Closing the Gender Gap in Papua New Guinea Parliament

2018 Pacific Update

Geejay Milli | University of Papua New Guinea
Dr. Maxine Newlands | James Cook University
Presentation Overview

Background to women’s political participation and leadership (PNG)

- Research methodology

- Research question: What avenues can be taken to make the PNG political environment conducive for women to compete in?

- Some findings and recommendations: Gender Quotas in elections
In PNG’s short political history – in 42 years there have been seven women political representatives in parliament.

In the past decade there has been an increase in women representatives at local level governments and slightly in the national government.

In the 2017 general election 163 women stood as candidates, none were elected.
Table 1 Women in national elections, 1964-2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Elections</th>
<th>Number of Women Candidates</th>
<th>Number of Women Elected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Methodology

- Qualitative research methods:
  - Parliamentary Hansards
  - Interview (Dame Carol Kidu)
  - Review of literature
  - 2017 National Election observation (Madang Province)
Some Findings

- **Culture** (the Big-man system);
  - The hegemonic political system
  - The *Big-meri* system is counter productive

- **Threat of violence** during elections is widespread

- **Financial handicap** – a deterring factor

- **External political processes** (i.e. The United Nations mock parliamentary sessions require more sustainable planning over years not weeks)
Talking points

Big-man is symptomatic of colonial legacy

- Big-man system is a challenge to female member of parliament
- Unique leadership style exerted by women candidates is important

“You can use your (cultural) relationships in politics without being a big-man or big-meri” – Dame Carol Kidu

- Women candidates to strategize and be more pro-active (Mary Kamang – Madang Regional)
- External influence needs to be progressive and sustainable not reactive and short term (Eg. UN mock parliamentary sessions/ ANU candidate workshops)
- Financial handicap
  - A significant factor experienced by a majority of women candidates
Exploring Alternatives

**Research question**: What avenues can be taken to make the PNG political environment conducive to compete in?

“We should look at new ways of affirmative action (in addressing the issue of women’s political representation)” – Dame Carol Kidu

**Some significant conventions & Platforms:**

1. **CEDAW** (1979) – Convention of the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women


Temporary Special Measures (TSM)

1. Look at Temporary Special Measures (CEDAW)

These TSM can be constitutionally or legally mandated quota or can be voluntary party quota

a. Reserved seats (Bougainville/Rwanda)

b. Pre-selection (Australia) – not compatible for PNG political environment. Political parties are unstable/weak. Work well in established western liberal democracies with strong political parties (Political parties
Reserved seats – gender quota

What is it?

- Article 4 CEDAW – recognizes that TSM such as quota are needed to ‘kick-start’ women’s political representation. Especially in developing countries.
- Convention notes that such measures are ‘temporary’ ending when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved.
- There has always been a general misunderstanding of this provision as in the case of PNG.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Single house or lower house %</th>
<th>Upper house or Senate %</th>
<th>Both houses combined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nordic countries</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>--</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americas</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe – Organization for Security and co-operation in Europe (OSCE) member countries including Nordic countries</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe – OSCE member countries excluding Nordic countries</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab States</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific (including Australia)</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Lower/single house</td>
<td>Upper house/senate</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Elections</td>
<td>seat s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Grenada</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Namibibia</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>189</td>
<td>PNG</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>190</td>
<td>Vanuatu</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>191</td>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table – Inter-parliamentary Union (IPU)
196 countries (as at 1 April 2018)
Critics for and against:

Against:

- Unnecessary; discriminatory; distortion of democratic process;
- Gives ‘special treatment’ to women
- Undermines legitimacy of women who occupy reserved seats (quota); (resounding debate among women pre-2012 elections)
- Placing a ceiling on women’s political participation;
- Relevant/suitable only for post-conflict societies
Critics for

For:

- Evidence of quota benefiting parliamentary democracy (as shown in Table by Inter-parliamentary Union)

- PNG needs more awareness on the nature of TSM

- Arguable that PNG society has long term situation of conflict (ethnic/tribal) is still ongoing, hence is a society that can be classified as being ‘in conflict’

- Women in PNG politics do not have luxury of arguing ‘against’ quota in electoral process
TSM successes

Pre-selection

- Successful in western democracies

Reserved seats

- Successful in some countries

Eg: Rwanda (Powely, 2004) – 24 reserved seats in 2003-08; most chose to run on political party ballots – many were successful.

“reserved seats served as an incubator for women who might otherwise have been excluded from the process – giving them the experience and confidence to run in the general elections”
Recommendations

1. Strong political will
2. Strong political parties – that are gender inclusive
3. Increase public awareness
4. Long term execution of candidate grooming/preparation – External political processes
5. Execution of long term strategy and net working
Questions & Comments?
Sources


Convention of the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979)


Regional parliamentary assemblies, Inter-Parliamentary Union (2018), retrieved from http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm

World Regional average, Inter-Parliamentary Union (2018), retrieved from http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm