's needs if women and men participate in the decision-making process more or less in equal proportions. If a greater proportion of women took part in politics, decisions might get closer to life and our social and economic everyday life. (Central Europe)

These aims would be achieved through improved gender partnerships in politics:

Greater partnership between men and women in political life would mean first of all that politics would provide better responses to the needs of society as a whole. Secondly, it would mean a different choice of priorities. Thirdly, women's sensitiveness would help solve men's social problems. And in countries where women are denied cultural opportunities, a strong presence of women in the highest political posts would certainly lead to equal access to education, which is the key to equal opportunities in any field. (Southern Europe)

Respondents thought that a woman's view provided a different lens through which to view women's typical existence at an ordinary level:

Women bring a greater connection between the people's daily reality and the priorities of the world of politics. The realities of real life faced by women at all levels of society would then also be taken into account. (Western Europe)

In keeping with the view that women's participation in politics improved democracy, respondents frequently mentioned the idea of better representation of the wider population when discussing women's future in politics.

To conclude on this section of the survey, it could be stated that respondents consistently agreed that politics would fare better if shaped and led as much by women as by men:

representation of the needs of all members of the community and their life experience. (Western Europe)



The Appointed Senator

Arab Region

Born in 1931 in her country in the Arab region, AS has an undergraduate degree, and has worked as a public servant, and more recently as a businesswoman and entrepreneur. She is the oldest respondent to the survey, but one of the newest politicians, having been appointed to her first term in the Senate in 1998. She explains: *"my husband is deceased, but full encouragement came my way from my three children, all of whom are professionals, and who promised to assist in every way possible to help me give the highest standard of service, and make my term a success."*

In AS's country, women do not have the same legal opportunities as men to participate in national political life. This is not surprising, as AS was in her forties before women gained suffrage. While they exercise their right to vote, there have only ever been a handful in parliament or government. An attempt at participation at the political and professional level is made all the time by women, with some limited success at representation for professional unions and little success at parliament level. Lately some women mayors were elected in rural towns and villages thought to be very conservative, implying a possible slow change.

In AS's view, the prevailing cultural values limit women's participation, at least in her part of the world. Thinking and acting politically is identified with the male sex. *"Women are put off by the nature of political power relationships, and do not know how - or wish - to adapt even if they know how to use the system. Men shape and lead politics, so that the practice of a true democracy and equality are a problem."*

AS believes that in her more than sixty years of observation and experience that women do have special talents for working effectively and politically. With a long service in women's NGO's and working in social work fields AS believes that women are more responsive to community needs, and that there are consequences for the whole community when women are not present in decision making.

According to AS, *"change is a matter of the number of women taking part in political life, and while there are small changes over time, a minimum of at least 30% of the membership of a parliament would have to be female to guarantee consistent progress. In the last Parliament's Lower House, one female out of 80 MPs was elected into office for the first time in this country's history. She was perceived as progressive, aggressive and demanding reform. She lost her seat in the next elections, partly because her high tone and overzealous attitude was not accepted by what is thought to be a generally conservative society. The people at large will accept and vote into Parliament women they can acknowledge as reformist, yet pragmatic and experienced."*

AS sees herself as having a special responsibility to represent the needs and interests of other women, and believes that women also expect this of her. The NGO's of which she had been a member and for whom she had worked encouraged her to accept the Senate seat, as did her family members. It is an honour and privilege to be appointed to the Senate and serve amongst a selected few highly experienced individuals. *"I was encouraged by my family and close friends to assume the responsibility and work on making it a valuable experience", she says.*

Men shape and lead politics, so that the practice of a true democracy and equality are a problem.

AS has continued with her business interests but has had to make special arrangements in that regard: *"I am involved in management of a family business. My children are helping in taking some of the work load needed. I have also hired a specialised secretary to aid in sorting and organising matters related to my new responsibilities in the Senate"*. In addition she has domestic assistance in her home, which is essential.

While the presence of a mere handful of women has done nothing to change the rules and practices for the appointment of women to Cabinet or to parliamentary offices, AS believes that the few women before her and with her have brought a change in the way in which problems are addressed and resolved, and a marked improvement in legislation concerning the status of women in her country. They have also acted as mentors: *"I benefited from observing the activities of a seasoned woman senator who, through her motivation, charisma and intellect has been a source of inspiration and assurance. Other role models played a part: I was motivated by learning about such country leaders as Bangladesh and India, where running a Government is very demanding. It was reassuring to notice that in both cases the leaders did very well."*

“ I benefited from observing the activities of a seasoned woman senator who, through her motivation, charisma and intellect has been a source of inspiration and assurance. ”

AS believes a woman presiding over debates would moderate language, tone and substance and guarantee identical treatment for men and women in the debating chamber. Being in a parliament with so few women has special problems: *"with no women in the Lower House and only three in the Senate the distribution of women on Committees is far from satisfactory. As the absence of women does effect legislation, women really need to be present on all Committees."* Women in AS's country have been particularly active on issues of home affairs, education, social affairs, legal changes and the budget, and these have been their priorities.

While men and women in parliament enjoy the same standard of offices and access to bathroom facilities near the debating chamber, the presence of women has not brought any change in the rules or practices on working hours, and the small numbers of women has meant that questions such as the provision of creche facilities has not arisen.

AS has had a satisfactory relationship thus far with the media: *"So far (we have) a balanced working relationship. I hope in due time (there will be) more focus on committee activities. Because women's representation is very few in number, in a way we tend to be heard more because we are a minority."*

With her background in the NGO area, AS reports that women's organisations and NGO's promoting the status of women are in touch with her on an ongoing basis. They are supporting her effectively in her parliamentary activity and offering her the necessary information. She does see that more communication is needed through organised workshops and seminars and a co-ordinated information flow. *"I will seek this during my current term and enhance such communication and encourage it at all levels."*

Does AS think that more women are needed in political office? *"My experience at the Senate is still young. However, I am encouraging younger women leaders to come across and make their political ambitions felt and heard."*

And what do women bring to political life? *"More understanding of basic women's needs and instincts is needed, especially in rural areas, resulting in better communication between women and men and therefore more understanding and mutual respect."* ■

4

PARTIES AND QUOTAS

The survey data produced a wealth of detail about women's experiences in political parties:

- ▶ 80% of the survey respondents gave their main channel of entry into politics as having been through a political party.
- ▶ 92% of respondents were members of a political party at the time of completing the survey and, as mentioned under Chapter 1, the largest number situated themselves on the left of the political spectrum (32.6%) with a slightly smaller proportion in the centre (31%); on the right were 16.6% of respondents, with 4.3% identifying themselves as 'centre right' or 'centre left'; the 'other' category of 15.5% included women in parties where the party's primary identity was religious or ethnically based.
- ▶ 83% said that their political party had a structure that was receptive to women. However, two thirds of respondents believed from their personal experience that political parties were not structures in which women felt at ease.
- ▶ 50% of respondents felt that political parties in general were structures somewhat hostile to the incorporation of women. This reinforced the theme that structures which articulated the formal inclusion of women did not always guarantee an equal political gender partnership.

In some parts of the world, the advance of democracy provided an incentive for women to become politically active and to join political parties:

So far, very few women are leaders of political organisations. Usually they simply join political parties created and led by men. Since the advent of multi-party government, women are becoming more interested in political life, and take part in various elections either as candidates or as voters. (West Africa)

Women were aware that the female vote was actively sought by some parties:

The fact that parties need women's support makes them more receptive to women. (West Africa)

However, although most respondents belonged to political parties, some noted that in their country party support was not yet an avenue for women's highly needed political training or participation:

In general, women have very little involvement in party politics in our country. It is in the parties that one learns to carry on the most wide-ranging debates. It is also from the parties that candidates are chosen for the various elections that govern national life. (West Africa)

Any factors which might lead to a lack of party participation by women were identified by one respondent as due to women's personal responsibilities:

Although women form about half the total membership of some political parties, women fail to use those opportunities despite the legal opportunities. This is due to a lack of understanding of their political power, lack of assertiveness, lack of self-confidence, lack of material support and the fact of being overburdened with domestic responsibilities. (South-East Asia)

Another group of respondents reported that women should compete without special structures because the nature of party politics was competitive, irrespective of gender, and three-quarters of respondents stated that the rules governing candidature for national elections were fair to both men and women.

The great variety of information provided by respondents may be due to political ideology or social, cultural or constitutional factors. Ideologically, the respondents reflected the general expectations of commentators on politics and parties that promote women - namely that women are more likely to be "admitted" to representation from the centre or left of the political spectrum.

WOMEN'S FEELINGS ABOUT AND EXPERIENCE OF POLITICAL PARTIES

While fifty per cent (50%) of respondents reported hostility towards women in political parties, this was not in evidence from the parties' rules and regulations.

The problems are the non-written rules. The rules are written down in statutes of political parties but the practices do not favour women. (Western Europe)

Hostility that had been observed by respondents was reported as personal and gendered:

Very few women dare join political parties ... The few who are determined to confront the male politicians within the party end up being called all sorts of names - insolent, would-be men, etc. - and they are often ignored and pushed to one side. (East Africa)

While sixty-eight per cent (68%) of respondents believed that party rules and practices were fair to both men and women, several respondents reported that some parties were controlled by men pushing their own personal agendas:

The election directorate is dominated by men and they decide from their male standpoint what the rules of the game should be. Therefore there tends to be a bias more in favour of men than of women. (Southern Africa)

Other respondents listed the areas where party structures and facilities specifically limited women's involvement:

- ▶ *The party does not provide any facilities for reducing domestic difficulties faced by women politicians who are caring for young children and old people or dependants. (South-East Asia)*
- ▶ *In the context of the party, most meetings are held in the evenings and at weekends. This seems to be true of most, if not all, political parties. Such timing intrudes on family commitments and family time. (Southern Africa)*
- ▶ *The workload, the fact of having dependants and one's age are supposed to be taken into consideration regarding elections or meetings, but such rules are not often complied with. (Central America)*

- ▶ *The party programmes do not take the specific concerns of women into account. (Central Africa)*

In some parties, women's experiences reflected a lack of access to important avenues of decision-making, such as leadership roles and senior party positions. For some respondents, there was a gap between structure and practice:

The rules and practices concerning internal elections to positions of responsibility are not especially restrictive or detrimental to women. But it's the underlying mentality and the obstacles to the full development of women which limit their access to certain positions of responsibility within some of the new parties. (West Africa)

Respondents compared party structure with party receptiveness and frequently noted the contributions women's committees and quotas had made to changes of attitude, both inside party structures and in the overall political spectrum. Parties in some countries successfully guaranteed women's participation through special gender parity committees and/or quotas, while other respondents claimed that quotas and special measures could fail to safeguard access to winnable seats on party lists.

WOMEN TRANSFORMING THE POLITICAL PRIORITIES AND INTERNAL CULTURE OF POLITICAL PARTIES

The sort of male domination of political parties just described was changing as:

- ▶ 78% of respondents believed that the presence of women had brought about a change in their party's priorities,
- ▶ 79% of respondents reported that women's presence had led to change in the internal culture of their parties, and
- ▶ 74% of respondents reported that the rules and regulations of their party had been modified to include women.

Some of the comments in those respects are enlightening:

- ▶ *There is greater sensitivity to the inclusion of women in executive positions, and to the issues of special relevance to women. (North America)*
- ▶ *There has been recognition over the last ten years (1988-98) that it is essential for the credibility of any political party to be seen to be pre-selecting and electing women to parliament. (Pacific)*
- ▶ *Somehow women matter more now as political entities because they now have a voice and an opinion. (Southern Europe)*
- ▶ *Women carry more weight within my party than they do in other parties. This has resulted in having more women in positions of responsibility within Government and more women MPs than any other party. (South America)*
- ▶ *The presence of women moderates extreme positions, and decisions are more weighed, especially since our women have strength of character. (Central Europe)*

- ▶ *The party is much more aware of and sensitive to women politicians and voters. (Southern Africa)*
- ▶ *The mere fact of my participation in the party brought about some improvements in the party structure. (East Africa)*
- ▶ *I am able to demand the presence of specific women in order to hear their points of view. (East Africa)*
- ▶ *I believe that the more women are encouraged to participate actively in our party, the more the male attitude towards them changes. (Southern Europe)*

“ It is suggested that, when drawing up their programmes, parties should pay special attention to the principle of equality between men and women. The programmes should focus on the advantages of active partnership between men and women based on recognition of their difference and complementarity.”

Plan of Action to correct present imbalances in the participation of men and women in political life, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Paris, March 1994

More than eighty-two per cent (82%) of respondents considered that in recent years their party's perception of the respective roles of men and women in politics and society in general had changed, and an overwhelming eighty-five per cent (85%) said that this change was due in part to the action of women within their political party. Women's party participation had been strong and effective and respondents listed how the presence of women in political parties had brought about change in the policies and priorities of their political party:

- ▶ *Recognition of the importance of social issues of state discrimination, etc. (Pacific)*
- ▶ *There is improved consideration of social issues. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *The party is more attuned to the needs of society as a whole, especially social aspects. (Middle East)*
- ▶ *Women are taking more of a role in debates/Committees, etc., on economics, industrial relations, industry and defence. (Pacific)*
- ▶ *Women drew attention to women's issues. Women drew attention to women in politics. Women drew attention to women in parties. (North America)*
- ▶ *Women played a major role in making child poverty and human rights higher priorities. (North America)*
- ▶ *We have included several sectors for women and development programmes in our manifesto. Some were recommended by our women leaders. (Central America)*
- ▶ *Our governing programme has a whole chapter on the advancement of women in three fields: (a) public policies, (b) law reforms, (c) institutional projections in favour of women. We still have a weak spot in the governing programme: we have not been able to shift the gender focus in all 36 items of the programme. (Central America)*
- ▶ *There is more about family matters, violence against women and children, peace, environmental issues and women in general in our developing aid programme. (Nordic country)*
- ▶ *Subjects such as maternity insurance, or the sharing of professional work and family work, are considered to be priorities. (Western Europe)*

Other respondents noted the way their party had organised facilities to accommodate women's needs:

- ▶ *Since men are expected to take their share of, for instance, childcare in our party, both men and women have had to change meeting times. Men, as well as women, collect children from day nurseries. (Nordic country)*

- ▶ *In our party the times of meetings are automatically adjusted to the requirements of the participants, once people announce their requirements and are sufficiently important to be taken notice of. We prefer job-sharing within the family to having to arrange for child-minding within the party. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *Childcare is now made available for annual state conferences and national conferences, etc. (Pacific)*
- ▶ *Having day nurseries is very, very important for mothers if we want the full participation of women when there is nobody to take care of their children and homes. That way they can go to school, go to a clinic and participate in meetings. We have found it difficult, so day nurseries are an important structure. (East Africa)*

Some parties were identified as sensitive to the needs of individual members: *In my party, the rules provide for women who for family reasons cannot participate in meetings to be excused. Obviously, however, both men and women must make the effort to come up with qualitative contributions. (Central America)*

Other respondents, however, observed that change was not so noticeable or speedy:

- ▶ *Men's resistance is still very strong. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *Things are changing, but only very slowly. (Southern Africa)*
- ▶ *Change is occurring but very, very slowly! And with very small steps. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *There are not enough women. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *Where there are women, or enough women, things have changed. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *Because women's participation is still minimal, it has not really affected the party culture. (Southern Europe)*
- ▶ *Being in the minority, women cannot influence how the party's internal culture changes. (Central Africa)*
- ▶ *During all these years of the party's existence, women have always had to fight for better conditions outside as well as within the party. (Southern Africa)*
- ▶ *When the party defines its priorities, women only contribute as representatives of a minority in a given situation. The party's programme only contains generalities that concern all constituents. (Central Africa)*
- ▶ *Given the very few women in the party leadership and the cultural obstructions, change remains imperceptible. (Central Africa)*

Other respondents simply noted that party structures and rules had always been receptive to women and they were not claiming a need for change:

- ▶ *In our party, which was founded in 1993, there have always been considerable numbers of women, and we don't feel any need for change since there is no sexual discrimination. (Southern Europe)*
- ▶ *I have been an MP for ten years and the situation has been good all the time. (Nordic country)*
- ▶ *Well, my party has been pro-women since it was founded in 1896. (Nordic country)*

“Parties should aim to eliminate from their programmes any terms or wording which could directly or indirectly imply the notion of superiority of men over women.”

Plan of Action to correct present imbalances in the participation of men and women in political life, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Paris, March 1994

- ▶ *The State division of my party has, since inception, had equal male and female representation at every level of the party from branch office-bearer to Party Vice-President. As a result, pre-selections to choose candidates have an equal male/female ratio and all party committees and councils are the same. In my 15-year experience this brings about a balanced discussion. (Pacific)*

A few respondents suggested it was not the responsibility of the party to adapt structures for women such as meeting times or crèche facilities. Those were personal responsibilities:

- ▶ *This is considered to be private business rather than a matter of public or official concern. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *Nor should they [take such measures]! That is a matter for the individual to organise. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *If you want to do politics, you have to take the risks. Politics is hard; you have to run all the time. (South America)*

WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS WITHIN POLITICAL PARTIES

While some respondents acknowledged that women did occupy leadership roles and reported that parties were increasingly receptive to women, the holding of powerful positions by women was another matter:

- ▶ *There are women at all levels within the party hierarchy, but they are few and don't occupy decision-making positions. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *Women actively participate in the same way as men, but they don't manage to move upwards, always holding subordinate positions in political organisations and on electoral lists. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *Although the rules and practices do not prevent women from running for decision-making posts, they are not elected or supported for these posts. In my country no party has ever had a woman party leader. (South America)*
- ▶ *Even though women are represented at the level of the decision-makers in our party, they are hardly ever suggested for positions of responsibility. (Central Africa)*
- ▶ *The number of influential women in political parties is very limited. (Middle East)*
- ▶ *Women are not in leadership positions. (Central America)*
- ▶ *Women don't get the possibility to get on top. They only reach the second row (Vice-President, not President). (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *Despite their substantial membership in political parties, women account for only 10-15% of political leadership. (South-East Asia)*
- ▶ *Although the rules do not discriminate against women, extremely few women are in the mainstream. Only 10% of delegates to the General Assembly are women and likewise women are grossly under-represented in the other decision-making and policy-making bodies of the party. (South-East Asia)*

- ▶ *The number of women politicians decreases as the level of responsibility goes up. (Asia)*
- ▶ *There is change but the top posts are still almost all "reserved" for men. (Southern Africa)*
- ▶ *Countless obstacles and restrictions keep us from attaining power on an equal footing with men. The patriarchal ideology prevailing in our society is the biggest stumbling block we have to face. (Central America)*

Several respondents reported that male culture and solidarity inside parties still made it difficult for women to hold important posts in parties:

There are some kinds of traditions in the old political parties. They are the "old boy's club". I call it wrong traditions, misinterpretations of holy writ, because they are laying down a link between religion, culture and tradition. (South America)

One respondent believed men aimed to exclude women:

The political scenario is such that men's intention is to oust all women politicians and pave way for male politicians and women support these actions through the bribes men pay them in order for them to get such positions in parliamentary or political structures. (Southern Africa)

Another identified negative male behaviour as a disincentive for women:

The minority presence of women at the decision-making levels of the party and the recalcitrant behaviour of the men doesn't encourage the emergence of rules that are fair and equitable for men and women in my party. (West Africa)

One respondent claimed there was a link between male solidarity and monetary income:

There is no formal unfairness but men club together to get their pals elected to party posts, particularly if extra remuneration is attached. This is changing slowly. (Southern Africa)

Respondents noted that women were still frequently confined to ancillary work in the party:

- ▶ *Traditionally, we women have participated in undervalued political activities, such as preparing food, sewing flags and banners, secretarial, receptionist and guide work, etc. (Central America)*
- ▶ *In practice, women are those who participate the most, working on election campaigns, campaigning for deputies and presidential candidates. (Central America)*
- ▶ *Men tend to accept women's contributions when a lot of work is required. The idea that women must work from A to Z while men must be in charge persists. (Central Europe)*

“It is proposed that measures be taken to give equally qualified men and women equal opportunities to belong to decision-making bodies at all levels in the party's structure: local, provincial and national.”

Plan of Action to correct present imbalances in the participation of men and women in political life, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Paris, March 1994

WOMEN'S BRANCHES AND COMMITTEES

Two thirds (2/3) of respondents belonged to political parties with a women's branch.

Among them, some questioned whether some women's branches served the party's purposes or helped to promote women:

- ▶ *The women's branch is still at the stage of supporting the party, marching on its behalf and imparting its guidelines to the party faithful. Owing to a lack of financial means, the functioning of this branch has slowed down and its activities have become almost nil. (Central Africa)*
- ▶ *This branch within our party only appears to work along the lines laid down by the party. This branch does not really make any great effort to ensure that the women within the party are equal partners with the men. Often the women stick to traditional women's roles, without trying to establish themselves in the activities usually handled by men. (Central Africa)*

One theme to emerge was the view that operating a special women's branch could be restrictive and possibly harm women's interests:

- ▶ *This structure only played an accessory role because it became more combative. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *Women tend to be confined to a women's wing. (South-East Asia)*
- ▶ *It doesn't exist, because it isn't considered necessary. (Southern Europe)*
- ▶ *There isn't a women's branch. I was fiercely opposed to all discrimination. I wonder now whether I was right! We need a women's pressure group to establish women in the decision-making centres of the party. (East Africa)*
- ▶ *Parties should have problem branches, not sex branches. (Central Europe)*
- ▶ *I am not very enthusiastic about so-called "women's sections", but they can be used as a vehicle to promote women to positions of political leadership. (South America)*

Yet the women's branch was generally perceived as a valuable part of the party because:

- ▶ *It is true that women have often met to discuss their specific problems, which has led the party to consider their association as a specialised branch within the party. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *It brings in younger women in particular. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *The branch pools women who make efforts to improve the status and role of women, as well as to promote equality in real life; its aim is to enforce the status of women within the party and to define the political views of its female members where the basic political issues of today are concerned. (Central Europe)*
- ▶ *The branch seeks to achieve the following goals: activate women's political interests through its activity and that of the party; represent its political interests and demands in public; take part in discussions and debates, as well as the decision-making process within the party; establish links with women's NGOs and organisations at home and abroad that have similar political affiliations. (Central Europe)*

- ▶ *Lobbying actions carried out by this branch in collaboration with certain associations and NGOs led to the modification of party rules. (West Africa)*

Women's branches were reported as having undergone evolutionary changes in roles, functions and activities:

- ▶ *In the fifties, they fought for recognition within the party and for women's rights (the right to vote and stand for election, equal pay, etc.) at the legislative level. Today, they act as the female conscience of the party and monitor how the party deals with issues such as work sharing, discrimination against women in the workplace, international solidarity between women, etc. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *I can say that this branch has seen some changes within the movement, especially since the last congress, at which there was a major advance in the representation of women at the executive level. (North Africa)*
- ▶ *In the beginning it was a "women's wing" formed by the wife of the presidential candidate and her close collaborators. At present, it is formed by a network of women community leaders engaged in major bids to advance women. (Central America)*
- ▶ *The branch has become more proactive. It has moved from being a basically fund-raising organisation to a more political one. Its function is less "secondary" and has become more mainstreamed. (Southern Europe)*
- ▶ *The branch has developed from one which organises political in addition to social events. It also is very active in party and national politics. (Southern Europe)*
- ▶ *The Women's League was instrumental in the struggle for political and economic independence during the colonial period. The branch has motivated a lot of women to play a more dynamic nation-building role. This has resulted in a good number of women having leading roles at both district and national level. Women are now in Parliament and in ministerial positions. The branch continues to prepare and groom younger women for future leading roles in politics. (East Africa)*

Clearly respondents perceived a change of focus in women's branches from women-only organisations towards the idea of gender inclusion, partnership and the promotion of gender awareness, training and analysis:

- ▶ *The branch is more and more included in the party; it is one organisation with special elected groups at each level to take special care of gender issues and female values and issues. (Nordic country)*
- ▶ *We now have two secretariats: one for women and the other for gender issues. We are thus trying to distinguish between policies for the improvement of women's status and ... the equality and understanding by men and women of our gender policy. (Central America)*

Some respondents noted that their women's branch was faced with operational problems because:

- ▶ *There is a lack of material and financial resources. (Central Africa)*
- ▶ *There are no meaningful activities. (Southern Africa)*
- ▶ *It does not function actively to promote women's interests because the women in the political structures are not literate enough to come up with broad-based activities which encompass many issues, such as*

“ Political parties and organizations should carry out public information campaigns on the need for and importance of women's participation in political life as an integral part of the process of strengthening democracy. ”

Plan of Action to correct present imbalances in the participation of men and women in political life, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Paris, March 1994

education, economics and the inclusion of women in most decision-making structures. (Southern Africa)

Those women who were hostile to a women's branch in their party insisted that this did not imply that women were not supported by the party:

- ▶ *A women's branch has not been necessary within the party, but the party has given full support to relevant women's causes, coalitions or commissions. (Southern Africa)*
- ▶ *Women members of the party do not want such a branch. We are and want to continue to be an equal component of the party, just as we feel now. In our party there is a consideration of members as persons, not as men or women. (Southern Europe)*

PARTY PRACTICES FOR THE SELECTION OF WOMEN AND MEN FOR INTERNAL ELECTIONS

One section of the survey dealt with the rules and practices concerning internal elections, within parties, to the decision-making posts of the parliamentary wing, such as party leader, party spokespersons, or leadership of political groupings in Parliament.

Sixty-nine per cent (69%) of respondents indicated that within their party these rules and practices seemed to be fair to both men and women:

- ▶ *My party is only two years old. We have three women at the top of the party. It is the only political party with a woman as deputy. We want to promote women at any level. To start with, we want to put them in the small cells we are building now and in the other party structures. (South America)*
- ▶ *In recent years there has been an increase in the number of women in the party's decision-making bodies and among the representatives. (Central Europe)*

Fifty-seven per cent (57%) stated that there had been some modifications to party rules in this respect, to take account of women:

- ▶ *There has been a change in the details required on nomination papers. They used to ask for a record of military service. (Pacific)*
- ▶ *A proposal to compel us to have at least one third of women in internal party posts was rejected in 1987. The situation has not improved since then. (Western Europe)*

It was evident that some men had worked hard to ensure women's party participation. In addition, many parties had allocated party positions to under-represented groups:

- ▶ *The national president of one party decided that his party's main objective was to be the opening of positions of responsibility and decision-making to women and young people. (Central Africa)*
- ▶ *In order to give more women a chance of being elected to the various decision-making bodies of our party, we recently brought about some constitutional amendments that include a quota of 20% at all levels. I am pleased to say that, because of the encouragement that we gave,*

more women became interested and were elected during the elections that followed our constitutional amendments. (Southern Europe)

- ▶ *Clear rules have been established making it mandatory that there should be no less than 35% of women in leadership posts within the party and in public posts. Women make up 35% of the bureau of our party and of its representation in Parliament. (Nordic country)*
- ▶ *We have changed our rules (statutes) so that women are to be represented by at least 50%. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *The party has introduced quotas as an internal requirement and has introduced this idea into my country's political life. It is committed to equality and equal opportunities for women and men. The rule is 50% for each sex. (Western Europe)*

Conversely, some respondents believed that their party conventions and practices were unfair to women:

Although there is no overt discrimination against women yet because extremely few women are in the mainstream bodies, they generally are not recommended for candidacy. The convention is that the party president makes the decision. However, the president is required to consult the divisions, which are empowered to make recommendations. Women politicians normally do not even account for 10% at the divisional committee level. In any party, correcting the gross imbalance would require affirmative action. (South-East Asia)

This sense of unfairness was also reflected in candidacy selection for some respondents:

Women members of political parties, unlike independent candidates, are rarely given eligible posts in the lists of candidates. (North America)

“By analysing election results, the parties could assess the advantage of choosing women candidates as well as men candidates who are active in promoting women's participation.”

Plan of Action to correct present imbalances in the participation of men and women in political life, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Paris, March 1994

THE SELECTION OF CANDIDATES FOR NATIONAL ELECTIONS

Only one quarter (25%) of respondents thought that the current rules and practices concerning the selection of candidates for national elections within their party were unfair to women. This was explained by the finding that fifty-three per cent (53%) of respondents belonged to parties where there had already been rule changes to define an overall policy regarding women candidates.

Respondents acknowledged the equality struggle of women who had preceded them and recorded a continued need for affirmative action in some countries:

- ▶ *Without women, equal rights would not have become a priority. At the last election the priority was: a country list has to include one woman in the first five candidates; a country list has to include 25 women. Unfortunately they were in the second part of the list. (Central Europe)*
- ▶ *No rule or practice is observed. One has to fight by petitions and sit-ins; that is how women managed to place a woman at the top of the list for the legislative elections in 1993. (West Africa)*

► **Indices of arrangements adopted by the parties of 46 countries to promote political participation and election of women**

Taken from IPU's Survey "Men and Women in Politics: Democracy Still in the Making", 1997

Country (N = 46)	Entry Index	Election Index	Total Index	% Candid.	% Elected
Senegal	0.75	0.08	0.42	—	11.7
Germany	0.70	0.33	0.52	29.5	26.2
Sweden	0.68	0.64	0.66	43.6	40.4
Argentina	0.63	1	0.81	30.0	25.3
Armenia	0.55	0.60	0.58	2.5	6.3
Australia	0.46	0.17	0.32	27.9	15.5
Fiji	0.46	0.17	0.32	—	4.3
Cyprus	0.45	0.23	0.34	9.9	5.4
Ireland	0.35	0.30	0.33	18.1	13.9
Slovakia	0.33	0.13	0.33	14.6	14.7
Egypt	0.29	0.08	0.19	2.0	2.0
Hungary	0.25	0.00	0.13	—	11.1
Equatorial Guinea	0.25	0.13	0.19	—	8.8
Romania	0.22	0.22	0.22	—	—
South Africa	0.21	0.17	0.19	37.9	25.0
Andorra	0.21	0.08	0.15	—	3.6
Singapore	0.17	0.00	0.09	3.2	2.5
Mexico	0.16	0.66	0.41	14.8	14.2
Canada	0.15	0.50	0.33	22.1	18.0
Tunisia	0.15	0.00	0.08	6.0	6.7
Venezuela	0.15	0.40	0.28	—	5.9
Iceland	0.13	0.08	0.11	50.4	25.4
Jamaica	0.13	0.00	0.07	9.3	11.7
Republic of Korea	0.13	0.00	0.07	2.2	3.0
Cameroon	0.10	0.13	0.12	—	12.2
Slovenia	0.09	0.06	0.08	—	—
Finland	0.08	0.00	0.04	—	33.5
Zambia	0.08	0.00	0.04	—	—
Botswana	0.05	0.00	0.03	—	10.0
Kenya	0.04	0.00	0.02	2.7	3.0
Bolivia	0.00	0.50	0.25	16.6	6.9
Bulgaria	0.00	0.00	0.00	—	13.3
Cambodia	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.8	5.8
Colombia	0.00	0.00	0.00	8.5	11.7
Guinea	0.00	0.13	0.07	—	7.0
Kiribati	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.5	0.0
Malawi	0.00	0.00	0.00	7.2	5.6
Moldova	0.00	0.00	0.00	11.3	4.8
Nepal	0.00	0.00	0.00	6.0	3.4
Poland	0.00	0.00	0.00	13.1	13.0
Czech Republic	0.00	0.17	0.09	20.2	15.0
Samoa	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.9	4.1
Saint Lucia	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.0	0.0
Chad	0.00	0.00	0.00	10.5	17.3
Ukraine	0.00	0.00	0.00	9.3	3.8

Notes

Countries are classified according to the score obtained in the "ENTRY" index. The "ENTRY" index is constructed as follows: the actual number of "logistical" and "training" measures adopted by the political parties of a country is divided by the total number of measures of the same type that could have been applied by all the country's political parties. For example, in a country with six parties, if one party adopts the arrangement that consists in choosing meeting times that leave priority to household and family activities, two parties that of pre-established meeting times, no party that of providing day-care or child-minding facilities, and three parties that of setting up a women's branch, the index is as follows: $(1+2+0+3)/(6 \times 4) = 0,25$. Scores may vary from 1 (if all parties adopt all the measures) to 0 (when no party makes any such arrangements). The "ELECTION" index is calculated in the same way: the actual number of measures adopted by the political parties of a country when drawing up the electoral lists is divided by the total number of measures of the same type that could have been applied by all the country's political parties. The "TOTAL" index represents the average score obtained by adding up the scores of the "ENTRY" and "ELECTION" indices. The data on representation of women among candidates and those elected refer to the lower or single Houses. Data available at 12 November 1996.

QUOTAS

- ▶ 94% of the survey respondents considered that changing the nature of the outputs of politics had most to do with the numbers of women taking part in the decision-making process
- ▶ 75% believed that the number factor had greater influence than the passage of time, although both were significant.
- ▶ 52% of respondents belonged to parties without quotas or internal guidelines designed to ensure that the party fielded a minimum proportion of women in national elections
- ▶ 48% of the respondents indicated that their party had adopted a quota or internal guideline designed to ensure that the party fielded a minimum proportion of women in national elections

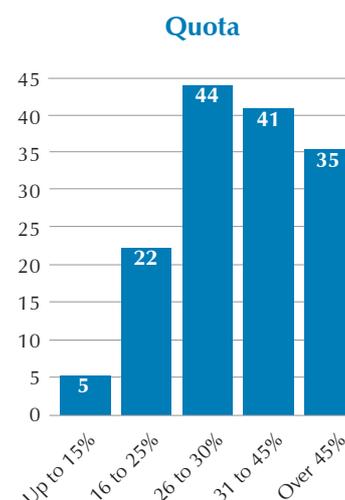
- ▶ *The adoption of a quota or an internal guideline guarantees that the party fields a minimum proportion of women in the national elections. (Southern Africa)*
- ▶ *Half of winnable seats for 1997 election were filled by women candidates. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *List quotas are the rule in our party. In several areas women's lists have also enabled women to be elected. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *My party decided that for the communal and legislative elections its basic structures must use the 1/3 rule, that is to say a minimum of one third of the candidates must be women. (West Africa)*

- ▶ 43% responded that measures had been taken in their party to ensure that women gained entry
- ▶ 80% of respondents agreed that quotas of at least 30% were desirable
- ▶ 35% recommended 40% or more.

Yet the minimum percentage did not always ensure that women were placed in winnable seats or list positions:

- ▶ *The Constitution of our political party is always talking about he/she. In the local election held in 1997 it was the policy for the election that at least two of every five candidates should be women; 40% of elected candidates were women. However, I have to admit that even if rules are there, it is sometimes difficult to put them into practice. (Southern Africa)*

- ▶ 20% of respondents had other measures in place to ensure that women were placed on the lists in winnable positions
- ▶ 23% of all the respondents belonged to a party where men and women were alternated on electoral lists
- ▶ 33% of the respondents belonged to parties where the rules specified arrangements for an equitable distribution of men and women candidates between constituencies in which the party stood the best chance of winning in the election
- ▶ 27% of respondents were covered by party rules outlining material and financial arrangements that were to be made for women candidates.



The replies to questions on rules and practices concerning candidates for national elections suggest personal experiences:

- ▶ *My political party supports women candidates ... a quota. (Southern Africa)*
- ▶ *I entered the national Parliament on a "women's" lists. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *In 1993, when the woman Federal Councillor had been elected with a great deal of difficulty and thanks only to a great effort made by women, a popular initiative demanding post-election quotas for the government, the Parliament, and the Federal Tribunal was launched. The National Council drew up a counter-project proposing quotas for the lists of candidates and this project was accepted by Parliament today, 24 September 1998. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *Just one courageous woman can be a vehicle for profound change where 30% may be of little effect. As in all politics, it is quality that makes for improvement and, while numbers help, the question of how many brings in the demand for equality: we cannot settle for less than half. (Pacific)*
- ▶ *It is not normal in a democracy that a group accounting for 52% of society should be represented at a level of only 10-20%. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *I think the ideal would be 50%, but in reality men do not accept it. In [my country] we have had to start with 30% and that's where our proposals stand. It is a challenge for women to achieve even that. (Central America)*

From a more philosophical point of view, respondents reported their views that the system of quotas would have a positive social impact beyond women's political representation:

I think that the percentage could permit a real change in male behaviour regarding questions of interest to women, for example in the resolution of conflicts in our district. (Central Africa)

Others noted the wider implications for society of women's guaranteed partnership with men in politics:

- ▶ *Considering that women in my country do not lack general or professional education, it is rather the fact that we still operate within a strict societal and family structure which is not conducive to their more active role in politics. Therefore I firmly believe that the "critical mass" of 30% could have a real impact on the ongoing policies and decision-making processes that affect our daily lives, which would ultimately lead to a shift in the mind-set of both men and women. (Central Europe)*
- ▶ *My experience is that the low representation of women in politics leads to underestimation of the fields of education and upbringing and of some social matters. (Central Europe)*

Respondents noted that quotas had an important role to play in the political empowerment of women generally and even told of events where there was a sense of celebration in political situations where quotas had obviously made a difference:

Since July 1998, the Central Committee of the R.C.D. has included 21.3% women. The change is tangible. In meetings, when a woman speaks in favour of a proposal which concerns women, the applause is louder and more sustained, at least from her female colleagues. They can have a decisive influence during debates and on decisions. A significant percentage can sway a vote. (North Africa)

“ Views on quotas diverged. Those who favoured them stressed the need for quotas at all levels where decisions are actually taken, from parties to the national Parliament, Government and administration. It is clear to us all that quotas are only a necessary evil which should be applied on a temporary basis in order to redress the current dramatic imbalance between men and women and that they should be abolished once the desired effect has been achieved.”

Concluding Statement, IPU Conference "Towards Partnership Between Men and Women in Politics, New Delhi, 14-18 February 1997

► **Quotas of women's candidatures set by parties, by rule or custom, for legislative elections**

Taken from IPU's Survey "Men and Women in Politics: Democracy Still in the Making", 1997 (Information restricted to survey results November 1996)

Argentina				Georgia		
PJ	35.0%			CUG	?	
UCR	30.0%			NDP	?	
FREPASO	30.0%			Greece		
UCDe	30.0%			ND	20.0%	
AL	30.0%			Guyana		
DP	30.0%			PPP	?	
FG	30.0%			PNC	?	
Modin	30.0%			WPA	?	
MID	30.0%			Iceland		
US	30.0%			WA	100.0%	
Armenia				PA	40.0%	
Shamiram	100.0%			SDP	40.0%	
UNSD	20.0%			PM	40.0%	
CPA	?			India		
NDU	?			Asom Gana Parishad	35.0%	
Australia				Ireland		
A. Greens	50.0%			Fine Gael	aim 40.0%	
ALP	35.0%			Labour	20.0%	
Austria				Japan		
Greens	50.0%			KOMEI	planned 30.0%	
ÖVP	33.0%			Mexico		
Social Democrats	?			PRD	30.0%	
Belgium				Namibia		
Volksunie	25.0%			SWAPO	?	
Bolivia				DTA	?	
MIR-ADN-PDC	30.0%			DCN	?	
EJE/P	10.0%			MAG	?	
MNR-MRTKL	?			Norway (1)		
CONDEPA	?			LP	50.0%	
MBL	?			CP	50.0%	
Brazil				Conservative Party	50.0%	
PTB	20.0%			SLP	50.0%	
Canada				CDP	50.0%	
NDP	aim 50.0%			PP	50.0%	
Costa Rica				Liberal Party	50.0%	
PUSC	aim 40.0%			REA	50.0%	
PLN	m/w planned 40.0%			Roumania		
Czech Republic				PDSR	25.0%	
KSCM	?			PD (FSN)	25.0%	
Denmark				Senegal		
SDP	w/m+aim 40.0%			PS	25.0%	
Ecuador				Slovenia		
APRE	50.0%			ALSD	33.3%	
PRE	25.0%			South Africa		
ID	25.0%			ANC	33.3%	
DP	10.0%			Sweden		
PSC	4.0%			SDP	50.0%	
Ecuatorial Guinea				VP	50.0%	
CSDP	?			Mp.G	50.0%	
Fiji				FP	40.0%	
FLP	20.0%			The Former Rep. Macedonia		
France				PDP	4.0%	
PS	(1996) 30.0%			United Kingdom		
Germany				Labour	aim 50.0%	
B90/Greens	50.0%			Uruguay		
PDS	50.0%			Socialist Party	38.0%	
SPD	33.0%			Venezuela		
				AD	30.0%	
				MAS	30.0%	

(1) All political parties in Norway have a rule - formal or traditional - to aim to include 50% of women in their lists.

One successful quota system was reported thus:

My party established a minimum 20% quota for women eight years ago. Two years later the quota was no longer necessary because more women than that had been elected on their merits alone. We have now approved the principle that "neither sex can hold more than 60% of posts in the Party's collegial structures". In the last National Committee elections, six of the first ten majorities were women. (South America)

Clearly the quota issue was reflected in the total staffing of parliamentary systems. One respondent highlighted a need for a more widespread systemic awareness of the need for quotas:

I am aware that 33% is a proportion quoted as constituting a critical mass for change and impact. However, I think it equally important to count the numbers of women in positions of influence at government level. For example, there are only 20 women MPs in our parliament. Of these, however, five are ministers (three full cabinet ministers), one woman is party leader and two others are deputy leaders of their parties. Many other women are high-profile front bench. So not only numbers matter; clout and visibility and power in their own parties matter a great deal. (Western Europe)

While often acknowledging the usefulness of quotas and other mechanisms, women believed quotas should not distract women politicians from being able to demonstrate that they were just as skilled as male politicians:

- ▶ *We have a cabinet of 17 ministers with seven women and this is sufficient to beat the men at their game. So this depends on the quality of women and not on numbers. (Central America)*
- ▶ *The point is not in percentage but in quality. (Southern Africa)*
- ▶ *I tend not to favour quotas because it is more a matter of ability, no matter the gender. Change should be brought about by the joint effort of society, by all men and women. (Southern Europe)*
- ▶ *We are not in favour of quotas as this term gives the impression of an obligation on the part of men to include women in electoral lists. (Southern Europe)*
- ▶ *The percentage should come about naturally as a result of the electorate's vote and the capabilities of those women who want to stand for election. (Southern Europe)*
- ▶ *The percentage is an important factor but not the only one; in my view the quality of leadership has to be developed. In Latin America, although there are notable educational differences, there is a very well-prepared women's elite - it should be brought into politics. (South America)*



A Seasoned Politician

Nordic country

Born in the Nordic region in 1942, SP is married with two adult children. She has an undergraduate degree, has been a Member of Parliament since 1985 and is now in her fifth term. In SP's country, women enjoy the same legal opportunities as men to participate in political life, but she considers that they do not take as active a role as men in voting, in parliament or in the Government. She considers that prevailing values as to the respective roles limit the participation of women in politics.

SP notes that her views may be surprising to many, as her country has the highest women's representation in the world, but men still dominate as party leaders and in the 'heavy positions'. SP is describing a very small difference in the proportions between men and women in parliament - a difference other respondents could only dream about. Yet she explains: *"Civil society is not as equal as in our Parliament and I believe we have to make more progress there to make real equality in politics. Women's political power is increasing - but it is not equal."*

SP believes that thinking and acting politically is traditionally identified with men. Women are put off by the power relations that often characterise political work. They do not know how to adapt to them or use them. *"Women's presence is transformative; they change politics, because they have different priorities and a different conception of society, and this helps women politicians restore the public's trust in politics. Women focus more on family matters, violence against women and children, peace, environmental issues and about women in the development aid programme."*

Even when women account for 43% of parliamentary representation, SP considers that politics is still shaped and led by men in her country. The most specific difference that women bring is their support for the weakest in society. While women's greater participation is bringing about a change in the traditional male values, language and mores of politics, some traditions die hard. The language has become simpler and easier to understand - as well as lost a bit of its status. *"Even if people want us to talk in a way they can understand they seem to be very impressed by a formal language."*

SP believes that changing the outputs of politics depends on the number of women taking part and the passage of time. She also considers herself to have a special responsibility to represent the needs and interests of other women. SP entered politics via activism in the party. She was motivated to put words into action, to actively participate in political life, to be involved in change. She has always been very upset about injustice. When she first entered parliament she had children under fifteen but received strong support from her husband and close relatives. While SP does not have domestic support at home, she does believe it is essential to reconcile family life and political commitment.

Describing her party as being in the centre on the political spectrum, she suggests that the party is not structurally receptive to women, and furthermore that parties in general are somewhat hostile to the incorporation of women. *"While women have worked inside the party to change its basic texts, and party rules have changed to take account of women, the party rules and practices concerning elections to decision-making posts are unfair to women. This is again a reflection of practices in civil society."*

“The party is not structurally receptive to women, and furthermore parties in general are somewhat hostile to the incorporation of women.”

However, SP reports that the situation is different for candidate selection in national elections. Rules and practices ensure an overall policy regarding women candidates, an internal quota on the minimum percentage of women candidates, and rules to see that women are in winnable positions in party lists or on seats. Material and financial arrangements support women candidates. The party also has a women's section. *"It is very valuable to have a women's branch or organisation to support women. It is also important to cooperate closely with the party. Our women's organisation used to be very strong but it has lost a little of its importance lately."*

The action of women inside the party has changed the perception of SP's party regarding the respective roles of women and men in politics and society, and this in turn has changed the party's attitude towards both male and female voters. While meeting times have not been adjusted to account for women's needs, facilities such as day care centers have been provided.

“ Now we have a system of mentorship. Its about practical and formal advice on everything from committee work, to raising motions, and to taking initiatives in the committees.”

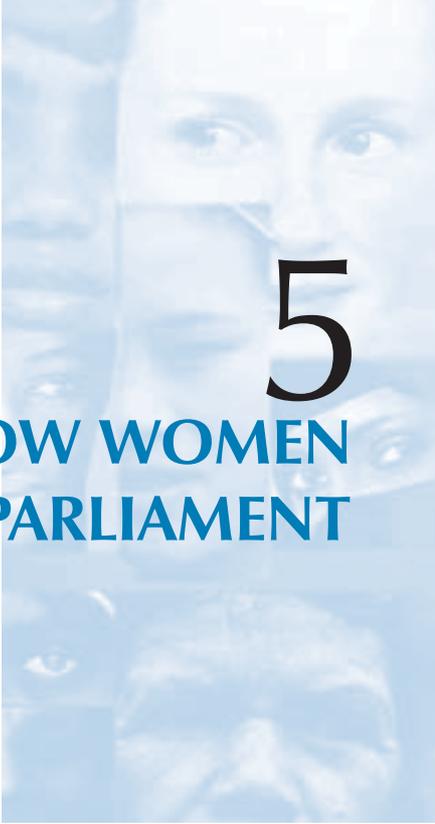
As a woman candidate, SP received training from her party on how to conduct her campaign and on her future role as an MP. *"This came in particular from the women's branch and from male and female mentors. Once I got a seat in parliament, I didn't have much of this support. We newcomers supported each other, and we got advice from both seasoned men and women. Now we have a system of mentorship. It's about practical and formal advice on everything from committee work, to raising motions, and to taking initiatives in the committees."* SP was elected in a mixed electoral system and believes this favours women. She has experienced a woman presiding over the parliament, and believes this improves the management and organisation of proceedings, and moderates the tone of debate. *"It reflects everything that happens when women enter a male culture: language, habits and the focussing on other issues."*

Women are represented on all parliamentary committees, so there is no Committee on the Status of Women. Parliament has a creche, fewer night sittings, and announced timetables for parliamentary work are observed. Decision-making posts in parliamentary support services are distributed in a balanced manner between men and women.

SP believes the media view men and women differently and that this can work both to women's advantage and disadvantage. *"The media focus is more and more on party leaders - it would be good for democracy if they could pay attention to all members responsible for different issues. We could also be more active and determined. There is an association of women journalists, and this is very important. Women journalists know women better - obviously. They write more interesting articles."*

Describing her political life in general SP advises us that she has always been met with respect, and had no real problems being a woman. She has experience of support from both men and women. But, she confides, *"the voters give me a lot more of their personal problems. The journalists use other words in their articles about me and sometimes I notice that men seem to take decisions in their own little group. Eight years ago my male competitor gave up. He knew I had more support and did not want to lose face."*

It is clear from SP's experiences that incoming women politicians can benefit from the direct support and advice of seasoned women in politics. And in particular SP believes that *"it's very important for women MPs to meet women from other countries. I think we who have a high representation can support other women and show the whole Parliament that this works very well and is good for the society as a whole."* ■



5 WHY AND HOW WOMEN RUN FOR PARLIAMENT

A WIDE VARIETY OF MOTIVATIONS AND CIRCUMSTANCES

Respondents to the survey were questioned about their motivation for becoming a political candidate and their channel of entry into politics. In addition, respondents were requested to describe their process of entry. There were ten themes that emerged from these questions.

The strongest motivational theme to be identified was a natural interest in or vision for the community, country or society in general, and this idea was coupled with a powerful sense of social justice. Eighty-eight per cent (88%) of all respondents claimed an overall desire to make a difference to society:

I wanted to change society into one of more justice and equality. I therefore entered the party that came closest to my aims. I learned that if you want to change something, you need power. To get power, you need to look for support. I therefore tried to get (and I got) the support of women in the party and in society. (Western Europe)

Political action was perceived by some as a short-term contribution to systemic change rather than a lifelong career:

I was brought up in a family in which political ideas were prominent. I was a rebel, anti-authority, and took part in many demonstrations concerning human rights, nuclear issues and employment rights. After spending a lot of time outside the establishment, I decided to take the plunge and enter the «ultimate establishment». I knew a lot of people who were involved in politics. I fell in love with the Green Party as I was turned off by the traditional parties. My life in politics is a period of transition for me; I will give it 4 years or 8 years, at the most. Afterwards I will do something else, but I will always defend the ideas that I believe in. Before, as a drama teacher, an organiser and an educator, I was also involved in politics. It was different, but neither more nor less effective. What is interesting is to be elected in order to get a better understanding of the system as a whole. It's a more systemic view. (Western Europe)

A natural interest in or a given vision for society

The commitment to empower the people was often identified as a reaction to previous political regimes:

- ▶ *The main motivation was changes in society as achievable utopias. I am part of a generation that since the 1960s has tried to bring about changes in society. To this was added the work of the women's movement to change the situation of women. One great source of motivation was the struggle to restore democracy in my country. (South America)*
- ▶ *I was politically motivated early in my life because of the injustices done to my people during the communist regime. My parents, who were dissidents, were a source of special inspiration for me. At the time of political (change) transition, I saw the opportunity to contribute to building a free and democratic State. I also believed that my country needed the help of every citizen in the difficult times of war and the transition to democracy. (Central Europe)*

The need to address injustice was a clear theme to emerge from the survey commentaries:

The factors which motivated me were a personal desire to defend those less fortunate (women, children, the handicapped), as well as my previous work as national secretary general of a union, president of health associations and president of a network for the advancement of women. (Eastern Africa)

Issues viewed through the lens of Christian values were of significance to the channel of entry into politics for one of the respondents:

Entering politics called for character, activity, optimism and a spiritual quest for the sense of life; Catholicism - the sense of duty and responsibility; being aware of my own abilities and limitations; believing in the significance of life and work; studies - birth of the Solidarity Independent Trade Union, Students' Independent Union. The provocation in my country in 1981 helped me realise how humiliatingly the communist regime treated society. (Central Europe)

The combination of working towards a better world for future generations both socially and environmentally was the core reason for one respondent's entry into politics:

Children of my own (work for their future). Environmental questions (for future generations. We take too much from the earth and give back garbage and pollution). I'm a woman and their representation is very important. So I had to start with myself. I want to change society into a green and equal one. (Nordic countries)

In some contexts the plight of indigenous peoples was a spur:

I entered politics at the urging of people and colleagues with whom I had worked for recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples and the demilitarisation of our country. The peace process helped pave the way and helped us fight from the seat of power for changes in the conduct of politics and a stronger civil society, and for the elimination of impunity and discrimination against indigenous peoples. (Central America)

Working towards resolving injustice overwhelmingly included equal political representation for women:

In my experience I was not treated equally with some male colleagues by the ministry in a question concerning my salary. I found that some other women had the same difficulty and there was much discussion to the effect that more women should participate in politics. I looked around and asked many women why they didn't enter politics. I was asked to look in the mirror and be a candidate myself. I came into politics very late since I was already approaching the age of 50. (Nordic countries)

In the case of some respondents, tertiary education had played a part in developing their consciousness of the need for political action to address injustice and inequality:

- ▶ *When I returned from the USA and Canada, the main incentive for my activities was that there were too few women active and in power and that, where equality was concerned, there was a big gap between theory and practice. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *A long time ago I started to work on educational problems and through this interest of mine I entered the Teachers' Union. A few years later I became the leader of the Union. Later, I became the leader of the national Confederation of the Unions. At the time of political changes I finished my career in the Union and became a member of the first freely elected parliament. This year I've been elected an MP for the third time. Between 1990 and 1994 I served a period as Minister of Labour. (Central Europe)*
- ▶ *As a teacher, I attended meetings of the teachers' union. Later I was elected a member of a political party's executive committee, president and founding member of an association, and member of the coordinating body of associations and NGOs in my country. (Western Africa)*

A critical feature of many responses was the need for consultation with the people. Women spoke of wanting to implement processes that were participatory:

- ▶ *I wanted to be able to discuss the country's problems, defend women's interests and exchange experiences with women. I needed to experience the politics of other democratic countries and to speak with the people, to hear the people's concerns and to help find solutions to the problems experienced by the most vulnerable population groups. (South-East Africa)*
- ▶ *It was a long battle at grass-roots level to prove that I was as capable as a man was, so that I could be acknowledged and elected to posts in public life. Determination and ambition pulled me through those times. (Southern Africa)*

Creating a better world for children was a motivation for some of the respondents:

When my children were born I started worrying about the state of the world around me. I began to be active in an ecological association. After a cantonal election in which the nationalist right-wing party won a lot of seats, I felt an increased responsibility for changing the balance of power. I joined the Socialist Party without knowing anyone and without being from a socialist background. Subsequently, it was the women in the party who encouraged me to get more deeply involved and to register on a list for the elections to the cantonal Parliament. My feminism really woke up at that time and I took part with enthusiasm in the first women's list for election to the national Parliament. I was not elected the first time round, but we were successful with our women's

list the second time and got one woman on the State Council and two women on the National Council. (Western Europe)

Mainstreaming women into all public sectors of employment, production, development, politics, economics, professions and education was also a catalyst for participation in national politics:

I was coordinator of our National Council of Women and supervised many women's groups all over the island. The aim was to empower women to enhance the status of women in all walks of life; effective mainstreaming of women's concerns in development; identifying women's needs at the micro level and getting a constant feedback. After four years coordinating the National Council of Women, I left to coordinate a new political party - the United Workers' Party. This party, in six months' existence, went up for election and in 1990 became the main opposition party. In 1995 it became the Government of the country. Hence here I am with all my women's groups at my side and I being among the founders of the Party. I have been a schoolteacher in the area and a leading member in all developments. Hence I had no difficulty entering politics, but it is not an easy kettle of fish. (Central America)

Specific issues pertaining to women and their families provided the motivation for participation in many cases. Fifty per cent (50%) of the respondents suggested that a political or other particular project was their main motivation. For example:

- ▶ Dishonesty / double standards / corruption
- ▶ Pension scandal in my country
- ▶ The low status of women in the country / Women very much discriminated against
- ▶ The lack of formal education / Bad schools for my children
- ▶ The need for women's education / Low female literacy
- ▶ Women's emancipation
- ▶ The lack of women in politics
- ▶ The need to help women with domestic responsibilities

The family background

Thirty-seven per cent (37%) of all respondents said they were influenced by the culture of their family when moving into politics. Respondents consistently commented on their family's involvement in political life, and thirty-nine per cent (39%) had received encouragement from their family circle. This had inspired their subsequent involvement at both local and national level:

I come from a family that was interested in politics and supportive of the Labour Party and labour movement. I became active in the student movement and joined the Labour Party as a young adult. I was active in the Party, including in changing its rules to set affirmative action targets. I also worked as a lawyer for trade unions. I was the first woman to be selected in my State to represent a safe Labour seat. (Pacific)

The continuation of political consciousness within the family unit was perceived as necessary for the well-being of future generations:

I grew up in a family where politics was an important thing. I got interested and active. I believe that a society can be made. As I want a good society, a democratic society for now and later for my children, I try to help to make this ideal society. (Western Europe)

Nineteen per cent (19%) of respondents noted that they were influenced by a role model or the participation of a family member. Women from across the regions were particularly inspired by their father's political activities. Other male relatives or their husband had often led the way and this gave women the confidence to believe that they too could be a Member of Parliament. With a tradition of family members in politics, some respondents named the issues which had inspired their families and themselves to work towards resolving injustice:

North America

North America

- ▶ *I was first involved in politics as student because my father was in politics. I ran for the Municipal Council. I was concerned about local issues and wanted to bring attention to them. I got involved running for federal politics because I found a vehicle committed to change, a party committed to real systemic change based on grass-roots principles.*

Pacific

Pacific

- ▶ *I am the offspring of leaders: my father was a clergyman, my mother a woman leader. My grandparents were traditional leaders. I had an advantage through my education as a teacher. I was motivated by issues of colonialism, exploitation, nuclearisation, widowhood, single parenting, power abuse, greed, corruption, injustice and suffering.*

Western and Southern Europe

Western and Southern Europe

- ▶ *I was co-opted into local government owing to the death of my father, who previously held the seat. Representing women was the main factor.*
- ▶ *My father was a Member of Parliament for 25 years, so politics was always a vital part of my family's life. However, my entry into politics was also due to my own involvement in the Party's various subcommittees from an early age. I always viewed politics as a means of serving the people by making their voices heard in the country's highest institution, especially as a means of representing the weak, the less fortunate and other minorities in our society.*
- ▶ *My father was an MP for 29 years and my husband an MP for 17 years. Many members of my family were Councillors. Distant family members were MPs. I thought I could win the seat for the Party.*

Africa

Africa

- ▶ *Following the example of my father (...), I became involved in politics at an early age. For the general elections of October 1994, I was selected by the party through internal elections on an equal footing with my peers and that is how I entered the general list.*
- ▶ *My parents were very interested in public life and politics and my father, in particular, encouraged me. I then married a man who was also active in politics, which assisted me a lot. He was not such a "go-getter" as I was but that also assisted me in my «growth» as a politician. I also wanted to make a change in life in the sense that I wanted a better life*

for all the people in my country, with equal opportunities (not in a welfare sense, though!).

A combination of education and family background as a reason for entering politics was a sub-theme to emerge from the data which two respondents in particular put very clearly:

- ▶ *I came from a family where both parents were active in politics and so was exposed to politics at an early age. I made up my mind to be in politics when still at school. At university I read papers on politics. After three years of practising law as an advocate and solicitor, I felt ready to enter active politics and joined my parents' political party. Some years later my party split and I joined one of the factions. I was very active in expanding its influence. Hence I was in a position to request and did obtain my candidacy for the general elections in 1990. Since October 1996 both factions have joined up - the new political party which I joined dissolved in favour of merging with the other faction. (South-East Asia)*
- ▶ *As a college student I had become involved in the politics of our region and joined a political party that addressed my concerns towards my country and my region. I met my husband through this political party and through political activity in our University. When we got married he continued to be involved in politics formally (in official positions, rising to the post of Prime Minister) and I continued my political involvement informally, but outside the political party to which we had belonged. My involvement in public life included the rights of women, on which I lectured, gave speeches and participated in seminars. It also included an interest in education and higher education as a human resource development tool, the environment and the political future of our country and region. I was unable, however, to participate formally in politics as I was the wife of a chief of the Royal Court and the then Prime Minister. My husband passed away at an early age and I was asked to enter politics formally, first through my appointment as a member of the National Consultative Council (a body which replaced Parliament temporarily because of the political and military consequences of the '67 war in our region), then as Minister of Information, then as a member of the Senate for the last nine years. (Middle East)*

The political circumstances of the country or the region

For some respondents, particular issues specifically related to their country, rather than their family background, had motivated political participation.

Thirty-seven per cent (37%) of respondents claimed that the challenge or taste for risk motivated their becoming a candidate. Specific historical injustices provided a challenge to some respondents to take political action:

As a child I lived through the war years, i.e. the Second World War. After 1945 I was confronted with the need to recognise the incredible brutality of the regime that existed during the so-called Third Reich. Also the deceit that had been practised, by means of which the Nazis succeeded in gaining the support of the young people in Germany. I joined my party because I wanted to contribute to setting my country on its way to a better future in a peaceful international community. I worked intensively and was able to chalk up successes. (Western Europe)

Social change provided the catalyst for other respondents:

I personally received no encouragement from my environment (family, partner, local society). However, I became interested in politics because my teenage years coincided with the polytechnic uprising, which was a period of great political inspiration for most of my countrymen and women. I strongly believed in the need for social change. I was determined to fight for gender issues in politics. (Southern Europe)

Women's participation at national level frequently coincided with constitutional change, which in turn was a strong force leading to opportunities within parties for several women:

- ▶ *My interest in national affairs developed during the constitutional crisis of 1975. I then joined a political party and became active locally. I stood twice for a State Parliament seat and was unsuccessful. After the first attempt (1984) I became active at State level in the Party and, after the second attempt, was elected to the Party governing body and a year later (1989) became one of four Vice-Presidents of the Party. Two years later a Senate vacancy occurred and I decided to contend for it, in spite of being next in line for the State Party presidency. I became a Senator in July 1993 and, at the time of writing, have just been re-elected for a second six-year term and was No. 1 on the ticket. (Pacific)*
- ▶ *At the outset it was the fact that the whole political system changed, culminating in 1993 in the adoption of the first written constitution. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *In autumn 1968, the year the tanks entered Prague, the socialist-communist coalition in the district where I lived split up. During the special elections which followed I was at the top of my party's list; my party had formed a new coalition with the socialist group. I became deputy mayor and kept that post until 1979. In 1979, I was elected to the national Parliament. From March 1980 until 1984 I held two offices, national MP and Euro-MP. From 1984-1989 I was a member of the European Parliament. Since 1989 I've been in the national Parliament again. (Western Europe)*

For one respondent a combination of political circumstances, family tragedy and a vision for a better society left her with constituents who needed representation:

I was involved with the resistance work against the junta, beside my late husband. His assassination in 1989 led me to claim, at the last minute, his orphaned mountainous constituency in order to work - as he would have done - to end its isolation and relative economic backwardness. (Southern Europe)

In more than one instance, personal experience of discrimination and injustice galvanised respondents' desire to effect change:

Because of oppression and discrimination by the colonial regime I joined a Liberation Movement. Because of my participation in the liberation struggle I came step-by-step through the party structure, where I am now. It was 1974; my family and I had to leave the country to avoid imprisonment, because we helped the freedom fighters. I had to be a refugee for 15 years. As a refugee, I was encouraged by other people from other countries who liberated their countries. We got political, financial and diplomatic support from international communities and we were encouraged by our political leaders. (Southern Africa)

When countries moved towards democracy this provided opportunities to participate in a greater spectrum of parties:

- ▶ *After 40 years of having only one party in politics, when there was an opportunity to have more parties, first at least with a membership card I had to demonstrate that my heart was in it. Then ten years ago, when I became a candidate, I felt that if I could do anything to prevent this democracy from being too short-lived, I would do it. (Central Europe)*
- ▶ *I became interested in politics with the advent of democracy. I wanted to be part of the grass roots. I thought it wasn't easy to reconcile family life and political activity. I received encouragement. (West Africa)*

Threats to the democratic process also motivated women to become more involved in politics at national level:

The violation of the State Law (Constitution) by the President brought about the shooting on the Parliament in force. It created a threat to the development of democratic processes and parliamentarism. In such circumstances it was natural for the people most active and interested in developing parliamentarism to enter Parliament. For me it was essential not so much to become a member of the Parliament as to strive to secure its continuance. (Eastern Europe)

For one respondent, political activism and rebellion motivated the battle for justice through political representation:

I contributed to rebellion against a flagrant injustice, in defiance of the Government. The rebellion was not to do with regionalism. As a result I was sentenced to twenty-five months in prison, seven of them in solitary confinement. At the time I was the mother of six children. They were left to look after themselves although they were minors. Despite this, I never received an award from my country. But I received the medal of honour from the President Nasser in 1969. However, after my studies I was given a responsible position by people in authority. (Central Africa)

Identifying a need for ethical practice prompted one respondent to enter politics:

The country was in a state of chaos and political parties lacked credibility. There were problems of terrorism, galloping inflation, immorality and corruption. (South America)

Deep developments in values and society translating into political action, coupled with the emergence as priorities of human rights and social justice, have sometimes helped to make women more aware of the need for them to become politically active:

Participation in the student uprising in France in 1968. Activist in the Luxembourg Feminist Movement. Involvement with some young barristers practising in Luxembourg whose objective was the creation of a barristers' union. Prison action. Free advice for foreigners. Action to combat drug addiction. Activity in support of the integration of foreigners. (Western Europe)

Others suggested that in their country the public was looking to women for political action:

I had an invitation to occupy a space that until then had been occupied by politicians with little knowledge of the needs of the population or the country in general. With the especially difficult - critical - situation in my country, this was a period in which the people were looking for new and, in particular, women's faces. (South America)

An experience at the local level

Many women had been active locally before contemplating national politics, and local political action had been a feature of some respondents' lives from a very early age:

- ▶ *I managed to influence school and educational politics in my town as a member of the city council. I later took on additional tasks in social and welfare politics and was elected chair(wo)man of my faction in the city council. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *1988-89: I took part in civic youth movements to assume responsibility for voting and civic topics. 1990: birth of the party. I headed the Youth Section in 1993. I was part of the Women's Branch as Deputy Secretary General in 1993. I entered the National Executive Committee as a women's representative in 1994: Secretary of Minutes, Executive Committee in 1995. Elected to Congress for the first time, for a four-year term at the head of the National list. I was 27 years old when elected, and obtained more votes than any other deputy but one. Starting in 1990, I worked as an adviser on five committees and learned about the technical and administrative development of Congress. It is interesting to note that I got my job from a woman, the then President. (Central America)*

VARIOUS CHANNELS OF ACCESS TO POLITICS AND ELECTIVE POSTS

The NGO channel and the feminist movement

When survey respondents were questioned about their channel of entry into politics

-
- ▶ 33% mentioned involvement with non-governmental organisations and, in addition
 - ▶ 24% highlighted encouragement from non-governmental organisations.
-

Some women's personal experience of inequality before the law led to political action within NGOs towards change:

In 1969 I could not get a divorce from my husband on account of federal laws and the Marriage Act. I became involved in a women's group, the Women's Electoral Lobby, and through that I became involved in divorce law reform and the law reform groups, human rights groups, and setting up services for women and children (women refugees, youth refugees). In 1972 I got a job in community work and have continued to work to change our society through involvement with groups. (Pacific)

A strong theme to emerge from the data was experience of social work with NGO contributions. This often served to raise political consciousness and as a channel of access to political office:

- ▶ *I had spent a fair length of time in social work for a big non-governmental organisation, which gave me quite good experience. (Central Europe)*

- ▶ *I've been taking care of single mothers since the age of 21, in an NGO whose aim is to give professional training - in sewing, embroidery, hygiene, infant care, cooking - to young single mothers between the ages of 15 and 25 so that they can earn a living and raise their children in dignity. Young mothers abandoned by the fathers of their children live in a poverty-stricken world. I got involved in politics to make their voices heard in the media and in government, to prompt everyone to take their problems into account. I am an officer of the party in power and so can make my voice heard. (West Africa)*

The global women's movement undoubtedly influenced, motivated or encouraged women to become candidates for political office:

- ▶ *I was active in a lot of associations as a result of being a founding member and I chaired the Committee on the Status of Women during International Women's Year, in 1975. Because of all the problems with which women are faced, the inferior status with regard to all of the challenges to be overcome, women asked me to stand in the legislative elections and they supported my candidacy in the one-party state system. I was vice-president of the Commission on General and Institutional Affairs from 1989 to 1992. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *The independent feminist movement politicised me long before I joined a political party. (Western Europe)*

The trade union channel

Although trade unions were a channel of entry separate from NGOs in the questionnaire, the two areas clearly interfaced and provided opportunities that led to some women's participation in national politics:

I am an activist in several non-governmental organisations: women's representative in a confederation of trade unions; representative of a women's association; member of an association for the defence of human rights; a member of a political party which selected me to stand in the elections. (Central Africa)

In fact, eighteen per cent (18%) of respondents indicated that trade unions had been their main channel of entry into politics. Action within the trade union movement provided experience for these women to move into political advocacy in the wider spectrum:

In 1990 I was elected secretary general of the health workers' union. For five years I managed strikes and negotiations with different governments. When my term of office was over I did not renew it, preferring to leave the position available to others who wanted union experience. Since I had been an activist in women's NGOs and proved myself in various positions of responsibility, a women's delegation – political activists – came to see me and asked me to be a candidate for parliamentary elections, to represent the majority. The objective of the delegation was to have a representative in Parliament capable of representing civil society. After a lot of thought and because of my commitment to see a woman in Parliament, I agreed, and that is how I found myself in a political party and a candidate in elections. (East Africa)

Leadership roles within trade unions led to wider community awareness, greater individual skills and subsequent nomination for other political posts:

I was active in trade union and emancipation work from about 1970. When I moved back to my home place, I was nominated to a place in the local council

- I got a place in 1987. I had to leave it after about one year because I got a job in the local municipality. Then I was elected a member of the board at county level, where I got the leadership post after about two years. I was nominated to the county council in 1991 - and got a place there - and to Parliament in 1993. (Nordic countries)

The political party channel

Seventy-eight per cent (78%) of all respondents stated that commitment to a political party was the channel through which they became candidates.

Some political parties actively sought the involvement of women who had proven abilities, and parties approached them as potential candidates. Several respondents to the survey commented that they had been approached by the party, rather than personally seeking a place as a political candidate:

- ▶ *It was a surprise for me in 1990 when a traditional political party contacted me to persuade me to enter politics and stand for election after six months (in May 1991). It was a great challenge for me because I was the first Indian woman on a list of candidates, besides which I was very religious and presided over the first Indian women's movement. What the old men decided to do was put me at the bottom of the list. I got very angry and set up a campaign to vote on preferential votes. So in 1991, I was the first Indian woman elected to Parliament. (Central America)*
- ▶ *As a militant in left-wing political parties since 1969, I have held different responsibilities within my party and coordinating non-governmental bodies nationally and internationally. I became a member of [my party's] Political Committee by direct arrangement of the President of the Republic, who had asked for names of women who could become Cabinet members. (South America)*

It is possible that positions in party organisations existed for women in areas where few women had previously offered their candidacies:

I was vice-president of the young socialists in my branch, and the branch president said I should stand. Actually, I was probably the only woman and the only young person, and so I stood a good chance of being put on the list. I submitted my candidature on the last day as I had given it a lot of thought; my life was already very full, what with work, sport at weekends, evening courses (3 a week) and political activism. (Western Europe)

The movement from local representation of the party through to national representation was a common theme:

I belonged to a political party which was in power and it was my work in the party machinery that got me noticed. I held various positions within the party and was first elected a municipal councillor, then becoming deputy mayor. Later, when my party had to compile a list of candidates for the last legislative elections, I won the party «primaries», which are used to select the candidates. My name was carried forward to the list of candidates enrolled in my constituency, and that list was elected. (West Africa)

High-achieving women and those working in the civil service were sought after by some political parties:

I was picked from my post in the civil service to stand as a candidate for the government-backed political party. It was felt that the candidate should meet all the necessary criteria. (South-East Asia)

“Parties and non-governmental organizations, especially women's organizations, should ensure that candidates for election are given the support indispensable for the success of their campaign. In the case of parties, equal support - including financial support - should be given to men and women candidates for election. Women's branches of the parties can further provide women with a very effective network of support.”

Plan of Action to correct present imbalances in the participation of men and women in political life, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Paris, March 1994

Involvement at the policy-making level of the party organisation led to political candidacy for other women:

I entered an embryonic political party in 1989 and helped draft its statutes. National Secretary of Legal Affairs; as such, member of the National Executive Committee; Deputy for the metropolitan district, having been a candidate for the second seat. (Central America)

Some women actively worked their way through the traditional party hierarchy to achieve candidacy:

As a member of the Party, I moved up through the hierarchy from bottom to top and was designated to stand in the elections. (West Africa)

Finally, affirmative action on the part of a particular party provided opportunities for some women to run for Parliament:

The political party which I am in now was proposing to encourage women for election. The Federal Constitution gives us the right to vote and to seek election for the first time in the history of my country. (East Africa)

The professional background

Specific careers emerged as good grounding for politics. Careers that involved analysing legislation were referred to as relevant to respondents' entry into politics.

Various women highlighted legal training:

- ▶ *My experience as a lawyer and a lobbyist. (Asia)*
- ▶ *Membership in the Bar Union, then participation in election to Parliament on behalf of "Bar Union". With my legal background, I decided to take part in elections because adopting laws requires a professional background. (Central Asia)*
- ▶ *I was the first woman in the Government. Being a lawyer, I have an interesting task. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *As a lawyer I have realised that participation in national politics is the only way to help bring about across-the-board change in my country. (Central America)*

Legal literacy had also been gained through other professions:

- ▶ *As a food engineer and a technical and sales manager, I have to work for laws in this field. I have learnt that to get advantages I have to be prepared. (Central Europe)*
- ▶ *My participation in the politics of professional economists led to entry. (Eastern Europe)*

Professions which involved the media featured in women's comments about their entry into politics:

- ▶ *As a journalist, I followed the different stages of change in the political system of our country with great interest. In this capacity, and having noticed the very limited number of women in politics, I wanted to help rectify this imbalance by joining a new party. All the more so because, in my opinion, journalism has a lot in common with political work. (North Africa)*

“As a lawyer I have realised that participation in national politics is the only way to help bring about across-the-board change in my country.”
Respondent from Central America Central America

- ▶ *I was motivated through my work as a radio journalist. (Western Europe)*

Chance of circumstances

Some respondents found that their personal interests and being in the right place at a significant time of change provided the opportunity for nomination at a political level:

In 1963, during the preparation for the legislative elections, an informal meeting was called to choose three women to represent the regions of our country (North – Centre – South). That is how I came to be chosen for the Northern region. I wasn't prepared for this; it was almost pure chance. (West Africa)

Changes in personal life circumstances motivated entry for other women:

I got fired and decided to do something about it. I joined a political party and a couple of years later I became an MP. (Nordic countries)

Local boundary changes provided opportunities for women who had been active locally to channel their energies into politics at national level:

I was asked by local people to put my name forward for the selection process for the newly created constituency (Post Boundary Commission recommendation) in which my family and I lived. I did so in the hope that I would be able to serve the area to which I was committed. (Western Europe)

A combination of various factors

As already mentioned in the discussion of other channels of entry into politics, some women were unable to indicate just one channel; rather, they identified a combination of factors:

The desire to carry out a project, the encouragement of my party, the encouragement of my family and friends, and a bid to be the first elected woman in my village. (Western Europe)

Activism for political participation of women in national politics, legal training, family culture, involvement within a party and the support of other women combined to prompt women to seek political representation at national level. Such a combination was well articulated by one woman thus:

First of all, I was one of the first practising women lawyers in my country. As such and having tasted the many inequities and prejudices that existed at the time (1960s - 1970s), I participated actively in all efforts to bring about the legal and social changes that were needed to improve the status of women, and I became known as a young professional activist. In 1988 my husband was elected President of our country. During his five years in office I had to give up my legal career and instead I became very active and involved in many other spheres, such as social welfare and cultural activities, and I became the Honorary President of the newly established Permanent Agency on Women's rights. In 1993, after losing the elections, my husband decided to set up his own political party, a centre party in the establishment of which I played a very important role. In 1996 our party was the first new party to enter Parliament for a long time and I personally won one of the two seats, having obtained the most votes of preference. In my case, I had the support of many women. (Southern Europe)

The timing of local issues, coupled with family support and party involvement, motivated other candidates:

My constituency comprised four main villages which were badly neglected. Representation was poor and the ruling Government did not pay much attention to the representative although he was a Minister. My husband encouraged me and all three political parties approached me. (Central America)

In addition, for some respondents, harsh regimes added an extra incentive for education and family involvement:

There were three important factors: my academic education, which confirmed and consolidated my interest first in political ideas and then in political involvement; my husband, who is also a political scientist and historian who started our fruitful academic and political collaboration; our exile, which kept us a long way from our country until 1986, led us to active political involvement against the dictatorship, and then later to the party. (Central America)

Political activism during higher education provided the foundation and networks for later involvement in issues at national level:

Participation in the student uprising along with being in the feminist movement and involvement with some young barristers whose objective was the creation of a barristers' union. Prison action, free advice for foreigners. Activities against drug-addiction. Activity in support of the integration of foreigners. (Western Europe)

The combination of union activism, education, family encouragement and local representation was a theme that was referred to repeatedly:

Education gave a view of politics. The different political views and the political activity of my husband became the reason for my studying political education. His resignation from politics, for health reasons, forced me to get involved in it. The political process which made things hard for the right-wing governing force mobilised me. First I got involved in union activity, next I became a member of the city council, and then I went into the political process I have mentioned, and I eventually won the parliamentary election. (Central Europe)

Eighteen per cent (18%) of respondents indicated that other channels led to their involvement in politics. Among those cited are the following:

- ▶ *I was handpicked, though I declined at first. (South-East Asia)*
- ▶ *The International Women's Year. (Pacific)*
- ▶ *My political activities started at university. (South America)*
- ▶ *I succeeded in getting support for and sharing my political life in my country by encouraging activists, by calling upon young people, women and even men, and by organising them. (Central Africa)*

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF RUNNING FOR PARLIAMENT

Having identified the channels of entry into Parliament, women were asked to describe their personal experience of running for Parliament. Respondents identified difficulties and inhibitions which had to be overcome when running for Parliament, as follows:

▶ 67%	Balancing amounts of time to be devoted to private life and political activities
▶ 37%	Cultural values and attitudes hostile to women's participation in politics
▶ 36%	Financial questions
▶ 31%	Assuming political status without betraying one's female identity and approach
▶ 30%	Lack of a support network
▶ 21%	Transport problems
▶ 20%	Problems of insecurity
▶ 20%	Inhibition in contact with media
▶ 19%	Becoming a public figure
▶ 16%	Inhibition about public speaking
▶ 12%	Inhibition vis-à-vis constituents

How cultural values and gender matter in the context of election campaigns

One theme to emerge from the qualitative comments about running for Parliament was that of equal gender treatment as a candidate:

- ▶ *I really don't think the party asked me to be a candidate because I am a woman. I never had that feeling.* (Western Europe)
- ▶ *Women do not enjoy any special support in my party.* (Central Europe)
- ▶ *There is no special backing of women candidates, at least officially.* (Southern Europe)
- ▶ *Once a candidate is identified by the party, it is not a question of gender any more. The whole machinery has to work to make sure the candidate wins.* (South-East Asia)
- ▶ *It was not important that I was a woman. It mattered that I was a person known to artists.* (Central Europe)
- ▶ *I came to Parliament within the group of professional economists who had decided to reform the country by means of law and through development of the rule of law and parliamentary institutions. Under such conditions sex – female or male – plays practically no part.* (Eastern Europe)
- ▶ *No different from the men.* (Nordic country)
- ▶ *The party does not have a policy of backing women candidates separately or specifically. All candidates are backed equally.* (Southern Africa)
- ▶ *I cannot find any differences in relation to my male candidates in my party. We have the same rules.* (Nordic country)
- ▶ *My party provided no special support for women. Everyone – women, men and children – received the same treatment.* (Central Africa)

For some women, gender in fact had a positive influence on how constituents and/or their political party treated them:

My electoral campaign was made easy inasmuch as my candidacy was viewed sympathetically by the public. There being fewer female candidates, my party made a special effort on their behalf. (Central America)

Some respondents found age rather than gender to be of more significance when campaigning:

Although I was the first woman from my area to offer herself as a candidate, my male counterparts in opposition did not, since they knew my ability, try to exploit the fact as a weakness. They nevertheless referred to my age, since I am older than they are. To their surprise, youths returned to me in just the last few days before the election. (South America)

Being an advocate for women was of prime concern for other candidates:

Coming from a professional background as the principal of a girls' school and having had a long association with various service-orientated community organisations, as well as having always actively identified with and been involved in gender-related matters in the organised teaching profession, I approached my candidature to a significant extent from the platform of gender equality. In all campaign speeches for the 1994 elections, women's needs in this country were stressed and have continued to play an important part in my work as an elected representative. (Southern Africa)

Others found that marital and parental status influenced how they were treated when on the campaign trail:

As a woman I suffered much from dirty campaigning strategies used by both men and women because of my being a single parent. Secondly, female voters view politics to be a male field; hence they generally prefer male candidates. One has to be strong in order to pull through the campaign trail. (Southern Africa)

How logistics, funding, support and training have an important impact

For some women the physical logistics were not gender-sensitive. Here is a sample of the kind of experiences from their campaign that they recalled:

Since I was a candidate on the national list, I had to travel to all the towns all over my country, sometimes overland, sometimes by air, but most of those present were men, which did not help logistically. Sometimes the steps leading up to the platforms were very high; there were no bathrooms, or even time to go to the bathroom; if I got up feeling sick I couldn't say "I'm not going today". (Central America)

When comparing the support enjoyed by male and female candidates, including the general political and logistical backing from the party, women noticed differences which were gender-specific, such as:

- ▶ *Some men are still surprised by the "candidate" being female. (Pacific)*
- ▶ *The men on the list were very angry with me; the way I structured my campaign. (South America)*
- ▶ *When people stood for Parliament as independent candidates, party leaders and members closed ranks, shutting out all such candidates, particularly women. Women were said to have no business in politics. (Pacific)*

Different gender treatment was not always a negative feature of campaigns:

- ▶ *Our women's organisation supports women candidates. (Nordic country)*

- ▶ *Women candidates receive solid backing from my party. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *Everything is done not only to make women candidates feel at ease but also to protect them from certain inadequacies during the campaign. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *Training weeks are regularly organised to prepare women for their future political role and on many aspects that facilitate their task as women candidates. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *As soon as a woman has proved herself, she makes a name for herself and they rely on her. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *Women received more attention at all levels. (Nordic country)*
- ▶ *I was the last person on the list, but a campaign helped me to be elected with preferential votes of more women voters. (South America)*
- ▶ *When election time came, the party promised that it would back the constituencies that fielded a lot of women candidates. (West Africa)*

Funds and human resources were identified as critical measures of support for women candidates. Some women commented on these in terms of the need for special measures for women:

- ▶ *My party supports women... by allocating a budget to them. The inter-federal committee of the women of the party decides on the activities, posters, etc. according to the budget. The federal committee of women proposes a project and the federation allocates a budget according to requirements. For example: a poster - a photo of all of the candidates. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *Women candidates are free to form groups with the party's authorisation to run funds for women's campaigns. (Central America)*
- ▶ *In our own experience, we have formed a special group of women entrusted with supporting women candidates and finding funds for their campaigns, all of this with the approval of the party. We have done this because the party bureau hasn't shown any particular interest in supporting women candidates. (Central America)*

Others commented on the need for resources as a feature of campaigns irrespective of gender:

- ▶ *There are no material or financial arrangements to support candidates in general. (Southern Europe)*
- ▶ *My party supports all candidates with volunteers, money and resources. The amount of support ... depends on a number of factors. (Pacific)*
- ▶ *I have not had any more difficulty raising funds than my male colleagues have. Women should be prepared to work just as hard as men to achieve the same result. (North America)*
- ▶ *My party provided financial support for female as well as male candidates. (Central Africa)*
- ▶ *Once a woman is on a party list, or a party candidate, she has the same material and financial support as her male colleagues. (Central Europe)*
- ▶ *In my experience within the party, it was more a personal effort. The party opened the door to our participation as candidates and to our election by the people, but I got very little support in terms of publicity. (Central America)*

The general lack or scarcity of funding for women's campaigns led to various interesting recommendations:

- ◆ Political parties should, as a matter of principle, put forward at least one-third women candidates and allocate one-third of their campaign resources to them.
- ◆ Political parties and international financial institutions such as the World Bank should establish special funds which can be used to offer cash contributions or interest-free loans to women candidates or to reimburse their campaign expenses.
- ◆ The establishment of systems for at least partial public funding of campaigns should be generalised.
- ◆ Wherever public funding of political parties is possible, incentives should be put in place, i.e. the amount of funding or refunding of election campaign expenses should be linked to the percentage of women candidates put forward by each party and/or elected to Parliament.
- ◆ In those countries where funding is provided to parliamentary political groups, an additional premium should be foreseen, linked to the proportion of women MPs.
- ◆ The establishment of foundations for financing women's electoral campaigns should be encouraged and developed.

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- ▶ *The political party I belong to gives more or less the same support for women candidates as it does for men. (Southern Africa)*
- ▶ *The party does not have a policy of backing women candidates separately or specifically. All candidates are backed equally. (Southern Africa)*
- ▶ *When it comes to presenting candidates, providing means and funding election campaigns, my party supports women on the same terms as it does men. (Southern Europe)*

Financial questions were the third highest priority for women running for Parliament. Some respondents noted that the notion of equal treatment of male and female candidates was problematic because women were less likely than men to have access to the financial resources needed to run a political campaign. The notion that equal treatment did not necessarily accommodate equal outcomes was perceived as problematic:

- ▶ *Politics requires extensive financial means that women do not have. Election campaigns require enormous financial and logistical means. Important political positions (minister, company directorships) are held by men. Women can be as intelligent, talented, efficient and popular as they want; money makes the world go round, especially in our poor countries where not everyone can eat their fill. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *There is no legal obstacle to women's participation in politics. The restraints are sociological. Money is a problem since few women have independent means, particularly when embarking on political activity at local level. It is more difficult for women to fund-raise, lacking as they do the "club" network that many males enjoy. (Western Europe)*

Women identified the impact of personal income on candidates:

- ▶ *Being a professional was advantageous as I was looked upon as a credible politician. Having the financial means was also an asset. (South-East Asia)*
- ▶ *The economic problem is a source of serious concern in political campaigns (I myself have worried about it). (South America)*
- ▶ *Women with special needs require resources. Cases in point are young women who have university education but experience difficulty finding a job, and women from rural areas who need more training and information and have to learn to use resources. (Southern Europe)*

Women who were economically privileged openly suggested that their experience was not typical of most women who run for Parliament:

I feel that I am not representative of many women who are interested in taking part in politics and elections, because I am comfortably off and can be involved in politics and still take care of the home. I also have the support of my family and the President and his wife, who have been friends for many years. (Central America)

Teamwork in the context of a political party was seen as an important priority:

My experience as a candidate was very positive because I had the solid backing of my party. I received more votes than anyone else from the 1,000 participants in the last convention to elect the party's national authorities (1997). I also came first when they elected candidates for deputy. In my party the custom is on principle that the party and not the candidate finances the election campaign, because once you are in public office you have to pay a share to the party for its support. (Central America)

A lack of confidence and training was perceived as a significant factor in women's experiences of political campaigns:

Women are not given chances in the party. All the practicalities of electioneering are new to women. The women have found their contest or campaign exercise exacting, exhilarating, liberating, informative and/or educational and are keen for more. We need lots of training in such things as confidence-building, public speaking, leadership skills, communications, fund-raising and budgeting. (Pacific)

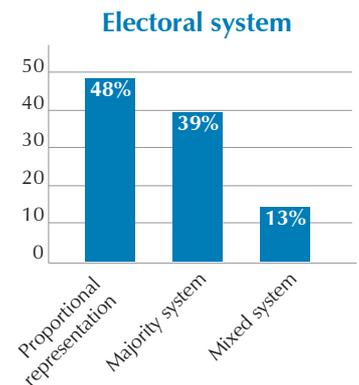
The impact of the electoral system

While personal factors, inhibitions and financial and human resources all had an impact on women running for Parliament, respondents were also questioned on the influence of the electoral system. This matter had already been the subject of previous surveys by the IPU¹ and was covered in very cautious terms in its Plan of Action.

Fifty per cent (48%) of respondents were elected under proportional representation, forty-one per cent (39%) under the majority system, and fifteen per cent (13%) under a mixed system.

When asked to assess from a gender perspective the possible impact of the electoral system on the outcome of the election:

- ▶ 64% of respondents believed the proportional system to be most conducive to the election of women in their country.
- ▶ 17% of respondents identified the majority system was most conducive.
- ▶ 26% of respondents suggested a mixed system was most conducive.
- ▶ 7% of respondents clearly gave more than one answer to this question, believing more than one system to be conducive.



Campaign preparation

Some women received training for their campaign:

- ▶ 53% were given training about how best to conduct their campaign.
- ▶ 41% participated in training for their future role as a member of parliament.
- ▶ 37% of all candidates received training regarding legislative work.
- ▶ 33% were supported in preparation regarding analysis of the national budget. This training was, however, overwhelmingly provided free of charge to 89% of respondents, and these services were provided by the candidate's party in the case of 68% of the survey respondents.
- ▶ 73% of participants received training from more than one source.
- ▶ 26% of the total group of respondents receiving training were given it by NGOs.

With regard to mentors:

It is interesting to reflect on the generosity of male mentors for candidates, given that 31% of respondents received their unpaid training for campaigning from men.

The lower number of female mentors, at 22%, may nevertheless just reflect the lower proportion of women in national politics with experience available to mentor new candidates.

Another factor deemed important for the consideration of women running for parliament was voter attitudes. Respondents had a positive view of voters' willingness to elect women representatives:

-
- ▶ 75% believed that voters in their country were generally willing to elect women to the national parliament.
-
- ▶ 61% of respondents believed voters had as much confidence in women as in men.
-
- ▶ 18% thought voters had more confidence in women than in men.
-

ARE WOMEN RELUCTANT TO RUN FOR PARLIAMENT?

Women provided their views on the idea that women may be reluctant to put themselves forward for candidacy:

It is difficult to find women willing to make sacrifices. We have recruiting drives that seek out women, but our party is very truthful with candidates on what the job expectations are: the time commitment, the travel. Women with a commitment to family are generally not interested unless they have no children or the children have grown up. (North America)

A common comment was that women's personal responsibilities made running for Parliament a difficult decision:

I should point out that convincing me to stand as a candidate was not a simple exercise. Firstly because I was looking after my twin babies and secondly because I had very limited financial means. Being a member of the opposition, standing against someone from the party in power was not easy. In the second round we were standing against the list of the incumbent party. It needed conviction and the determination of various organisations to win. Mobilising young people was very important. (Central Africa)

Cultural factors and the social construction of women as mothers were consistent factors identified which made women feel hesitant about political candidacy:

Women in general do not take part in active politics because of the demands to be away from home, particularly if one is married, child-bearing and with young children to look after. Secondly, our culture is patriarchal; hence women do not have much control of their lives. (Southern Africa)

Some women who had been leaders in their field felt that it was their responsibility to encourage women to participate and this meant providing a positive example to others, offering themselves for selection, even if they were hesitant at first:

As a successful businesswoman, I did not want to be an MP. My party members said: "You complain that there are not enough women, young people, English-speakers, business people in politics. And now, when we ask you to run as candidate you say no. It is unfair". I was thinking one day that it was unfair. Therefore I had to run and I am an MP. (Central Europe)

Given the information about campaign experiences, channels of entry and the perceived reluctance to run as candidates, respondents offered advice to women who were tempted to run for national parliament. Their suggestions fell into four distinct categories:

- ▶ Social, cultural and attitudinal changes that are needed.
- ▶ Solidarity on the part of women.
- ▶ Women learning the job and building their specific image as politicians.
- ▶ Changes to conventional political practices and strategies for implementation by political parties.

Social, cultural and attitudinal changes that are needed

In that connection, respondents commented on the following:

The need for change in community cultural attitudes, with special reference to women, and barriers to female participation in politics:

- ▶ *To start with, a change of mentality [is needed] through the education of men and people in general to make them understand that women have a lot of what it takes to be successful in politics and represent the people in parliament. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *If women were to receive more encouragement from their immediate surroundings, there would be more women in parliament. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *Women should be made aware of a new definition of the concept of "politics", and be shown the necessity and duty for women to take part in the management of public affairs. We have so much to contribute. (Central Africa)*
- ▶ *Women must join the women's movements and become an active part of civil society in general. (Southern Africa)*
- ▶ *In my opinion we need women to sign a manifesto, as in France, to demand equality. (Central Africa)*
- ▶ *In a personal respect, if a woman is married and her husband is not fully supportive of her, she could have a very difficult time. (Southern Africa)*

The need to encourage greater interest and awareness and greater involvement in political life on the part of women:

- ▶ *Women have to want it! They must try to get a seat, especially whenever a male member of parliament stands down. If they do their job well, we will not be excluded any more." (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *An awakening of female consciousness would allow more women candidates into our parliament. (Central Africa)*
- ▶ *Women should and must become more proactive. (Central Europe)*

The need to enhance women's self confidence:

- ▶ *Every woman must be secure and internally strong to persevere in the face of pressure, stress and outside competition. In parliament you cannot cry; you have to bring effort and hard work to the job every day. (Central America)*

- ◆ Training should be provided to both women and men and trainers should also be drawn from each sex. Substantial efforts must be made so that the necessary funds are provided for that purpose.
- ◆ Responsibility for training involves several sectors. Political parties should mobilise and appeal to women candidates and should set up training programmes suited to their needs. Universities, NGOs and associations also play a fundamental role, particularly women's associations which rely on men and women who can share the wealth of their experience. Parliaments are another valuable actor which provide training to newly elected MPs in order to help them prepare for their parliamentary duties.
- ◆ Training should focus on the working of government, the building of democracy and problems tied to social relations between men and women, and pertain to such topics as communication, campaign organisation, work with volunteers, media and NGOs, and the role of political parties. One particularly important type of training involves learning how to examine the national budget so as to understand its different components and determine the extent to which it takes into account the needs of women.
- ◆ Education programmes should convey the philosophy inherent in human rights, the fight against stereotyped roles, and should be followed by training components comprising elements of legal and political literacy.

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- ▶ *More self-confidence, more stability, and a better general view of society* (Central Europe)
- ▶ *Women should be encouraged by the various women's organisations to run. Such organisations should also assist women in their campaign and should encourage voters (both men and women) to show their confidence in women by voting for them.* (Southern Europe)
- ▶ *Women need to learn to take risks.* (Central Europe)
- ▶ *Women must have confidence in themselves and act with professionalism. They must do all they can to have the support of their families.* (West Africa)
- ▶ *Women considering running for parliament must rid themselves of all complexes; they must agree to fight for an ideal while remaining true to their electorate and their party. The country's authorities and political parties must have a true policy of change.* (West Africa)
- ▶ *Trust yourself and go full steam ahead together.* (Western Europe)

The need to identify practical ways for an equal share of household tasks; family support; more men willing to take on family-related work, which would generate a profound change in society:

- ▶ *Preparation for consciousness raising and training.* (West Africa)
- ▶ *More focus on how to combine family and political work.* (Nordic country)

The need for gender planning: action and measures that take into account women's true needs, including schedules for political and parliamentary meetings, day care, etc.; the opening of affordable childcare day centres.

The need for political-academic training and adequate preparation:

- ▶ *First, the most important thing is education so that women understand their responsibility for the future of the country and the importance of obtaining power.* (Central America)

The need for political structures that integrate women better:

- ▶ *We have to fight and struggle, we have to win this moral and political battle in the political parties. We women must learn tirelessly, must train endlessly, so that we can be good competitors.* (Central America)
- ▶ *Women should start at the grass-roots level to work their way up the ladder.* (Central Europe)
- ▶ *Women must fight to be chosen by their own political organisation.* (Central Africa)

The need to increase public knowledge of the work of MPs; the need for more women role models, in parliament included, and the mobilisation of current female politicians:

- ▶ *Female politicians should sensitise other women. They should organise to have women attend sessions of parliament, and should lay on a programme of political education in women's groups.* (Central America)

The need for a warmer welcome for female candidates; the definition of a global politics taking women's candidatures into account and, in particular,

the need for legislation imposing on parties an equitable quota for lists and elective positions:

Our cultural environment does not allow the development of women in this domain. Only quotas can solve the problem. (Central Africa)

The need for adequate training and means:

- ▶ *There is need for financial support, transport and public speaking training. (Southern Africa)*
- ▶ *Awareness of human rights training. Communication. Commitment. A good campaign team. A good set of policies. An adequate budget, good communications, good transport, good statistics, good knowledge of electoral regulations. (Pacific)*

The need to find solutions to women's common economic and social problems and the importance of women's financial independence. The need to provide economic and financial security for women so that they can become credible political activists:

- ▶ *Women need more opportunities in business/professional/public life so that they can acquire the necessary public profile. (Southern Africa)*

The need for a change in the general image of women as primarily family persons (this concerns public media informing and education from the primary-school level)

Support for women so that they are not susceptible to rumours, slander and unjustified criticism:

- ▶ *Women candidates must cultivate in advance their relations with the media and seek their support for their projection. (Southern Europe)*

The need to end the boycott by male politicians:

- ▶ *Women have to be brave and be frightened of neither threats nor the men who will do everything they can to discourage them. (West Africa)*

Solidarity on the part of women

Reflecting on the need for women's political solidarity, respondents conveyed the following ideas:

- ▶ *I would advise women to form a front, to fight and support one another. (Central Africa)*
- ▶ *The need for gender solidarity means that women who reach power must fight to open up effective space for more women. (Central America)*
- ▶ *Solidarity among women is also very necessary for electing as many women as possible to the National Assembly. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *Other women must support them; female solidarity requires this. (Central Africa)*

“ In politics, commitment, active ongoing presence and conviction can make up for insufficient resources, including financial means, and [...] good media coverage does as much to win an election as large sums of money. ”

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Women learning the job and building their specific image as politicians

Remarks in that connection cover more especially two related aspects:

The need for women to identify their political message and learn how to convey it:

Women candidates should project a definite campaign programme and explain their priorities, which must be such as to appeal to the voters. (Southern Europe)

The importance of building a female image of politicians:

The most essential thing for women in parliamentary activities is an ability to preserve their female advantages and try not to play a "male" part. Professional skills, ability and eagerness for dialogue [are also needed]. (Eastern Europe)

Changes to conventional political practices and strategies for implementation by political parties: advice from seasoned women politicians

Advice from seasoned women politicians for changes to conventional political practices included:

- ▶ A review of electoral laws to oblige political parties to propose an equal number of male and female candidates.
- ▶ The establishment by law of spending limits on nomination contests so that women, who generally lack the necessary financial means, may run for political office.
- ▶ The identification of ways of helping finance women's campaigns, including the establishment of funds for the purpose.
- ▶ Provide moral and logistical help to women in the preparation of their campaigns.
- ▶ Provide help to women to create political parties or join those that exist so that, during the redistribution of electoral constituencies, they are taken into account as potential candidates for Parliament.
- ▶ Increase in the support of NGOs for women running for or already holding political office.
- ▶ Development and provision of political and legislative training for women.

Specific advice for parties included:

- ▶ *The "key" is undoubtedly the political parties. Electoral laws have to be changed to make the participation of women obligatory in party decision-making positions and in public office. That can be achieved only if the political parties have women (even a few) who are the driving force behind gender policy; male leaders will do nothing for women unless put under pressure. (Central America)*
- ▶ *Teach the political parties to appreciate the contribution of women in the realisation of their programmes. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *The leadership of all parties must sincerely believe that partnership of men and women would benefit society. They should motivate educated*

- women (tertiary level) and professionals in their mid-thirties onwards to form a pool from which candidates would be selected. (South-East Asia)
- ▶ *Political training: political parties should set aside part of their budgets to train women on gender issues, national reality and electoral aspects. (Central America)*
 - ▶ *First of all, political parties should be encouraged or even obliged (by women's pressure groups) to accept more women on their electoral lists. (Southern Europe)*
 - ▶ *Political parties should agree to put women at the top of the list and that women do not have to accept subordinate positions within the party organisation. It really needs hard work and quotas for women. (West Africa)*
 - ▶ *The parties should encourage women and their supporters. Provide greater visibility, especially in the media, and thereby help them to reach the people. (North Africa)*
 - ▶ *More support from political parties, better childcare and life... arrangements. (Pacific)*
 - ▶ *Ask more women to be active in the parties and locally. (Western Europe)*
 - ▶ *More motivation from political parties to run for Parliament and more political training, especially for younger women. (Western Europe)*
 - ▶ *In order for women to be elected to Parliament, the political parties have the responsibility of trusting in women, encouraging them and putting them forward in the constituencies where they can be certain of electoral success. (Central Africa)*

A strong sub-theme emerged from this section suggesting that quotas and other affirmative actions were considered an important measure to be taken to ensure a greater proportion of women as political candidates. This concept is dealt with in further detail in the chapter entitled "Parties and Quotas", which also discusses women's experience of political parties in greater depth.

1 See *Women and Political Power*, Series Reports and Documents N° 19, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Geneva, 1992; *Men and Women in Politics: Democracy Still in the Making*, Series Reports and Documents N° 28, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Geneva, 1997, ISBN 92-9142-024-7; *Towards Partnership Between Men and Women in Politics*, Series Reports and Documents N° 29, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Geneva, 1997, ISBN 92-9142-034-4, 1997.



The Independent Candidate Pacific

Born in the Pacific region in 1946, IC is married with three children. She was the offspring of leaders. Her father was a clergyman and her mother a woman leader. Her grandparents were traditional leaders. IC gained an undergraduate degree and describes herself as advantaged through education to become a teacher and a worker with people and communications, a doer and a service deliverer.

Women do not have the same opportunities as men to participate in national political life in IC's country. *"Women do not enjoy the same legal opportunities as men because mostly women are unaware, uninformed, uneducated, and uninvolved. CEDAW has been ratified but is not effective. Political parties are anti-women. The indigenous culture is generally anti-women. Women are overburdened, overworked, unwanted, unpaid, unrecognised, and slaving to please men. There is no woman in Parliament. There are no women in 15 out of 30 top decision-making bodies, and just a sprinkling of one or two women on some of the bodies. On the face of it women can stand for elections and vote for candidates. On the whole women only vote; because only men make the decisions in political parties, and the men only choose men candidates."*

While IC's countrymen and women believe that thinking and acting politically is identified with the male sex, IC believes it to be independent of gender. *"It depends on what one means by politics. While women are put off by the power relations that characterise political work, they do not adapt to or use these power relations, not because they do not know how to, but because they choose not to."*

"Every little change for the better, we have had to fight tooth and nail for. And for every one. Men pay-lip service. And forget in the next breath. Men do not wish to allow women to do anything else in politics other than the slavish services. Here we have mixed cultures, with a low status for women. Women very discriminated against with a lack of formal education and low literacy rates. Politics is full of dishonesty, double standards and corruption."

Women's nature, and their political priorities are different from those of men. *"Women care about people and about life. Men care about material things: money, power, and fights. Men look at the big things, women see the details. Women's politics is transformational, men's politics is transactional. Women are more honest. Women want a political system and government that is participatory and holistic. Men just want what is good for men. Men enjoy monopolies for as long as no one picks them up on it. If women want any concessions they have to ask for it or go out and get it. Men are not going to freely give up what they enjoy. Men see through the eyes of men. They are not going to know about what women see if*

“Women's politics is transformational, men's politics is transactional.”

women don't say what they see. Women have to articulate, express, and communicate their concerns for men to know."

IC's has been in political life for long, and in it she has been active in social work, trade union activities, a political party, and non governmental organisations. She has always been supported without reservations by her family - Parents / Grandparents / Uncles / Husband / Sister. "Our three children were born to a political life and reared and brought up throughout all the natural and man-made calamities and crises. Ailing parents on both sides of the family have had to be cared for. We have had continual extended family responsibilities because we live in the capital, feeding and accommodating transiting school children and adult travellers."

"My husband and I both held very responsible political positions during the rebellion 30 years ago, and together we averted, or avoided and prevented a blood bath, quelled the rebellion and brought the country to a peaceful independence. In our family we have lived through and worked on the issues of colonialism, exploitation, and nuclearisation. As a woman I have been concerned with widowhood, single parenting, power abuse, greed, corruption, injustices, and sufferings."

For many years IC was active in a major political party. "There were endless frustrations there. Political parties need to be totally overhauled and reformed. Those of us who stayed in leading roles in the activities of the Women's branch of the Party have over the years dissociated in disgust and frustration. Those who are there now just agree with everything men say! We have come through some very tough, rough times. We are tired, raw, and pained. To date men just don't see women, don't want to know that women exist. Men will never make allowances for women of their own accord. It is hard enough when women ask and struggle and suffer for it."

Because women did not have a chance in the party structures, IC left the party in 1995 and invited a slate of women candidates to run as independents in the election. "Because I have been a lone woman in decision-making circles, for a long time I have spent my life encouraging and enabling others to follow suit."

Because of a training initiative developed by the Pacific office of UNIFEM and supported by UNDP, in response to the obligations of CEDAW and in fulfilment of the Beijing Plan of Action, IC and all other women candidates in her country, both those standing as independents and those standing for political parties, were able to have some training in campaigning.

"All the practicalities of electioneering were new to women. The women found their contests and campaign exercise exiting, exhilarating, liberating, informative, educational and are keen for more. We need lots of training in confidence building, public speaking, leadership skills, communications, fund-raising, and budgeting."

"Standing for Parliament as an independents, party leaders and members closed ranks, shutting out all independent candidates, particularly and especially so the women. Women were said to have no business in politics. Men were very angry with us. Women sided with the men."

“The women found their contests and campaign exercise exiting, exhilarating, liberating, informative, educational and are keen for more. We need lots of training in confidence building, public speaking, leadership skills, communications, fund-raising, and budgeting.”

"While the independent women candidates were certainly a sensation, and creating a first, they did not even receive that sort of attention from the media. Media is a new scene for traditionally oral societies. Both users and media persons need training. Media personnel are not gender sensitised. They are more ready to report about men's activities."

“ Good governance, like the word "gender", is new to our country. People will use them not knowing what they are talking about. Actually there is very little conscious knowledge of gender. ”

Although none of the candidates were successful, they have not abandoned their commitment and a small Women in Politics organisation has been formed. "We are highlighting the existing gaps in regulations and practice but our voice is still weak and very small. We are a tiny committee of educationists attempting to offer political education for good citizenship and good governance. Good governance, like the word "gender", is new to our country. People will use them not knowing what they are talking about. Actually there is very little conscious knowledge of gender."

The group is also determined to train a younger group of women in political activism and in the tactics and strategies needed to run as a woman candidate in an election. Their list includes: fund-raising, house-to-house lobbying, commitment, a good campaign team, a good set of policies, an adequate budget, good communications, good transport, good statistics, and a good knowledge of electoral regulations. They want women to become more aware, active and committed and the government to give political will and commitment to gender equality.

Does IC think that more women are needed in political office? "The ideal is 50% women. Future representation should be 50% women. The nation would be healthier, people happier, government more efficient if men and women were fairly represented. Equal participation would guarantee democracy. Equal participation would take care of everyone's needs/concerns. Equal participation would transform politics making it open/transparent/ accountable/honest/responsible/informative/informed."

And what do women bring to political life? "If women were more involved in politics the whole nature and quality of politics would change. Language, behaviour, timetable, calendar, attitude, beliefs, values, power-relations, relationships." ■

“ Media is a new scene for traditionally oral societies. Both users and media persons need training. Media personnel are not gender sensitised. They are more ready to report about men's activities. ”



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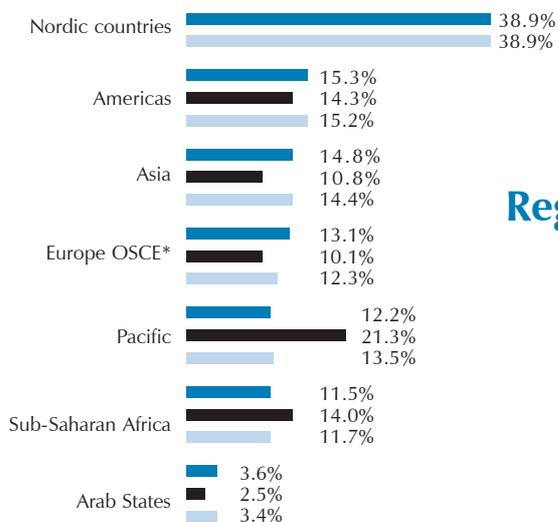
WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT

Both Houses combined	13.0%
Total MPs	41820
Gender breakdown	38643
Men	33633
Women	5010

Single House or Lower House	13.4%
Total MPs	35190
Gender breakdown	32327
Men	27994
Women	4333

October 1999
World Average
 World Average

Upper House or Senate	10.7%
Total MPs	6630
Gender breakdown	6316
Men	5639
Women	677



October 1999
Regional Averages
 Regional Averages

■ Single or lower House
 ■ Upper House of Senate
 ■ Both Houses combined

* Europe: OSCE member countries minus Nordic countries

PARLIAMENT: A CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENT FOR WOMEN

Parliaments are, by essence, a platform where conflicts are to be channeled into politically negotiated solutions and where diverging or conflicting interests are to be transformed into legislation applicable to all. It is therefore inevitable that power relations tend to predominate in that context, not only between parties and political visions but also between individual parliamentarians.

Against that general background, respondents noted that the culture of parliament often reflected the features of a male domain with some of their less pleasant characteristics.

A typical experience was reflected in the following respondent's observations following her first term. In her view, *women fear calculating behaviour and are in direct confrontation with men. Calculation*, she suggested, was *something which many women would prefer to avoid.* (North Africa) This view was reinforced by seventy per cent (70%) of participants in the survey, who believed that women were discouraged by the power relationships that often characterised political work.

This mature politician observed that *women learn to be calculating in moderation, but with foresight, and mostly women end up learning the ropes in politics.* In her view, this transition *occurs without being tempted by abhorrent manoeuvres.* She noted that, *given the chance, women would replace power relationships with partnership, looking for support from men.* (North Africa)

This politician's previous experience as a public servant was quite clear from her commentary: *Women have a humanising effect on politics, women are more loving and their political action is directed towards improving the day-to-day life of the citizens.* (North Africa) She recognised the influence of parliamentary power on women's understanding of the use and abuse of power. *Politics offers women an opportunity to acquire more experience and more confidence, and to discover their own abilities, as well as the extent of their power, and its limits.* At a personal level, she suggested *politics helps women to achieve self-fulfilment. But the experience is not without its challenges, the most important of which is to remain a woman first and foremost, not to put on a man's face.*

Much of the respondents' comments, however, show that, even if women are a rather new political force in parliament (as borne out by the figures in Chapter 1), their presence and pressure has already brought about changes with regard to how questions are addressed and resolved in Parliament.

Where there were more than a symbolic number of women, their pressure had more or less dramatically affected parliamentary positions and the parliamentary environment, and it had concerned allowance for the interests of women across party sectors. As mentioned in Chapter 3, such changes also included a marked improvement in legislation on a wide range of issues affecting the daily well-being of society, the status of women and the environment, more especially.

As will be observed, women tend to be a dynamic and creative element in parliament and it may be inferred that the group of women surveyed will be responsible for any new wave of change as we move into the next millennium. Clearly, the future leadership of the women surveyed will be critical to continued positive change.

South Africa is undoubtedly a case in point in that respect: *"The women in our party and in our parliament are a strong lobbying group for equality. The presence of women in parliament has most definitely made positive changes in our parliament and, for example, in dress code, punctuality, diligence, etc. I established an informal women's caucus in our parliament. As far as legislation is concerned, we have managed to make portfolio committees very much more gender sensitive."*

BEING INFLUENTIAL WHILE BEING FEW

I believe that the main problem is the small number of women members of parliament. We are just eight out of sixty. Seven out of eight belong to the opposition. In this situation women are "de facto" denied any real possibility of changing the decision-making process. (Southern Europe)

This comment exemplifies the situation faced by women in parliament. In most countries, their low proportion means that they cannot occupy influential positions in parliament and exert any real impact on the process.

It was difficult to get our point of view over as women since we numbered only two out of the 60 persons elected to the Senate. Out of the seven Senate officers, none were women. Nor were there any female members at the Office of Permanent Committees or at the Office of Parliamentary Groups. (West Africa)

The fact of being few does not, however, rule out the possibility of being influential, as a southern African woman and an Arab woman from the Middle East explain:

- ▶ *The growth in the number of women parliamentarians has led to an expansion in the parliamentary activities that women engage in. This has brought about a very positive change in the attitudes of male parliamentarians towards their female counterparts. [With regard to] legislation, close links with women's groups proves effective in the establishment and revision of laws related to women's issues and in the allotment of the budget for projects on women's issues. [With regard to] the distribution of posts, although only 3% of National Assembly members are female, we have gained the participation of at least two woman members at IPU meetings, thus heightening the status of women within the National Assembly. (Southern Africa)*
- ▶ *The limited number of women severely limits their ability to affect the general discourse on legislation. However, there are issues where women can influence and improve legislation. There is also one woman (myself) in the Bureau of the Senate. In the former Senate I was also Chair of the Committee on Environment and Health. [Also], with only two women in the Senate of 1993-1997, there was a woman in the Bureau of the Senate and chairing one of the Committees. The other was a member of the Legal Committee. In the ensuing Senate of 1997-2001, a woman is in the Bureau and a member of both the Foreign Affairs Committee and the Environment and Health Committee. Another woman sits on the Financial Committee and the third, who was until recently Minister of Planning, is also just joining the Financial Committee. Their contribution to the budget deliberations is effective and credible. (Middle East)*

In fact, their low numbers compel women to get organised and show solidarity among themselves if they want to become influential.

There is no balance in the distribution of men and women since a total of only 16.6% of members of parliament are women, but women have the same back-up teams as men. [Also:] In our parliament we have established a "female parliamentarians group" bringing together all women belonging to the various parties, both full and alternate members. We have sought to develop a joint agenda for women which we will pursue within each party and in the House. This is, largely, a supra-party endeavour. (Central America)

Changing the nature of the outputs of politics has most to do with the numbers of women taking part in decision-making, according to 94% of the respondents to this survey. And 75% believed that the number factor had more influence than the passage of time, although both were significant.

A marginal number of respondents from Central Europe, however, insisted that numbers were irrelevant:

The quality of parliamentary work depends not on the proportions of men and women in parliament but rather on the knowledge, wisdom and abilities of all members of parliament. [and] The presence of women in Parliament has no impact on the work. All members have to work for the common good. It does not depend on the sex of MPs. I do not think of parliamentary situations in terms of men's and women's participation. (Central Europe)

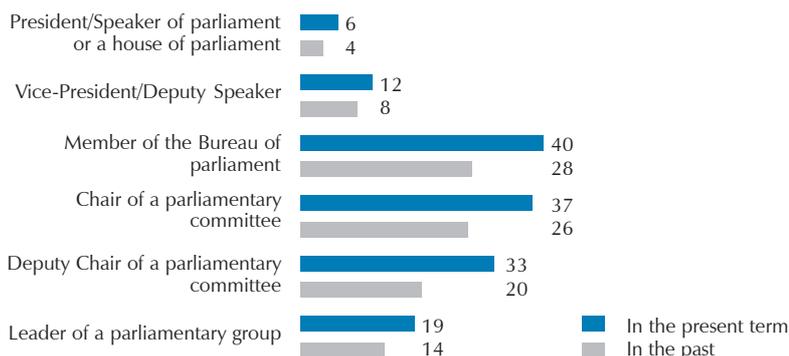
GENERATING STRUCTURAL AND FUNCTIONAL CHANGES

A woman in the chair and women in key parliamentary bodies: does it matter?

The majority of respondents (117) already appeared to have experienced having **a woman preside over the proceedings of the House or Assembly**, even if only temporarily as an Acting Speaker or President. At least two of the respondents had been presiding officers of Parliament.

In the experience of most of them (64%), a woman in such a position had a moderating effect on debates, with fewer sexist or trivial remarks. A woman presiding officer, however, did not necessarily improve the management and general organisation of proceedings.

Senior parliamentary positions occupied by the respondents



Just over half (53%) believed that with women presiding there was a better organisation of the work schedule, for example, or compliance with announced timetables. Among those who thought otherwise (47%), there may well have been an acknowledgement that the parliamentary structure or Standing Orders ruled out such individual influence, or that the Leader of the Majority in the House was the most influential person in respect of these matters.

Similarly, House procedures meant that a woman presiding officer could not guarantee identical treatment for men and women if the Standing Orders did not permit such treatment, and only 52% of respondents agreed that having a woman in the Chair would result in such treatment.

However, as will be seen later in this chapter, many women noted that a number of facilities and services were introduced in parliament only when a woman became President of a Chamber, and they are very grateful for the big improvement that such very practical and down-to-earth measures have signified for them.

As far as the **Bureau of the parliament** is concerned, many respondents noted that it was important that it should include a fair number of women but it was often not the case, although in that respect the Beijing process had had some positive impact in some parliaments:

I acknowledge that all Bureaux since 1995 have had female members, which is a big step forward. The same cannot be said of the Committees, although more women are chairing them. (South America)

In only 8% of the cases cited by respondents was there a particular rule covering equitable distribution of men and women in the Bureau. In the majority of situations (64%) the proportions of men and women just depended on circumstances, although 15% mentioned that changes in this matter were under consideration. But these observations were made in the context of a survey where the majority of respondents had entered parliament in the last ten years.

It would appear that women in top posts are more likely to be found in the parliaments of recent democracies than in those of long-established democracies. For example, as proudly highlighted by a South African respondent, the posts currently occupied by women in the parliament of her country were those of Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, several chairpersons of committees, whips and deputy chair of NCOP; since then, further progress has been made since both Houses of Parliament are now under the leadership of a woman. In addition, *parties try to ensure that women are always included in multiparty legislature delegations. The women's caucus also gives attention to this and, as Speaker, I fully endorse this position. In staffing the legislature, attention is also given to gender representativity, though this is not always achievable.*

Respondents were divided, however, in assessing whether or not the presence of women in Parliament, or within its Bureau, had done anything to change the established rules and practices regarding the composition of the Bureau, with 49% thinking that there had been some change and 51% believing the presence of women had made no difference.

Merely having women present in parliament or in the Bureau did not ensure changes in the rules and practices regarding the composition of the Bureau or Select Committees, and 52% of respondents had not seen any change as a result of the presence of women.

Women presiding officers of Parliament

▶ Since 1945, only 41 (22%) of the 186 States in which a legislative institution has existed have selected a woman to preside over Parliament or one of the Houses of Parliament. As a pioneer in this respect, Austria elected a woman to the presidency of the *Bundesrat* before the Second World War: in 1927 and again in 1932. Denmark followed suit, albeit very briefly and not until 1950.

▶ In all the other 39 States, it was not until the 1960s that a woman acceded to the top parliamentary office. Of the 41 States concerned, 17 are in Europe, 19 in the Americas, 3 in Africa, 1 in Asia and 1 in the Pacific. Twenty-four of the 41 States concerned had a bicameral Parliament and the presidency was entrusted to a woman more often in the Senate (often entirely appointed) than in the lower House.

▶ In October 1999, the situation may be summarised as follows:

Only 25 women preside over one of the Houses of the 179 existing Parliaments, 66 of which are bicameral. The countries concerned are:

- Antigua and Barbuda (House of Representatives and Senate);
- Australia (Senate);
- Bahamas (House of Assembly);
- Belize (House of Representatives and Senate);
- Croatia (House of Zupanije);
- Czech Republic (Senate);
- Ethiopia (Federal Council);
- Finland (Eduskunta);
- India (Council of the States);
- Jamaica (House of Representatives and Senate);
- Mexico (Cámara de Senadores);
- Netherlands (Second Chamber);
- Norway (Stortinget);
- Peru (Congress); Poland (Senate);
- South Africa (National Assembly and Council of Provinces);
- Spain (Senado);
- Suriname (National Assembly);
- Sweden (Riksdagen);
- Switzerland (National Council);
- United Kingdom (House of Commons).

▶ Women therefore occupy only 10.2% of the total number of posts (245) of presiding officer of Parliament or one of its Houses; four bicameral Parliaments have a woman presiding officer in both Houses.

Many women commented on the slowness of change in attitudes and practices inside the decision-making bodies of parliament. They had noted the dominance of what was perceived as masculine behaviour, and talked of becoming like their male counterparts, fearing the adornment of the "male mask", abuse of power by male and female colleagues and the failure of other women to provide support.

Women's distribution in parliamentary committees: a key for change

While, according to the parliamentary tradition, committees may not always be functioning, wherever they do function they are generally crucial in the legislative process, as stated by the following respondent, and offer room for individual creativity:

In [my country's] Parliament, the most important and exacting work takes place in committees. The hearings on proposed legislation and the opportunities to amend before reporting back, the cross-examinations on departmental appropriations, the investigations and learning of evidence on special enquiries. MPs are "free" from the party whip and machine, Ministers' and incumbent intimidations, to ask the awkward questions, even if they are then forced into line on the votes. (Pacific)

It was a point of principle overwhelmingly endorsed by respondents (97%) that women should be present on all parliamentary committees *because their presence not only brings to light the disadvantages faced by women in society, but also guarantees that the projects that are decided upon will be carried out with an intrinsic gender vision, no matter what the topic dealt with*, states a woman from Congo. This vision is shared by women from very diverse political contexts such as those of El Salvador, Ethiopia, Sweden, Hungary, Mexico, Republic of Korea and Russian Federation.

The absence of women certainly affected legislation, according to seventy-two per cent (72%) of respondents.

With respect to the current gendered proportions in parliamentary committees, only half (51%) considered the present distributions to be satisfactory. However, the number factor is clearly crucial to ensuring women's presence in all areas of parliamentary work, and respondents were aware that the proportions of men and women in their respective parliaments determined the possibilities of women being represented on all or just some committees.

There were 4 women out of 28 members (14%), so it was very difficult to have a woman on each committee, states a respondent from Southern Europe.

Responses indeed show that, where there are many of them in parliament, women tend to be represented in all committees. Parliamentary rules sometimes help, as in the case of Cameroon:

The rules of procedure of the National Assembly of Cameroon stipulate that every deputy must be a member of at least one and not more than two committees. Pursuant to judicious consultations, therefore, there is at least one woman on each committee. Two out of six (6) general committees are chaired by women. The presence of women in the committees is a good thing because they bring a feminine touch to the concept of politics and the settlement of problems.

Women tend, however, to concentrate more on particular committees than on others. Two respondents from the same country in Western Europe comment in that respect:

- ▶ *In theory, all the committees are open to women, but there is a tendency (on the part of women) to focus on health (greater numbers) and education, instead of turning to the most important topics (finance, economics, law). (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *There is a higher percentage of men on the "important" committees than on the less "important" ones. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *The "high priority" committees of banking and finance remain the domain of men and consequently funds go to "male" priorities at times. (North America)*

Gender Equality Committees and Committees on the Status of Women

While the survey was not aimed at assessing whether gender equality committees are a common feature in parliament, comments from respondents make it clear that few parliaments have as yet established a committee with a mandate to secure gender equality per se; such committees tend to be more common in Europe than in any other part of the world. Committees on the status of women, however, appear to exist in many developing countries. Often though, gender equality issues and women's issues as such are dealt with by other committees. A fairly common tradition has it that women's issues are covered by the Committee on the Family, Women and Children or the Committee on Health. It is therefore interesting to note that, in Croatia and Hungary, they are addressed through the Committee on Human Rights and that in the Czech Republic they are handled by a subcommittee of the Petition Committee.

Whenever a specialised committee exists, a crucial challenge is to secure the presence of a fair number of men in it and to reach consensus on key legislation affecting women. The comments from two women from the same Central American country and another woman from South America are enlightening in that respect:

- ▶ *Our Parliament has a committee on women that also covers minors and the family. It is made up of men and women. It has not always been able to draft legislation in favour of women because of the opposition of men to such legislation. (Central America)*
- ▶ *There is a Committee on Women, but it does not deal with issues of parity or equality; it addresses women's and children's affairs. [Its concerns include] the intra-family violence Act, important resolutions on women's work, legislative initiatives on harassment. etc. It is enough. The challenge is to get all women from all parties to support initiatives like that mentioned in the question. (Central America)*
- ▶ *In the beginning there were problems between women parliamentarians that kept the committee decided on from being set up. At present, with the participation of men, the problem subsisting between women has lessened. (South America)*

Party and all-party women's caucuses

Some respondents provided information on the existence and operation of such caucuses, which allow women to discuss issues on the parliamentary agenda and prepare a collective strategy. The following three examples in Western Europe and Southern Africa may be particularly noteworthy:

- ▶ *(There exists) an inter-party group of women: we get together to find solutions acceptable to all (e.g. paid maternity leave, old-age insurance) and subsequently agreed by parliament. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *In our parliament we have a Women's Parliamentarian Caucus. It is a caucus for all women. We meet as women regardless of our political affiliation. Recently it was decided that this caucus should change to become: Equality and Gender Development Committee. It has to include men but they should not be a majority. (Southern Africa)*
- ▶ *(There is a) Women's Caucus, with all women therefore as members, though men are welcome to attend. (Western Europe)*

Facilities and services introduced in Parliament to meet women MPs' needs

Where parliament sits in old and non-modernised premises, the question often arises or has arisen of providing women with particular facilities to enable them to do their work as comfortably and conveniently as men.

Among such facilities, the **women's toilets** occupy a "strategic" position. Having been built for men, old parliaments did not originally have members' toilets that women could use. Thus, one ancillary but nevertheless symbolic battle women have had to wage is that of getting toilets provided for them, and not in another building or a long way from the main hall where voting takes place. This domestic battle, which even gave rise to literature in a couple of countries, has not yet been won in some parliaments.

Other services such as a **crèche** or **day nursery** available for MPs who are mothers of young children, or **laundrettes** for those who cannot afford domestic help at home, are far from common in any parts of the world other than the Nordic countries of Europe.

For politicians and more especially women politicians, physical appearance is of crucial importance; indeed, women politicians often complain that they are under permanent scrutiny for their physical appearance, while men are not usually under that pressure. Yet parliamentary and other constraints make it very difficult for them to devote time to "looking good". Hence the importance of having a **hairstylist** or **beauty salon** in the parliamentary precincts (which may incidentally serve as an informal negotiating place). In addition, the many social functions to which they are exposed as politicians tend to be inimical to trim figures or just to any effort to keep fit. Hence also the importance accorded by various respondents to the kind of food available in the **restaurant for MPs** (if available).

Salads and more healthy food arrived on the menu in the Members' restaurant. [We have] new toilets and shower facilities (very small but there!). A crèche or family room has long been promised but it is very difficult to achieve, states a woman from Western Europe.

However legitimate their claims may be, especially where such facilities or services were available for men, women sometimes faced strong resistance to meeting their needs as MPs:

Support of women within the National Assembly and women's groups was essential to the provision of such facilities. But still, [our] National Assembly does provide sports and rest facilities for male assembly members, but has yet to cater for the needs of women. We are currently strongly requesting that such facilities be provided, and it looks as though our request will be met. (Asia)

Some women stated that, in those issues, a woman presiding officer can make a very big difference:

- ▶ *The previous period was presided over by a woman, who introduced material and functional improvements that we are still extending. (Central America)*
- ▶ *A (woman) Speaker had toilets installed for female parliamentarians, as had been requested during several earlier sessions. Parking spaces were also assigned to female parliamentarians. (Central America)*
- ▶ *Since the election of a woman to the position of deputy Chair of the Senate, we have a hairdressing service. (Central Asia)*
- ▶ *The President of the Congress in 1995, a woman, established a children's supper. A woman parliamentarian has sponsored a remarkable library service. (South America)*
- ▶ *The last woman President of the National Council had arranged for a specially equipped room to be set aside for women. That room now exists, and it is very nice to have a quiet place to rest, to work in silence, to change laddered stockings, etc. (Western Europe)*

Sometimes, the individual attitude of a woman pioneer opened the way for other women, as in New Zealand:

No one has a hairdresser. I used to use the men's toilet beside the Caucus room, and women who followed me did this, too, until they made it unisex. Well, after I had gone, finally a crèche was provided and the refurbishing has meant equality in the provision of facilities and conveniences for MPs and their families. For instance, in the past there was a "Members' Wives Room", but nothing for partners of women MPs.

In conclusion, the parliamentary facilities and the services available within them are non-negligible aspects of the changes that women can make in politics and which, in turn, can help women generate changes. Yet the real helps and difficulties encountered by women in parliament are clearly not technical but based on systems and human attitudes.

GENERATING A CHANGE IN PARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE AND MORES

On this subject, readers may refer to Chapter 3, pp. 30-52.

FACING OBSTACLES TO CHANGE

Against the background of power relationships, respondents in Parliament identified four main areas of objective and subjective obstacles to change:

Rules and practices

Obstacles relating to **rules and practices** most commonly cited by respondents include the following:

- ▶ Political practices (manoeuvres) with which women are not familiar and the difficulty of changing a machine that has been smoothly running for dozens of years.
- ▶ The fact that confrontational debates are not the most welcoming of places for women.
- ▶ The newness of the democratic game and the need to educate the people.
- ▶ Women's inexperience of formal politics and lack of training in parliamentary work and procedures.
- ▶ Gaining acceptance for innovative ideas, and the tendency to have women's abilities always challenged as a way of discrediting their work.
- ▶ The party discipline: *I don't agree with the decisions of my party in parliament, but I don't feel strong enough and supported enough to put my ideas forward.* (Southern Africa)

Behaviour and attitudes

Obstacles deriving from **behaviour and attitudes** highlighted by respondents include:

- ▶ The below-the-belt remarks of male colleagues.
- ▶ Uncontrolled jealousy from women but especially from men and the tension stemming from jealousy: *I experienced very intensive and critical observation of my work (even today a woman has to be better than a man). The jealousy of other women and of some men led to negative rumours being spread.* (Western Europe)
- ▶ A lack of solidarity among women.
- ▶ Opposition from men and the fact of men competing with women / Men's difficulty in accepting the political ambitions of women / Male party organisers conspiring with sitting MPs to edge women out.
- ▶ The fact that women's management is not always trusted.
- ▶ Conservative attitudes and behaviour of the country's population / Common sexist stereotypes: *"A woman MP is a disgrace!" This was said by the former Minister of Education, a member of my constituency.* (East Africa)
- ▶ The reality of a society where women are not permitted to take a public stand on certain issues.

- ▶ The inhibition for a woman speaking in public where doing so violates society's traditional values / Being exposed to violating the cultural norms.
- ▶ Misinterpretations of the Koran, and the influence of traditionalists.
- ▶ The attitude of some people (men and women) who hold traditional and cultural ideas that stand in the way of the country's socio-economic development.
- ▶ Discrimination against indigenous women.
- ▶ The media's attitudes to traditional women's roles.
- ▶ Traditional leaders being ill-disposed towards women in leadership positions, and the need for women to find the right responses.
- ▶ A lack of awareness of women's issues.
- ▶ The fact that many lawmakers lack any social conscience.

Practical obstacles usually mentioned include:

- ▶ The need constantly to juggle political responsibility and family rights and obligations / The many constraints and family and domestic obligations inherent in women's roles as mother, spouse and woman.
- ▶ The long working hours and the lack of time, especially for private interests and relationships: *No time for interests or to be with my friends. I have to spend almost 95% of my active time on politics and the other 5% I need for rest.* (Nordic country)
- ▶ The lack of childcare facilities
- ▶ The financial limitations

A number of respondents also cited their **personal fears and difficulties**:

- ▶ *I entered parliament after I had started my doctorate; it was really difficult since it is very hard to do several different things at the same time. I feel that I don't have the time to work with the electorate and to study.* (Southern Africa)
- ▶ *To be taken seriously, I've always had to work harder than a man in the same situation.* (Central America)
- ▶ Advancing in a mainly male environment
- ▶ The fear of taking on new responsibilities
- ▶ The strain on family life: *[I suffer from] the absence of privacy now that I am a public figure.* (Southern Africa)
- ▶ A fear of destroying one's private life: *Despite an understanding partner, it was difficult to reconcile political and family life with two small children at home.* (Southern Europe) *My husband did not understand the situation. He later left me.* (South-East Asia)

Practical obstacles

Personal fears and difficulties

FINDING THE RIGHT RESPONSES TO BEHAVIOUR PATTERNS AND PRACTICES THAT ARE INIMICAL TO WOMEN

In their comments, respondents expanded on the encouragement they received and the obstacles they faced once they had won their seats in Parliament. Their responses to this section of the survey mirrored their experiences when running for Parliament.

The importance of role models, especially women

Given the low proportion of women parliamentarians, it was to be expected that the sharing and passing on of political experience by women would be highly valued by respondents to this survey. It will be recalled that ninety-one per cent (91%) of the replies confirmed that women politicians received direct support and advice from more seasoned politicians.

The importance of women political leaders as role models - a strong theme of the survey which is also addressed under Chapter 8 - was superbly conveyed by the following respondent for whom, in particular, internationally recognised women leaders had been a source of empowerment, as no doubt for many other women politicians:

I had indirect support or advice from other women. Political advice came from the writings of Indira Gandhi and activities of major international women leaders in politics, like Ghansi Ki Rani (India), Margaret Thatcher (United Kingdom), Benazir Bhutto (Pakistan), Bandaranayake (Sri Lanka) and Sophie Redmond (Suriname). I recognise how important the support and advice of seasoned women politicians is. Hence I shall do my utmost to apply it and to advise other young women politicians. (South America)

The importance of role models should obviously never be underestimated in political life. One respondent reflected on the influence and great value that a particular woman leader had in her decision to become a member of parliament:

I would perhaps never have embarked on my political «career» had it not been for my admiration of a woman politician who was my teacher at high school. She offered me my first job. When she became Minister for Finance and Budget (1986), she asked me to become her political secretary. I appreciated her honesty, her consideration and loyalty to the State, her commitment and consideration of the importance of her role (in the sense that she always studied and was prepared whenever she took the floor), and her intelligence. I learned how to work and realised the importance of being inside the decision-making process and bodies. (Southern Europe)

However, respondents observed that, politics being very competitive, most politicians viewed their colleagues as potential rivals irrespective of gender. This possibly worked against attempts to provide support and mentoring for colleagues:

- ▶ *It is difficult to bring women from different political parties together to exchange experiences. Those from the party in power feel they are in a superior position; this is a source of complexes and frustrations and can lead some women to be reticent. (Central Africa)*

- ▶ *In theory, newcomers are supposed to benefit from the support and advice of seasoned politicians, but unfortunately those with experience who do not want to give up their positions and are afraid of the new arrivals do not provide support. I said earlier that every woman's worst enemy is other women. Older women have to change their attitudes. (Central Africa)*

Some respondents noted that support from other women was one strategy relied upon to help them avoid wearing this male mask. However, such support upon entering parliament was not widely reported:

- ▶ *A disturbing observation is that the few women in politics do not generally support or provide facilitation for more women to enter politics. If anything, women politicians who have made it usually suppress other women. I personally did not benefit from the advice or support of any women having occupied political positions. (Southern Africa)*
- ▶ *I had no support from anyone and I felt the need of such support. (Southern Europe)*
- ▶ *In my experience no support was offered. Very few seasoned politicians are willing to give support and advice to newcomers. (Pacific)*
- ▶ *At the start of my political life there was no particular support for women. Now the women's branch of the party takes care of the training of candidates. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *I had to learn on the spot. The only help I got was during the meetings of Socialist Party women. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *Mentoring and support is not done here in an organised way. It should be; it is important!! (Southern Europe)*

Conversely, support for one respondent was directly attributed to older, more experienced women politicians:

When I entered Parliament, a senior woman politician ran a session on how to set up one's own electoral office. That session was most helpful. As well, senior women politicians gave practical and emotional support in understanding Parliament and coping with the massive workload. (North Africa)

Those respondents who had some support recorded both good and bad experiences of support and mentoring from other women politicians. Unfortunately, adverse comments were the most common theme to emerge:

- ▶ *I was heavily supported by the men and especially the women of my party and by the body of feminine associations. I was followed and surrounded by more politically experienced women both in the party and in women's associations. This enabled me to climb the ladder to become the General Secretary of my section. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *The mentoring of an experienced MP in my own party was of great help, as was the cross-party sharing of experiences. (Southern Africa)*
- ▶ *I myself have benefited from senior women politicians' support and advice. My appointment as political secretary to a woman Cabinet Minister is considered as on-the-job training. (South-East Asia)*
- ▶ *Once I got a seat in Parliament, I didn't have much of this support. We were newcomers supporting each other but we got some advice from seasoned politicians, both men and women. (Nordic country)*

“Regarding participation in politics, some women such as women parliamentarians and those exercising responsibilities in the government - whether at the local, provincial or national levels - can act positively as models. They can show that, without abandoning their traditional roles, women can participate responsibly in political activities and have no need to adopt male behaviour patterns to do so.”

Plan of Action to correct present imbalances in the participation of men and women in political life, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Paris, March 1994

- ▶ *Women do contribute to the downfall or slow progress of other women in politics and decision-making positions because of petty jealousies and the fewer there are, the more they like to enjoy all the attention. (Southern Africa)*
- ▶ *It is disappointing to note that some of the women do oppress or hinder other women's entry into politics. These women also work hand in hand with men to hinder the entry of other women into politics. (Southern Africa)*
- ▶ *I had moral and financial support from retired female politicians and I could still call on them for advice if needed. I have also had support and advice from a (contemporary) male colleague. (Pacific)*
- ▶ *I have received advice from women politicians regarding work in committees, in setting up my office, in choosing my staff and in organising my future work. (Western Europe)*

A number of respondents showed how conscious they were of the importance of providing support and mentoring for women newcomers to the political and parliamentary scene and their commitment to politics:

▶ **Areas where support or some form of introduction or training would be most appropriate, according to women:**

▶ **Education and gender awareness**

- More women's literacy programmes.
- Education at a university level and access to studies and research.
- Participating in conferences and workshops, more especially gender awareness-raising workshops.
- Introducing CEDAW, publishing the text in other languages and making sure that the government honours its obligations to report on national implementation to the United Nations.
- Economic income-generating projects to make women independent so that they have more freedom of choice and are less controlled by men.

▶ **Political and parliamentary environment and work**

- Learning about elective offices.
- Providing campaign advice and support.
- Becoming familiar with parliamentary services and showing new members around the building and services of parliament.
- Showing new members the basic tools and how to use them: building, offices, expenses, etc.

.../...

- ▶ *There have not been many women to come into politics yet. There have been two women ministers since my own term. In the Senate we discuss together and coordinate. I think I have been useful to our third colleague, who is new to parliamentary life, by explaining procedures and the background of issues and discussing with her problems that arise. (Middle East)*
- ▶ *I tend to offer support and advice to younger and newer members. I feel particularly for independent deputies who have no party support structure, or I would offer advice to women politicians who lack my legal knowledge. (Southern Europe)*
- ▶ *Through the training and awareness-raising given by the group Women in Politics, we are highlighting the existing gaps in regulations and practice but our voice is still very faint. We have a tiny Committee of Educationists attempting to offer political education for good citizenship and good governance. (Pacific)*
- ▶ *We now have a system of mentorship. It covers everything from practical to formal advice and advice about committee work, tabling motions and taking initiatives in committee. (Nordic country)*
- ▶ *We hold informal meetings, seminars and activities in the associations to which we belong. We have also used the media to address women on their role and the contribution they must make to rehabilitating the situation of women within our society. (Central Africa)*
- ▶ *I am eager to help younger women who want to be involved in politics and pass on my experience to them. I believe that mentoring is very important. (Southern Europe)*
- ▶ *We need to have comprehensive information about parliament, to know what being a member of parliament is like... We need to be constantly in contact with other women and organisations. We should not think of power as the most desirable thing in the world. (Southern Africa)*
- ▶ *I make constant appearances in women's leadership training courses, in addition to initiation of such courses, and private meetings with women politicians. (Middle East)*

- ▶ *While my experience at the Senate is still young, I am encouraging younger women leaders to come across and make their political ambitions felt and heard. (Middle East)*
- ▶ *I have given advice to those around me in a summary account of my legislative campaign within the party and within women's NGOs; by speaking at a regional seminar on gender issues and development, on the topic «Women and politics» and on my own experience of legislative battles. (East Africa)*
- ▶ *In my work with associations and my administrative and political activities, I have always surrounded myself with women of all ages with a view to sharing experience between generations. (Central Africa)*
- ▶ *To all women who wish to commit themselves, I tell them to be serious and patient, and to respect the party rules and correctly manage internal conflicts. (West Africa)*

Conversely, some respondents simply lamented how little solidarity they had enjoyed from women in their parliamentary work:

I was elected secretary responsible for finance and materials after two ballots. My opponent for this post was a man. The vote was by show of hands and, to my great surprise, the women did not vote for me and it was the men who actually elected me. (Central Africa)

This respondent asked if this was because: *Women did not trust in their sisters? Is it for cultural reasons? In fact, a woman who dares to stand up against a man, especially in public, is thought badly of by other women. This must be strongly linked to the cultural prejudice whereby women must restrict themselves to the home and only men have the right to a public life. By refusing to vote for me, their female colleague, women certainly wanted to conform to traditional society. (Central Africa)*

A number of other respondents insisted:

- ▶ *We must undertake an activity in close proximity to sensitise women and inform those who are in need. The success of the woman's fight depends upon the spirit of understanding; being available and sociable should be the concern. We should cultivate solidarity among women. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *Efforts should be made to diversify the activities of women members of parliament so as to prevent tension and unnecessary competition between women. (Asia)*
- ▶ *Institutional measures are needed in order to provide for cooperative partnerships between women politicians. For instance, if there is a policy where only one high-ranking position is allocated to women, tension rather than cooperation between women politicians may be triggered. (Asia)*

After a length of time this woman found that respect for her was gained and both male and female colleagues offered her support. Following her initial entry she was able to work in partnership with her colleagues: *Through my actions, as time went by, women and men, too, recognised qualities in me and the party promoted me to General Treasurer of the Party. (Central Africa)*

One respondent believed that the women in her cultural situation were particularly resistant, and that men were not responsible for the political difficulties she had experienced:

.../...

- Introducing new members of parliament to present members.
- Learning how to become efficient in meetings.
- Advising incoming female politicians on how to prepare their motions and petitions in order to gain majorities.
- Learning about and from the experiences of other women, including through personal mentoring, workshops and studying speeches made by former women politicians; helping women politicians with speech preparation.
- Acquiring competence in positions of leadership.
- Supervising young people in parliamentary sessions, party meetings, NGOs and women's associations.
- Arranging informal meetings with the presence of women ministers, present and former.
- Cooperating with women politicians locally or regionally on matters of common interest.
- Introducing women politicians to different associations and groups working on certain areas of political interest.
- Helping new MPs to make contact with the media and senior officials.
- Learning about ways of coping with invitations to professional functions. / Social interaction.
- Discussing problems at work in order to avoid repeating mistakes.
- Making donations.

Women themselves fight against the participation of women in elections by hounding those who come forward as candidates because they say they are competing with their husbands. In our country, women have always been their own worst enemies. For example, it is the sisters-in-law who make the widows and orphans suffer. It is also they who set themselves up as "police" in their brother's home; nevertheless they are the "well-loved witches" of those whom they hurt. So I do not totally agree with the aforementioned discrimination of men against women. (West Africa)

Other women believed that the lack of support and mentoring they had observed was the result of the defensiveness of women politicians from a particular generation: *I am 37 years old and the youngest MP in the party faction. I have more problems with older women, aged 50 to 60, because they look on me as a new challenger. Women around 40 look on me as an additional force to modernise the party and society. (Central Europe)*

While respondents' comments reflected some of the obstacles women experienced as members of parliament, it is important to highlight the opinion of a minority of women who believed obstacles were not altogether gender-related. The following respondent's empathy for other women whilst recording her own view may be an indication that women who do not have to campaign may experience fewer obstacles than those who do:

I have always considered myself an atypical case of a woman in politics. My trajectory to political life seemed without serious obstacles and, since I was not running for election, I did not experience the difficulties that women running for office in developing countries and conservative societies encounter. (I am a member of the Senate - the Upper House of Parliament, and in my country members of the Senate are appointed.) It is important to note here that I feel that, although society in general does not yet seem ready to elect a large number of women to Parliament or any other office, it does respect and admire women who are appointed - whether to Parliament or the Cabinet or any other post in the administration. Once appointed, a woman has the same credibility and respect as her male colleagues. This is what I have experienced and what I believe other women have experienced, too. (Middle East)

Alongside partners and family, some women obviously experienced a high degree of support from male colleagues who understood women's political need to work in partnership with men:

Encouragement always came from wise men who were active and hard-working, who could appreciate a woman's sacrifice. Encouragement has always come from the family - husband and daughter. (Eastern Europe)

Support from the political party and the NGO community

The second most recurrent theme was that of continued party support, which is documented in Chapter 6 but also worthy of mention here:

I came from a liberation movement, today a party of the left, which helped me enormously to become an actor in the party and in my country. My party is the one that gives the most space to women: (a) it has the most women in parliament; (b) it is the party that has the most women running the country's biggest town councils; (c) my party has a gender policy that includes a minimum quota of 35% women in its leadership and in public office; its statutes, charters

and rules of procedure have a gender dimension; its platform includes the promotion of women; its election strategy has a gender dimension, as evidenced by the fact that I am second-in-charge at national level. (Central America)

Less than half (43%) of respondents were in parliaments with a parliamentary equality committee or committee on the status of women. Those whose parliaments did not have such a body reported that this void was filled by political parties. Support continued from their party or the woman's branch of their political party once they were elected:

- ▶ *I received support from the first influential women politicians of the Union - the women's branch of what used to be the only party. They taught me to resist the moral pressure exerted and to overcome the obstacles placed in the path of newcomers to politics. (Central Africa)*
- ▶ *At the start of my political life there was no particular support for women. Now the women's branch of the party takes care of the training of candidates. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *The party has a training unit for men and women. I accept invitations to take part in discussions and exchanges. I also accept invitations from women's groups. At present there is a lot of discussion on the topic of women and politics, and I take part. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *Our party and its women's section are structured from the grassroots right to the top, in the villages, districts, municipalities and communities. Regular meetings are held. Newcomers to politics can get support and advice from their elders. I am in charge of organising the women in our party, and as such hold fairly regular political meetings to talk with women, heighten their political awareness and encourage them to become candidates for positions of responsibility. (Central Africa)*
- ▶ *This also occurs at party level: encouraging young women to become involved locally and then nationally in the party apparatus. Seeing ourselves as examples serves to prod them further. (Middle East)*

Others continued to be supported primarily by a women's network outside parliament:

Great support from my surroundings and until I became a competitor for power and position. (...) A great women's network was my lifeline throughout my 25 years of membership of parliament (I am the first woman to celebrate such a 25-year anniversary in [my country]). (Western Europe)

Support from family and friends

For most respondents, the major support people were their husbands/partners and their extended families. The following accounts reflected the typical characteristics of widely documented commentary:

All along in my career, I have had the encouragement and support of my family and especially that of my husband, who saw the potential in me, and I am sure he wanted to encourage and develop it both for my sake and for the sake of the party. This was proven by the votes that our party achieved and from my personal votes, without which the party would not have entered parliament. (Southern Europe)

The support given by some husbands/partners was sustained over a long period of time and featured full commitment to the politician's career:

My husband has become the primary and best adviser in all decision-making. His basic agreement has been a valuable encouragement not only in my family activities but also in professional and political activities. Despite a cultural environment which is rather against all the travelling I have done, both abroad and within the country, my husband has always supported me and we have been married for 35 years. (West Africa)

A strong marriage acknowledging the relationship as one of equals was an obvious source of strength for many women:

My husband is a continual support who never ceases to encourage me in lots of useful ways. This doesn't mean that he runs my political activities; quite the opposite. In this field we each have our own vision, our own way, and it is this that enhances our marriage and helps me so much in my work. (North Africa)

A shared interest in political issues between marriage partners provided a strong foundation for a politician's sense of support:

My husband and I are both academics and discussions are second nature to us. So much so that some of our friends are wondering how we could live as a couple if every subject has to be debated. Because of this, my husband supports me in both my professional and my political activities, and helps me to do the best I can. (West Africa)

Conversely, politics was an obstacle to the marriage partnership once some women succeeded in their campaign. There were sacrifices that some partners were not willing to make:

My husband was initially supportive but found it difficult to cope with my absence. He was not happy to come to the capital and regarded time away from the farm as wasted time. However, he did support me financially before I entered the Senate. We are in the process of being divorced (November 1998). (Pacific)

In other marriages negotiation took place about the need for a change in work roles to enable the politician to manage obligations, once elected:

It took me two years to persuade my husband to leave his work and take care of the children and to be by my side for support during trips around the country. We have now reached an agreement and he takes the children to school and picks them up - since we have four school-age children. He also shops for the groceries. Although he doesn't like politics and wants to be independent, he has nevertheless given me my freedom to act. (Central America)

Some women found that support was not sustained but variable and dependent on the level of respect from others:

Support depends on his mood; in the beginning he didn't want me to stand, but with time and the respect of other colleagues who called me the iron lady he ended up supporting me. (West Africa)

One woman's cultural experiences suggested that a woman politician would not be able to expect personal support from a man in her country. She preferred to remain unmarried:

I do not enjoy that kind of support from a husband, simply because I am single. And I would not envisage any support which could be on the positive side, particularly from a husband, because men usually want to dominate women and take control of their lives and be consulted on all issues, plus getting or giving women (their wives) approval on what and what not to do. (Southern Africa)

One woman experienced support from her husband but her mother was less encouraging:

My husband was in politics himself. He supported me in my campaigns and he also gave me advice. My mother, however, didn't appreciate my political activities and told me I should look after my household instead. (West Africa)

There were some direct contrasts in the level of maternal support provided for women in the political environment:

My mother and close relatives in my country and overseas gave me all the support they could. Mamma cried when I lost in 1990; she lived to see me win in 1995. (Central America)

Family tradition and the politicians' community of identity continued to offer post-election support for many:

My family was the main incentive... The biggest benefit is that any afternoon of any day I know that the people who elected me will open their homes to me and invite me for a cup of coffee and to share the meal that cost them so much work. (Central America)

The combination of support from family, friends and professional colleagues continued after an election campaign, according to some respondents:

With regard to my political career, the most important encouragement came from my professional background. Apart from the support of my family, the favourable circumstances of my circle of friends have helped me to shape my political outlook. (Central Europe)

A legal background featured throughout the data as a major area of support for politicians while in parliament:

I got my main encouragement from a 31-settlement constituency where I worked as a lawyer and which elected me MP three times. (Central Europe)



▶ WOMEN IN TOP POLITICAL OFFICE

▶ A Chronology of Women Heads of State or Government

Women elected President

1.	Mongolia	Suhbaataryn Yanjmaa	09.1953 - 07.1954
2.	China (D. P.R.)	Song Qingling	10. 1968 - 02.1972
3.	Argentina	Maria Estela Martinez de Péron	07.1974 - 03.1976
4.	Bolivia	Lydia Gueiler Tejada	11.1979 - 07.1980
5.	Iceland	Vigdís Finnbogadóttir	08.1980 - 08.1996
6.	Malta	Agatha Barbara	02.1982 - 02.1997
7.	San Marino	Gloriana Ranocchi	04 - 10.1984
8.	San Marino	Maria Lea Pedini-Angelini	04 - 10. 1984
9.	Philippines	Corazon Aquino	02. 1986 - 06.1992
10.	San Marino	Gloriana Ranocchi	10.1989 - 04.1990
11.	Haiti	Ertha Pascal Trouillot	03.1990 - 02.1991
12.	Germany (Dem. Rep.)	Sabine Bergmann-Pohl	05.04 - 02.10 1990
13.	Nicaragua	Violeta Barrios de Chamorro	04.1990 - 12.1996
14.	Ireland	Mary Robinson	12.1990 - 11.1997
15.	San Marino	Edda Ceccoli	10.1991 - 04.1992
16.	San Marino	Patrizia Busignani	04 - 10.1992
17.	Liberia	Ruth Perry	11.1996 - 08.1997
18.	Sri Lanka	Chandrika Kumaratunge	11.1997 - 11.2003
19.	Ireland	Mary McAleese	11.1997 - 11.2004
20.	Guyana	Janet Jagan	12.1997 - 12.2002
21.	Switzerland	Ruth Dreifuss	12.1998 - 12.1999
22.	San Marino	Rosa Zafferani	04.1999 -10.1999
23.	Latvia	Vaira Vike-Freiberga	06. 1999 - 2002
24.	Panama	Mireya Moscoso	09. 1999 - 2004

Two other women served as Head of State for a couple of days: **Ecuador**, Rosalia Arteaga Serrano, 9-11. 02. 1997, and **Guinea Bissau**, Carmen Pereira, 14 - 16. 05, 1984. **San Marino** has a system of co-regency for six-month periods

Women Prime Ministers

1.	Sri Lanka	Sirimavo Bandaranaike	07.1960- 03.1965
2.	India	Indira Gandhi	03.1966 - 03.1977
3.	Israel	Golda Meir	03.1969 - 04.1974
4.	Sri Lanka	Sirimavo Bandaranaike	05.1970 - 07.1977
5.	Central African Rep.	Elisabeth Domitien	01.1975 - 04.1976
6.	United Kingdom	Margaret Thatcher	05.1979 - 11.1990
7.	Portugal	Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo	08.1979 - 01.1980
8.	India	Indira Gandhi	01.1980 - 10.1984
9.	Dominica	Mary Eugenia Charles	06.1980 - 06.1995
10.	Norway	Gro Harlem Brundtland	02 - 10.1981
11.	Yugoslavia	Milka Planinc	05.1982 - 05.1986
12.	Norway	Gro Harlem Brundtland	05.1986 - 10.1989
13.	Pakistan	Benazir Bhutto	12.1988 -08.1990
14.	Lithuania	Kazimiera Prunskiene	03.1990 - 01.1991
15.	Norway	Gro Harlem Brundtland	11.1990 - 10.1996
16.	Bangladesh	Khaleda Zia	03.1991 - 03.1996
17.	France	Edith Cresson	05.1991 -04.1992
18.	Poland	Hanna Suchocka	07.1992 - 10.1993
19.	Canada	Kim Campbell	06.1993 - 11.1993
20.	Burundi	Sylvie Kinigi	06.1993 - 02.1994
21.	Turkey	Tansu Çiller	06.1993 - 07.1996
22.	Rwanda	Agathe Uwilingiyimana	07.1993 - 04.1994
23.	Pakistan	Benazir Bhutto	10.1993 - 11.1996
24.	Sri Lanka	Chandrika Kumaratunge	08.1994-11.1994
25.	Bulgaria	Reneta Indzhova	10.1994 - 01.1995
26.	Sri Lanka	Sirimavo Bandaranaike	11.1994-currently (August 1999)
27.	Haiti	Claudette Werleigh	11.1995 - 02.1996
28.	Bangladesh	Sheikh Hasina Wajed	06.1996 - currently (August 1999)
29.	Guyana	Janet Jagan	03.1997 - 12.1997
30.	New Zealand	Jenny Shipley	12.1997 - currently (August 1999)

Sources: IPU and <http://web.jet.es/ziorarr>

FROM 1945 TO 1999

► A Chronology of Women Presiding Officers of Parliament

1.	Austria	O. Rudel-Zeynek (<i>Bundesrat</i>)	1927-1928
		---	1932
		J. Bayer (<i>Bundesrat</i>)	1953
		H. Tschitschko (<i>Bundesrat</i>)	1965
		---	1969
		---	1974
		H. Hieden-Sommer (<i>Bundesrat</i>)	1987
		A.E. Haselbach (<i>Bundesrat</i>)	1991
2.	Denmark	I. Hansen (<i>Landsting</i>)	1950 (March)
3.	Uruguay	A. Roballo (Senate)	1963
		---	1965
		---	1967
3.	Germany	A. Renger (<i>Bundestag</i>)	1972-1976
		R. Süßmuth (<i>Bundestag</i>)	1988-1994
		---	1994-1998
4.	Canada	M. Fergusson (Senate)	1972-1974
		R. Lapointe (Senate)	1974-1979
		J. Sauvé (House of Commons)	1980-1984
5.	Argentina	M.E. Martínez de Perón (Senate, <i>pro tempore</i>)	1973-1974
6.	Iceland	R. Helgadóttir (lower House)	1974-1978
		S. Thorkelsdóttir (upper House)	1983-1987
		G. Helgadóttir (<i>Althingi</i> United)	1988-1991
		S. Thorkelsdóttir (<i>Althingi</i>)	1991-1995
7.	Switzerland	E. Blunschy (National Council)	1977
		H. Lang (National Council)	1982
		J. Meier (Council of States)	1992
		G. Haller (National Council)	1994
		J. Stamm (National Council)	1996
		T. Heberlein (National Council)	1998
8.	Bolivia	L. Gueiler Tejada (Chamber of Deputies)	1979
9.	Italy	N. Iotti (Chamber of Deputies)	1979-1992
		I. Pivetti (Chamber of Deputies)	1994-1996
10.	Dominica	M. Davis-Pierre (House of Assembly)	1980-1988
		N. Edwards (House of Assembly)	1993-1995
11.	Sao Tome & Principe	A. da Graça do Espírito Santo (National Assembly)	1980-1991
12.	San Marino	M.L. Pedini Angelini (Great General Council)	1981
		G. Ranocchini (Great General Council)	1984 (April)
		---	1989 (October)
		E. Ceccoli (Great General Council)	1991
		P. Busignani (Great General Council)	1993
13.	Ireland	T. Honan (Senate)	1982-1983
		---	1987-1989
		D.J. Garcia (Senate)	1984-1989
14.	Belize	J. Usher (Senate)	1989-1993
		S. Flores (House of Representatives)	1998-2003
		E. Zabaneh (Senate)	1998-2003
		R.M. Karpinsky Doderó (Legislative Assembly)	1986-1987
15.	Costa Rica	J. Child (House of Representatives)	1987-1990
16.	Australia	M.E. Reid (Senate)	1996-2002
		E. Hennicot-Schoepges (Chamber of Deputies)	1989-1994
17.	Luxembourg	---	1994-1995
		M. Neckles (Senate)	1990-1995
		M. Argüello Morales (National Assembly)	1990-1992
19.	Nicaragua	R. Uosukainen (Parliament)	1991-1995
20.	Finland	---	1995-1999
		A.C. Soberanis Reyes (Congress)	1991-1992
21.	Guatemala	A. Castro de Camparini (Congress)	1994-1995
		A. Castro Quiñones (Congress)	1997-1998

.../...

► WOMEN IN TOP POLITICAL OFFICE FROM 1945 TO 1999

22.	Sweden	I. Troedsson (<i>Riksdagen</i>) B. Dahl (<i>Riksdagen</i>) ---	1991-1994 1994-1998 1998-2002
23.	Trinidad and Tobago	O. Seapaul (House of Representatives)	1991-1995
24.	United Kingdom	B. Boothroyd (House of Commons) --- ---	1992-1997 1997-2002
25.	Croatia	K. Ivanisevic (House of <i>Zupanije</i>) --- ---	1993-1997 1997-2001
26.	Japan	T. Doi (House of Representatives)	1993-1996
27.	Norway	K. Kolle Grøndahl (<i>Stortinget</i>) --- ---	1993-1997 1997-2001
28.	South Africa	F. N. Ginwala (National Assembly) --- N. Pandor (Council of Provinces)	1994-1999 1999-2004 1999-2004
29.	Antigua and Barbuda	M. Percival (Senate) B. Harris (House of Representatives)	1994-1999 1994-1999
30.	El Salvador	G. Salguero Gross (Legislative Assembly)	1994-1997
31.	Mexico	M. Moreno Uriegas (Chamber of Deputies) M. de los Angeles Moreno (Senate)	1994-1996 1997-2003
32.	Panama	B. Herrera Araúz (Legislative Assembly)	1994-1996
33.	Ethiopia	A. Meko (Federal Council)	1995-2000
34.	Latvia	I. Kreituse (<i>Saeima</i>)	1995-1996
35.	Peru	M. Chávez Cossio de Ocampo (Congress) M. Hildebrandt Pérez (Congress)	1995 1999
36.	Jamaica	S. Marshall-Burnett (Senate) --- V. Neilson (House of Representatives)	1996-1998 1998-2003 1997-2002
37.	India	N. A. Heptulla (Council of States)	1996-2002
38.	Malta	M. Spiteri Debono (House of Representatives)	1996-1998
39.	Poland	A. Grzeskowiak (Senate)	1997-2001
40.	Bahamas	R.I. Johnson (House of Assembly)	1997-2002
41.	Suriname	I. M. Djwalapersad (National Assembly)	1997-2001
42.	Venezuela	I. Rojas (Chamber of Deputies)	1998
43.	Netherlands	J. Van Nieuwenhoven (Second Chamber)	1998-2002
44.	Czech Republic	L. Benesova (Senate)	1998-2004
45.	Spain	E. Aguirre Gil de Biedma (Senate)	1999-2000



7 WOMEN MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE EXECUTIVE

Those women who answered the questions in the section on the Executive were overwhelmingly those who had held such office:

- ▶ 29 of the respondents held posts as Cabinet Minister, Minister of State, Secretary of State, under-secretary and parliamentary secretary to a Cabinet Minister at the time of their interview
- ▶ 6 had held such posts in the past
- ▶ Some of these respondents had been the first women in their country to hold a Cabinet position or the first women to hold that particular post

Their responsibilities had included the following areas, which mirror the global situation of women holding executive positions in August 1999 as presented on pp. 130.

Education	Foreign Affairs
Youth	Posts and Telecommunications
Sports	Information
Property	Public Construction and Traffic
Health	Advancement of Women
Social Welfare	National Planning
Labour	Social Development
Justice	Family Affairs
Civil Service and Administration	State Affairs
International Development Cooperation	Arts
	Culture

Their comments highlighted that they had experienced the loneliness or isolation of such a position, or the sense of being a minority speaking for the majority. This may be why they were so determined on quotas for the Executive, and in such high proportions. They consistently conveyed the message that without equal numbers all the differences that women brought to politics, that they had expressed earlier, would be overwhelmed by the sheer numerical weight of the male majority.

One respondent summed up their reasoning in this way:

It is very evident that while women are in the minority in Cabinet, and the doctrine of ministerial collective responsibility applies, the women who battle for women in the secrecy of Cabinet will be forced to comply with the male majority and can never defy that beyond Cabinet without fear of being forced to resign. This is a distinctly unhealthy situation for women, and any representatives of minorities. (Pacific)

MAKING A DIFFERENCE: DOES IT HAVE TO DO WITH NUMBERS?

The absence of women from the Executive branch was considered prejudicial to society in general, and to women in particular, by eighty-five percent (85%) of those addressing this issue. Those who held or had held such posts were particularly united in this concern.

Twenty-four respondents opined that there should be a specific percentage of posts to be held by women, and of these more than half suggested figures of 40% or more.

- ▶ *Half, because that is the percentage of the female population. I am aware that at first it could be difficult or that not-so-qualified people may be elected, but it is a risk that has to be run by society, because then the vicious "no preparation - no participation" circle will be broken.../... (South America)*
- ▶ *1/3 of men is an equitable ratio. Care must be taken not to move ahead without taking into account the country's sociological reality. Demands for female representation must be made as part of a step-by-step approach that also reflects women's motivation to hold senior positions. (Western Africa)*
- ▶ *I think that 50% of all decision-making positions should be held by trained women. (East Africa)*
- ▶ *In principle, and ideally, the distribution of posts in the Cabinet of the administration as a whole should be 50% to each gender; but considering that women are still relatively new in their participation in public life, I believe we should start with 25% of participation for women. (Middle East)*
- ▶ *50% of women and 50% of men. (South-East Africa)*
- ▶ *Try to find 40%; 60%. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *At the very least, the proportion of women in Cabinet should be equal to those in the governing party, and preferably equal to those in Parliament. (Pacific)*
- ▶ *The number of women should be approximately 50%; at present it is around 30%. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *Currently 1/6! 50% - 50%, with quota. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *If women were recognised for their potential leadership qualities and **chosen** for such, the numbers would prove equitable on their own merit. (Middle East)*

Only 20 percent of all respondents felt that the numbers of men and women in their Government were equitable. Of these women, there was just one respondent each from the Asian, American and African regions who took that view, all the others being from Europe.

Their concern was overwhelmingly that a cabinet appointment required the best person for the job, and that the lack or scarcity of women was not a sufficient criterion for their appointment.

- ▶ *Choice on merit and ability to sell Government message. Gender should not be the basis for distribution of portfolios. (Pacific)*
- ▶ *It is one's competence that counts, not one's sex! (Central Europe)*

- ▶ *Assignments should be allocated primarily on the basis of necessary skills and ability. (Southern Africa)*
- ▶ *Ability is the most important and only basis on which to distribute posts (or should be). (Nordic country of Europe)*
- ▶ *It's the person for the job not the sex. (Western Europe)*

Others believed the question was related to the lack of women representatives to choose from.

- ▶ *Given the low number of women in government, the division cannot be equitable. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *First women need to achieve equal representation in parliament and then in the ministries. (Pacific)*

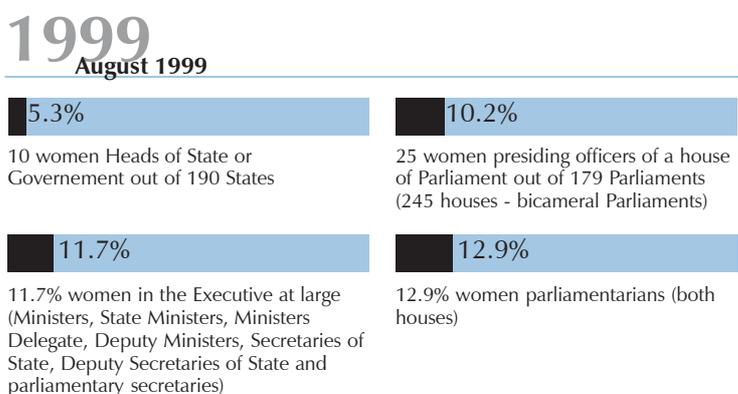
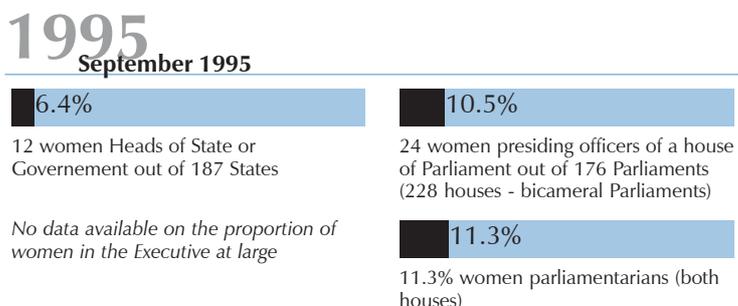
However, even on their own some of them began to be effective.

- ▶ *An example is the role of the first woman minister from 1979 to 1984. She established the first ministry of social development and with her mandate was able to address women; juvenile delinquency, together with the issue of income-generating projects for women and remote poor areas, addressing the issue of poverty and rehabilitation and services for the handicapped. With her the whole movement towards the social and human factor in development started. (Middle East)*
- ▶ *As Minister of Information, I was able to establish a constructive relationship with the media, which previously were absent, even hostile. I exposed the cause of a free press and freedom of opinion and expression. When my policies ended in a conflict with the State I resigned in protest, an act which had great repercussions and opened the whole issue of democracy to debate in public for more participation. (Middle East)*

Five years later, a look at the "Beijing effect" on political decision-making positions

This table has been prepared from a numerical standpoint. It should be borne in mind, however, that, as far as politics is concerned, the "Beijing effect" should not be viewed from that angle alone.

▶ Women in the Executive ▶ Women in Parliament



Source: IPU *Participation of women in Political Life*, Series Reports and Documents, N° 35, Geneva 1999, ISBN 92-91-42-065-2

MAKING A DIFFERENCE: DOES IT HAVE TO DO WITH THE PORTFOLIOS ASSIGNED TO WOMEN?

For some women the cabinet is a forum where they specifically approach their work from a gender perspective.

My presence as the only woman Minister in the Government's Cabinet means that women are also represented at this level. In a general sense, as a woman I feel it is my duty to see that women's needs and priorities are voiced in any matters discussed. (Southern Europe)

Women Heads of State or of Government in August 1999

▶ Women elected President

Sri Lanka	Chandrika Kumaratunge	11.1997 - 11.2003
Ireland	Mary McAleese	11.1997 - 11.2004
Guyana	Janet Jagan	12.1997 - 12.2002
Switzerland	Ruth Dreifuss	12.1998 - 12.1999
San Marino	Rosa Zafferani	04.1999 - 10.1999
Latvia	Vaira Vike-Freiberga	06.1999 - 2002
Panama	Mireya Moscoso	09.1999 - 2004

▶ Women Prime Minister

Sri Lanka	Sirimavo Bandaranaike	11.1994-currently
Bangladesh	Sheikh Hasina Wajed	06.1996-currently
New Zealand	Jenny Shipley	12.1997-09-1999

Frequently, it was the combination of a woman and the portfolio responsibility that made the difference.

Having a woman Minister of Health has no doubt contributed to the amendment to abortion regulation. Having a woman as Minister of Safety and Security has ensured that attention has been focused on rape and violence against women. (Southern Africa)

The presence of a number of women could begin to have a feminising effect on many portfolio areas.

- ▶ *The fact that there are more women in ministerial posts guarantees that government policies will have a gender focus. It is normal that this focus comes from women, rather than from men, because it is they who have suffered more from the consequences of the political inequalities suffered by women. Men rarely think about women's needs. (Central America)*
- ▶ *Having women as cabinet members guarantees that certain topics like saving the environment, family matters, human rights and educational issues, which are of profound importance to women in particular, receive the necessary attention. (Western Europe)*

But this was not always the experience or impression of observers.

- ▶ *The maximum participation of women in Government was **one** out of 11 ministers. Therefore it was impossible that their presence would make any substantial difference to government policy. (Southern Europe)*
- ▶ *The women Secretaries of State we had have done a good job, but, with respect to form, there haven't been any great visible differences with what men have done. (Central America)*
- ▶ *The first government had only one woman. Now there are five women – one minister and four deputy ministers. It cannot be said that those women are always very concerned about the situation of women. (South-East Africa)*

These examples were the minority of the observations recorded in the survey. More typically, respondents noted that the promotion of women to Cabinet in particular helped change the stereotypical perceptions of women. Women in Cabinet also demonstrated that women have skills equivalent to those of men:

- ▶ *The presence of women in the Cabinet has done much to change men's stereotypical perceptions of women: women come across as rational, determined and capable of fighting; moreover, positions of power are no longer seen as contrary to women's biological and social features (i.e., maternity, aesthetics, etc.). (Central America)*
- ▶ *The presence of women in the Government Cabinet has had positive results inasmuch as it allows them to affirm themselves and prove their credibility to men. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *The women in Cabinet have, as far as possible, represented women's views and pushed for a lot of changes to improve the status of women in our country. Equality between men and women is no longer an issue and women have proved themselves to be as capable as their male counterparts. (East Africa)*

However, the stereotyping of women in Ministries of Social Affairs was of major concern to survey respondents. They believed there could be a far more equitable distribution of ministerial posts between men and women.

- ▶ *Numbers are equitable but the importance and the profile of the positions are not. Women need to be assigned more non-traditional posts - e.g. financial portfolios, defence, transport. (North America)*
- ▶ *Traditionally, women have held educational and cultural portfolios, we have never had a female Finance or Public Security Minister. (Central America)*
- ▶ *[There should be] no discrimination between female sectors (social, family, etc.) and male ones (economy, infrastructure, foreign affairs). (South America)*
- ▶ *First of all, government should be highly professional, its staff must have common economic principles. Because of political compromises none of the institutions of government have any perspective; the problem of participation of women in them is beside the question. The essential factor alienating women from work in the Executive bodies of power is the process of criminalisation of the economy and, as a result, the rise of corruption in power. In considerable part, the situation of the woman in the political elite may be regarded as a continuation of old traditions when power was formed by a party, and the party in its' turn was formed by men. The specific character of a party of the ideological type didn't suppose there were different views, including a female perspective of the problems of the country's development and nowadays the power process displays a masculine ideology. Not understanding the importance of civil initiatives, civil society and the part played by women creates an obstacle for widening women's participation in power structures. An increase in the political activity of women is not a separate task, but a part of the whole process of public transformation of my country. (Eastern Europe)*
- ▶ *Not only the number but the working area is important. Half and half sharing is needed, and in the economic and defence area. (Nordic country)*

On the other hand, there was no doubt that such stereotyping could have its benefits on occasions.

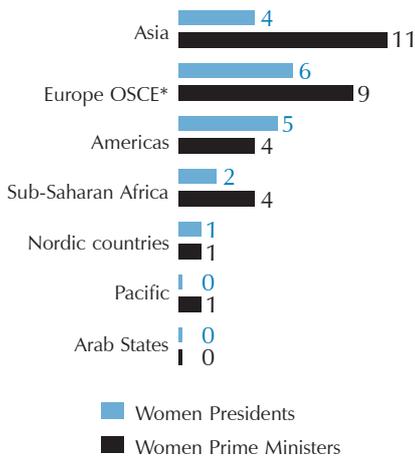
- ▶ *Women's and family problems are taken more into account in governmental programmes. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *The Minister of the Interior is in charge of social welfare benefits; one can tell she is more aware of these issues. (Western Europe)*

WAYS IN WHICH WOMEN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Politics more responsive to society's aspirations and needs

As already detailed in Chapter 3, respondents generally felt that Cabinets that included women were in a better position to respond adequately to the needs and aspirations of society, especially in all issues affecting the daily lives of people, their social environment and their human rights. This, they felt, is so

Women Presidents and Prime Ministers by region (1945-1999)



* Europe : OSCE member countries minus Nordic countries

because, as stated by a woman from Southern Europe, "women look at problems differently, their approach is closer to society". The following few comments from various parts of the world are adamant in that respect:

- ▶ *Women have a more humane view of development issues. They never forget the need to take into account the situation of the most vulnerable groups, including women. Women are more in touch with problems of solidarity, the notion that national wealth must be distributed equitably, and the management of public assets. They are very much affected by corruption, by the misappropriation of funds and by economic crimes. They are more particular about the ethical and moral values that constitute the foundations of society. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *Cabinet positions filled by women are the fields of education and the peace process and I believe that the vision and action of women in human development are even more important than in other areas. I believe that our presence in the Cabinet makes for a more transparent discussion on each problem than would otherwise be possible. (Central America)*

More emphasis placed by the Executive on women's concerns and issues?

While one should avoid generalisations on the matter, comments by respondents clearly point to the fact that the presence of women in the Executive generally has a positive impact on the status of women:

- ▶ *Some women say they represent a political party and not a category of people, in this case women. Our first woman Cabinet member did try to establish structures fostering women's emancipation (woman and development network), a key factor in claiming their rights. (East Africa)*
- ▶ *I think that the presence of women in government is very important. If in the former government I hadn't represented the interests of women, there wouldn't have been a real government responsibility towards women. We formed a ministerial secretariat dealing with the equal rights of men and women. The new government sadly doesn't continue this project. (Central Europe)*
- ▶ *The creation of a Ministry for the Advancement of Women and the fact that the post was filled by a militant woman have resulted in the introduction, since 1994, of various draft laws for which we had waited a long time. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *The Health Minister [a woman] reintroduced abortion-on-demand legislation although many men of her own party were against it. (Southern Africa)*
- ▶ *The government puts effort into women's issues and into gender equity. (Nordic country)*

A Ministry of Women's Affairs: does it make a real difference?

Some respondents doubted that having a portfolio on Women's Affairs, with a woman holding it, made any difference. However, ministerial responsibility appeared to be of particular significance to the establishment of affirmative action programmes for women in society. The creation of ministries for the

advancement of women was more likely to result in the introduction of draft legislation that addressed women's priorities:

- ▶ *Our country has six women Ministers and 18 women members of the National Assembly. This is commendable but is not an end in itself. We hope that this will be reinforced over the coming years. The presence of women within Government has positive effects. The Ministry for the Advancement of Women, of the Family and of the Child is a perfect example. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *The Ministry for the Advancement of Women and for Human Development was established for the purpose of overseeing and executing plans necessary to the observance of women's rights. The Ministry of Justice, headed at present by a woman, is impressing this vision on the conduct of policies relating to the administration of justice. Over the last few years, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education have incorporated gender perspectives in their policies and programmes. (South America)*

Generating a change in perception and attitudes

The presence of more than a token woman in the Executive can start to change public attitudes, as various respondents stated it:

- ▶ *In general it has been seen that women are as capable of doing such a job as men. Many changes in law concerning equal rights have been made. But a change in thinking and doing is also needed. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *Women in Cabinet have created role models. Efficient women in Cabinet "prove" women's abilities in politics. (Southern Europe)*

Efficient women in the Executive also generate a change of vision and attitudes on the part of the media:

It has most definitely contributed to the diligence of the male members in Cabinet and "forced" the media to give greater recognition to the female members because they work harder and are more organised than men. (Southern Africa)

The prominence of the woman member of the Executive, the media coverage of her, and the fact that she is still all too often only one of a handful means that she is seen as a role model for many other women, especially when women ministers were conscious of the fact that they represented an incentive for other women. Typical comments in that respect follows:

- ▶ *Women in Cabinet are important and positive examples. They encourage women in the society. They motivate more women to accept political responsibilities. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *Society receives a clear message that there is no discrimination against women; as regards women, it helps to generate their interest in politics. (Central Europe)*
- ▶ *Women in government are important because they set an example for women to start in politics. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *The presence of women in our Government definitely has positive effects on our society - from their being role models to influencing political decision-making processes. (Central Europe)*

“ Every State should set up a multidisciplinary advisory board having a supervisory function to ensure that the interests and needs of women are taken into account in every field. ”

Concluding Statement, IPU Conference "Towards Partnership Between Men and Women in Politics", New Delhi, 14-18 February 1997

► WOMEN IN THE EXECUTIVE

Despite efforts to obtain full and accurate information on women in the Executive, the following table may contain errors or omissions.

For classification purposes it was decided to classify each minister with a complex portfolio under each of the items mentioned; for example a minister for labour and social affairs is classified both under the category labour and under the category social affairs. To enable the reader to identify a complex ministry, a star has been placed next to the name of the country concerned whenever portfolio encompasses more than one of the various areas listed. Yet for calculation purposes only one person is taken into account.

It should be noted that, while the research covered all cabinet posts, the data presented in the table serves to illustrate a trend and therefore only a number of key ministries have been mentioned.

► Heads of State: Guyana, Ireland, Latvia, Panama, San Marino, Sri Lanka and Switzerland	7 States	(3.7 %)
<u>Deputy Heads of State:</u> Costa Rica, Gambia, Honduras, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Philippines*, The FYR of Macedonia, Uganda, Viet Nam	8 States	(4.2 %)
► Heads of Government: Bangladesh, New Zealand and Sri Lanka	3 States	(1.6 %)
<u>Deputy Prime Minister</u> and junior positions in the Prime Minister's Office: Australia, Barbados (<i>Deputy PM</i>), Belgium* (<i>Deputy PM</i>), Croatia (<i>Deputy PM</i>), Fiji (<i>Deputy PM</i>), Grenada, Ireland* (<i>Deputy PM</i>), Jordan* (<i>Deputy PM</i>), Luxembourg* (<i>Deputy PM</i>), Malaysia, Netherlands (<i>Deputy PM</i>), Norway, Russian Federation (<i>Deputy PM</i>), Sweden (<i>Deputy PM</i>), Tajikistan (<i>Deputy PM</i>), Thailand*, Togo, Turkmenistan* (<i>Deputy PM</i>), Uganda, Uzbekistan (<i>Deputy PM</i>); in addition, China has a woman State Councillor.	21 States	(11.1 %)
► Number of countries whose Government includes a woman	145 States	(76.3 %)
Women members of the Executive as minister, State minister, minister delegate, deputy minister, secretary of State, under-secretary of State or parliamentary secretary		
► World average of women in Government	190 States	(11.7 %)
► World highest percentage of women in a Cabinet: 55 % in Sweden (11/20)		
► Minister of Foreign Affairs: Bahamas, Barbados*, Bulgaria, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Finland, Liechtenstein*, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Mexico, Mongolia, Niger, South Africa, Sweden, United States of America	15 States	(7.9 %)
<u>Deputy Minister</u> or occupying a junior post in the Ministry: Australia, Austria, Dominican Republic, Ireland, Kenya, Luxembourg, Morocco, United Kingdom	8 States	(4.2 %)
► Minister of Defence and Veteran Affairs: Bangladesh (also Head of State), Cambodia*, Norway and Sri Lanka	4 States	(2.1 %)
<u>Deputy Minister</u> or occupying a junior post in the Ministry: Cambodia*, Nigeria, South Africa	3 States	(1.6 %)
► Minister of Home Affairs: Italy	1 State	(0.5 %)
<u>Deputy Minister</u> or occupying a junior post in the Ministry: Kenya*, Slovakia, South Africa, Uganda, United Kingdom, Zimbabwe	6 States	(3.2 %)
► Minister of Public Administration/Civil Status: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, Congo (Republic of)*, Dominican Republic*, Italy, Luxembourg, Madagascar*, Norway*, Seychelles, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe*	13 States	(6.8 %)
<u>Deputy Minister</u> or occupying a junior post in the Ministry: Argentina, Cape Verde, Mauritania, Uganda	4 States	(2.1 %)
► Minister of the Economy/Development: Albania*, Burkina Faso (<i>Regional Integration</i>), Canada, (<i>International Co-operation</i>), China, Denmark, Germany, Liberia, Netherlands, Norway (<i>International Development</i>), Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Slovakia, Slovenia, Suriname, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	14 States	(7.4 %)
<u>Deputy Minister</u> or occupying a junior post in the Ministry: Cape Verde, Dominican Republic, El Salvador*, Gabon*, Greece, Poland, Senegal, Slovenia, Uganda*, United Kingdom	10 States	(5.3 %)
► Minister of Trade and Industry: Albania*, Angola, Benin*, China, Colombia, Cuba, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Georgia, Ireland*, Malaysia, Mali, Nepal, Uganda	14 States	(7.4%)
<u>Deputy Minister</u> or occupying a junior post in the Ministry: Belarus, China, Dominican Republic, El Salvador*, France, Gabon, Japan, Kenya, Norway, Poland, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Turkmenistan, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America	17 States	(8.9 %)

IN AUGUST 1999

▶ Minister of Finance/Budget: Andorra, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Ecuador, 9 States (4.7 %) Finland, Guatemala, Honduras, Latvia, Slovakia, Venezuela	
<u>Deputy Minister</u> or occupying a junior post in the Ministry: Gabon*, Norway, Senegal, 4 States (2.1 %) United Kingdom	
▶ Minister of Labour/Employment/Vocational Training: Austria*, Bahamas*, Belgium, 25 States (13.2 %) Canada, Cape Verde*, Finland, France*, Haiti*, Honduras, Ireland*, Jamaica*, Kazakhstan*, Lithuania*, Luxembourg*, Madagascar*, Norway*, Saint Lucia*, Senegal, Sudan, Uganda*, United States of America*, Uruguay*, Vietnam*, Zambia, Zimbabwe*	
<u>Deputy Minister</u> or occupying a junior post in the Ministry: Cambodia*, China*, 10 States (5.3 %) Dominican Republic, Gabon*, Morocco*, Poland*, Slovakia, Uganda*, United Kingdom*, Zimbabwe*	
▶ Minister of Public Works /Territorial Planning: Albania*, Andorra, Angola, Canada, 11 States (5.8 %) France*, Jordan*, Luxembourg*, Netherlands*, Seychelles*, South Africa and Tunisia*	
<u>Deputy Minister</u> or occupying a junior post in the Ministry: Dominican Republic*, Malaysia, Netherlands*, Panama, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania 6 States (3.2 %)	
▶ Minister of Transport and Communications: Albania*, Belgium, Cape Verde*, 9 States (4.7 %) Democratic Republic of Congo, Denmark, Fiji*, Luxembourg, Netherlands*, Nigeria	
<u>Deputy Minister</u> or occupying a junior post in the Ministry: Dominican Republic*, Netherlands*, United Kingdom*, United Republic of Tanzania 4 States (2.1 %)	
▶ Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs: Barbados, Denmark, Dominican Republic, 8 States (4.2 %) Jamaica*, Mali, Seychelles*, South Africa, Swaziland	
<u>Deputy Minister</u> or occupying a junior post in the Ministry: Grenada* Panama, Zambia 3 States (1.6 %)	
▶ Minister of Tourism: Australia*, Benin*, Cape Verde*, Congo* (Republic of), Ecuador, Fiji*, Gambia*, Mali*, Philippines, Seychelles*, United Republic of Tanzania* 11 States (5.8 %)	
<u>Deputy Minister</u> or occupying a junior post in the Ministry: Dominican Republic, France, Haiti, Malaysia*, South Africa* 5 States (2.6 %)	
▶ Minister of the Environment: Andorra*, Angola*, Bangladesh*, Belgium*, Bulgaria*, 28 States (14.7 %) Canada, Costa Rica*, Cuba*, Ecuador, El Salvador*, Finland, France*, Georgia*, Grenada*, Honduras*, Iceland, Iran (Islamic Rep. of), Israel, Japan, Lesotho*, Malawi*, Mexico*, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Solomon Islands, Spain, Tunisia*	
<u>Deputy Minister</u> or occupying a junior post in the Ministry: Argentina, Egypt, Jamaica*, 6 States (3.2 %) Slovakia, South Africa*, United Kingdom*	
▶ Minister of Energy and Natural Resources: Bangladesh, Botswana, Bulgaria*, 16 States (8.4 %) Costa Rica*, Côte d'Ivoire, El Salvador, Georgia*, Honduras*, Mexico*, Netherlands*, Nigeria, Norway, South Africa, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania*, Zimbabwe*	
<u>Deputy Minister</u> or occupying a junior post in the Ministry: Ethiopia, Malawi*, 3 States (1.6 %) South Africa	
▶ Minister of Agriculture/Food/Forestry/Fishing: Andorra*, Angola*, 7 States (3.7 %) Bangladesh*, Mexico*, Solomon Islands*, South Africa, Sweden	
<u>Deputy Minister</u> or occupying a junior post in the Ministry: Australia, Fiji, Malawi, 5 States (2.6 %) Sri Lanka*, Zimbabwe	
▶ Minister of Justice: Australia, Azerbaijan, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Dominican 23 States (12.1 %) Republic, France, Gambia, Germany, Hungary, Iceland*, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, New Zealand, Poland, Samoa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland*, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America	
<u>Deputy Minister</u> or occupying a junior post in the Ministry: Belarus, Ireland, 4 States (2.1 %) South Africa, Sweden	
▶ Minister of Social Affairs: Algeria*, Austria*, Belarus, Benin*, Burkina Faso*, Burundi*, 44 States (23.2 %) Cameroon, Cape Verde*, Central African Republic*, Chad*, Denmark, Dominica*, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea*, Fiji*, Finland*, Gambia, Guinea*, Guyana, Haiti*, Iceland*, Indonesia, Italy, Kazakhstan*, Lithuania*, Luxembourg*, Malawi*, Malaysia*, Maldives*, Mauritania*, Mauritius*, Mozambique, Namibia*, Niger*, Norway, Philippines, Saint Lucia*, Senegal*, Switzerland, Togo*, United States of America*, Uruguay*, Vietnam*, Zambia*	
<u>Deputy Minister</u> or occupying a junior post in the Ministry: Belarus, Cambodia*, 19 States (10.0 %) Central African Republic*, China*, Dominican Republic*, Gabon*, Grenada*, India, Kenya*, Kyrgyzstan, Japan*, Morocco*, Netherlands, Pakistan*, Poland*, Sweden, Uganda*, United Kingdom, Zambia	

.../...

► WOMEN IN THE EXECUTIVE IN AUGUST 1999 (Contd.)

► Minister of Health: Austria*, Barbados, Belgium*, Benin, Dominica*, Dominican Republic*, Finland*, Germany, Gambia*, Ghana, Grenada*, Haiti*, Iceland*, Italy, Madagascar, Malawi*, Mali*, Mauritania*, Namibia*, Netherlands, Panama, Poland, Portugal, Saint Lucia*, Seychelles, South Africa, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America*, Zambia	30 States (15.8 %)
<u>Deputy Minister</u> or occupying a junior post in the Ministry: Belarus, China, Dominican Republic*, France, Germany, Jamaica, Japan*, New Zealand*, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic, Uganda, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania	14 States (7.4 %)
► Minister of Family/Children/Youth/Elderly/Handicapped: Algeria*, Angola*, Australia, Barbados*, Belize*, Burkina Faso*, Central African Republic*, Chad*, Côte d'Ivoire*, France*, Germany*, Guinea*, Guyana*, Lesotho*, Luxembourg, Madagascar*, Malawi*, Mali*, Mauritius*, Niger*, Norway, Panama*, Saint Lucia*, Senegal*, Tunisia*, United Republic of Tanzania*	26 States (13.7 %)
<u>Deputy Minister</u> or occupying a junior post in the Ministry: Australia*, Barbados*, Cambodia*, Canada, China, Gabon*, Germany*, Malaysia*, Panama, Uganda, Viet Nam*	11 States (5.8 %)
► Minister of Women's Affairs/Gender Equality: Algeria*, Angola*, Antigua and Barbuda, Austria*, Bangladesh, Belize*, Benin*, Burkina Faso, Burundi*, Cambodia*, Cameroon, Congo (Republic of)*, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire*, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica*, Dominican Republic, Equatorial Guinea*, Ethiopia, Fiji*, Gambia*, Germany*, Guinea*, Haiti, Italy, Lesotho*, Luxembourg, Madagascar*, Malawi*, Maldives*, Mali*, Mauritius*, New Zealand, Niger*, Panama*, Peru*, Rwanda, Samoa, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Togo*, Trinidad and Tobago*, Tunisia*, Tuvalu*, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania*	47 States (24.7 %)
<u>Deputy Minister</u> or occupying a junior post in the Ministry: Cambodia*, Canada*, Gabon*, Grenada*, Indonesia, Mauritania, Namibia, Panama, Pakistan*, Republic of Korea, Thailand	11 States (5.8 %)
► Minister of Education: Austria*, Barbados*, China, Denmark*, Dominican Republic*, Ecuador*, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Finland, Gambia, Germany*, Ghana, Guatemala, Latvia, Liberia, Luxembourg*, Nepal, Panama, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu*	23 States (12.1 %)
<u>Deputy Minister</u> or occupying a junior post in the Ministry: Angola*, Australia*, Barbados*, China, Ethiopia, France, Gabon*, Morocco*, Namibia, Netherlands, Norway*, Pakistan*, Poland, Sweden, Thailand, Uganda, United Kingdom*	17 States (8.9 %)
► Minister of Culture/Arts and Heritage: Austria*, Barbados*, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Canada, Colombia, Congo (Republic of), Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of Congo, Denmark, Dominican Republic*, Ecuador*, El Salvador, Estonia, Fiji*, Finland, France*, Gambia*, Greece, Guinea*, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein*, Luxembourg*, Mali*, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Trinidad and Tobago* Tuvalu, Uganda	32 States (16.8 %)
<u>Deputy Minister</u> or occupying a junior post in the Ministry: Algeria, Angola*, Barbados*, Canada*, Dominican Republic*, Ethiopia, Malaysia*, Namibia, South Africa*, Sweden, Thailand, United Kingdom*	12 States (6.3 %)
► Minister of Science, Technology and Research: China, Croatia, Cuba*, Denmark, Germany*, Luxembourg*, South Africa*, Switzerland*, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	9 States (4.7 %)
<u>Deputy Minister</u> or occupying a junior post in the Ministry: Nigeria, Norway*, Togo*	3 States (1.6 %)
► Minister of Posts /Telecommunications: Belarus, Colombia, France*, Japan, Mali, Nepal*, Senegal, South Africa	8 States (4.2 %)
<u>Deputy Minister</u> or occupying a junior post in the Ministry: Angola, Dominican Republic*, United Kingdom*	3 States (1.6 %)
► Minister of Information: Côte d'Ivoire, Nepal*	2 States (1.1 %)
<u>Deputy Minister</u> or occupying a junior post in the Ministry: Ethiopia*	1 State (0.5 %)
► Minister of Sports: Australia*, France*, Guinea*, Guyana*, Liechtenstein*, Luxembourg*, Mauritius*	7 States (3.7 %)
<u>Deputy Minister</u> or occupying a junior post in the Ministry: None	0 States 0%

8

WOMEN AND WHOM THEY REPRESENT

When respondents to the survey were asked if they considered, as a woman politician, that they had a special responsibility to represent the needs and interests of women, a vast majority of eighty-nine per cent (89%) replied in the affirmative. In the qualitative comments, however, where women expanded on their responses, they highlighted how conscious they were of their mandate to represent the interests of women, men and children alike.

Gender partnership was a theme constantly echoed by the data, and comments strongly recommended that when considering legislation, speech-making and policy development, politicians should conduct a gender analysis of the content to identify the needs of, and impact on, all members of society accounting for the different impacts of class, age, ethnicity and ability.

While it was clear that women believed they should be advocates for women and that the under-representation of women in politics continued to have a negative impact on society, there appeared to be a trend away from announcing this as their only interest. It was convincingly argued that women should focus on the inclusion of men, women and children and their particular, specific and shared interests. They wrote of the need for gender analysis, gender training and gender sensitivity alongside the traditional expectation of advocacy for women. This subtle but important shift of emphasis was expressed by one respondent thus:

Women have, through participation in public life, brought about change in their circumstances. Seeing that women have been in the forefront, the perception that male political leaders are in charge should now be cast aside. This should no longer exist. Women must have gender sensitivity to bring about real and sustained changes for women. Participation in public life has many facets. It includes activities with a strong bearing on political groups, the power to effectively influence those voted for. I try to make Parliament more gender sensitive. I exert pressure for gender-responsive laws and policies and improved services, especially those affecting women. ... I fight for women's causes. (Central America)



REPRESENTING BOTH GENDERS

The political mandate to represent the electorate was strongly identified as one involving a responsibility to all members of the electorate, and several politicians commented that claiming an exclusive or even main representative responsibility towards women implied that men would be excluded:

- ▶ *I am elected to represent all my constituents irrespective of gender. (Central Europe)*
- ▶ *Does a man have to represent all men only and a woman all women only? Politics is concerned with the well-being of all! (Central America)*
- ▶ *In the first place, you are a politician for both men and women. (Central America)*
- ▶ *I have a responsibility to look after the needs and interests of all. (Pacific)*
- ▶ *Women must represent both sexes without discrimination. (Southern Europe)*
- ▶ *I represent women but not only women! We are elected by all. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *I feel the needs and interests of other women are not that different from those of men. (North America)*
- ▶ *Therefore I feel I have a responsibility to be concerned about all my constituents, thereby representing the women. (North America)*

The idea that political skills and debate would reflect a plurality of interests was identified as important to respondents:

The best way of being useful to society is to contribute well to all that we do every day in the interests of society. A politician, whether man or woman, has no weapon but relevance, the pertinence of his or her point of view. In a democracy, the only weapon you have is persuasion, the solidity of your arguments, sacrifice and total assiduity in all debates that enable me to share my experience and my vision of things with all partners and adversaries with whom I share the heavy burden of acting to promote the happiness of an entire nation. (West Africa)

To act solely in the interests of women would be to act with impaired vision:

Yes, but not entirely. I consider the view that women politicians are the representatives of their sex to be profoundly wrong. It turns women politicians into a sort of self-restricted species. The true content of our participation should be to give new light, fresh nuances and an enhanced restructuring of values in politics, not to act as politicians on a limited mission. (Southern Europe)

One respondent had observed that discrimination could occur irrespective of the gender of the politician, and she worked from an inclusive ecological perspective:

I represent the needs and interests of the whole population (at least, I try). I think that women's groups, for example, are rather counterproductive. I was elected by men and by women. Female Members of Parliament do also table bills that discriminate against men. It's a shame and it's harmful. But I am obviously present and active in the «women's struggle»; my male colleagues too (ecologists). We are working on a global project for society. (Western Europe)

The aim of empowerment of the underprivileged through political action was a gender-neutral concept for several of the respondents:

My aim is to represent the needs and interests of other women, but also of those who have no voice, both men and women. There are some men who have no power and who also want their interests to be represented. (East Africa)

Although there was a strong theme of the need for gender neutrality, respondents frequently stated that women had a better understanding of the social, economic and emotional impacts on women of political change, and they felt that it was important for a woman's voice to be heard in political debate.

A SPECIAL DUTY TO WOMEN

Many women specified that their decision to represent women more particularly was based on the fact that fewer women than men were represented in their Parliament: *There are too few women – I have a duty to represent them. (Western Europe)* is a typical comment from all regions of the world.

This was often combined with a claim that defending women in Parliament had to do with the strong obstacles still faced by women in obtaining a political mandate:

- ▶ *As women, knowing the obstacles we had to overcome to reach our present position, it is our duty to use that position to bring about meaningful political change. (Central America)*
- ▶ *My aim is above all to encourage women to enter politics; otherwise political decisions will be made without them, and maybe against them. (Central America)*

Other respondents reported that their decision to represent women was based on a perception of discrimination against women (sometimes combined with discrimination based on class or race) and a strong sense of solidarity:

- ▶ *It is very clear where so many black women do not have full legal equality and black men, particularly from tribal backgrounds where the status of women is very low. There is a need to keep up the pressure. (Southern Africa)*
- ▶ *Because I am in the minority and a feminist, I feel responsible for the needs and interests of other women who are not represented in Parliament. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *I found that women's issues are always forgotten and were a laughing matter when brought up by me. (South-East Asia)*
- ▶ *The endeavour is based on fighting to achieve the objective for all women of fighting for equality of opportunity in all sectors of activity, in gender terms, thereby putting an end to all forms of discrimination. (Southern Africa)*
- ▶ *Because we have suffered together the discrimination of society. (Southern Africa)*

“We must raise the consciousness of society and make all elements in it more attuned to the largely unheard female voice.”

- ▶ *Because we still need affirmative action as we don't have equality, or level playing fields. (Pacific)*
- ▶ *We are the class that suffers the greatest discrimination and is the most illiterate. So female politicians must defend people's interests. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *Actually, the mere fact of being present in political organisations shatters the prejudice that women were made only for domestic tasks and low-grade work. (East Africa)*
- ▶ *Those of us women who are in politics should act to consolidate democracy in our countries, fight exclusion and the sidelining of certain sectors - class and gender. (Central America)*
- ▶ *The activities of a woman politician must pay keen attention to the lives of women, their social status and the legal inequities that women suffer. (Pacific)*
- ▶ *Since we are under-represented, solidarity must operate at all levels. I remain very attentive to problems affecting women and children. (Central Africa)*
- ▶ *Whenever given the opportunity, I try to ensure that women gain places in adequate numbers in committees and as participants in forums, seminars or conferences. (South-East Asia)*
- ▶ *A woman always feels responsible to society. Women account for half the nation, region, sub-region, continent or world. Half the representation by women is always on their mind. (East Africa)*
- ▶ *I represent women because their needs and interests have been under-represented up to now. (Nordic country)*
- ▶ *My participation in a large organisation of women can be seen in the Assembly, where I am always present. It is evident that I am a woman and I represent thousands of women, and I always pay attention to the legitimate defence of women's rights. (East Africa)*

Such comments were often followed by a comment in support of men:

However, we women politicians and parliamentarians represent both women and men in our society, as is our duty. (Southern Europe)

Monitoring political action through a woman's perspective during cabinet meetings was the focus of one woman:

Having been exposed to working with women in the National Council of Women and women's groups, I am very sensitive to the needs of women. I am always on my feet when in Cabinet anything comes up which affects women and remind the Cabinet of the need to include women in boards, committees, etc. (Central America)

It was common for respondents to identify the need for gender neutrality but to follow up with a comment suggesting that understanding women was more effectively dealt with politically by women than by men. The importance of recognising that women's perspective was different from that of men was in any case central to the comments.

- ▶ *In any case, men and women politicians represent the general interests of the nation. However, I believe that a woman has more political responsibility to represent the interests of other women to the extent that she understands the depth of female problems better, experiences*

some of them herself and has the same interests as they do in many ways, and that they count on her to pay greater attention to women's questions. (West Africa)

- ▶ *Only we women understand the problems women encounter in life in general, hence in politics too. Therefore we can only be our own liberators and facilitators on behalf of others so as to ensure representation of other women's interests. But one point to mention is that the political and all other civil structures ought to be accommodating of women so that their views are taken from a much larger angle of societal structures. It is a "man's world" and "our" interest has not been taken care of. (Southern Africa)*

One of the reasons advanced by many was that women contributed special skills, alongside a human approach to politics:

It seems to me that women are more organised, less indifferent, and more disciplined and sensitive. (Central Europe)

CONTINUED PARTICIPATION WITH WOMEN'S GROUPS

A common theme found in the qualitative data was the need to retain linkages with women's groups for sharing information, providing support and facilitating effective feedback to the community:

To try to include the interests and the needs of women in political decisions. To cooperate with women's organisations. To be an example and to work for the women in the party, besides also having extensive contact with women. (Western Europe)

For some politicians this included the sharing of political skills:

Because of my status, it is my duty to defend the interests of other women through information, awareness training and motivation. (West Africa)

Continued participation with women's groups enhanced a sense of the trust that women politicians felt had been bestowed upon them:

In addition, with regard to local matters, I take part in numerous activities alongside the people who voted for me to show them they were right to place their trust in a woman. (North Africa)

One politician provided networking opportunities for women in managerial positions and consciously promoted the idea that women can work in political positions with ease:

I maintain strong links with the women in my party and in the women's movement. I appoint women to management positions at the ministry. I try not to give the impression that one has to be a superheroine to fill a political position. (South America)

Some politicians concentrated on voicing a woman's interpretation of issues in the mainstream rather than with special women's groups:

It is women who have the responsibility of achieving changes for women in general. Hence I have always been concerned with what could be done to change politics and people's outlook in favour of women. Instead of committees

dealing exclusively with women's matters, I prefer take part in committees looking into other issues, to speak of women and also to prove that we are able to debate all kinds of issues, without any exception. I attach a lot of importance to developing ideas that are documented and backed up by actual, up-to-date figures. Men only concern themselves with women's questions if they are convinced that there is a problem with obvious consequences. (North Africa)

Non governmental organisations had a special role to play when women politicians were concerned about the representation of women. Respondents noted that this occurred in the following ways:

- ▶ *NGOs help since the only women's political organisation was broken up by the advent of democracy; it is difficult for us to bring all women together in one political organisation. Since we are under-represented, solidarity must operate at all levels. I remain very attentive to problems that affect women and children. (Central Africa)*
- ▶ *NGOs empower women and are organising themselves in the different women's organisations. Organisations were strengthened, especially at the grass-roots level, the society most forgotten by the previous regimes. (East Africa)*
- ▶ *Many people with scant resources have formed basic social organisations, made up essentially of women, that have been working for several years to obtain food aid, health services, citizen security in the face of violence, and solutions to various social problems of concern to the population. (South America)*
- ▶ *I'm an active member of an NGO called Women's Parliament Forum in which women of all political parties participate. We work with students, who have to present papers regarding women in politics. Lectures [are given] for women's grass-roots organisations and other persons interested in my experience in politics. (Central America)*
- ▶ *Women have made major contributions to the democratic process, for it is women's groups, as social movements, that have brought to light the social differences between the sexes. Those differences limit or prevent peaceful and democratic coexistence between the male and female halves of the population. (South America)*
- ▶ *Gender discrimination was brought to light thanks to those women's groups. If it hadn't been for their work, promotion and research, the problem of the social alienation of women would not have been recognised, and Parliament would not have been able to take subsequent legislative measures. (South America)*
- ▶ *The women's organisation has held several seminars concerned with the implementation of international instruments dealing with women matters. MPs and members of the government were invited to take part. (Central Europe)*
- ▶ *A few years ago, a National Committee for Women's Affairs was established and has started to consolidate women's efforts and to facilitate coordination and networking, in addition to building awareness of issues and guidelines. I believe that in a short time its efforts have started to bear fruit. (Middle East)*

Other women politicians noted the benefits of having NGOs as a political back-up and a network of support:

- ▶ *I am a member of an NGO - Emily's List - which gives support, ideas, donations, mentoring, volunteer work and practical assistance during the campaigns. I expect the mentoring, networking, ideas and practical support to continue during my term in Parliament. (Pacific)*
- ▶ *Given that in most cases the NGOs do the pioneering work with women, and that their members are women of all political parties, social classes and ethnic and religious groups, they provide major input guaranteeing the development of projects and activities corresponding to women's needs. (Central America)*
- ▶ *As a female politician, I have actively to get in touch with women's organisations by which I want to be supported, and not wait until I am asked. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *I consider it my duty to keep in touch with these organisations and inform them about my work and all issues of interest discussed and decided in Parliament. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *The support of women's organisations is always important, even for seasoned women politicians. (Southern Europe)*
- ▶ *As to young women politicians, the support of such organisations (particularly in their constituency) is vital and should take the form of campaigns and active encouragement. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *In the context of political activities, I think we need the support of women's associations and NGOs that are in direct contact with the population. We await their technical and financial support in the form of training, research and even periodical meetings with a view to harmonising our activities, which are complementary. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *I am the president of the first grass-roots women's organisation with twelve subs in six districts for four years. I have excellent contact with other NGOs and women's movements. (Central America)*
- ▶ *They are important!!! Building networks is everything!!! (Nordic country)*
- ▶ *Women's organisations have a vital role to play in preparing women for political life. They provide a practice ground for political techniques: elections, campaigns, financial management of participation – organisation issues – methods of communication ... By showing solidarity with women they can provide crucial support to women candidates: mobilisation, information, logistic means. After the election they can provide elected women with information, lobbying, documentation, first-hand accounts, contacts ... (North Africa)*
- ▶ *The women elected to the Federal Parliament meet twice a year with the women's associations. Logistic support is provided by the Office for Equality. At the national level, women parliamentarians meet with women's associations once a year. In addition, a working group that liaises between the organisation following up the Women's Conference and the Parliament, meets four times a year to work on the Conference's demands. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *NGOs are important on account of their help with (i) awareness-raising / education / teaching of human rights; (ii) laws to be gendered / CEDAW / effective / justifiable; (iii) women to become more aware, active, committed; (iv) government to give political will and commitment to gender equality. (Pacific)*

However, some women politicians were not anxious for contacts with the NGO community:

- ▶ *I do not need such contacts, support and information. (Central Europe)*
- ▶ *For my work in politics I did not miss this or need this. (Western Europe)*

When women politicians assessed the NGOs from a political perspective, many of the comments were critical for a wide variety of reasons:

- ▶ *Some NGOs establish contacts when they need to promote their organisations and their own activities. NGOs usually have predefined, narrowly defined notions, a one-sided approach without examining every angle, something a true politician should always do. (Central Europe)*
- ▶ *It is often the case that some NGOs will not share their views with all parties; they look for like-minded parties. I think it would be rewarding for all of us to know their positions clearly so that we could learn from each other. (Central America)*
- ▶ *Women NGOs are very divided politically. Coordination is the most important requirement for an effect on work and representation. (Central Europe)*
- ▶ *They are busy fighting with one another. (Central Europe)*
- ▶ *They are waiting for ready-made food. They are busy with themselves. (Central Europe)*
- ▶ *They view politics as something dirty instead of using it as an effective tool to increase women's power and influence. (Central Europe)*
- ▶ *Our target has to be to ask and ask again, listen to them, and train them to be more efficient. (Central Europe)*
- ▶ *The women's organisations have not yet been successful in creating an effective network to form the sort of pressure that is needed to accomplish their aims and programmes. (Middle East)*
- ▶ *They have not yet understood the importance of contacting Members of Parliament to pressure them in favour of important legislation concerning women, or tried to stir awareness campaigns in the media in support of their cause on specific issues. (Middle East)*
- ▶ *They have not even tried to contact male candidates to ask them to include women's issues in their platforms. (Middle East)*
- ▶ *Despite theoretical or intellectual discussions over issues which I always have with women's groups at the practical level, we have not yet found a formula for constant contact to help them in their lobbying efforts or to depend on them to supply necessary information for amendments of laws and alternatives. (Middle East)*
- ▶ *My country, because of its polarised political environment, has (a) political women's organisations that only liaise with women of their own political persuasion, (b) women's NGOs that, again because of the country's political environment, take a staunch political stand and actually shun women in politics. The situation has improved in the past few years but very slightly. (Southern Europe)*
- ▶ *What has made it difficult is that the NGOs in our country have partisan sympathies, even when formally that is not the case. We are learning to be inclusive and still go ahead when it comes to improving the situation of women, regardless of any affiliation or partisan sympathy. (Central America)*

“ Irrespective of political ideology, I believe NGOs and women's organisations should be more aggressive in getting women into politics.”

A respondent from Central America

- ▶ *In my view, women's movements are identified with political and/or ideological options. This means that sometimes they cannot give support to other women. (South America)*
- ▶ *Difficulties arise from the fact that the frequency and quality of close contacts with NGOs differs between ruling and opposition parties. (Asia)*
- ▶ *The NGOs try to be too politically correct because that is the source of quite a lot of their funding. (Southern Africa)*

Respondents had ideas about how cooperation between NGOs and women politicians could be encouraged:

- ▶ *I wish to enter into contact with those NGOs in order to share my experience and that of my country when it comes to parliamentary pluralism, and also to benefit from the experience of other countries. (North Africa)*
- ▶ *Very few women's organisations and NGOs approach serving women parliamentarians for support, advice or policy information. They should know who their female representatives are, and keep them informed. (Pacific)*
- ▶ *They should have the references of women politicians in their files. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *I am always asking for more training and support for promoting the ideals we all share, with due regard to my country's specific situation. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *Women's organisations and non-governmental networks occasionally have to meet to get to know each other and exchange experiences. They have to meet frequently with women parliamentarians and inform them of their concerns and see together whether draft legislation can be drawn up in areas of interest to them. (Central Africa)*
- ▶ *Since most of my parliamentary activity is not specifically concerned with women's interests, cooperation with women's NGOs is rather casual. The organisations concerned should try to expand the scope of their interests. (Southern Europe)*
- ▶ *More communication is needed through organised workshops and seminars and coordinated information flow. During my current term I will seek and enhance such communication and encourage it at all levels. (Middle East)*
- ▶ *I would like to see women working in NGOs being more active as regards cooperation and contacts with women MPs. (Central Asia)*
- ▶ *National networking, issue by issue, is vital. The MP must work very hard to reach and listen to those with too little time or confidence to utilise the lobbying channels. (Pacific)*
- ▶ *NGOs also need to be there (i) to lobby all the men, (ii) to thank and congratulate, and (iii) to forgive when the party machine straitjackets the woman MP. (Pacific)*
- ▶ *Permanent channels of communication and work need to be improved; this should not be done in an incidental way. (Southern Europe)*
- ▶ *It's very important for women MPs to meet other women from other countries. I think we who have a high representation can support other women and show the whole Parliament that this works very well and is good for society as a whole. (Nordic country)*

“Programmes which give women NGOs training in political literacy are vital.”

WOMEN AS ROLE MODELS

As already mentioned in Chapter 5 discussing women in Parliament, the provision of role models for other women was a theme that was also reinforced as important in this section of the survey. While women believed that it was part of their job to encourage other women to be politically active, the role of women in political representation appeared to be of particular significance owing to their greater responsibility and visibility.

Women politicians had an extra responsibility to act as positive role models for other women:

- ▶ *The main thing is to be an example that can be followed. To show that "women can do it". (Central Europe)*
- ▶ *My primary responsibility is to promote other women so that they can occupy positions, and to stimulate them; to train and discover leaders, to motivate them. (Central America)*
- ▶ *I aim to do my job well so as to give prestige to the work of women politicians. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *Women politicians motivate more women to accept political responsibilities. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *The presence of women in our Government definitely has positive effects on our society, from their being role models to influencing political decision-making processes. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *Role models serve as an example for young people. (Southern Europe)*

Some respondents identified particular positions in which role models had been inspirational:

- ▶ *The 1995-1998 Human Rights Prosecutor - a woman - left a mark on account of her exemplary commitment, which will be difficult to equal. (Central America)*
- ▶ *Women in Cabinet are important and positive examples. They encourage women in society. (Western Europe)*

Positive role models communicated the concept of gender equality inside the community generally:

Society receives a clear message that there is no discrimination against women; as regards women, it helps to generate their interest in politics. (Central Europe)

One respondent, however, wished to make this point: *It is a problem that not every woman politician is gender-sensitive. (Pacific)*

“ I think that women in government are important because they are an example for women to start in politics. ”
A respondent from Western Europe

GENDER ANALYSIS OF LEGISLATION AND POLICIES

North Africa

North Africa

A gender analysis of legislation was of prime importance to respondents, as stated by this one from North Africa:

As a member of the Commission for Juridical and Administrative Affairs in the National People's Assembly, I always take account of the position of women in our society when discussing laws.

Pacific

Pacific

Gender analysis highlighted specific legal inequalities in some countries such as, in this case, in the Pacific:

There are some inequitable laws in my country and some States that cause suffering and disadvantage, particularly to women. I do not see these issues being addressed in a practical and concise manner by the existing institutions or by the Federal or State Parliament: e.g. prostitution law reform; lack of a de facto relationship Act; migrant two-year wait for income support, social security benefit; funding/operating arrangements for children's services and a range of community services; same sex relationship recognition and Drug Law Reform.

North America

North America

There were special precautions taken in some caucuses to make sure that legislation was analysed for gender impact, as is the case in Canada:

The governing party has a very active women's caucus that meets regularly with Ministers to discuss and influence such issues as the national budget, pay equity, gender analysis and women's health issues.

West Africa

West Africa

Historically some laws had disadvantaged women and responsibility for action was left to woman politicians, owing to male bias, according to one respondent from West Africa:

Take inheritance for example, and the position of widows and orphans after the father's death. Men will never consider this problem in order to find fair solutions. Their natural selfishness does not tend to make them interested in this kind of legislative area.

Southern Europe

Southern Europe

When women had specifically worked hard to support politicians and to put women's interests on the political agenda, politicians felt a strong responsibility to honour the trust those women had placed in them, and to represent their concerns actively:

Right from the start of my professional career as a lawyer, I played an important part in the bid to improve the status of women in our society. It was on the

insistence of a great many women that I ran for Parliament, and likewise many women come to me for support. I therefore regard it as my primary duty to represent the needs and interests of women, not so much for me any more, but for younger women who I hope will take over from my generation and for the benefit of the ordinary working women and mothers who need our help.

Middle East

Some politicians entered Parliament specifically to address law reform from a gender perspective, as was the case of the following respondent from the Middle East:

While the Constitution of my country guarantees equal rights for men and women in political activity, there are still many areas of legislation born of tradition or conservatism, social or religious, that put women at a social and economic disadvantage. Hence I believe that my presence in Parliament should be directed to supporting modernisation of legislation and helping overcome the obstacles women face because of tradition and habit, by resorting to legislation that can protect them and establish their basic human rights on a clear legal basis.

Western Europe

Women's rights were viewed by many respondents as human rights, as stated, for example, by a woman from Western Europe:

My work includes legislative initiatives aimed at making up for democratic shortcomings in the field of women's rights and at tangible action for practical follow-up to legislation. This implies taking action in Parliament and within the party to promote women's development from all points of view, and thereby encouraging women to act for the female cause, even beyond formal possibilities.

South-East Asia

One respondent from South-East Asia implied that women politicians could monitor the application of human rights in domestic legislation:

Together with other women politicians, we are more aware of the move to clarify women's rights and needs and the move to have appropriate legislation passed.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH MEN

It was made very clear that women could not effect positive change through political processes without the support and understanding of men:

Personally, I remind myself that society is made up of men and women and the fact that the latter are having a say gives rise to certain feelings. We have our specific problems and only we are capable of finding the solutions with the help of men. (East Africa)

This was an inclusive approach:

In the framework of the left-wing women's clubs, seminars and discussions are organized on the subject of the Beijing Declaration and the Plan of Action. The men are also involved in the discussion. (Central Europe)

Female and male politicians would need to negotiate and conciliate issues:

Implementing platforms requires agreement between men and women. (Central America)

Women could bring their «womanness» with them into the political arena. Encouragement and understanding of differences was preferable to fighting for separatism in the view of one respondent:

Some women spurn gender issues, so afraid are they of being termed "feminists" by their male colleagues. What women ought to realise is that the goal should be the "feminisation" of all politics rather than the colonisation of a few gender-related/equality pockets. (Western Europe)

Acting in a humane way meant acknowledging the importance of all humans:

In social life the basic value is the human being, i.e. the woman, the man and the child. The value of each human entity is the same and both good and evil deeds done to any human being affect all others. (Central Europe)

The Cabinet Minister

Africa

CM was born in Africa in 1941 and is married with two children. *"From my school days I was always interested in politics and had a few role models which inspired me. My parents were very interested in public life and politics and especially my father encouraged me. I then married a man who was also active in politics which assisted me a lot. He was not such a go getter as I was. But that also assisted me in my growth as a politician. It was a long battle at grassroots level to prove that I was as capable as a man so that I could be acknowledged and elected to posts in public life. Determination and ambition pulled me through those times."*

CM gained an undergraduate university degree and became a teacher. Her family support and her work in the political party were CM's vehicles of entry to parliament. When she was elected to parliament in 1987 she still had a child under 15. *"But I wanted to make a change in my life in the sense that I wanted a better life for all the people in my country with equal opportunities."*

In CM's country, women have the same legal opportunities to participate in national politics, but are not equally represented in parliament or government. Values limit women's participation: men shape and lead politics but CM believes that democracy, equality and a better response to the needs of society as a whole require an equal participation between men and women. CM considers that women know how to use and adapt to the power relations that are characteristic of national politics, *"but a woman's view of life and therefore also politics is much more pragmatic and emphatic than that of a man, and because she has always had to struggle for recognition in all fields of life, her approach is much more pragmatic and democratic."*

In CM's opinion women change politics, and restore public trust in politics. While they have a different conception of society and politics from men, the political priorities are not different, but women have a specific and different contribution to make in addressing these priorities. While CM *"is not really in favour of a quota system to achieve equal representation, because we have had such a struggle to be recognised and appointed to higher posts, it may be necessary to "force" the powers-that-be into a quota system of between 40-50%."*

And, CM believes, women should have at least 45% of cabinet positions. CM has been in Cabinet since 1994, and *"as being a minister in politics is fulltime, I am so busy with political activities there is no time to practice any other profession. Now to reconcile her family life and political commitment, it is essential to have domestic help at home. This is needed in addition because now I have a disabled and sick husband. He gives me the support he can, but it is very hard and tiring on a woman to be active in social activities which are a part of political activities in a situation such as this. And there is an additional gendered problem which many other women*

politicians have experienced: if you go to functions without your husband then the perception is still that as a woman you are almost “available”! If you take a partner along then there is a big question mark on WHY, but if a man does the same thing it is accepted.”

“The presence of women in Parliament has most definitely made positive changes in our Parliament, also for example, in dress code, punctuality, and diligence. In the House men try to “watch” their pronouncements on gender issues much more carefully as well as bad or abusive language.”

CM describes her party as being in the centre of the political spectrum, and a member of the International Democrat Union, but from her personal experience women are not at ease in her political party, and parties in general are hostile towards women. While women have worked hard and successfully, to modify the basic texts of CM’s party, they are still unfair towards women, particularly with respect to internal elections to decision making posts. Party rule changes have ensured that women candidates are placed in winnable seats or positions on party lists. There is also a strong women’s branch of the party which is *“changing slowly from being more of a welfare society to a more active political role. That led to becoming a stronger pressure group in the party.”*

Whenever there has been a change within the party structure or culture, it is attributable in large part to the presence of women, and to their work for change. In the party there has been *“a recognition that women workers for the party and women voters play an irreplaceable role in the running of the party. The party is much more aware and sensitive to women politicians and voters. The visions of women of all ages, family situations and professional status, and their contribution of experiences and revision of needs, have enriched the party’s proposals to society and its debates.”*

But at the practical and logistical levels, old habits remain. Meeting times are not changed to make it easier for women to attend, nor have arrangements been made for provision of creche or care facilities to enable participation. CM’s interest in politics, the support from her parents and husband, and her own love of a challenge were her motivations to run as a candidate. Her difficulties were her lack of a support network, and the cultural values and attitude hostile to women’s participation in politics. Yet if women can become candidates, voters show as much confidence in them as men, and are waiting to elect them to national office.

Once CM became a candidate for the first time, women and men (were) assisted and treated the same during election time. *“The party that I belong to gives more or less the same support for women candidates as they do to men. The big problem still is to be elected as a candidate instead of a man.”*

CM was elected in a mixed member proportional representation system, and while at best the percentage of women elected has not exceeded 30%, CM considers this system offers the best chance for women to be elected in her country.

As a woman candidate, CM received no preparation or training for her future work as a parliamentarian, but it would have been very useful. Now with new women MPs she shows them around the building and tries to be seated next them at meal times so that they can ask questions and discuss the do’s and don’ts. She introduces new members to present members.

In CM’s four terms of parliamentary experience she has observed specific changes in behaviour when a woman presides in the chamber. Debates are tempered, more

polite and less sexist. *"The women in our party and in our Parliament are a strong lobbying group for equality. The presence of women in Parliament has most definitely made positive changes in our Parliament, also for example, in dress code, punctuality, and diligence. In the House men try to "watch" their pronouncements on gender issues much more carefully as well as bad or abusive language."*

Women have an equal chance to get the call to speak; the ongoing organisation of the house runs smoothly. But the questions of equal treatment in parliament mirror's party experience: Women are not on all parliamentary committees. *"Membership is not covered by rules or practices and this affects legislation. An informal Women's caucus has been established in our Parliament. As far as legislation is concerned we have managed to make portfolio committees very much more gender sensitive."*

Women parliamentarians do not have creche provisions; there are still night sittings. In CM's parliament, women play the most effective roles on issues of social affairs and health, education and culture, followed by legal and constitutional matters, and budget. CM has held significant cabinet portfolios. *"I try to always address the female side of legislation in my speeches and would nominate women for as many posts as I can on merit, of course. I think it is also my responsibility as a public representative to be well groomed and friendly and accessible to all voters because I must set an example of efficiency and pride in being a woman in that post."*

As a Member of the Cabinet it has been her experience that *"because women politicians are much more diligent, punctual, better prepared, and much more eager to work in a team, the men feel guilty when they do not perform as well."* The presence of women then lifts the standards and performance of men and women. *"Having women in cabinet has most definitely contributed to the diligence of the male members in cabinet and "forced" the media to give greater recognition to the female members because they work harder and are more organised than men."*

CM's personal relationship with the media has been varied: *"My relations with the certain media is very positive but others are very negative. It usually depends on the editors and whether they have an informative newspaper or a newspaper always looking for sensation. I feel that female journalists can do much more to boost the women politicians in a positive way. Some women journalists tend to be too « politically correct » and then neglect a lot of very able and capable female politicians."* Overall though, during her 12 years in office, the media do much more to advance the positive role of women brought to parliament.

Does CM think more women are needed in political office? *"Women should make themselves more available in greater numbers for political office. They should forget about feeling that "I am not good enough" and work more at their self confidence. They should also be more informed (by reading etc) of the daily events in public life and make up their own minds - to be able to take a stand and then be able to defend their stand. Only dynamic women will succeed in a very competitive but unequal life."*

And what do women bring to political life? CM replies: *"A much more open and balanced approach to life and opportunities - on merit - as it should be in a democracy in its fullest form."* ■

“ Having women in cabinet has most definitely contributed to the diligence of the male members in cabinet and “forced” the media to give greater recognition to the female members because they work harder and are more organised than men. ”

9

RECONCILING FAMILY AND PROFESSIONAL COMMITMENTS WITH POLITICAL COMMITMENT: A PERMANENT CHALLENGE

The responses to this section of the survey provided a kaleidoscope of differing cultural experiences.

Women in politics reported pressures they claimed to be similar to those that are the lot of many other women in paid work. They were conscious of having to try particularly hard to reconcile their personal roles as mothers, partners, daughters and professionals with political office. Roles within the family and the organisation of such resources as time and money all required careful practical management. Alongside functional matters, the adjustment of emotional, social and psychological issues such as love, affection, caring, loyalty and effective communication was an ever-present feature of their commentaries. Women spoke of giving, receiving and balancing their family's needs with their own needs while coping with the challenges of political life.

Respondents reported an abundance of unconditional support from, and a desire to provide support for, family members when trying to achieve the balance between family life, professional life and political commitment.

- ▶ 80% of respondents received support either from husbands or partners or from parents, children or other relatives.
- ▶ 85% of this group stated that they received support from their husband or partner while
- ▶ 64% highlighted support from their parents
- ▶ 47% reported support from their children, and
- ▶ 40% noted support from other relatives.

TRADITIONALLY GENDERED FAMILY ROLES

Women reflected on traditionally gendered roles and cultural understandings when considering the priorities of life as a politician.

The household tasks which had traditionally been the responsibility of some women before they entered Parliament were taken over by husbands or partners once they became parliamentarians:

- ▶ *In our culture, men have a hard time accepting that their wives fill important posts - it is a frequent cause of domestic disputes. A woman politician must organise herself so as to reconcile her political, family and professional activities. My family, my husband, my three children, aged 30, 27 and 16, and my brothers and sisters all support me very much at all levels - physical, moral and financial. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *My husband had to do all those tasks that fell to me as a housewife before. (Central Europe)*

One respondent looked to international conventions as a guideline to help set ground rules for the organisation of roles in the household:

Life as a lawyer has always been as busy as it is now. We (I and my husband) try to take care of my daughter together based on the principle of the ILO convention on «workers with family responsibilities». (Asia)

Cultural expectations meant that traditionally gendered roles were paramount in some countries:

I am a Member of Parliament, a mother, a wife and I work in a bank. My four roles mean a great deal to me and it is very important to fill them. Firstly, to have a family and be a good mother and wife is very important for my prestige within my community, because the status of mother and wife are very important in our society. Secondly, regarding my participation in professional life, I endeavour to make suitable arrangements for my family. It is very important for me and for them. (East Africa)

One respondent protested that asking about support in the home inferred that women *should* be responsible for running the household:

Are men asked these questions?! I try to be present at the weekend. It is a choice that does not always go down well outside the family- too bad. I am often busy with meetings. Some think that I should put looking after the home above everything else: after all I am only a woman. (Western Europe)

HUSBANDS AND PARTNERS

Respondents identified the need for husbands or partners to take responsibility for practical and caring roles in the home:

My husband takes prime responsibility for cooking, shopping and organising adult children and my grandchild. He also takes prime responsibility for keeping up to date with computer technology and upgrading our home computer software. (Pacific)

Some partners or husbands adapted their paid work to fit in with the parliamentarian's obligations so that they could take the major share of the unpaid work of the household:

- ▶ *My husband has decided to work part-time. He looks after our three children from 3.30 p.m. onwards and sees to their cultural and sporting activities on Wednesday afternoons. It was a joint decision, but it took us two years to get into our stride and for the children to get used to the situation. This situation could not go on for ever. (Western Europe)*

- ▶ *My husband has taken over all the housekeeping duties. He is very supportive to my daughter. My husband's help and my children's understanding, together with my colleagues' support, help me to reconcile my various commitments. (Central Europe)*

CLOSE AND EXTENDED FAMILY

Practical help from extended family members was an important feature of the way women reconciled the commitments of a Member of Parliament with family obligations:

- ▶ *My parents looked after my children and even all household matters were handled by them while I attended to my electorate. (South-East Asia)*
- ▶ *I come from a large family where there is always someone to take care of the younger ones during my absence. However, when I have time, I take care of them as much as I can. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *I am a woman who has a lot of commitments: President of an NGO, a counsellor in my country's federal assembly. My diary is often full of appointments for awareness-raising days in rural areas. My family suffers from my absence. Particular arrangements were made in order to manage my political commitments successfully: 1. the permanent presence of my mother to look after the daily needs of the children (with meals at normal times); 2. a domestic employee to do the washing and ironing; 3. my husband's continual supervision of my children's school work to relieve me of this task. (East Africa)*

“Men should support women's participation in social activities and share with them obligations and responsibilities, as well as authority, with regard to housework and the rearing and education of children. This is particularly so when women combine domestic tasks with professional and/or political activities.”

Plan of Action to correct present imbalances in the participation of men and women in political life, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Paris, March 1994

The extraordinary and generous help received from mothers of women politicians was a strong theme to emerge from the data:

- ▶ *Sometimes it is a sacrifice for me. However, my mother has helped me take care of my two orphaned children from a previous marriage after their father disappeared during the troubled times. (Central America)*
- ▶ *Much care has been lavished on my children from my mother in the long hours of my absence in Parliament. (Southern Europe)*
- ▶ *My mother, who is 74 and is still working, and my mother-in-law always give me a lot of support. (East Africa)*

Frequently the politician's mother and husband shared the domestic workload in support of the her career:

- ▶ *With the help of my mother and my husband I am relieved of most family commitments. This allows me to devote myself to politics. (Central Europe)*
- ▶ *I have two children (aged 8 and 11). My husband and my mother look after them when I am not at home. (Western Europe)*

In some families or given cultural contexts, the complete extended family took over the responsibilities of the household and care of children. Women were thus relieved of work in the home:

- ▶ *In our African countries, when it comes to family life and domestic questions, we have the advantage of an appreciable level of support from our relatives (mother, cousin, niece, etc.), which allows us to devote ourselves to our political life without too many concerns. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *My husband and both our families help me in combining my political commitments and family life. They help me to educate and care for the children, in addition to such household tasks as cooking, washing and ironing, and so on. (Southern Europe)*
- ▶ *When I was attending political meetings, my sister helped me to look after my children because when I entered politics they were small. (Southern Africa)*
- ▶ *I can count on the support of my mother and my sister, who help me with the housekeeping and also with administrative tasks. (East Africa)*

Mothers often helped their politician daughters for as long as they were physically able to provide the support in question. The care and support roles were then reversed. For the woman politician with little spare time this often meant looking outside the family for support:

When my mother became ill, I asked my neighbour (she is unemployed) to work for us. Now she has an official salary, my children like her and she is very flexible. (Central Europe)

Friends also provided the much needed help and support for the children and elderly parents of women parliamentarians:

My husband and older children share in looking after my 8-year-old son. Friends help a great deal in "grannyng" around and making sure he gets to all his extra-curricular activities. My mother has a companion for a number of hours in the morning while a home help takes care of her during the afternoon. During parliamentary sittings my older children and husband eat at home. Some juggling is still necessary. If it weren't for the spontaneous help of friends, I would not be able to cope with several of my youngest child's extra-curricular activities. Domestic service is essential as my 88-year-old mother needs constant supervision. I have absolutely no time for housework, although I shop, cook and launder in addition to taking care of all family financial matters and «errand-running». (Southern Europe)

In other cultures, responsibility for an extended family added to the commitments that had to be reconciled by the politician, particularly where elderly parents were concerned:

- ▶ *I had to take care of my old father. I was able to manage the care only with the help of other members of the family. In the Czech Republic, a woman is supposed to devote herself to the family and manage all the housework. Otherwise, she is viewed very critically. (Central Europe)*
- ▶ *I do not have to take care of my children. I do care on a daily basis for my 86-year-old mother. (Central Europe)*
- ▶ *I take care of my parents (mother is 82 and father 81 years old), who both need financial support (I can afford it) and medical services which I can easily provide as a doctor. (Central Europe)*
- ▶ *I am happy to come from a big family so that we can share our duties, such as caring for older members of the family. (Central Europe)*

For others, independent elderly relatives and separate nuclear families meant that there was no need to reconcile commitments:

Not applicable! I help my parents, who are elderly. However, they live separately, are independent and don't require constant care. (Central Europe)

In the case of some respondents, responsibility for their parents was taken by siblings with more time available:

My parents are elderly but my brother and sister-in-law live in the same town and assume more of a caring role. (Pacific)

DOMESTIC SERVICES IN THE HOME

- ▶ 72% of respondents reported that they had domestic services at home - often provided by a woman
- ▶ 77.5% replied that domestic services were essential.

Some of respondents sought help from outside the family circle and others relied on family and friends, while a third group needed both the support of paid outside help and the practical support of family and friends.

Support in caring for elderly parents was sought from outside the family circle by some politicians, and several respondents combined the support of close family with paid help and some simply relied on paid support:

- ▶ *With my 84-year-old mother, I rely on a network of community services, friends, my husband and my children, to assist with household tasks so that she can continue to live in her own house. I still do her washing each week and write letters as required. I also make sure she looks after her health and seeks timely treatment. (Pacific)*
- ▶ *When I am busy I hire someone to do the housework. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *I have improved the situation by taking on a nanny who lives with us and stands in for me during my absence. (West Africa)*

It was common for women to pay for housework and laundering to be done by people from outside the family when they had responsibilities for an extended family:

African families are like this. Not only do I have to look after my own children and those of my sisters and brothers; I must also look after my mother's health and the needs of my father, etc. Political women in Africa share their time and their lives between the family and political activity. In any case, my political engagements are not allowed to harm those I am responsible for. If I can't always be in the house, I ask domestic staff to do their work correctly and make themselves available to the parent or relative of my choosing to look after things in my absence. (East Africa)

Women persistently noted that they had relied on outside help in previous professional roles. They had experience of balancing their paid work with the unpaid work of the household:

I had had responsibilities in my previous career, as the principal of a secondary (high) school for girls. What applied in those circumstances would have applied equally had I entered politics earlier. I did not have the advantages of an extended family (grandparents, aunts, uncles) living nearby, but always had the most wonderful support from my husband, notwithstanding his own

demanding career commitments. I also had the advantage of the assistance of a full-time housekeeper, whom, to this day, my children (now in their twenties) still call their "second mother". (Southern Africa)

COMMUNICATION WITH CHILDREN AND COMPENSATING FOR LOSS OF TIME WITH THE FAMILY

Children were of prime concern for the respondents. Various women stressed the particular need for good communication with children when parenting time was a scarce resource:

- ▶ *Before committing myself to politics, I discussed the matter with my two children, aged 14 and 19, and enlisted their support so that they would understand that there are times when I have to be away from home and even keep late hours because of meetings. (East Africa)*
- ▶ *It is important that you talk to the children and that you keep the promises you make with them. I am sure that it is not the number of hours you are with the children that are important, but the quality of what you do with them. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *I'm communicating with my family and my son all the time, so that my function as a mother isn't diminished. (East Africa)*
- ▶ *It is really difficult. I try to talk to my two daughters, aged 14 and 10, every day. I study with them, but sometimes I have a lot to do and I cannot give them all my attention. (East Africa)*
- ▶ *I had to make my children understand the reasons of my absence, and to find occasions to compensate them for that. (Central Europe)*
- ▶ *In some cases, such as schooling and ethical matters, I feel it necessary to stay close to my children. (Central Europe)*

Many women organised outside help for basic practical support but returned home to take care of the emotional, social and educational needs of their children:

At the beginning of my formal involvement in politics, I had two children below the age of 15. In my country we are fortunate to have full-time housekeeping help. This provides relief from the chores of housework and spares the available time to spend with the children: their studies, discussions, leisure and guidance. My work was almost all done while they were at school (between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.) except for few days a week. I tried as much as possible to leave my evenings free for them. Now they are married and independent! (Middle East)

Women spoke of needing to find ways to make up for lost time with their children:

- ▶ *With my 13-year-old daughter I try to compensate for my absences with more affection and interest when I am available. (North Africa)*
- ▶ *I organise myself in such a way as to be able to devote a little time to my family life, my professional life and to my political engagements. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *On my return, I attend to them for a moment so that they know that I am always thinking of them despite my responsibilities. (North America)*

CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Concern for children's education was a high priority for many of the participants. In particular, many mothers showed concern for careful monitoring and arranging for supervision of their children's homework when they were busy with their political duties.

Women from developing countries particularly highlighted concern with children's education:

Political life is so absorbing, particularly in our underdeveloped countries; our generation must make superhuman efforts to respond to all sorts of requests. Whenever I am not involved in my political activities, I devote my time to asking about and monitoring the schoolwork of my children. (West Africa)

Women continued to take a close interest in their children's schoolwork, even if children had to count on other more regular support:

- ▶ *My daughter is looked after by her father, her elder brothers and sisters, and the other members of the family during my absence. However, I make sure that I regularly check the schoolwork. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *The special arrangements consist mainly in monitoring the homework of the two children whenever I have meetings or when I am at the university because of my professional activity. The two eldest take responsibility for this, as does my husband. Whenever he can, he does so without too much grumbling. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *Employment of additional babysitter. Employment of a home teacher (part-time). Culturally, we have an extended family, a very close society where we have lots of celebrations together. Sometimes our time becomes so tight, what with the responsibility we have. (East Africa)*
- ▶ *Before entering politics, I always had my children tutored at home. I followed them myself and I still pay for home tutoring to avoid leaving them on their own. With regard to family education, I can count on the help of other members of the family. (West Africa)*

Some respondents organised professional educational support:

The presence of a governess compensates in general for my long periods of absence. (West Africa)

And others made sure of a good education by sending their children away to boarding school:

- ▶ *I have put my youngest daughter into a boarding school from the primary level so that I am assured of more time to engage in politics. Secondly, I always leave the children in the care of the housemaid whenever I am away. (Southern Africa)*
- ▶ *The children are grown up now. I had a nanny /a maid at home. They were in boarding school, so only the holidays were a problem. (Southern Africa)*

“We have as yet to mobilise the necessary structures, such as accessible, affordable and quality daytime childcare centres to empower women to take up political roles.”

A respondent from Southern Europe

THE NEED FOR CHILDCARE

Women called for better childcare contingency arrangements for children of women parliamentarians.

Several women relied on a mix of childcare centres and extended family:

My extended family (which includes grandparents and uncles), pre-school centres and learning and recreation programmes for small children supported me. Furthermore, I had an office that was easily reached, comfortable, versatile enough for me to breast-feed my daughter for the first nine months. (South America)

A respondent from Sweden reported a high quality of childcare available for parliamentarians in her country: "I have a son 16 months old. My mother travels with us from time to time to take care of him. (We have) day care in the Parliament: very good and necessary!"

GUILT AND A SENSE OF PERSONAL LOSS

Feelings of guilt featured heavily in respondents' commentaries, even when adequate arrangements had been made for their children and family:

It is my husband who takes care of most of the housework and the children's schoolwork, at least during the weeks when we are in session. The rest of the time we share the work. When we are stuck, we have good relations with our neighbours. But I still feel guilty of course, quite a bit! (Western Europe)

As well as guilt, some respondents experienced a sense of personal loss at missing time with family and time to revive their personal needs:

To reconcile the mother's role, family life and political life is not easy at all. One has to sacrifice a lot of private time with the children, and sometimes one has the impression that if one wants to fight on all fronts, one or the other will lead to a breakdown in the end. Even if one tries to be well organised, there is hardly any time left to look after oneself. (Western Europe)

Several women mentioned their sense of personal loss, particularly as regards missing out on enjoyable experiences with their children:

The most important moment that I miss from my normal days is when I used to spend time with my family before the children's bedtime, since now when I return home my kids are already asleep. (Southern Europe)

Time to sustain relationships with partners or husbands was an area seldom referred to in the responses. It is unclear whether this was something that the questionnaire did not address or rather something that respondents did not think of commenting on. Only two respondents referred to their need to nurture their intimate relationships. One respondent tried very hard to be home whenever possible but she felt guilty about her relationship with her husband:

I try as much as possible to be home by about 7 p.m. (bath, tucking in, homework, bedtime stories, etc.); then I go out again to a meeting. I take

some days off during the school holidays ... The hardest thing is to find time to see my husband. It is not easy to shed one's feelings of guilt. (Western Europe)

Respondents hinted that their personal lives were less than satisfactory because they lacked the time to see to their own needs for solitude: *I have dropped all personal pastimes*, a woman from Western Europe laconically states.

A second respondent, from Central America, particularly noted the importance of time with her partner: *At home my partner and I spend quality time together.*

One respondent hinted that approval from family members was a form of support that was important to her. And even though her husband was supportive of her, the disapproval of others was significant enough to note:

The rest of my family are not supportive or helpful; they actively disapprove. (Pacific)

Another respondent echoed the significance of approval when she reported:

Relatives and in-laws complain that they are not able to see me as often as before I became involved in politics. (South-East Asia)

CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Politicians identified the management of crises as an important influence on the organisation of time and energy, which had an impact on family life:

My three children have been born to a political life. Reared and brought up throughout all the natural and man-made calamities/crises. Ailing parents on both sides of the family have had to be cared for. There are continual extended family responsibilities because we live in the capital and are frequently feeding, accommodating and transiting schoolchildren and adult travellers. (Pacific)

But this was not peculiar to political work, according to one respondent:

The reconciliation of roles is a constant juggling act. The needs of my ageing mother often coincide with crisis points in politics. I have had many professions and the problem is not unique; all professional women and others may face this problem. Still it is not a shared responsibility. Women are seen as and are primary caregivers. (North America)

CAREFUL MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATION

According to many respondents, politicians organised their busy lives by finely tuning the management of practical details:

Reconciling political commitments and family commitments is a question of organisation. A home help looks after the housework. As to the children's education, each morning I keep an eye on all of their problems before they leave for school, and the homework and the exercise books are checked either in the evening or during the weekend. A teacher (tutor) helps me in this sector for modest remuneration. (Central Africa)

One respondent mentioned the need to make the best use of all available technology in managing time and resources:

Mobile phones and clear instructions that their calls are a priority make for clear quality time, i.e. Friday night dinner and weekend activities. (Middle East)

Some respondents had partners or husbands who worked in areas where time was available for the children:

I am able to reconcile family, profession and Parliament because my partner is a teacher and his hours are the same as the children's. (Western Europe)

“Despite the help and support of my family, I still sometimes feel guilty about being away from home.”

A respondent from North Africa

PLANNING TIME

Time use was clearly the most important consideration in respondents' comments about how women politicians sought to balance and organise their lives:

It's very hard. One has to be alert every minute not to waste time. Time management is very important. Apart from that, every member of the family has to understand what is going on. I work as an aerobics instructor. I also teach in the mornings and make plans and appointments in between work and Parliament. My diary is my personal manager and I can't miss appointments. (Southern Europe)

Long and inconvenient working hours made time an important feature of how women politicians organised their lives. Planning specific time well in advance to be with the family was a high priority in how politicians organised their diaries:

- ▶ *Continuity is difficult. Politics is like no other job. Times are pervasive. Late Dáil sittings and party and political meetings frequently take place at night. It is important to ring-fence weekends if family is to be sustained. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *Under all circumstances, when forming one's schedule it is necessary to keep in mind allocating time for one's nearest and dearest, especially those who need your care. (Eastern Europe)*

One politician believed that the lack of time for family was one of the main reasons why women who were also mothers ended their political careers:

It is very difficult for women who have children to devote time to politics. It is considered a special responsibility of mothers to look after their children and, since most political meetings and sessions of Parliament take place late in the afternoon or at night, women generally give up political responsibilities. (Western Europe)

RECIPROCITY

The idea of reciprocal care was suggested and this reflected many families' experiences where the balancing act was a team approach; individuals all contributed. This was based on the principle of giving and receiving support:

If there is something I don't like but which cannot be changed, and where I need to invest time and attention, I can count on the understanding of my family. But whenever and wherever I can, I devote myself to my family with love. I cook for them, look after the house and spend time with them, etc. It isn't so much a concept as a list of objectives that need to be shared. (Central America)

The value of generosity with time and money towards family was a theme of the politicians comments:

I frequently send money to my mother, who lives in a northern town, while I am in the southern part of the country. And at the weekends I take my children to the country, where I have a farm rearing cattle and goats. I show them nature first-hand and its value when it is worked and cared for. (East Africa)

THE IMPACT OF POLITICS ON THE FAMILY

Some politicians made a decision not to have children owing to the demands of politics:

I devote the whole of my time to politics (I have no husband or children). I think it was my political activism that made me decide not to have any children. (Central America)

Others had fewer family responsibilities because they were politicians before acquiring a family of their own:

I received support from my father but I did not have a husband or partner or children on the scene at the time. (Pacific)

One politician believed there was no escaping some politics having an impact on a mother's relationship with her children:

I have three boys who are now a little over 15. I believe that political activism always affects children because of the little time there is left to be with them. Being a mother and fulfilling one's political obligations means making twice the effort. (Southern Africa)

Several respondents said they made it clear to their children that time with them would be difficult to find. The children were encouraged to accept the fact of their mother's spending a lot of time away from home. Respondents stated that they actively prepared their children for this reality:

My children accepted the fact that their mother was often not at home. However, I always had a housekeeper who looked after the children very well. In view of the obligations I had in my family and in my profession, extreme efforts were needed to do a good job in government as well. (Western Europe)

It is proposed to refrain from presenting the traditional roles and tasks assumed by women at home and her activities outside the home, whether social, professional, political, or other, as conflicting activities.

Plan of Action to correct present imbalances in the participation of men and women in political life, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Paris, March 1994

PROFESSIONAL LIFE

In some countries it was possible to continue with paid professional life at the same time as being a politician. Forty per cent (40%) of respondents continued to practise their profession while fifty-nine (59%) did not. One respondent noted that her party meetings were organised so as not to interfere with her professional time:

At party level, arrangements have been made to see that meetings and public duties do not encroach upon professional working hours. (Western Europe)

Representatives coped with professional roles by careful management of their diaries:

I prioritise the professional involvement I wish to continue. I keep a diary of coming events for many months ahead to minimise the possibility of double booking events or not being able to carry out commitments. I delegate tasks, where possible, to other committee members or individuals. (Pacific)

Respondents repeatedly reiterated that the management of time was paramount in political life:

Everything depends on time management. I allocate the first three hours of the morning to teaching (8 to 11 a.m.) two to three times a week during the school year. The last four hours are devoted to parliamentary life when we are not in session. (West Africa)

Given women's consistent observation that effective time use was crucial to a politician's success, it was to be expected that the majority of respondents would choose to put aside their professional commitments while they were political representatives. However, one respondent pointed out that there was more than the giving of time and care at stake. She perceived potential conflicts of interests for those who continued in both spheres:

I have given up my legal practice because I believe that to succeed in your political work you must devote a lot of time to it. You cannot possibly do both successfully. We have a Greek anecdote that if a priest tries to conduct the liturgy in two churches he is bound to cheat on one of them. I therefore chose to be involved in politics at a rather late stage (at the age of 52) when my three children were already grown up and independent and when it was easier for me to give up my legal profession. (Southern Europe)

Other respondents in the legal profession found it impossible to represent clients and constituents at the same time:

I find it impossible to devote time to my professional work as a lawyer. My constituency work is too demanding on top of the political responsibilities imposed by my party. (South-East Asia)

Some professionals, however, were able to juggle both roles, to continue in both spheres. This was particularly the case of teachers in some countries, who talked of how they organised their political life and their academic commitments.

- ▶ *The hours of my professional practice do not prevent me from carrying out my parliamentary activities. Parliamentary hours are from 8.30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Teaching is between 3.40 and 6.50 p.m. Family time is from 7 p.m. to 7.30 a.m. and weekends. I regularly visit my constituency,*

twice or three times a year, during the university vacation period so that my students are not affected. (East Africa)

- ▶ *I work 70 hours a week during my term of office. How could I do another job in addition to this? (Western Europe)*

Clearly, though, the demands of parliamentary commitments were the determining factor:

- ▶ *Teaching is not a profession that one could continue as a parliamentarian, at least not in my country. Being a parliamentarian in this country is considered a full-time career (and paid accordingly), and teaching is a career which can itself never be anything but full-time. Furthermore, my political party prohibits its elected representatives from engaging in other employment. (Southern Africa)*
- ▶ *I don't lead an intensive parliamentary life. I have nevertheless scheduled my teaching activities for between 7 and 10 a.m. Research activities then follow from about 10 a.m., which is often when parliamentary sessions begin. (West Africa)*

There was a theme running through the responses suggesting that the retention of two incomes was not fair on constituents or students:

It is not possible as one must be in Parliament on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. I was a teacher. I could not leave my pupils for three hours or more each week. What is more, one shouldn't be greedy. A Member of Parliament earns enough to live on without also taking the job of another teacher (especially in 1985 when many teachers were out of work). One should practise what one preaches. (West Africa)

Whatever the profession, however, the dual management of careers with political representation was clearly dependent on the particular country and parliamentary system:

I work part-time. It's a middle management position with some responsibility. I don't intend working full time as long as I am an MP (which a lot of men nevertheless do!). The Swiss Parliament is one of Volunteers; we don't receive any salary but get a token for each meeting we attend and compensation for any expenses. During my term of office I studied law at university. It was very fulfilling but also very demanding.

The overall message to emerge from this section of the data was the need for astute planning of time use to cater for family, professional and political commitments.

Further to the effects of politics on the practical, social and emotional demands on the politician and her family, the high-profile nature of the work of politicians can mean that they undergo public scrutiny. The role of the media in the lives of politicians is therefore crucial to any discussion of women's political experiences. The next chapter will explore the media issues that were identified and experienced by women.

“ It is equally important to recognize and enhance the role and activities of women inside the home. Governments, Parliaments and non-governmental organizations could organize campaigns focusing on the importance of this role and these activities for society. This recognition could even extend to the institution of a method which would place an economic value on work at home and even a system to remunerate such work. The economic value of women's work at home could also be considered as part of the gross national product.”

Plan of Action to correct present imbalances in the participation of men and women in political life, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Paris, March 1994

The Minister of Women's Affairs

Asia

Born in the Asian region in 1937, MWA is married with two children. After attaining a post graduate degree she worked initially for fifteen years as a journalist. Like many of the respondents who worked in the media, she actively participated in popular movements against the suppression of the press, and for the establishment of trade unions for journalists.

"As a result of such activities, I was dismissed from my post and banned from any public positions for eight years. As a journalist, my area of specialisation was mostly women's issues. Therefore, once I was allowed to resume public activities, I came to work at a women's policy research organisation. It was encouraging to work in a public organisation that focused on developing policies for women. Being a part of a government organisation rather than an independent women's group, provided me with the opportunity to come up with policies that represented women's rights, (and to become) an expert in women's issues. Such expertise opened the doors to my engagement in politics."

In MWA's country, fewer than 5% of the members of parliament are women. These proportions are mirrored in the representation of women on local and municipal councils. *"While women number almost 30% of all public servants, they hold only 2.5% of all policy making bodies. Women enjoy the same legal opportunities to participate in political life at all levels, but many female constituents still regard politics as a men-only arena. However, participation in political activities is quite lively. Therefore we need to work on linking women's participation in politics with women's awareness issues."*

"The problem remains that although women advocate active participation of women in politics, in elections women do not vote for other women who can represent women's rights. This is because politics is still regarded as an arena for men only. But women must remember that quantity is the creator of quality."

MWA believes that women are not comfortable with the power relationships that characterise political work, and do not know how to adapt to and use these power relationships. The nature of the political culture may even cause tension between the women there. *"There have to be efforts to diversify the activities of women members of parliament so as to prevent tension and unnecessary competition between women. Institutional measures are needed in order to provide for co-operative partnerships between women politicians. For instance, if there is a policy where only one high-ranking position is allocated to women, tension rather than co-operation between women politicians may be triggered."*

MWA considers that the handful of women elected to national office do restore the public's trust in politics, and these women have a different conception of society,

“ The problem remains that although women advocate active participation of women in politics, in elections women do not vote for other women who can represent women's rights. This is because politics is still regarded as an arena for men only. ”

and different political priorities. *"The activities of a woman politician can only be completed by not only fulfilling her duties to work for a better society and life for all through persistent interest activities in the government's overall policies, but also by paying keen attention to the lives of women, their social status and the legal inequities that women suffer. Such interest in women's issues tends to be more dominant among women who have been in the political arena for a long time and have directly experienced discrimination between the genders."*

MWA strongly believes that women's increased participation changes the outputs of politics. As 'quantity is the creator of quality' she suggests that 30% is the minimum quota needed for women to bring about change.

"When I held the post of Chairman of my Party's Women's Committee, I raised the ranking of the post within the party, introduced a quota for women in high-ranking positions, and actively participated in the effort to introduce a 30% quota for women among the delegates voting for a presidential candidate. The Party culture in my country still puts men first, and regards women as supplementary. However, with the increasing number of women in political parties, pressure is being put on parties to raise the proportion of women in the members elected by proportional representation, and these efforts have been seeing good progress."

MWA's key supporter for her political commitment and activities has been her husband. She was appointed Minister of Women's Affairs in the mid nineties (Ministers can be appointed from outside parliament) and held the position for 2 years.

“ The media being a sector that is male-centered, in most cases, the activities of women in the Assembly tend to be treated as subjects for gossip, and nothing more. Women journalists personally tend to support women politicians. There being only a few women working in the media, it has been difficult for female parliamentarians to attract the media's attention.”

In MWA's country, women have only ever been appointed to portfolios directly related to women's issues, and now the Ministry of Women's Affairs has been 'dissolved'. While working as a Minister, MWA joined her political party, and started activities as a party member. This led to her nomination for a seat in the National Assembly on a nation wide proportional seat. She won, and is serving her first term as an elected parliamentarian.

"The growth in the number of women parliamentarians has led to an expansion in the parliamentary activities that women engage in. This has brought about a very positive change in the attitudes of male parliamentarians toward their female counterparts. I strongly protest whenever I hear derogatory remarks being made of women, in private or in public, by other National Assembly members. As a result, male members now exert caution when calling or speaking to a female counterpart. This is one issue that is also being checked by other women in the assembly and in citizen's groups."

As a Minister and a parliamentarian MWA's work has reflected different priorities and women's interests and perspectives. *"The greatest difficulty I encountered was the lack of awareness regarding women's issues. At the time, policies for women's rights focused only on the lower class, thus only providing such programmes as prostitute re-education, and there were no policies whatsoever for middle class women. It was difficult, but nevertheless a valuable experience to overcome the situation and establish laws for equal treatment on the job and equal employment opportunities."*

"In the Asian crisis of the late nineties, as businesses and financial organisations have been cutting down their management, many organisations have been dismissing female employees first. When participating in parliamentary inspections of government-run banks and government organisations, I raised such issues in an effort to reverse the trend of firing women first."

"My activities are especially focused on preventing the dissolution of families, securing a sound environment for the younger generation, and creating various welfare systems to prepare for the coming senior citizens." In addition MWA works on legislation preventing sexual and physical violence against family members, the abolishment of the householder system, projects to shelter sexual abuse victims, protection of young girls from violence, abuse and sexual exploitation. "All these are the results of increased female participation in politics."

As a former journalist MWA's comments on the media are particularly interesting. She writes: *"The media being a sector that is male-centered, in most cases, the activities of women in the Assembly tend to be treated as subjects for gossip, and nothing more. Women journalists personally tend to support women politicians. There being only a few women working in the media, it has been difficult for female parliamentarians to attract the media's attention."*

But there are some small changes which offer some scope for improvements. *"Recently, a small number of women have advanced into the politics department of journalists agencies which is very encouraging. In general, close links with women's groups proves effective in the establishment and revision of laws related to women's issues and in the allotment of the budget for projects on women's issues. And although fewer than 5% of National Assembly members are female, we have gained the participation of at least two woman members at IPU meetings, thus heightening the status of women within the National Assembly." ■*

“ The growth in the number of women parliamentarians has led to an expansion in the parliamentary activities that women engage in. ”

10

WOMEN POLITICIANS AND THE MEDIA

The IPU is concerned about the perpetuation of sexual stereotypes in so far as they are an obstacle to partnership between men and women in politics. For this reason it is important that women politicians understand the way the media operates, and how to put their message across. And it is important that those working in the media are aware of, and avoid contributing to, inappropriate representations of women.

As purveyors of information the media may be owned by the private sector and aim for profit or be an organ of government control. Either way, they may be subject to interference and censorship. Regardless of the nature and form of the media, for decades commentators have highlighted the stereotypical treatment of women whatever their roles. In particular, women who break the mould, whether in business or the professions, as artists or musicians, in sport or in community activism, supply the material of news stories and may be subject to trivialisation or stereotypical hype. Women politicians are no exception, and at national level have encountered and experienced, sometimes suffered, the full range of treatment meted out on women individually and collectively by the male-dominated media.

Women politicians communicated an understanding of the media suggesting keen awareness of the media's power to undermine or enhance their political integrity or credibility, or both. Respondents claimed that some women had been "created" then "destroyed" by the media and that women politicians were subject to harsher, more unrelenting scrutiny.

Other respondents saw the media as a potential means of promoting women and their concerns. They suggested specific programmes, articles and information for women in the media, female awareness and promotion by journalists, increased communication of women's activities, provision of advice and training on communication and increased promotion of women in positions of authority in the media. Associations of women journalists could be of particular help and almost half the respondents reported that there were one or more associations of women journalists in their country. Respondents suggested that such groups could enhance the image of women and rehabilitate politicians in their role in society. Respondents observed that associations continued to show what women contributed to national development, in different sectors. Such associations, respondents believed, should also disseminate all the legal measures adopted both by individual States and by the international community.

“The media can make or break a politician.”

In some countries the influence of the mass media was a new phenomenon for both genders. In such countries the media are *a new scene for traditionally oral societies; users and media persons therefore need training* (Pacific)

While negative impressions created by the media were seen as one of the risks of political life, irrespective of gender, one respondent observed that there had been a general lowering of the standard of reporting politics in the media, and this comment is worthy of consideration:

I believe media in-depth reporting has markedly deteriorated in 20 years. There are more opinion pieces and fewer well-researched journalistic commentaries. The market rules, the sensation sells. The media is no longer an educator or informer, and this disadvantages the hard-working politicians who do their home work on complexities. (Pacific)

HOW DO WOMEN POLITICIANS VIEW THEIR PERSONAL INTERACTIONS WITH THE MEDIA?

▶ 53.16%	of respondents viewed their interaction with the media as good.
▶ 14%	believed their relationship was excellent.
▶ 10%	believed their personal media interactions were bad.
▶ 22%	could not categorise their relationship as either good or bad.

Respondents who had enjoyed positive experiences frequently spoke of previous training in, or involvement with, the media, for example as a chief editor of the biggest national newspaper in Moldova, as a former Minister of Information who had "championed their cause" in Jordan, or as a freelance radio announcer with her own women's programme in Suriname. Clearly, all women politicians with a media background had an advantage over their colleagues.

Several politicians believed their status as women provided opportunities for media coverage owing to their role as advocate for women's issues:

- ▶ *The relations were very good. Right from the start I had plenty of attention (being the first female minister). Later on there was never a problem.* (Western Europe)
- ▶ *Excellent, female journalists identify with me as the first female politician in my town to make it to the Federal Parliament. I am told that I (as a woman!) am less critical of their articles about my political work. My male colleagues obviously complain more often.* (Western Europe)

Other women politicians agreed that their style as women afforded them better coverage by the media:

The curiosity of the press has been aroused by my status as a woman politician. I am overwhelmed every day with requests for interviews and articles of all kinds. I try to maintain excellent relations with the media, but do not hesitate to speak my mind and fight disinformation that is harmful to society. (West Africa)

Some women actively worked towards strategic associations with media representatives in order to foster good working relationships:

- ▶ *I have wooed the media over the years, especially as a member of a voluntary organisation. This network has turned out to be invaluable. (Southern Europe)*
- ▶ *Excellent relationship. I get press and electronic media coverage almost every day and sometimes more than once a day. (South-East Asia)*
- ▶ *I have a very good relationship with the media. With almost every newspaper and radio station, I have one or two media persons with whom I exchange information. The relationship works vice versa. (Central America)*

The media keep us in touch with public thinking, both educated and otherwise. The media record, organise and generate data for popular consumption. Some respondents saw the media as a tool to educate the public about their political activities, important in terms of public relations:

I have had no problems with the media. Our relations are good, for the media enable us to be better known and to heighten public awareness. (Central Africa)

For one respondent, media relations clearly had nothing to do with gender:

My relationship with the media is not as a woman politician - just a politician. It is very good! No problems. (Nordic country)

Relationships with the media were perceived by some respondents to be dependent on particular individuals:

My relations with some media are very positive but with others very negative. It usually depends on the editors and whether their newspaper is an informative one or just ever on the lookout for sensation. (Southern Africa)

Many respondents felt there was an element of bias in the media:

- ▶ *As women politicians, we have relations with the State-run media that are timid. The media are inaccessible because the services they provide cost too much (for example, a political activity lasting 1-2 hours will be covered on TV for 1-3 minutes), with no emphasis on the basic message to be conveyed. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *My relationship with the media is not very developed since there is not yet a culture of information regarding women politicians. In my opinion, the media in our country always promote women politicians or women active in civil society who move in democratic non-religious circles; they give short shrift to the conservative woman who in official reality represent the true authentic (Algerian) woman of my country. (North Africa)*

Other women politicians felt that they lacked confidence in their dealings with the media:

- ▶ *My relationship with the media is too slight. It may be partly my fault because I find it difficult to contact them. I am concerned about such matters as: (i) will they ask questions I can answer? (ii) will they report my words without twisting their meaning? ... I do not like the fact that they seem to prefer stars. Even if I send them a text, it is often not published. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *I tend to keep my distance from the media since I do not have the gift of the gab. I get by. It must be said that the media don't make it easy. They should put people at ease, help them sit well, be a kind of psychologist. (West Africa)*

“ Emphasis was placed on the need, in particular, to provide media training for women both so that they can better understand the working and priorities of the media and also so that they can learn how to get their message across. The media in fact tend to focus on people who are identified with a cause without paying attention to their gender. On the other hand, the media were invited to look into the way they portray women in general, as well as women politicians in particular, and to adopt a new outlook. If the media are aware that integrating women in politics reinforces democracy, they should, having a crucial and increasingly important role to play in the democratic process, strive to get this message across in every possible way. ”

Concluding Statement, IPU Conference "Towards Partnership Between Men and Women in Politics", New Delhi, 14-18 February 1999

Some women felt this way because they had had negative experiences:

I often have had interviews that were not always fairly representative in reporting. (Southern Africa)

It was suggested by respondents to the survey that the media were influenced by unethical practices:

- ▶ *I have had good relations with the media. They are men and women who have their price; all you have to do is grease their palms. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *The media should simply give information, honest information, without adding anything or trying to «improve» it. Journalists are not allowed to cheat. (West Africa)*

THE MEDIA SEEN FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE: A LONG WAY TO GO IN MOST PARTS OF THE WORLD

Sixty-eight per cent (68%) of respondents believed that men and women were viewed differently by the media. A drastic and rather common comment in that respect is the following:

Although it would be unfair to generalise, the media tend, on the whole, to discriminate between men and women. Sadly, there is a very thin surface of political correctness, but sexism is deeply rooted in the media's perception and representation of women politicians. Personally, however, I have not fallen prey to such attitudes. (Western Europe)

On the issue of sexism and gender bias in the media, respondents were detailed in their replies. They claimed that the media helped perpetuate stereotypes of women and politics. To echo their own words, the media assess women against male standards of leadership and deal more harshly with women, as women are expected to be perfect.

Women politicians identified a sense of marginalisation and trivialisation of the ambitions and interests of women politicians. They observed that the media mobilised particular tactics and criticised them in very harsh terms for that. They claim that the media give women a harder time when interviewing them; that they tend to treat the activities of women in the Assembly as subjects for gossip and present the public with a frivolous idea of women's fickleness towards their duties. They state that they deem women invisible at functions. They feel that they debase women politicians involved in university, in the media or in demonstrations. And they add that the media do not even take women media personnel themselves seriously.

A significant number of respondents observed that women politicians were more likely than their male colleagues to be subject to media commentary about their appearance. Stories about women frequently focused on their clothing, hairstyles and accessories. The social construction of women politicians by the media in that way not only reinforced gender stereotypes but also trivialised the message being conveyed.

Respondents spoke of their feeling of personal intrusion when media stories explored their relationships with their partners and children. They frequently claimed that men in political office would not be asked such personal questions. To the respondents, the media appeared to be interested in presenting women

“The contribution which the media can make towards the promotion of awareness is undoubtedly crucial. They can help to instil among the public the idea that women's participation in political life is an essential part of democracy. They can also take care to avoid giving negative or minimizing images of women and their determination and capacity to participate in politics, stressing the importance of women's role in economic and social life and in the development process in general. Any stereotyped presentation of the image of women by any media should be prohibited by law.”

Plan of Action to correct present imbalances in the participation of men and women in political life, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Paris, March 1994

politicians in the context of the traditionally gendered roles of "wife" and "mother". A high number of respondents thus commented that in their experience the media were very sensationalist and went into unnecessary detail, focusing on such matters as clothes, hairstyles and high voices, instead of concentrating on the woman politician's message. Men were treated differently. The media reported images of women politicians that did not always reflect reality, and they ridiculed their image, for example presenting a woman politician either as a man in a skirt, or as an unlucky person, or as a woman brought into power by men. They observe that the media report their behaviour as married women and mother or talk more frequently about whether a woman politician is divorced than in the case of a male politician, and as something more important than her political accomplishments. They argue that the media present women politicians as the "wife of ..." and that this implies a lack of esteem of the woman's own merits; that they ask such questions as whether the husband's trips are paid for out of public funds or the household budget and discuss what husbands say about wives as politicians, when a wife is unlikely to be asked what she thinks about her husband becoming a politician.

“It is necessary to bring about a radical change in attitudes so that the image of women politicians which is relayed by the media is not restricted only to their identity as women but portrays them as real actors in political life.”

Concluding Statement, IPU Conference "Towards Partnership Between Men and Women in Politics", New Delhi, 14-18 February 1999

Irrespective of region, status or whether the medium was press, radio or television, respondents noted that the media consistently interviewed women politicians about women's issues:

When the media give attention, it tends to focus on women's issues rather than on the issue being presented. Women are frequently shown in the media as concerned about women's or social issues and are not always reported when connecting on other issues, e.g. economic, transport, budget. (Pacific)

This was not always reported as a negative aspect but was clearly linked to the dominant social values:

As socialising instruments, the media have not been free of patriarchal ideology, as evidenced by the fact that in certain traditional male areas the opinion of women is not taken into consideration. However, when it comes to issues regarding women, children, adolescents and the family, more women are asked their opinion than men. (East Africa)

Many women politicians believed that one reason for that state of affairs was that the dominant political voice in the media was pervasively male. Respondents claim that the media usually interview the same people and since there are more men in politics, especially among senior political figures, interview more men. They claim that the media generally take more interest in men in politics and generally prefer men to women for comment on political issues. According to some respondents, the perpetuation of socially constructed political masculinity was reinforced by the attitudes of the media: they help give a masculine image of Parliament and emphasise that men have a longer tradition in politics. Respondents further noted that the media treated older women politicians as invisible and tended to give young women access to the media like men. One respondent noted that the media gave little coverage of women, and even less in the case of an indigenous peasant woman.

Several respondents believed that status and gender influenced media coverage. They noted that the media focused on people with State responsibilities and on party leaders, which clearly disadvantaged women, and that the difference was felt depending on the post occupied by the woman. They further noted that it was very hard for a backbencher and opposition member to get media interest. That combination of status and gender was a vicious circle for women looking to be active in the media.

One theme that emerged from a review of respondents' comments was their failure to distinguish between seeing the media as a form of education and seeing them as a business. Too many expressed displeasure and self-righteous indignation or surprise that the media simply played the market. There was an underlying assumption that the media ought to be interested in distributing facts and information, which, in some contexts, is simply naive. They reported that the media obeyed their own agenda of confrontation and controversy, and that it was a fine line between getting coverage for your work and policy developments and getting coverage for outrageous or quirky exploits. They feel that the media tend to emphasise intra-party tensions and other superficial matters. Some respondents further feel that there is a monopoly of the press that belongs to the political right and noted that they were often confronted with politically biased journalists.

Negative experiences of politicians' interactions with the media were not the only experiences that women talked about. Some respondents found their interaction very positive.

Identifying positive media treatment they said:

- ▶ *I think there are hardly any differences in comparison with the experiences of our male colleagues. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *I have a reasonably good access to the media in my constituency. (Nordic country)*
- ▶ *There is no discrimination on the basis of sex. (Southern Europe)*
- ▶ *I don't think it has anything to do with the fact that I'm a woman. (Pacific)*
- ▶ *On the whole, the relations are very good; I am in great demand. (Central America)*
- ▶ *I think I am asked my opinion on major issues of internal and international policy more as a political analyst than as a woman. (Central America)*
- ▶ *I do not feel either advantaged or disadvantaged regarding my sex in the media. (Central Europe)*
- ▶ *I have good experience with the media. I have no feeling of difference with men. (Central Europe)*
- ▶ *I do not believe that there is any noticeable difference in the coverage of men and women in the media. Women writers, artists, politicians and NGO activists are covered extensively and favourably, as are women athletes and professionals with their own accomplishments. (Middle East)*
- ▶ *Because there are only few women, they attract more attention. (Asia)*
- ▶ *Once the women are in charge, it is a question not of the sex but of the topics. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *If you are able and willing to give proper information, you are treated as very normal. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *Politicians' relations with the media do not depend on their sex. (Central Europe)*

In the experience of some politicians, the media were especially sympathetic to women. The questions in the survey employed the general term "media". But in many countries there are women's magazines and women's radio programmes that are front-line current affairs programmes, or there are television programmes hosted by women and targeted at women audiences.

“The media can play an important role in such endeavours as removing discrimination and prejudice against women and encouraging them to improve their personal qualities and actively participate in management and decision-making. They should widely publicize the contributions that women have made to the development process of human civilizations and history, introduce to the public positive images of women's characters, encourage women to build confidence, raise women's participation awareness and deplore discrimination and any other conduct detrimental to women's interests.”

Plan of Action to correct present imbalances in the participation of men and women in political life, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Paris, March 1994

Such situations produced positive responses, but there were other reflections on media sympathy for women:

- ▶ *Because women account for representation that is very small numerically, they tend to be heard more because they are a kind of minority. (Middle East)*
- ▶ *Since fewer women manage to reach a position in the Federal Parliament, they do attract a certain amount of additional attention to their work. (Western Europe)*
- ▶ *Women are often given favourable precedence, particularly on television. (Southern Europe)*
- ▶ *Women journalists personally tend to support women politicians. (Asia)*
- ▶ *The media seem pretty indulgent towards women parliamentarians. (West Africa)*
- ▶ *Women's issues and activities are covered extensively and sympathetically. (Middle East)*
- ▶ *The overriding attitude of the media is to enhance the standing of women politicians while trying to remain neutral. The fact is that there are still very few women in politics. The most minor event involving women is highlighted, in an attempt to make it appear natural and normal. This could have an effect on conscious and subconscious public opinion. (North Africa)*

HOW THE MEDIA AND WOMEN POLITICIANS COULD WORK BETTER TOGETHER

Having often analysed the media without indulgence, respondents had suggestions and advice for media professionals in their relationship with women politicians that would assist them in avoiding bias and stereotyping. In their own words, respondents believe that the media should:

- ▶ ensure that women politicians get as much media coverage as male politicians on broad issues and devise the best means of assisting women politicians to that end;
- ▶ give coverage to activities carried out by women, help promote the programmes of women politicians and women's NGOs, spearhead women's contentions and defend their cause;
- ▶ promote women's successes and spread knowledge about women politicians' lives as militants and about their struggle;
- ▶ interact more with women politicians and make them more visible;
- ▶ be more aware of the progress of women in society, promote their image and their role and status in society, and use women journalists to lobby against gender stereotyping of women politicians;
- ▶ show that women are just as professional as men;
- ▶ encourage women to enter politics.

Some respondents perceived that too few women occupied positions of influence in the media and felt that women politicians and women journalists could work together. They felt, in particular, that encouraging more women

into journalism, hand in hand with more women in Parliament, would make a visible difference to the way women were perceived by the public. While journalists were busy in their own battle for recognition, one respondent suggested they were *likely to try to please the owners of the media and/or the chief editor, who, as a rule, was not interested in promoting women in politics or changing the image of women through the media* (Southern Europe) And if there were more women in the media, they could fight for more women journalists in key senior positions.

Other respondents believed the opposite to be the case. In their countries they had experiences where *a large number of women journalists and women were a very high percentage of the media population.* (Middle East) And where it was reported that there were a lot of women journalists, it was also often noted that they were doing a very good job: *there are many prominent female journalists in very key positions - hosting the leading radio talk shows, covering political and parliamentary posts for both TV stations, and in the press. This has helped bring more issues to the fore and put them on the national agenda.* (Middle East)

In countries with associations of women journalists, it was reported that they aimed to help women promote their image in the audiovisual media and the written press, and the media was more likely to be open to women's issues and to produce "*more interesting articles*".

For some respondents, gender sensitivity of press associations was not helpful in working towards equality:

I don't like women's associations. I see them as a preliminary stage to equality and non-discrimination, not as permanent bodies. Their existence means to me that equality does not exist. In our country we have many women journalists who also cover politics. I believe that this is the crucial point because it means that issues are considered globally, without sexist prejudice. (Southern Europe)

A significant group of respondents appealed for more contact between women journalists and women politicians to:

Support women in general, if only by writing in the feminine. Why not organise a meeting between the women of both professions. (Western Europe)

Some felt that women journalists were *not at all supportive of women politicians*. One commented on open hostility from women journalists: *My biggest critics are women and all my colleagues share this view that women are hard on elected women.* (Southern Europe)

One respondent believed *female journalists can do much more to boost the women politicians in a positive way. Some women journalists tend to be too 'politically correct' and then neglect a lot of very able and capable female politicians.* (Southern Africa)

Some respondents thought women journalists should act as advocates for women by spotlighting activities carried out by women and taking care to publicise the work that women do. That, they claimed, would enhance the image of women and make the government take note. If women journalists helped to restore a positive image of women, they would be fighting the same battle as women politicians. Other respondents noted that all women's organisations played a major role in initiating, strengthening and developing activities with a view to increasing the participation of women in politics.

“ Today, the media also play a very important role in politics. No politician, man or woman, can disregard or minimise them. This is why we debated the image of women politicians in the media. ”

Concluding Statement, IPU Conference "Towards Partnership Between Men and Women in Politics, New Delhi, 14-18 February 1999

Some respondents noted that the media could play the important role of providing support to improve the image of women politicians. It was also noted, however, that the images and models of men and women would need to undergo wider change in society before women could achieve positive results.

The media represented the most powerful tool for achieving equality goals. The risk was that journalists in the media followed ready-established patterns and trends. It is critical to note that respondents overwhelmingly thought that the media should take care to avoid giving negative or demeaning images of women. The role of the mass media in changing public attitudes was decisive and critical to the empowerment of women politicians.



Annex 1

RESEARCH DESIGN, SURVEY METHOD AND METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

THE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

The Drafting Process

The drafting process went through several stages:

- ▶ The draft was prepared by the IPU Secretariat, involving in-house discussion and consultation.
- ▶ Questions were included from previous world surveys conducted by the IPU.
- ▶ Questions on themes of the discussions at the New Delhi Conference, «Towards Partnership Between Men and Women in Politics», were included in the question design.
- ▶ The Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians made recommendations on questions for the survey, and on its design.

Pre-testing and Piloting

- ▶ The initial draft was pre-tested on one member of the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians.
- ▶ After adjustments were made, it was sent to the members of the IPU Women's Coordinating Committee to be presented to the Windhoek (Namibia) session in April 1998. At the plenary meeting of Women parliamentarians further amendments were suggested.
- ▶ As a result, a special working group on the survey was also set up and members of that group made suggestions.
- ▶ The Secretariat was then asked to finalise the document in consultation with the Coordinating Committee. A completely redrafted survey was sent for study to the members of the Coordinating Committee. While they were given a full month to feed back comments, views and amendments, the deadline was extended to two months as various members expressed interest in studying the matter in detail, some with experts in their country.
- ▶ One example of such commitment was an American Region member of the Coordinating Committee who organised a special consultation and pre-testing of the Women's Caucus in her Parliament. That member also consulted with a specialist, following which the IPU received a series of remarks and suggestions.

- ▶ A new draft was once again tested on the same member of the Women's Coordinating Committee. A further redraft of the document was sent for final approval to the President and two Vice-Presidents of the Coordinating Committee.

Research Commentary

The concept of the questionnaire survey instrument was to design it as an interview, to gather qualitative personal views and quantitative information about women's experiences as members of political parties, Parliaments and governments. In this it reflected the very best practice of community participatory research, as the community of respondents, or their representatives, were responsible throughout for the themes, design, and specific questions in the survey. However, the process had a number of shortcomings that undoubtedly affected the survey findings. In accommodating the views of so many, the survey covered a wide range of questions which included ambiguities, overlaps, omissions and repetitions. In pre-testing and piloting the questionnaire on the same respondent, who was also to be a respondent in the survey, too little variety of response was available for consideration in redrafting. Although the survey design made it clear that there were to be quantitative data collected, no attempt was made to pre-code questions and pilot the coding schedule. This might have altered the survey design considerably.

DATA COLLECTION

The Sample and Response Rate

- ▶ The questionnaire was finalised in the last week of August 1998.
- ▶ In September 1998, it was sent to the Speakers, or alternatively the President or ruler, of all Parliaments in the world, irrespective of whether they were IPU members.
- ▶ These included
 - (a) Parliaments whose membership included women;
 - (b) Parliaments whose membership did not include women; and
 - (c) Multi-Party Parliaments and Single-Party Parliaments
- ▶ The Speaker, or person who received the letter, was asked to assist in establishing a process in his or her country to invite up to 10 women members of Parliament, or previous candidates or party office-holders, to respond to the survey.
- ▶ The IPU suggested that women who were Cabinet members, leaders of political parties, key political figures in nation states and previous women members should be included in the research. Emphasis was placed on the need to achieve a balanced number of replies from all countries and from all political trends.
- ▶ This purposive sample limited the number of replies from each country to ten, and within that number just two from each political party.

Commentary

The nature of distribution of the questionnaire limited the ability of the IPU to keep a check on the number and nature of responses. For the survey to be statistically valid, a response would have been needed from 360 of the 5,010 women Members of Parliament. Significance tests would have required that representation itself to be representative of, for example, age, education or regional status. With the exception of regional representation, those data were not available for comparison, or to assist in sample selection.

DATA CODING

- ▶ Coding is the process whereby statements and answers are converted into numbers and categories for analysis and interpretation purposes. Coding permitted the reduction of data for computer analysis and storage.
- ▶ The coding framework was written by the consultant's statistician and piloted on questionnaires completed by the consultants.
- ▶ The coding process was completed by the IPU Secretariat in Geneva and entered on an EXCEL spreadsheet.
- ▶ These data were translated by the consultants to the MINITAB programme for ease of analysis, and to minimise error.
- ▶ All answers provided by participants in the study were registered and considered. The process involved grouping and testing for frequency and relationships between categories. Sufficient data were not available for significance testing of the findings. The data analysis involved 238 variables from 187 respondents.
- ▶ In some instances the post-coding process included the data collected from open-ended questions, where themes could be anticipated from the immediately preceding questions.
- ▶ The analysis and interpretation of the coded data collected began in early August 1999. A further 10 replies to the survey were received by the IPU after that date. While the qualitative comments of the later respondents have been included in this report, the quantitative data have been left out as their inclusion would have required another complete data run.

TRANSLATION OF RESPONSES

- ▶ The IPU requested that replies to the questionnaire be sent in English, French or Spanish. A high proportion of the replies were written by persons for whom none of the three languages was their first language.
- ▶ Translation was completed in accordance with the IPU practice of quoting the answers as extensively as possible so as to prevent any betrayal, misinterpretation or distortion of the author's thoughts.

- ▶ IPU assistants had to translate or transfer comment from more than 800 pages of replies into documents for transmission to the consultants.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

- ▶ The instructions included in the questionnaire stated: *By means of this questionnaire, you are invited to supply both personal particulars and opinions. You are invited to do so not anonymously but disclosing your identity. The Secretariat of the Inter-Parliamentary Union therefore wishes to assure you that the text of your overall reply will be processed and stored confidentially. Furthermore, to the right of each question you will find a circle that you can tick to indicate that you do not wish the information or comment provided in reply to the particular question to be cited with any mention of your identity.*
- ▶ All survey questionnaires were retained by the IPU. All data were given a unique identifier by number, and all comments were allocated another identifier, for example SAF 06. The consultants were then supplied with a coding sheet which matched the unique identifier and the comments code.
- ▶ The IPU required all persons involved in the project to respect strict confidentiality in the handling of reference files. Consultants gave a formal pledge not to keep any photocopies of material or make separate use of the contents.
- ▶ While only a few respondents requested complete or partial confidentiality in their replies, a decision was made to omit any references from commentary which could clearly identify a respondent to her political opponents. In this respect references to the names of parties, countries, and sometimes other clearly identifiable personal characteristics or positions held have been omitted, unless the commentary was a general one that might have been made by any one of a number of women representatives. Respondents' comments have been identified only by region.

LIFE STORY METHOD

- ▶ The life story subjects were a representative sample of regions. Within that sample there were some purposive selections: the youngest respondent, and one of the two oldest respondents were specifically chosen, and so was a former Minister of Women's Affairs, and a current Cabinet Minister who held other portfolios.
- ▶ The life stories were constructed from the minitab data of each respondent: their region, age, educational background and all responses were able to be read from their responses to the 238 variables. The IPU supplied the consultants with the matching codes for the comments, and this provided the basis for the construction of each life story.

ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE COMMENTS

This process involved four separate phases of analysis in addition to a final check for omissions. It was important during each of the stages that the responses rather than the questions should drive the process of analysis.

- ▶ The comments to be used were initially chosen and coded by the IPU Secretariat for consistent themes.
- ▶ On reaching the consultant the data were read and coded for both consistency and inconsistency. The emergent themes were then organised according to the chapters planned in consultation with the IPU.
- ▶ The emergent themes were checked against the quantitative data for verification and reliability to identify inconsistencies between the two sets of data. Interesting themes or differences were noted and commented on in the text.
- ▶ The data were organised under sub-themes and paired with the appropriate quantitative data. The linkages were then written between the sub-themes and major themes within the chapters.
- ▶ Once qualitative and quantitative data were themed and linked in draft form, each chapter was proof-read for internal inconsistencies possibly requiring interpretation, and for repetition. The repetitive nature of the questions was reflected in the respondents' data.

Analysis of commentaries followed the practice of the social science process of 'triangulation', that is, to subject data to three different frameworks of analysis to establish patterns and themes, and for the sake of sophisticated rigour. The other frameworks were the statistical frequencies, the content analysis of the qualitative comments made by respondents, and the life stories.

The analysts looked to identify specific problems and ambiguities which occurred in some of the questions while searching for consistencies, inconsistencies, differences and omissions which evolved from others. At the interpretation stage we were able to examine the specific experiences of participants, seeking an explanation for differences and similarities between sets of data within the themes that emerged.

Annex 2

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

INTERVIEW WITH WOMEN POLITICIANS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD

Basis

This survey is based on the following principle of democracy, set forth in the *Universal Declaration on Democracy*, which was adopted in 1997 by the Inter-Parliamentary Union: « *The achievement of democracy presupposes a genuine partnership between men and women in the conduct of the affairs of society in which they work in equality and complementarity, drawing mutual enrichment from their differences.* »

Goal pursued

- ▶ This questionnaire, which is designed like an interview, is being sent to you and other women MPs from your country and other countries. It aims to gather your personal views in addition to information on your experience in your political party (if you belong to a party) and your Parliament or even your Government.
- ▶ Above all, it is an invitation to engage in reflection on your experience as a woman politician to permit an appraisal of women's contribution to the democratic process. With the whole body of interviews, the Inter-Parliamentary Union is seeking to gather data indicating how far the arrival of women on the political scene has, within political parties, Parliaments and Governments, led to changes in established practices and prevailing rules, to a qualitative shift in the specific culture of political circles, and to changes in the priorities and outputs of politics. It also seeks to draw common lessons while highlighting the diversity and distinctiveness of experience, for example from the regional angle.

Interpretation of the interviews

- ▶ At this stage, the questionnaire is being sent to women politicians only, even though questions on the same topic could be put to men politicians as well.
- ▶ Since the subject concerns men as much as women and is also of interest outside political circles, it is planned to hold a meeting in Paris in 1999 with the participation of equal numbers of men and women from various circles, including MPs, members of Governments, media representatives, political analysts, philosophers, sociologists, historians and opinion poll and electoral experts.
- ▶ This joint reflection on the theme « *Perspectives on Democracy: Do Women Make a Difference ?* » should help to base the democracy of the third millennium on joint political action by women and men alike.

Dissemination

- ▶ The publication reporting on the survey and the interpretation of its findings will be widely circulated, particularly to all Parliaments and Governments of the world and to the media.
 - ▶ It will also be presented in connection with the special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to evaluation of national implementation of the *Beijing Platform for Action* (June 2000).
-

HERE IS SOME IMPORTANT GUIDANCE YOU ARE INVITED TO READ BEFORE PREPARING YOUR REPLIES

- ▶ While fully aware of the constraints of political life, the Inter-Parliamentary Union trusts that you will be willing to devote to the interview requested of you the necessary time and reflection, and thanks you warmly in advance.
- ▶ On the basis of its experience, the Inter-Parliamentary Union hopes that, in addition to advancing the overall objective of the survey, this interview will help you to make a useful assessment of your personal political experience and that you may benefit from it in your national context.
- ▶ By means of this questionnaire, you are invited to supply both personal particulars and opinions. You are invited to do so not anonymously but disclosing your identity. The Secretariat of the Inter-Parliamentary Union therefore wishes to assure you that the text of your overall reply will be processed and stored confidentially. Furthermore, to the right of each question you will find a circle that you can tick to indicate that you do not wish the information or comment provided in reply to the particular question to be cited with any mention of your identity.
- ▶ The questions that follow have been designed to take the fullest possible account of the extreme variety of the political, social and cultural contexts of the persons addressing them. It is for you, where necessary, to supply clarifications and interpretations pertaining to your specific context.
- ▶ The interview comprises two types of questions: (i) questions to which you are usually asked to give a yes or no answer by ticking the applicable reply, and (ii) questions requiring more elaborate replies, testifying to your experience or your reflection, to which you may choose to reply using the blank space after the question or on a separate sheet bearing the number of the question.
- ▶ The interview comprises, in addition to a brief personal background, ten headings: one of them concerns your overall view of the participation of women in politics and the others relate more specifically to your experience. Under each heading, you can choose to answer each of the questions separately or use particular groups of questions as points of reference for drawing up a global comment; for some questions are specific developments of more general questions.

Content of the interview

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▶ Your experience of the sharing and passing on of political experience	194
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▶ You may only be able to answer part of the questionnaire, but even a partial answer will be of the utmost interest for the general purpose of the survey.

▶ It is important to bear in mind that your answers to the questionnaire are equally important and valid whether the proportion of women within your party, Parliament or Government is very low or, on the contrary, high enough to give women a real say in its decisions and activities.

▶ Although experience at local or provincial level is very valuable and often decisive, the survey focuses on national (federal) political experience.

▶ The Secretariat of the Inter-Parliamentary Union is only able to process replies received in English, French or Spanish. Should you use another language, please arrange for translation into one of these three languages to make sure the information can be used.

(Replies to be sent by 15 November 1998. The deadline was later extended to June 1999.)

Personal background

- ▶ **Country**
- ▶ **Family name**
- ▶ **First name**
- ▶ **Year of birth**
- ▶ **Civil status**
 - single
 - married
 - divorced
 - widowed
- ▶ **Dependants**
 - Children
 - Number of children under 15 years
 - Number of children over 15 years
 - No children
 - Old persons
 - Handicapped persons
- ▶ **Field and level of education or professional training**
- ▶ **Profession**
- ▶ **General observations regarding utilisation of your replies**
- ▶ **Signature**
- ▶ **Date of reply**

Your overall view of the participation of women in politics

- ▶ **Synopsis of law and practice in your country** ¹
- 1. Do you consider that, in your country, women enjoy the same legal opportunities as men of participating in national (federal) political life?

	YES	NO
--	-----	----
- 2. Do you consider that, in practice, women in your country take as active a part as men in national (federal) political life?

	YES	NO
--	-----	----
- 3. On what criteria do you base your reply to the previous question:

1. Voter participation figures?	YES	NO
2. The respective proportions of men and women in Parliament?	YES	NO
3. The respective proportions of men and women in the Government?	YES	NO
4. Others?	YES	NO
- 4. Do you consider that prevailing values as to the respective roles of men and women in your country limit the participation of women in politics?

	YES	NO
--	-----	----

Please try to give (below or on a separate sheet marked Nos. 1-4) supporting information, including particulars of your cultural context, and examples or anecdotes.
- ▶ **A woman's view of politics**
- 5. Do you believe that thinking and acting politically is:

1. Identified with the male sex?	YES	NO
2. Independent of the individual's sex?	YES	NO
- 6. Do you think that women:

1. Are put off by the power relationships that often characterise political work?	YES	NO
---	-----	----

2. Know how to adapt to these power relationships? YES NO
 3. Know how to use these power relationships? YES NO
7. Do you think that:
 1. In comparison with men, women have special talents or advantages for working effectively in politics? YES NO
 2. This is independent of the individual's sex? YES NO
8. Do you think that:
 1. Women change politics? YES NO
 2. Politics changes women? YES NO
9. Do you think that, generally speaking, women politicians restore the public's trust in politics? YES NO
10. Do you consider that women have a conception of society and politics that differs from that of men? YES NO
11. Do you consider that women's political priorities differ from those of men? YES NO
Please try to give (below or on a separate sheet marked Nos. 5-11) supporting information, including particulars of your cultural context, and examples or anecdotes.
- ▶ **The political players** ○
12. Do you consider that, in your country, politics is shaped and led as much by women as by men? YES NO
13. Do you consider that the fact of politics being shaped and led as much by women as by men:
 1. Is (would be) important in respect of the principle of equality between men and women? YES NO
 2. Is (would be) a guarantee (among others) of democracy? YES NO
 3. Is (would be) likely to provide a better response to the needs of society as a whole than a politics shaped and led entirely by men or dominated by men? YES NO
 4. Is (would be) of no particular consequence for society as a whole? YES NO
14. What effects on political life do you hope for from a general shift in relations between men and women resulting in greater partnership between them?
Please try to give (below or on a separate sheet marked Nos. 12-14) supporting information, including particulars of your cultural context, and examples or anecdotes.
- ▶ **The contribution of women** ○
15. Do you think that there exists a specific contribution from women of the democratic (in its broadest sense) process? YES NO
16. If so, how would you define this contribution?
Please try to give (below or on a separate sheet marked Nos. 15-16) supporting information, including particulars of your cultural context, and examples or anecdotes.
- ▶ **What change?** ○
17. Do you consider that women's greater participation in political life is bringing about a change in the traditionally male values, « language » and mores of politics? YES NO
Please try to give (below or on a separate sheet marked No. 17) supporting information, including particulars of your cultural context, and examples or anecdotes.
- ▶ **The qualitative effects of political action by women** ○
18. Do you consider that women's increased participation in political life does anything to change the outputs of politics? YES NO
Please try to give (below or on a separate sheet marked No. 18) supporting information, including particulars of your cultural context, and examples or anecdotes.

- ▶ **Factors of change**
19. If you answered the previous question in the affirmative, do you believe such change to be a matter of:
- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. The number of women taking part in the political decision-making process? | YES | NO |
| 2. Time? | YES | NO |
- ▶ **The critical mass**
20. What do you see as the minimum percentage of women needed to bring about change? %
Please try to give (below or on a separate sheet marked No. 20) supporting information, including particulars of your cultural context, and examples or anecdotes.
- ▶ **The representation of women**
21. Do you consider that, as a woman politician, you have a special responsibility to represent the needs and interests of other women? YES NO
Please try to give (below or on a separate sheet marked No. 21) supporting information, including particulars of your cultural context, and examples or anecdotes. If you answer in the affirmative, please try notably to specify how you assume this special responsibility.

Your entry into politics

- ▶ **Main channel of entry into politics**
22. Please indicate the channel or channels in your own case
- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| - Social work: | YES | NO |
| - Trade union activity: | YES | NO |
| - Political party: | YES | NO |
| - Non-governmental organisation: | YES | NO |
| - Non-governmental organisation encouraging women to take part in politics: | YES | NO |
| - Family culture: | YES | NO |
| - Other (please specify): | YES | NO |
- ▶ **Process which led you to enter politics and stand for election**
23. Please describe briefly (*below or on a separate sheet marked No. 23*).
- ▶ **Encouragements and obstacles**
24. Please describe (*below or on a separate sheet marked No. 24*) the main factors that spurred you and the encouragements you received or the difficulties you encountered.
- ▶ **Family situation at the time of taking up political appointments**
25. At the time of assuming political responsibilities
- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| - Did you have dependent children under 15? | YES | NO |
| - Were you of child-bearing age? | YES | NO |
| - Did you have old or handicapped dependants requiring your constant care? | YES | NO |
- ▶ **Other information**
26. Please add (*below or on a separate sheet marked No. 26*) any other information you find to be of interest, including information related to your cultural context.

How you reconcile family life, professional life and political commitment

- ▶ **Support from your closest relations**
27. Do you receive support from your closest relations for your political commitment and activities, in particular from your husband or partner? YES NO
Please try to specify (below or on a separate sheet marked No. 27) the degree and the nature of such support.
- ▶ **Care of children under 15 and of old or handicapped people**
28. If you have such people in your care, please try to describe (*below or on a separate sheet marked No. 28*) the special arrangements made so that your political commitments do not detract from the care they expect of you.
- ▶ **Domestic support**
29. To reconcile family life and political commitment, do you have
 1. Domestic services at home? YES NO
 2. Do you find this essential? YES NO
- ▶ **Professional commitments**
30. Do you practise your profession during your parliamentary term? YES NO
If so, please try to describe (below or on a separate sheet marked No. 30) the special arrangements made to reconcile your political, professional and family commitments.
- ▶ **Other information**
31. Please add (*below or on a separate sheet marked No. 31*) any other information you find to be of interest, including information related to your cultural context.

Your experience as a woman within a political party

- ▶ **Your present status**
32. Before answering the questions below
 1. Please state whether you at present belong to a political formation: YES NO
 2. If not, please state whether your replies are based on previous experience as a member of a political formation: YES NO
- ▶ **Your political formation**
33. 1. Please give the name of your formation;
 2. Please state whether it belongs to:
 - The Christian Democrat International YES NO
 - The International Democrat Union YES NO
 - The Liberal International YES NO
 - The Socialist International YES NO
 - None of these groupings YES NO
 3. Please give its position on the traditional spectrum:
 - Left YES NO
 - Right YES NO
 - Centre YES NO
 - Far left YES NO
 - Far right YES NO
- ▶ **Women and partisan structures**
34. From your personal experience, would you say that
 1. Your political party is a structure receptive to women? YES NO

2. Political parties in general are structures in which women feel at ease: YES NO
3. Political parties in general are structures somewhat hostile to the incorporation of women? YES NO
- ▶ **Basic texts of your party** ○
35. So far as you know, has their wording been modified to take account of women? YES NO
- ▶ **Your party's programme priorities** ○
36. So far as you know, have women brought about any change in these priorities? YES NO
Please give (below or on a separate sheet marked No. 36) any additional particulars you consider to be relevant.
- ▶ **Rules and practices concerning internal elections to decision-making posts (party leader, party spokesperson, leader of political group in Parliament if such a group exists, etc.)** ○
37. Within your party, do these rules and practices seem to you to be fair on both men and women? YES NO
38. So far as you know, have these rules been modified to take account of women? YES NO
Please give (below or on a separate sheet marked Nos. 37-38) any additional particulars you consider to be relevant.
- ▶ **Rules and practices concerning candidatures for national (federal) elections** ○
39. Within your party, do these rules and practices seem to you to be fair on both men and women? YES NO
40. So far as you know, have these rules been modified to take account of women? YES NO
For example:
1. Definition of an overall policy regarding women's candidatures: YES NO
2. Adoption of a quota or an internal guideline designed to ensure that the party fields a minimum percentage of women in national (federal) elections: YES NO
3. Alternation of women and men candidates on electoral rolls: YES NO
4. Measures to ensure that women placed on the rolls are in an eligible position: YES NO
5. Arrangements for an equitable distribution of women and men candidates between constituencies in which the party stands the best chance of winning the election: YES NO
6. Material and financial arrangements in support of women's candidatures: YES NO
Please give (below or on a separate sheet marked Nos. 39-40) any additional particulars you consider to be relevant.
- ▶ **Women's branch of the party** ○
41. If your party has such a branch, have you observed any change in its role, functioning and activities? YES NO
Please give (below or on a separate sheet marked No. 41) any additional particulars you consider to be relevant.
- ▶ **Internal structures for the treatment of subjects within your party** ○
42. Have these structures been modified to take account of the principle of equality between men and women? YES NO

43. For example, has your formation set up:
- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. A gender parity committee? | YES | NO |
| 2. Any other type of structure (focal point, etc.) | YES | NO |
- ▶ **Internal culture of the party**
44. Do you consider that the presence of women has brought about any change in the internal culture of your party? YES NO
Please give (below or on a separate sheet marked No. 44) any additional particulars you consider to be relevant.
- ▶ **Perception of the party as to the respective roles of women and men in politics and in society in general and approach to the electorate**
45. Do you consider that, in recent years, your party's perception of the respective roles of women and men in politics and in society in general has changed? YES NO
46. Do you attribute this change (at least in part) to the action of women within the party itself? YES NO
47. Have you observed any change in your party's attitude to women voters? YES NO
48. Have you observed any change in your party's attitude to voters in general, prompted by the participation of women in politics? YES NO
Please give (below or on a separate sheet marked Nos. 45-48) any additional particulars you consider to be relevant.
- ▶ **Starting and ending times of meetings**
49. Have these times been adjusted to take account of women's needs? YES NO
- ▶ **Facilities**
50. Have you noted any improvement or diversification of such facilities as crèches, day nurseries, etc.? YES NO
- ▶ **Other information**
51. Please add (below or on a separate sheet marked No. 51) any other comment you consider relevant.

Your experience as a woman running for Parliament

- ▶ **Independent candidate**
52. Could you briefly describe the highlights of your experience as an independent candidate to do with the fact of your being a woman? Where appropriate, please provide supporting examples or anecdotes, which may be given below or on a separate sheet marked No. 52.
- ▶ **Candidate fielded by a political formation**
53. Could you briefly describe the highlights of your experience as an independent candidate to do with the fact of your being a woman? Could you also say whether, and how, your political formation backs women candidates? Where appropriate, please provide supporting examples or anecdotes, which may be given below or on a separate sheet marked No. 53.
- ▶ **Becoming a candidate**
54. When becoming a candidate / being selected / what were your main motivations:
- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| - An overall desire to do something for the community? | YES | NO |
| - A political or other particular project? | YES | NO |
| - The challenge, a taste for risk: | YES | NO |

- | | | | |
|---|---|-----|----|
| - | A family or other model? | YES | NO |
| - | Encouragement from your family circle? | YES | NO |
| - | Encouragement from your political circle? | YES | NO |
| - | Others? | YES | NO |
| - | None of the motivations mentioned? | YES | NO |

▶ **Main difficulties and inhibitions you had to overcome**

55. When becoming a candidate / being selected / what were your main difficulties and inhibitions:
- | | | | |
|---|---|-----|----|
| - | Balancing the amounts of time to be devoted to private life, to professional life and to your political activities? | YES | NO |
| - | Cultural values and attitudes hostile to women's participation in politics? | YES | NO |
| - | Assuming your politician status without betraying your woman's identity and approach? | YES | NO |
| - | Financial questions? | YES | NO |
| - | Transport problems? | YES | NO |
| - | Problems of insecurity? | YES | NO |
| - | Inhibition vis-à-vis constituents? | YES | NO |
| - | Inhibition about public speaking? | YES | NO |
| - | Inhibition in contact with the media? | YES | NO |
| - | Becoming a public figure? | YES | NO |
| - | Lack of a support network? | YES | NO |
| - | Defining a campaign image? | YES | NO |
| - | Others? | YES | NO |
| - | None of the difficulties mentioned? | YES | NO |

▶ **Your appraisal of the effects of the electoral system**

56. Under what electoral system were you elected to Parliament:
- | | | | |
|---|---------------|-----|----|
| - | Majority? | YES | NO |
| - | Proportional? | YES | NO |
| - | Mixed? | YES | NO |
57. Do you consider that this electoral system:
- | | | | |
|---|--|-----|----|
| - | Favours women? | YES | NO |
| - | Makes it harder for women to be elected? | YES | NO |
58. In view of the specific factors to be taken into account in your country (such as, among others, the proportion of women candidates and the attitude of voters), what do you think is the electoral system most conducive to the election of women in your country:
- | | | | |
|---|---------------|-----|----|
| - | Majority? | YES | NO |
| - | Proportional? | YES | NO |
| - | Mixed? | YES | NO |

▶ **Your preparation**

59. As a woman candidate, did you receive any preparation:
- | | | | |
|---|---|-----|----|
| - | As to how best to conduct your election campaign? | YES | NO |
| - | As to your future role as an MP with your constituents? | YES | NO |
| - | Regarding legislative work proper? | YES | NO |
| - | Regarding analysis of the national budget? | YES | NO |
60. In the affirmative, could you say whether this preparation was given you
- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|-----|----|
| - | By your party? | YES | NO |
| - | By the women's branch of your party? | YES | NO |
| - | By a non-governmental organisation? | YES | NO |
| - | By a female mentor? | YES | NO |
| - | By a male mentor? | YES | NO |
61. Could you also say whether this preparation was given you
- | | | | |
|---|-----------------|-----|----|
| - | Free of charge? | YES | NO |
| - | For payment? | YES | NO |
62. If you have received no kind of preparation, do you consider that some preparation would have been of use to you?
- | | | | |
|---|--|-----|----|
| - | | YES | NO |
|---|--|-----|----|

- ▶ **Your appraisal of the voters** ○
63. Do you believe that voters in your country are generally willing to elect women to the national (federal) Parliament? YES NO
64. Do you believe that voters in your country generally have
- As much confidence in women as in men? YES NO
- More confidence in women than in men? YES NO
- ▶ **Future candidates** ○
65. Could you say briefly what, in your view, would enable more women to run for the national (federal) Parliament?
66. What are the main encouragements and practical advice you would give women tempted to run for the national (federal) Parliament?
67. Could you say briefly what, in your view, would enable more women to be elected to the national (federal) Parliament?
These three questions can be answered below or on a separate sheet marked Nos. 65-67.
- ▶ **Other information** ○
68. Please add (*below or on a separate sheet marked No. 68*) any other information you find to be of interest, including information related to your cultural context.

Your experience as a woman Member of Parliament

- ▶ **Length of your parliamentary experience** ○
69. Please provide the following particulars:
1. Year in which you first entered Parliament:
2. Number of parliamentary mandates (including present one):
- ▶ **Your particular responsibilities within Parliament** ○
70. During the present legislative term:
1. President of Parliament / of a House of Parliament: YES NO
2. Vice-President of Parliament / of a House of Parliament: YES NO
3. Member of the Bureau of Parliament / of a House of Parliament: YES NO
4. Chairperson of a parliamentary committee: YES NO
5. Vice-Chairperson of a parliamentary committee: YES NO
6. Leader of the parliamentary group: YES NO
71. During a previous legislative term:
1. President of Parliament / of a House of Parliament: YES NO
2. Vice-President of Parliament / of a House of Parliament: YES NO
3. Member of the Bureau of Parliament / of a House of Parliament: YES NO
4. Chairperson of a parliamentary committee: YES NO
5. Vice-Chairperson of a parliamentary committee: YES NO
6. Leader of the parliamentary group: YES NO
- ▶ **Composition of the Bureau of Parliament** ○
72. In your personal experience, would you say that the presence of women in your Parliament and, where relevant, within its Bureau has done anything to change the established rules and practices regarding the composition of the Bureau? YES NO
73. Please specify whether observance of the principle of an equitable distribution (i.e. based on the respective proportions) of men and women in the Bureau of Parliament:
1. Is covered by a written rule: YES NO
2. Stems from an established practice: YES NO
3. Just depends on circumstances: YES NO
4. Is under consideration for application in this case: YES NO

- ▶ **President of Parliament / of a House of Parliament** ○
74. In your personal experience, would you say that the fact of a woman presiding over the Assembly:
1. Improves the management and general organisation of the proceedings (e.g. better organisation of the work schedule, compliance with timetables announced): YES NO
 2. Has a moderating effect on debates (e.g. fewer sexist or trivial remarks) : YES NO
 3. Guarantees identical treatment for men and women: YES NO
- ▶ **Composition of the Bureaux of parliamentary committees** ○
75. In your personal experience, would you say that the presence of women in your Parliament and, where relevant, within its Bureau has done anything to change the established rules and practices regarding the composition of the Bureaux of the parliamentary committees? YES NO
76. Please specify whether observance of the principle of an equitable distribution (i.e. based on the respective proportions) of men and women in the Bureaux of committees:
1. Is covered by a written rule: YES NO
 2. Stems from an established practice: YES NO
 3. Just depends on circumstances: YES NO
 4. Is under consideration for application in this case: YES NO
- ▶ **Distribution of women in parliamentary committees** ○
77. Practice within your Assembly:
With due regard to the respective proportions of men and women in your Parliament which, among other things, determine the possibility for women to be represented in all committees or just some of them, do you consider the present distribution satisfactory? YES NO
78. Position of principle:
Do you consider:
1. That the presence of women in all parliamentary committees is or would be a good thing? YES NO
 2. That the fact of women not being present in all parliamentary committees has no particular effect on legislation? YES NO
- Please try to give (below or on a separate sheet marked Nos. 77-78) supporting examples or anecdotes.*
- ▶ **Equality Committee / Committee on Women's Status** ○
79. Please provide the following particulars:
1. Is there such a committee in your Parliament / House of Parliament? YES NO
 2. Is the committee composed of men and women? YES NO
 3. What is the proportion of men? %
80. Do you consider that the committee
1. Has already contributed notably to improving legislation concerning women's status? YES NO
 2. Has already done effective work to ensure that legislation takes account of women's interests as much as men's? YES NO
- Please try to give (below or on a separate sheet marked Nos. 79-80) supporting examples or anecdotes.*
- ▶ **Fields of action in which women make their presence felt and concrete examples** ○
81. On the basis of the following main categories, please indicate - by placing them in order of priority - the fields of action in which, within your own Assembly, women's presence is the most marked:

- Social affairs and health
- Legal and constitutional matters
- Education and culture
- Budget
- Home affairs
- Foreign affairs
- Defence
- Others

82. From your personal experience, please give actual examples in which the presence of women, and yours in particular, in Parliament has had beneficial effects on:

- Legislation
- The distribution of posts and responsibilities within Parliament
- Others

This question may be answered below or on a separate sheet marked No. 82.

▶ **Global influence of women on the general work of Parliament** ○

83. In your personal experience, would you say that, globally, the presence of women in your Parliament and, if applicable, in its Bureau has brought about

1. A change in how problems are addressed and resolved? YES NO
2. A marked improvement in legislation concerning the status of women in your country? YES NO
3. Allowance, whenever appropriate, for the specific interests of women, whatever the field of legislative action? YES NO

Please try to give (below or on a separate sheet marked No. 83) supporting examples or anecdotes.

▶ **Parliamentary language and mores** ○

84. From your personal experience, would you say that the presence of women in your Parliament and, if applicable, in its Bureau has brought about a change in parliamentary language and mores? YES NO

Please try to give (below or on a separate sheet marked No. 84) supporting examples or anecdotes.

▶ **Parliamentary premises and environment** ○

85. In your Parliament, do women and men enjoy the same standard of conveniences, for example:

- Toilets near the Assembly hall? YES NO
- Offices? YES NO
- Hairdresser? YES NO
- Crèche / day nursery? YES NO

86. Would you say that the presence of women in your Parliament and, if applicable, in its Bureau has led to the provision of new conveniences or new services? YES NO

Please try to give (below or on a separate sheet marked Nos. 85-86) supporting examples or anecdotes.

▶ **Working hours of Parliament** ○

87. On the basis of your personal experience, would you say that the presence of women in your Parliament and, if applicable, in its Bureau has prompted any modification of the established rules and practices concerning working hours? YES NO

For example:

1. Observance of timetables announced: YES NO
2. Fewer night sittings: YES NO

- ▶ **Inter-party group (caucus) of women MPs** (if such a group exists)
88. Please specify whether the group
- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| 1. Enjoys official recognition: | YES | NO |
| 2. Has a meeting place: | YES | NO |
| 3. Receives the official support of parliamentary services: | YES | NO |
4. Is able, according to the standing orders, to influence parliamentary and legislative activity: YES NO
Please try to give (below or on a separate sheet marked No. 88) supporting examples or anecdotes.
- ▶ **Parliamentary support services**
89. Please state whether in your Assembly:
- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. Decision-making posts are distributed in a balanced manner between men and women: | YES | NO |
| 2. You consider such a balance to be important as a matter of principle: | YES | NO |
| 3. You consider that it also enhances the quality of the work done: | YES | NO |
| 4. You further consider that it enhances the working climate within Parliament: | YES | NO |
- ▶ **Other information**
90. Please add (*below or on a separate sheet marked No. 90*) any other information you find to be of interest, including information related to your cultural context.

Your experience as a woman member of the Government (Cabinet)

- ▶ **Your particular responsibilities within the Government**
91. Please state whether
- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. You discharge particular responsibilities within the present Government: | YES | NO |
| 2. You have already held particular responsibilities within a previous Government: | YES | NO |
- Please supply (below or on a separate sheet marked No. 91) the particulars you deem appropriate (e.g. title, rank in the Government, duration of your experience, etc.)*
- ▶ **If your country's present Government includes women**
92. Do you feel that the numbers of men and women in the Government are equitable? YES NO
93. Please specify what, in your view, would be an equitable way of distributing ministerial posts within your country's Government as to the numbers of men and women.
94. Please specify what, in your view, would be an equitable way of distributing ministerial posts within your country's Government as to the ministerial assignments entrusted to men and to women.
Questions 93 and 94 may be answered below or on a separate sheet marked Nos. 93-94.
- ▶ **If your country's Government has never included women**
95. Do you consider:
- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| 1. That such a situation is prejudicial to society in general and to women in particular and should change? | YES | NO |
| 2. That it is of no particular consequence? | YES | NO |

▶ **Effects of the presence of women in your Government's Cabinet**

96. Could you give precise examples suggesting that the presence of women in the Government's Cabinet has more or less marked positive effects on society in general and on women in particular ?
Please try to give (below or on a separate sheet marked No. 96) supporting examples or anecdotes.

▶ **Other information**

97. Please add (below or on a separate sheet marked No. 97) any other information you find to be of interest, including information related to your cultural context.

Your experience as a woman politician in contact with the media

▶ **Your relations with the media**

98. How do you assess your relations as a woman politician with the media?
99. If you find the relationship less than satisfactory, what in your view could be done to improve it ? Please try to mention (below or on a separate sheet marked Nos. 98-99) both what you could do and what the media could do.

▶ **How the media view women politicians and how you view the media**

100. From your own experience, do you believe that the media:
- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. View women and men politicians differently? | YES | NO |
| 2. View political figures in a way that has nothing to do with the individual's sex? | YES | NO |
| 3. Give precedence to information on the sex of their source? | YES | NO |

101. If you consider that the media view men and women politicians differently, do you believe that, generally speaking, this works out more
- | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|----|
| 1. To women's advantage? | YES | NO |
| 2. To women's disadvantage? | YES | NO |

102. Please describe (below or on a separate sheet marked Nos. 100-102) what impact this situation has on the public.

▶ **Women in the media**

103. Does your country have one or more associations of women journalists: YES NO
104. Please describe (below or on a separate sheet marked No. 104) what role you consider such associations can and must play in support of women politicians.

▶ **Other information**

105. Please add (below or on a separate sheet marked No. 105) any other information you find to be of interest, including information related to your cultural context.

Your experience of the sharing and passing on of political experience

▶ **Benefiting from the sharing of political experience**

106. From your experience, do you think that incoming women politicians can benefit from the direct support and advice of seasoned women politicians? YES NO

107. Please describe (*below or on a separate sheet marked Nos. 106-107*) whether and how you have personally benefited from such direct support or advice?

▶ **Ensuring the transfer of political experience**

108. Please state (*below or on a separate sheet marked No. 108*) whether and how you have personally been able to give support and advice to incoming women politicians?

▶ **Other information**

109. Please add (*below or on a separate sheet marked No. 109*) any other information you find to be of interest, including information related to your cultural context.

Your experience of relations with women's organisations

▶ **Your contacts with NGOs**

110. For your political and parliamentary activity, do you consider that women's organisations and non-governmental organisations active in promoting the status of women

- | | | | |
|----|---|-----|----|
| 1. | Are sufficiently in contact with you? | YES | NO |
| 2. | Support you effectively in your parliamentary activity? | YES | NO |
| 3. | Offer you the necessary information? | YES | NO |

▶ **Your expectations and needs**

111. Please set out (*below or on a separate sheet marked No. 111*) your expectations and suggestions in this respect.

▶ **Other information**

112. Please add (*below or on a separate sheet marked No. 112*) any other information you find to be of interest, including information related to your cultural context.

¹ By ticking this circle, you indicate that you do not wish your reply to the question to be cited with any reference to your identity.

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The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is the world organisation of Parliaments of sovereign States.

It is the focal point for world-wide parliamentary dialogue and works for peace and co-operation among peoples and for the firm establishment of representative democracy.

To that end it:

- Fosters contacts, co-ordination, and the exchange of experience among Parliaments and parliamentarians of all countries;
- Considers questions of international interest and concern and expresses its views on such issues in order to bring about action by Parliaments and parliamentarians;
- Contributes to the defence and promotion of human rights - an essential factor of parliamentary democracy and development;
- Contributes to better knowledge of the working of representative institutions and to the strengthening and development of their means of action.

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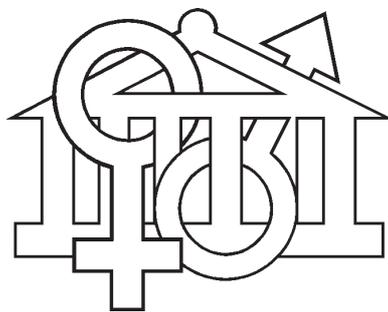
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