



OUR VOICE:

WOMEN IN THE HOUSE. WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!



REVIEW OF ELECTORAL LAWS TO INCREASE WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA.

INTRODUCTION

The Constitutional and Law Reform Commission (CLRC) review into PNG's electoral laws is critical for promoting women's political participation in PNG.

PNG is now one of only five countries in the world who have no female membership in national Parliament.¹

Only seven women have been elected to PNG Parliament over 40 years.² In the 2017 elections, a record number of women contested, but no women were elected to any of the 111 seats.³

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Women's equal and meaningful participation in all levels of decision making is a matter of fairness and equality.

Women have a right to participate in decisions that affect their lives.

This right is enshrined in the Constitution of PNG and international frameworks. The meaningful participation of women is also critical to make sure the needs and priorities of women are being heard and represented in policy decisions. Women and men can share the responsibilities of leadership and work together to solve problems and create solutions that will benefit their communities.

Amplifying and advancing women's leadership can also change attitudes towards gender equality. One woman leader can show a whole generation of future female leaders what is possible.⁴

WHAT ARE TEMPORARY SPECIAL MEASURES?

Temporary Special measures (TSMs) are temporary rules put in place to create opportunity for women in decision making positions and, most commonly, include some form of special women's quotas, such as reserved seats or political party women candidate quotas.

The term "Temporary Special Measures" comes from Article 4 of the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). A critical element of their usage is that they are supposed to be "temporary", which means that, as and when equality is achieved, they should be removed.

Of the 47 countries in the world with 30% or more women's participation in national parliaments, 41 countries (85%) use at least one form of quota system.⁵ In Timor-Leste, legislated candidate quotas were introduced in 2006, with women now making up 32.3% of the national parliament.⁶

PNG AND TSMs

PNG's Vision 2050 calls for reserved seats for women at all levels of Government. The Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration 2012 also included support for the use of Temporary Special Measures to increase women's representation.

PNG already has considerable experience with TSMs, with the Eighth National Parliament attempting to implement appointed reserved seats for women from 2008-10, and then debating legislation to enact 22 elected reserved seats for women from 2010-12. Unfortunately, these efforts were not successful.

TSMS IN THE PACIFIC

In the Pacific, there has been a strong push for TSMs. In a close island state to PNG, Timor-Leste introduced legislated candidate quotas in 2006 and women now make up 32.3% of the national parliament. The French Pacific territories of New Caledonia and French Polynesia are subject to the same quotas as the French legislature and each have consistently elected more than 40% women due to compulsory political party quotas for women.

In Samoa, a minimum 10% quota was introduced which requires that the National Parliament always have at least 5 women MPs. In Vanuatu, seats have been reserved for women at local levels. Most notably in PNG, the Autonomous Region of Bougainville reserved three seats for women in the National Parliament and, more recently, amended their local government law to require the election of one woman and one man to each Ward. In addition, each Community Government must have a woman as Chairperson or Vice Chairperson.

Women and men are two wings of a bird,
with women's equal participation the
bird can fly higher and further.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

We believe that some form of Temporary Special Measures are critical for promoting women's political participation in PNG.

1

INTRODUCE RESERVED SEATS

This could take two forms:

22 seats, elected by all voters, are reserved for women. This would be one seat per province, plus one for the National Capital District and one for the Autonomous Region of Bougainville. Alongside this, the role of provincial governor and provincial MP should be separated, with (i) Governors acting as the senior administrator (Premier) of each province but no longer sitting in Parliament; and (ii) existing Governor's seats converted to reserved seats for women.

OR

A safety net model is introduced with a minimum level of women's representation in parliament set at eleven seats (10%). This is the model used in Samoa and should be based on a regional distribution, with a number of reserved seats by region depending on the population size in each region. Guidelines will also be needed. For example, two women from the same province should not fill reserved seats in the same region.



Photo: Partners working together on Our Voice meet to discuss TSMs

2 LOCAL LEVEL GOVERNMENT REFORM

It is also important to consider women's representation at the local level. The current Local Level Government system, which is supposed to appoint 2 women to LLGs, should be abolished and replaced with a system of 50/50 elected representation. Each ward should elect one male and one female representative, with the leadership roles for each Local Level Government rotating between male and female representatives. This draws on experience from the Autonomous Region of Bougainville.

3 OTHER MEASURES ALONGSIDE QUOTAS

It is crucial that TSMs form part of a broader approach to address gender inequality. We also recommend that these measures are considered in the review process:

- **Introduce a political parties women candidates' quota** – political parties must nominate at least 20% women candidates or face a fine for non-compliance. A minimum percentage of women should also be included on political party executive boards, with sanctions if political parties do not comply.
- **Reform political party incentives** - The current political party incentive is amended to provide each nominated candidate with at least K20,000 and for political parties to be reimbursed for 75% of that amount for women candidates who receive more than 10% of the primary vote. An awareness campaign on the political party incentive should also be introduced.
- **Mitigating and preventing violence against women in elections** - Measures to mitigate and prevent violence against women in elections are introduced including the introduction of gender segregated polling stations well as National Identification Card registration of all citizens to allow for electronic voting.
- **Sustained support throughout the electoral cycle** - Women should be supported throughout the entire election cycle - that is before, during and after elections including political party reform, gender sensitive voter outreach, and longer term support mechanisms for female parliamentarians such as mentoring, coaching and women's parliamentary caucuses.
- **National Gender Advisory Board** - A National Gender Advisory Board is established with diverse representation, to provide gender analysis to parliamentarians on laws and policies as well as to amplify the priorities of women and girls in PNG at the local level.
- **Support for women's organisations and networks** - The PNG Government continues engagement with local women's organisations and recognises the vital role these organisations play in supporting women's leadership and bringing the voices of women and girls at the community level to national processes.
- **Tackling discriminatory social norms** - The PNG Government considers resourcing a public awareness media campaign in support of women's leadership to increase community understanding of gender equality and women's right to political participation. Compulsory training on gender equality should be provided for all members of parliament as part of the formal induction process and at training sessions to be held throughout the parliamentary term.

WE ARE STRONGER WHEN WE WORK TOGETHER

This is a joint brief from the following organisations working to promote women's leadership in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and the Autonomous Region of Bougainville: Voice for Change, Eastern Highlands Family Voice, Wide Bay Conservation Association, Bougainville Women's Federation, and Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation. We are working together on Our Voice, which is a campaign working to increase the representation and effective participation of women in decision-making at the local level in five countries across Asia and the Pacific, including Papua New Guinea.⁷

Join us: facebook.com/WAVEwomen

WORKING TOGETHER AS OUR VOICE - PNG PARTNERS



Voice for Change is a women's human rights organisation working in Jiwaka Province to empower and mobilise rural women to take leadership in addressing gender-based violence and increasing women's economic empowerment. They coordinate the Jiwaka Women Human Rights Defenders Network, building capacity to lead responses to and prevent violence against women at the community level.

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Eastern Highlands Family Voice (EHFV) is recognised as a leading organisation in Eastern Highlands Province working on Family and Sexual Violence. They provide critical counselling, referral and case management services to women and families experiencing violence. They also work with local communities to promote gender equality and human rights, advocate against abuse and violence, and create social behaviour change.

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Wide Bay Conservation Association (WBCA) works to strengthen recognition of women as traditional custodians and as equal leaders in their communities. WBCA works to empower local communities, especially women, to have control over decisions about their land and resources. They are supporting women candidates to run for LLG elections for the first time in East Pomio District.

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Bougainville Women's Federation (BWF) is the peak representative body for the women of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville; that works for the empowerment of women, ensuring that women's voices are heard in decision-making at all levels of society. BWF holds a unique position of influence in all matters concerning gender equality and the participation of women in Bougainville's development.

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The Nazareth Centre for Rehabilitation (NCFR) was created by the Congregation of Sisters of Nazareth in 2001, in response to the need for post-conflict rehabilitation and peace building in communities in Bougainville. NCFR provides refuge and counselling services for women and children survivors of Family and Sexual Violence, as well as to provide leadership skills training for women and young leaders in rural communities, awareness and advocacy for gender equality. Their network of Women Human Rights Defenders and Male Advocates reaches all 13 districts of Bougainville.

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¹ "Women in Politics: 2017." Inter-Parliamentary Union, 19 July 2017.

² World Bank et al (2013) Papua New Guinea Country Gender Assessment 2011–2012.

³ Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2017. Women in parliament in 2017: The year in review, p.7.

⁴ IWDA, Our Voice: Women's Participation & Influence in Decision Making, 2018, available at: <https://iwda.org.au/assets/files/pamphletwithnobleed.pdf>

⁵ The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), Gender Quotas Database, <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas>.

⁶ <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/country-view/286/35>

⁷ Our Voice is part of Women's Action for Voice and Empowerment (WAVE), which is a ground-breaking women's leadership program that brings together and supports individual women, organisations, and movements in Asia and the Pacific region to increase the representation of women in diverse leadership positions. To find out more about WAVE see: <https://iwda.org.au/wave/>.