

Closing the Gender Gap in Papua New Guinea Parliament

2018 Pacific Update

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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**

Background to Women's Political Participation &

Leadership in Papua New Guinea

- 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

General Elections	Number of Women Candidates	Number of Women Elected
1964	3	0
1968	1	0
1972	4	1
1977	10	3
1982	17	1
1987	18	0
1992	16	0
1997	55	2
2002	75	1
2007	105	1
2012	135	3
2017	163	0

(Sepoe 2002) 1964-1997; (Meki, 2015) – 2002 & (Wood 2017) – 2007-2017

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
2. **Beijing Declaration (1995)** – Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action : Also, Beijing +5 (2000)
3. **Resolution on Women, Peace and Security (2000)** – passed by UN Security Council
4. **UN Millennium Development Goals** – Goal 3 (2010) Promote Gender Equality and Empower 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 : Regional averages of women in national

parliaments (as at 1 April 2018) source: IPU 2018

Region	Single house or lower house %	Upper house or Senate %	Both houses combined
Nordic countries	41.4	--	--
Americas	28.8	29.5	28.9
Europe – Organization for Security and co-operation in Europe (OSCE) member countries including Nordic countries	27.6	27.0	27.5
Europe – OSCE member countries excluding Nordic countries	26.3	27.0	26.4
Sub-Saharan Africa	23.9	23.1	23.8
Asia	19.7	17.5	19.5
Arab States	18.5	12.6	17.7
Pacific (including Australia)	15.5	37.1	17.9

Table – Inter-parliamentary Union (IPU)

196 countries (as at 1 April 2018)

Rank	Country	Lower/single house				Upper house/senate			
		Electi ons	seat s	Wome n	% W	Electio ns	Seats	Wome n	%W
1	Rwanda	2013	80	61.3		2011	26	10	38.5
2	Cuba	2018	322	53.2		--	--	--	--
3	Bolivia	2014	69	53.1		2014	36	17	47.2
4	Grenada	2018	7	46.7		2013	13	2	15.4
5	Namimbia	2014	48	46.2					
189	PNG	2017	111	0	0.0	--	--	--	--
190	Vanuatu	2016	52	0	0.0	--	--	--	--
191	Yemen	2003	275	0	0.0	2001	111	2	1.8

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

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