

Country Quota Profile

Quotas as an instrument for empowerment of women

One may identify two tracks to gender balance in politics, the ‘incremental track’ and the ‘fast track’. The primary problem, according to the incremental track discourse is that women do not have the same political resources as men. While prejudice against women is recognized, it is assumed that it will eventually disappear as society develops. The fast track discourse rejects the idea of gradual improvement in women’s representation. Exclusion and discrimination are regarded as the core of the problem identification and understanding, the solution to which could well be affirmative action. The responsibility of dealing with the under-representation of women rests with the political institutions. It follows from this understanding of women’s representation, that measures like electoral gender quotas for the recruitment and election of female candidates are necessary.

The Beijing Platform clearly represents the fast track discourse and focuses on the mechanisms of exclusion through institutional practices, setting gender balance as the goal and demanding that governments and political parties commit themselves to affirmative action.

Quotas are an affirmative action tool aimed at ensuring that women constitute a critical mass in decision and policy-making bodies. Electoral quotas for women may be constitutional, legislative or a take the form of a political party quota. It may apply to the number of women candidates proposed by a party for election, or may take the form of reserved seats in the legislature.

A. Country wise quota profile

1. Status of quotas in country

Indian constitution provides for 33% quota for women in local politics.

A similar quota is being demanded at state and national level, but has not been successful as yet.

2. Form of quotas

3. Positions of Major Political Parties on Quotas

Electoral System	FPTP (Plurality/Majority) - Turnout	
Number of Women in Lower House:	Election Year: 2004	Number of Women Elected: 45 of 545 , 8.3%
Number of Women in Upper House	Election Year: 2004	Number of Women Elected/Appointed: 28 of 242, 11.6%
Constitutional Quota for National Parliaments?	No	
Election Law Quota or Regulation, National Parliament?	No	

Constitutional or Legislative Quota, Sub-National Level?	Yes -- 33% of seats in all local bodies (panchayats and municipalities) are reserved for women according to the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments. This includes the provision that 33% of the seats reserved for the scheduled classes etc shall be women.
Legal Sanctions for Non-Compliance?	No
Rank-Order Rules?	-
Political Party Quota for Electoral Candidates:	Most political parties in their manifestos agree to quota for women. However, in practice this has still not happened
<p>In 1996, an 81st Amendment proposed to reserve one-third of the seats in the House of the People and the State Assembly for women under a constituency-rotation system. The women's reservation bill was introduced by parliament by the United Front Government in 1996 after the major political parties supported it in their election manifestos. However, the bill has not been passed by parliament. Another proposal from 2003 suggested converting 181 of the lower house seats into double-member constituencies to elect one man and one woman, thus preventing that present male members had to leave their seats. This proposal has not been passed either.</p>	
<p>4. What's in the pipeline / Immediate areas for advocacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Women's Reservation bill pending in parliament. ○ Public/state funding of elections/campaigns needed to counter money politics ○ Public discourse with regard to alternative quota positions. – reservation model should be made, political party quotas, PR system, 2 member (male and female) constituencies, etc. 	
<p>5. Who's pushing it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For the first time Communist party of India has a woman in the politburo – Ms. Brinda Karat ○ Congress party had a cabinet reshuffle and now has 2 women in effective ministries. The Ministry of Tourism, which is an important portfolio, has been given to a woman Minister. ○ National Commission for Women and State Commission for Women. 	
<p>6. Major Achievements/ Best Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Quantitative increase in the number of women in politics in local government has changed the face of politics in India. ○ There is less use of abusive language and objectionable behaviour in legislature due to the increase of the number of women in legislature. ○ There have been changes in the procedure and behaviour of men; body language, etc have improved immensely ○ Men have become women friendly, local leadership has accepted the women's leadership and the fact that women will be a permanent part of the legislative system ○ More and more women are coming at local level and corruption has decreased 	
<p>7. What to avoid</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Party laws – there is only a stipulation in party laws and there are no provisions for gender ratio in party bodies. (There is a stipulation that women candidates should be nominated but nomination doesn't necessarily mean elected to the legislature) 	

8. What helps/ what hinders the effective working of quotas

Hindrances

- There is a limitation as the officials in the local level have not become cooperative and they are still patriarchal.
- Impact on the higher level of politics is not there, men still prefer to choose men rather than women at most levels.
- No commitment of political parties (stakeholders) although they use quota as an election issue
- Women political party leaders – no trickle down effect of general empowerment of women party members
- No impact on political party leaders after decades of quota lobbying, no political culture to fill more women candidates (10% women candidates). This is in spite of the women's movements lobbying for pre-electoral commitment
- Political corruption

Enabling

- A stable democratic system and strong/ vibrant civil society groups/ networks
- Women in local politics have an impact – women proved that they can perform which led to the acceptance of female leadership at the local level, the notion of politics as a dirty business being reduced and increased group of women aspire for political office despite the traditional gender ideology still in place
- Women's groups act as support systems
- Women's NGOs involved in Capacity Building of elected women representatives