

Gender Equality in Political Party Funding

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1. Introduction

The role of money in politics, especially the funding of political parties and election campaigns, has recently become a topic of increased interest and concern. In particular, debates about regulating the financial conduct of political parties, from setting campaign limits to introducing disclosure laws, have assumed increasing significance. However, these debates rarely focus on the gender implications of party funding. The extent to which party funding regulations affect women and men differently is not well researched, and is often overlooked. This chapter looks through a “gendered” lens at the topic of political party funding.

It is apparent that modern political systems often do not afford equal opportunity for all citizens to participate and share in the decision-making process. Although the right of women to vote and stand for public office is guaranteed in all democracies today, women remain largely under-represented in national legislatures and local decision-making bodies. In 2002, the representation of women in national parliaments worldwide stood at 14,4 per cent.¹

There are a number of factors and conditions that favour or hinder the involvement of women in political life, including socio-economic development, patriarchy and cultural stereotyping. This chapter focuses on the issues of financing, that is, whether the observable fact that there are fewer women than men in the political process is due to women’s economic background and the financial resources available to them. Does financing constitute an obstacle for women seeking to hold public office? It will also provide some suggestions for overcoming the problems women may encounter accessing political finance.

The chapter reveals that the investigation of a gender perspective in party financing is a considerable challenge, largely breaking “new ground” in the area. There has been limited research focused on the issue at the global level, although the problem of funding in the United States is well documented. Beyond contributing to a gender perspective of the issues dealt with in this volume, this chapter is an attempt to stimulate further research into and interest in the issue, especially beyond the existing examples, drawn

essentially from richer and established democracies. Key questions are:

- Are insufficient resources a reason for the apparently small pool of women candidates?
- Can public money be used as an incentive to increase the representation of women?
- What strategies have been employed to assist women candidates at various stages of the electoral process?

2. Gender and Representative Democracy

Democracy today is the most direct means by which citizens are able to make key decisions about their lives, by electing political representatives in free and fair elections. Political parties are central to modern representative democracies, promoting essential competition on ideological and policy alternatives. They also provide the central link between the institutions of government and various elements of civil society. Whether ideologically they are placed Left, Right or Centre, parties are the main vehicles by which citizens elect or dismiss governments, and they maintain firm control over the nomination of candidates for elected office. Parties are key to ensuring that the social demands of different groups of society are supported and represented in parliament, including acting as gatekeepers of those candidates nominated and supported for election.

Contemporary notions of democracy provide that every citizen has the right to seek public office and participate in the process of decision making. However, in practice many social interests are not represented, as only a small proportion of the population seeks elective office and even fewer are elected. This oftentimes includes women, who quantitatively are the most under-represented social group in the world. Inequality of opportunity to participate in the decision-making process has been identified as a major problem in many modern political systems.

Various economic, political, social and systemic practices narrow the field of potential female

representatives. Systemic factors such as the type of electoral system employed by a country and the nature of the party system can also affect women's access to political life. The number of women candidates whose names are put forward for election therefore depends to a large extent on the attitude and support provided by political parties.

There is a strong argument that is articulated, especially in developing democracies, that electoral finance is an increasing obstacle to women's election to parliament and other representative institutions. This is partly because women have traditionally been relegated to the private, domestic sphere, and thus have neither the personal financial resources nor the moneyed networks to allow them to compete effectively in increasingly expensive electoral politics. This is particularly so in candidate-centred systems, as in the United States, where many women candidates have indicated that the most formidable obstacle they encountered in their pursuit for office was winning their party's nomination and financing their campaign (see Brodie 1991; Carroll 1994).

3. Funding the Electoral Process

In order for political parties to fulfil their democratic functions effectively, financial and other resources must support them. These include operational and infrastructural support as well as sufficient resources to communicate with their support bases. Party funding plays an important role in fostering competition among political parties and ensuring the representation and participation of all sectors of society. The different forms of party financing during election campaigns are discussed in chapter 1, and fall into two broad categories – public and private funding.

It is argued in this *Handbook* that an adequate system of rules for the funding of political parties, if properly enforced, should improve the equality of opportunity for all parties competing in an election. However, unequal access to recruitment and funding tends to favour the representation of socially advantaged sectors of society, reinforcing social and political inequalities. This is apparent when we examine the representation and participation of women in the electoral process, as well as that of other distinct groups in society.

The emerging evidence suggest that there are two key stages in the electoral process where money in politics has a direct bearing on women as potential

representatives: (a) the party nomination and recruitment stage, and (b) campaign financing.

3.1. The Party Nomination and Recruitment Stage

Typically, access to political office rests on being selected as a candidate by a party contesting an election. In some political systems elections are centred on individual candidates, in others they are centred on political parties, and in some there is a mix of the two. Legislation regulating the financing of political parties varies from country to country and with the political system in effect.

The initial recruitment of candidates to run for political office and the challenge at the nomination stage of being "taken on" by the party are major obstacles for many women seeking elected office. Funding and other forms of support are usually more forthcoming for women after they have won a party's nomination. Therefore, so long as few women are nominated or recruited by political parties, and provided with financial resources, the political representation of women will remain low.

In the United States, the decision to become a candidate and seek a party's nomination through a primary or party convention can be an individual one or it can involve a number of actors attempting to support or dissuade a potential candidate. It is a strongly candidate-centred system, in which parties nominate candidates only in the weakest sense, as winning a primary election usually determines candidature. Women with sufficient resources and credibility to mount a campaign can win direct primary contests and have proved to be as successful candidates as men. However, in the past several obstacles to women's representation have been identified – most notably **insufficient resources to campaign successfully for nomination**, resulting in a small pool of women candidates (Carroll 1994:24–25).

Women also face problems campaigning for election in other countries. Research conducted in Canada for the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing in the early 1990s demonstrated that the process of local candidate selection can prove a financial obstacle for women. The research found that the cost of contesting a party nomination was disadvantageous to women, who on average had less access to financial resources than men (Brodie 1991:7). However, even in strong party systems where elections

are ultimately contests between political parties rather than individual candidates, women encounter obstacles in seeking elected office. There is a small but growing literature highlighting the problems fund-raising can pose for women candidates.

The challenge of funding also applies to men, but there are several reasons why obtaining financial resources is especially problematic for women. These gender differences in funding include the following.

3.1.1. Psychological Barriers

Early studies on the effect of campaign funding on women argued that women potentially face greater psychological barriers than men in asking for money for their personal use (Carroll 1994:50). Men have traditionally been positioned as “breadwinners” in the domestic sphere and accustomed to raising money for their own use. By contrast, women were traditionally relegated to the private sphere, and as homemakers their history has not been one of raising funds on their own behalf. Today this is disputed in many countries, as socialization patterns have changed markedly in the past two decades where the economic status of women has improved (see Box 9). However, **sex-role socialization** remains a barrier for some women, particularly in traditional, patriarchal societies. It is also apparent that many women, like men, may be hesitant to run for election because of the “perceived” high cost of campaigning and difficulties of fund-raising, as shown in the United States. Burrell argues that party leaders and other politically influential persons need to encourage women to overcome this reluctance by convincing them that they can raise enough money to win (Burrell 1998:37).

3.1.2. Networks

It is often argued that men are able to campaign more effectively outside the party structure because they are more likely to be linked to business and professional networks which can provide the financial resources and expertise necessary to mount successful campaigns. Several researchers in the USA have argued that the undeveloped nature of the networks available to many women affects their fund-raising capabilities, as Carroll claims: “Most women are not well integrated into occupational and social networks that often serve as a major source of campaign funds. As a result, they may have difficulty obtaining money from sources commonly available to male candidates, who are more

likely to be part of such networks” (Carroll 1994:50).

This proposition was reiterated by the Canadian Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing: Because of women’s segregation in the private sphere they have neither the personal financial resources nor the moneyed networks to allow them to compete effectively in expensive electoral politics (Brodie 1991:39). The network argument reaches further into what is traditionally understood as the “all-boys network” within the party – most party leaderships today remain male-dominated, and women are often excluded from these networks. Research by the Center for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics (CAPWIP) has found that the male-dominated leadership structure develops a culture that excludes women and described the all-boys network as an informal clique of men in positions of power and those close to them. The absence of women from network occasions works against their effective participation in decision making (CAPWIP 1999:8). Furthermore, Lesley Abdela finds that in Central and Eastern Europe some candidates seek contracts with private companies in order to receive financial backing for campaigning. In some instances women are not thought to be a “safe bet”, and often a man may receive financial backing in preference to a woman (Abdela 2001).

3.1.3. The High Costs of Nomination Contests

A further obstacle is that, where they are able to raise the funds, women find it difficult to attract sufficiently large amounts. Brodie’s research in Canada found that the control of local nominations was slipping out of the hands of the local parties because those who are able to spend large amounts of money usually win the nomination contest. Her research led her to conclude that the high cost “severely disadvantages many groups that have traditionally been under-represented in Canadian politics, particularly women, who . . . have fewer links to financial backers” (Brodie 1991:40). The study reported that women saw financial factors as the biggest obstacle to their electoral success and suggested that the government should set limits on the amount of money spent during nomination contests (there is a limit on spending during the election campaign). While political parties assist women candidates with funding in the election campaign that follows nomination, there is little or no assistance at the nomination stage of the process (Erickson 1991:111).

MONEY IN UNITED STATES ELECTIONS

In the United States, being elected to national office is a two-stage process: A candidate must first win a party nomination, and then go on to contest and win the national election. The importance of money in winning an election in the USA has become a subject of great debate and interest. The money involved in waging a modern campaign, including costs of electronic media, direct mail and voter analysis, among other things, can now reach millions of dollars per candidate.

The effects of money on representation are enormous, as the amount of money that groups and individuals have to spend on politics influences who gets heard and what issues are debated (Burrell 1998:26). This has been a particular area of concern among gender activists and women's groups, as conventional wisdom held that women were disadvantaged in campaigns for election by their perceived lack of fund-raising skills.

However, recent research has demonstrated that, while there used to be differences, in the 1990s women candidates raised and spent as much as or more than their male counterparts. Examining the results of women and men during primary contests, Burrell finds that between 1988 and 1995 women did as well as or better than their male counterparts in raising money. She finds the same to be true for women running for the congressional elections; where women run, they do as well as or better than male candidates (Burrell 1998:27–28). These findings are supported by others in the USA, where investigations into campaign finance (in particular net receipts of the candidates in different stages of campaigning) confirm that women raise as much money as men for elections.

However, examining the processes by which women and men raise money provides some interesting observations. One of the main reasons for the increase in funding for women candidates was the emergence of fund-raising bodies that were dedicated to supporting women financially through pragmatic fund-raising principles. In 1992 (the Year of the Woman in the USA), record numbers of women were elected to the House of Representatives. It is not coincidental that in the same year record levels of contributions were received by

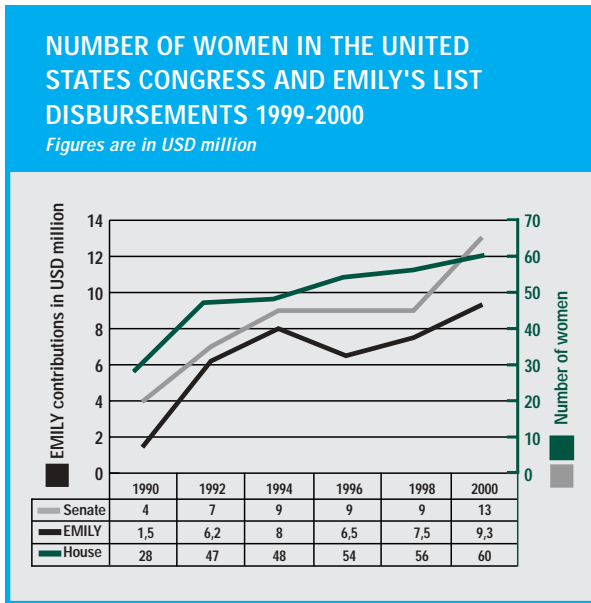
women's funding groups: Six national organizations gave a total of over USD 7 million (Int'l \$ 8,6 m.) to women candidates for national office.

In 1985 the best known of these women's groups, EMILY's List, was founded to channel "early money" to pro-choice Democratic women. Its strategy is to give women candidates access to early money, because Early Money Is Like Yeast (EMILY)—it makes the dough rise (Sullivan 1996:63). In 2000, EMILY's List members provided USD 9,3 million (Int'l \$ 9,3 m.) in funds to candidates. Other women's fund-raising groups include the Women's Campaign Fund, which is the oldest bipartisan women's fund-raising group, founded in 1974. The WISH List (Women in the Senate and House) is the Republican counterpart to EMILY and was founded in 1991. Figure 5 shows the increase in the number of women in the Senate and House along with the increase in money raised by EMILY's List.

Kate Sullivan explains that EMILY's List utilizes a loophole in the federal election campaign law known as "bundling" to help collect such large sums. Normally a funding group (often known as a Political Action Committee, or PAC) is limited to one USD 5,000 contribution to a candidate in an election. However, bundling allows groups such as EMILY to serve as the conduit for much larger donations. Individual members of the List write their cheque directly to the candidate, but send it to the List. The List then bundles all the contributions together and passes them on.

Sullivan continues that such methods have been able to provide a counterbalance to the traditional structure of campaign funding. Normally donors would give money to PACs, who themselves choose the recipients. EMILY's List, however, recommends candidates to members, who then make their own funding decisions. The success of this method among women (and the concept of the List has been copied by both Republicans and anti-choice groups) suggests that women have not yet fully acclimatized to the traditional approach of campaign contributors and have had to create their own sources of financial support (Sullivan 1996).

FIGURE 5.



Source: Table compiled by Kate Sullivan from EMILY's List, "History of EMILY's List", www.emilyslist.org/el-about/history.asp, and Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP), *Fact Sheet: Women in the US Congress 2001*, June 2001.

3.1.4. Early Money

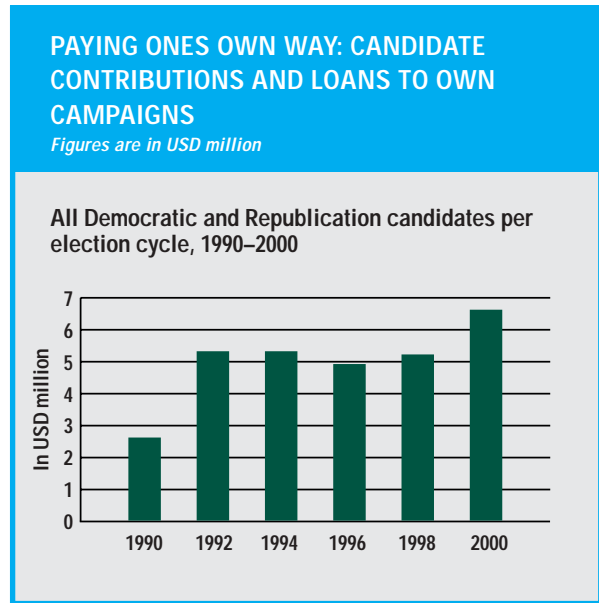
Early money is the initial financing a candidate requires in order to launch a campaign. It is often argued that the difficulties women face in primary elections and in receiving party nomination are the result of a shortage of early money. This early money is identified by some as crucial to have because it enables the candidate to establish name recognition, gain exposure and organize a campaign team – hire staff, arrange for headquarters and set up a telephone service, among other things. The acknowledgement that women needed early money in the campaign process was the inspiration behind the founding of EMILY's List. The efforts of organizations like EMILY's List have largely been responsible for the increase in the funding of women candidates.

However, it is important to note that in order to receive the backing of funding organizations during the primary election candidates often have to "self-finance" parts of the initial campaign. In the United States, obtaining this seed money is often problematic for many candidates. In many instances women candidates have resorted to taking out personal loans. Figure 6 demonstrates the vast sums of personal money invested by candidates in the election cycle in the United States.

3.1.5. Hidden Costs and Personal Financing

While the financial obstacles facing congressional candidates in the United States are arguably unrivalled elsewhere, other political systems provide examples of

FIGURE 6.



Source: US Federal Election Commission 2001.

obstacles in the realm of party funding. This is particularly so with regard to hidden personal costs, as demonstrated in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. These include:

1. *Interview Costs.* Norris and Lovenduski explain that applicants seeking to run for a parliamentary seat in the UK are initially faced with a number of interview costs. These include travel to successive meetings in different constituencies, clothes for interviews, overnight or weekend accommodation, and attending training sessions and party conferences, which are usually paid for personally. Although meagre compensation may come from the parties, the initial interview costs have proved sufficient to deter some women from continuing in the process (Norris and Lovenduski 1995:145).

2. *"Nursing" the Constituency.* If a candidate is adopted by the party, there are further personal costs in "nursing the constituency" for one or two years prior to the election. These include telephone, postage, transport and possibly secretarial costs, some of which may be taken up by well-resourced local parties (Norris and Lovenduski 1995:146). EMILY's List in the Labour Party (inspired by EMILY's List in the USA) may meet some of this expenditure for Labour women, yet a large amount of nursing the constituency is done by the candidate. Many women may feel they cannot

MORE, SOONER: SEED MONEY *

Since the emergence of groups like EMILY's List which focus on the power of early money in congressional campaigns, increasing attention has been paid to "seed" money and its role in attracting early money. As the competition for campaign financing heated up in the 1980s, more and more candidates started fund-raising earlier in the electoral cycle. As there was less competition for funds early in the cycle, many candidates perceived this early money to be, relatively speaking, easy money. Attention must be given, however, to what must be spent before early money can be accessed. This seed money can be considered the start-up funds of election campaigns, and was traditionally used for nomination costs and perhaps some preliminary advertising.

However, as elections have become more expensive and candidates' reliance on funding groups has grown, seed funding has increased in importance. Funders have become increasingly choosy about who gets money, especially early in a campaign cycle. This change has been accompanied by shifts in the perception of early money. Early money used to be for spending; now it is a calling card ("Look who supported me") as well as a preventive measure ("Look how much I've got").

This competition for early funds has allowed both PACs and donor networks like EMILY's List to be more demanding as to what is required before a candidate can

be considered for a contribution. EMILY's List has drawn fire for an insistence on polling data, and other like-minded groups require information on campaign staff and consultants, a registered campaign committee, fund-raising strategies and so on. While such organizations are obviously free to make their own rules, such requirements can also form a barrier to those seeking access to the political process.

Much seed money will often come from the candidate herself or himself. This self-financing is often a major obstacle for women. Women still earn less than their male counterparts, and the situation most women candidates find themselves in is not conducive to putting large sums of personal money into a campaign. As Paget and Matthews explain: "Self financing raises some complicated feelings for women who must commit family resources. If her husband has been the wage earner, will she feel entitled to commit these resources? (...) Widowed, divorced or single women have had to mortgage their homes, take out terrifyingly large loans and otherwise gamble their savings on winning their races. Male candidates must take (and have taken) these risks as well. For most women however, such financial risk-taking is a new experience, requiring a departure from deeply embedded tradition that puts the needs of others before personal ambition" (cited in Sullivan 1995:62–63).

* The material for this box was written by Kate Sullivan.

afford the financial investment required to nurse a seat.

3. *Family Responsibilities.* Certain structural barriers also pose obstacles for women at this stage. In particular, active campaigning demands time and flexibility which few people, particularly women, can afford. In many families women assume primary parenting responsibilities which are often extremely difficult to combine with long hours of campaigning (Herrnson 1995:3). Family commitments often mean that potential female candidates are deterred from running for office because they lack time for effective campaigning.

Abdela reiterates the points above by noting that the personal expenses of building a reputation and contesting a parliamentary seat are discouraging to some women. She notes that in the United Kingdom

there are a host of costs not funded by the party, including travel and hotel costs for attending party annual conferences, attending social and fund-raising events, childcare and clothing, that can cost between GBP 250 (Int'l \$ 340) and GBP 400 (Int'l \$ 550) per week. In addition, personal costs in an election year can amount to GBP 5,000 (Int'l \$ 6,900) (Abdela 2001).

Research undertaken by Joni Lovenduski and the Fawcett Society after the UK election in 2001 confirmed that some women encountered these obstacles in the selection process. The experiences of some Liberal Democrat and Labour Party women point to the fact that financial issues and childcare considerations are more likely to affect women than men. One Labour Party woman, for example, noted that the high cost of producing leaflets and literature for distribution "automatically preclude[s] those

mothers who are at home who just don't have the money to pay the child care, the petrol, the £500 stamps that you have to do to leaflet" (Fawcett Society and Lovenduski 2001).

There have been proposals in the UK to have childcare costs included in the campaign financing covered by the parties. The Fawcett Society recommends that systemic barriers to selection need to be removed, suggesting that: "Financial capability and lack of childcare commitments should not give a candidate a head start in the selection process. Assistance for candidates in financial difficulty and an understanding for candidates with caring responsibilities are essential if genuine equality of opportunity is to be achieved" (Fawcett Society and Lovenduski 2001).

The Canada Elections Act 1974, section 409(1)(b), makes provision for childcare expenses to be included in the personal expenses of a candidate for election, but not for the expenses incurred in the initial campaigning to receive nomination by the party. One of the recommendations in the Royal Commission in Canada noted that the cost of childcare imposes an unequal burden on many women seeking elected office and proposed that childcare is a necessary expense in seeking nomination as a candidate which should be considered a legitimate tax deduction.

These funding obstacles are not restricted to countries with candidate-centred electoral systems. Many women in strong party systems also encounter obstacles in campaigning for the party's nomination. Theoretically, proportional representation (PR)-based electoral systems place the onus of candidate selection on the political party, which acts as a gatekeeper to elected office. Yet women still need to build name recognition, canvass and be elected onto the party ticket. It may also be the case that candidates with money may be able to buy themselves a place high up on a party's list. However, once elected onto a party list, women in list-PR systems have a significant advantage over women contesting in constituency systems. Where political parties are responsible for campaigning, rather than the individual candidate in the constituency, women stand a greater chance of election provided they are placed in "electable" positions on the party list. Whatever may be the other effects of PR versus constituency electoral systems, PR systems take the financial pressure off individual candidates.

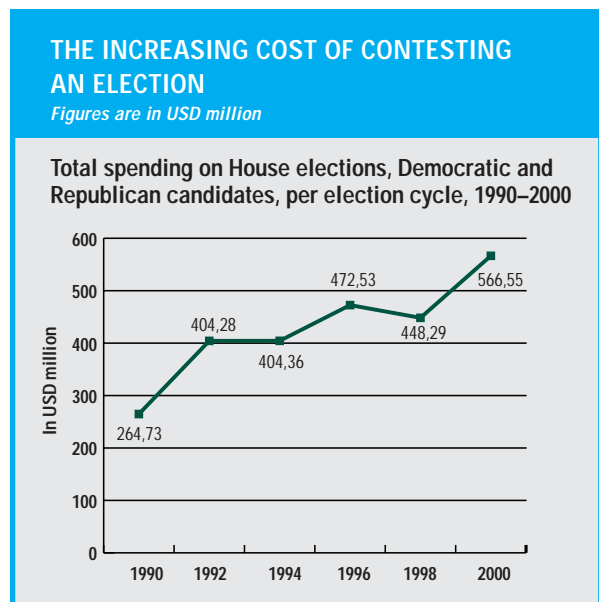
3.2. Campaign Financing

Where women succeed in winning a primary nomination and being recruited by a political party, they usually receive the financial backing of the party. In PR-based systems, campaigning proceeds on a party basis. Women may or may not be visible in the party election campaign, yet relying on the party ticket means that they usually do not need to raise their own funds for campaigning. However, in candidate-centred systems, where candidates rely on private funding to campaign (as in the USA), women again face obstacles in the party financing stakes.

3.2.1. The High Costs of Seeking Private Funding

With no public funding for congressional candidates, individual candidates and their campaigns are responsible for all fund-raising in the United States. The need to run two very expensive campaigns in one election cycle makes fund-raising a daunting task, especially for challengers and open-seat candidates. The expense involved in running an election campaign for congressional elections in the United States is well known. Money in congressional elections is primarily regulated by the Federal Elections Campaign Act of 1971 and subsequent amendments. The sections of the act that proposed a limit on the total expenditures allowable in a congressional election were ruled

FIGURE 7.



Source: Table compiled by Kate Sullivan from US Federal Election Commission, "FEC Reports on Congressional Financial Activity for 2000", New Release, 15 May 2001, www.fec.gov/press/051501congfinanact/051501confinanact.html; and attached table, "Financial Activity of All House of Representatives Candidates 1988-2000".

unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1976 as a denial of the First Amendment right of freedom of speech. As Sullivan notes, this equation of money with speech has remained prevalent in campaign funding (Sullivan 1996).

Winning an open seat (where no incumbent runs) is often associated with raising more money than one's opponent. In the 1992 US election, women made major gains in representation in the House of Representatives: Their numbers increased from 28 to 47. Carroll notes that the fact that more money was available to women candidates than previously and that many women were able to raise more money than their opponents was a contributing factor to the increase (Carroll 1994:165). In the 1980s, women candidates had faced several barriers in the campaign fund-raising regime, including the difficulties of self-financing, the reluctance to go into debt to make such a contribution, and the need to raise huge sums of money early on in the election cycle. As noted above, the important catalyst of change was the advent of women's networks providing early money and campaign support to women.

In many other countries, the high cost of running an election campaign with limited or no public funding can be disadvantageous to candidates. In Bangladesh the rapid growth of campaign costs (despite a limit on campaign spending) in elections has meant that candidates seek to raise large sums of money from various sources, including private companies, relatives and local business houses. Women are often affected during campaigning as they are seldom able to raise the large sums required to win an election, particularly if running against a male candidate. In the 2001 election, of the 36 women candidates, just five were elected in constituency seats (Khan 2001). The difficulties women face in winning a constituency election, including the large sums of money required, have prompted calls for a quota system ensuring a minimum representation of women in parliament on the basis of direct election.

3.2.2. *Cost and Incumbency*

Perhaps one of the most pervasive obstacles to women obtaining parity in the US House of Representatives is the **power of incumbency**. The incumbency advantage is powerful, and because the vast majority of incumbents are men, women's chances of succeeding in the House are limited (Burrell 1998:36). The US

political system is biased in favour of incumbents, and in 1972 nearly all incumbents were men. In the 1992 election only 7 per cent of sitting US representatives and 11,5 per cent of incumbent senators were defeated. Of the 41 women candidates who challenged incumbent members of the House, only two (4,8 per cent) won (Carroll 1994:162–163).

Women have been the challengers to a disproportionate extent and have therefore had difficulty in attracting contributors. Proposals for campaign finance reform, in particular for spending limits for individual candidates and time limits for term in office, are largely attributable to the tremendous advantages enjoyed by incumbents. In 1992, EMILY's List spent USD 6,2 million (Int'l \$ rate n/a) to increase the representation of women in the Senate from 2 to 6 per cent and raise the number of women representatives from 6 to 11 per cent – still huge under-representation (Burrell 1996:128). Women's PACs give an important boost to women candidates but have a limited affect on candidates who are running against well-entrenched incumbents. Half of the male candidates who run for the US House are incumbents, and have the large war chests of campaign funds of incumbents. This suggests that women do not enjoy equality of opportunity in running for the House.

3.2.3. *Lack of Resources*

In many developing democracies the lack of money to pay even modest candidate deposits can exclude women from the election process. In Tanzania, the Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP) finds that women candidates are affected by a relative lack of resources for campaigning compared with their male counterparts. Pottie finds that one result of this inequality is that few women run in the country's constituency seats, relying instead on the system of intra-party elections for access to reserved seats: Under the election law 20 per cent of seats in parliament are reserved for women. In the 2000 parliamentary elections only 71 out of the 862 candidates (8,2 per cent) were women, and a mere 12 were elected to the 232 constituency seats (Pottie 2002). This is in stark contrast to the 37 women elected to the reserved seats.

The scarcity of resources is often felt hardest among new parties or those not represented in parliament, as only represented political parties receive public funds in Tanzania. Parties are also able to raise their own private funding, and the incumbent party is usually

advantaged in this regard. Several women from opposition parties interviewed prior to the 2000 parliamentary elections in Tanzania expressed a similar view: The biggest problem they faced was a lack of financial resources for effective campaigning. Women candidates often had to finance the costs of transport and campaigning materials themselves, expenses which they could barely afford. This was particularly problematic in rural areas where the cost of transport to reach rural voters is very high. Because of the expense involved, some candidates resorted to door-to-door campaigning, often with a limited impact (Ballington, da Silva and Pottie 2001:24).

4. Options for Ensuring Gender Equality in Party Financing

Equality is a central component of democracy, where equality of opportunity and access to decision-making positions for both genders are fundamental. Yet it is apparent that in all parts of the world today certain conditions hinder women's active participation in political life. An analysis of the available information examining the effects of party funding on women has shown that various national realities mean that women face obstacles in the realm of party financing.

The Plan of Action to Correct Present Imbalances in the Participation of Men and Women in Political Life adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in 1994 notes that support for candidates in elections is important, where political parties, NGOs and other 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 for election" (Inter-Parliamentary Union 1994). The analysis provided above suggests several proposals for reform. These options for reform include the following:

4.1. Limits on Campaign Spending

In order to ensure equality of opportunity for all candidates, one option is to limit electoral campaign expenses. In the United States, many women activists call for political reform to limit campaign expenses. Women are often unable to raise the same levels of funding as men. Setting a ceiling on campaign expenditure and limiting the campaign period, it has been suggested, would promote the ability of all

individuals to participate in political life on an equitable basis.

The financial obstacles to party recruitment prevent many from seeking nomination, compromising the principle of equality of opportunity and fairness. It has been demonstrated that the considerable sums required to win a party nomination pose a financial barrier to women. A further option is therefore to regulate the expenses of the nomination contest.

4.2. Fund-Raising Networks

Women's fund-raising organizations have a huge effect on the flow of money to women candidates. As has been demonstrated, fund-raising groups in the USA have been very influential in raising and mobilizing funds for women. These fund-raising networks are particularly important where there is no public funding and candidates have to raise private funds to contest an election. "Private financing can be an advantage for women, but only if there are highly organised women's interest and campaign groups" (Matland 2001).

4.3. Public Funding: Levelling the Playing Field

The provision of public funding to political parties is commonly proposed and sometimes implemented in the electoral period. It is usually premised on providing a level playing field for candidates, particularly in countries where democratic participation has been denied under colonialism or other forms of political exclusion (Pottie 2002). While public funding is aimed at parties represented in parliament, it could also be extended to political bodies representing a significant section of the electorate. As political parties are deemed to represent the interests of those who vote for them, another option is to use public funding as an avenue to ensure the representation of women in the party system.

Public funding can be regulated in such a way as to ensure that parties nominate a certain percentage of women candidates for election. After all, the parties' decision on "who competes" is a key variable in "who governs". In France a modification of article 3 in the constitution was approved in June 1999 whereby the law now "favours the equal access of women and men to electoral mandates and elected offices and positions". The parity principle requires that 50 per cent of candidates on lists forwarded for election must be women, or political parties face financial sanctions. The reform is designed to ensure parity between men

and women in access to political office in all list elections in France – for the European Parliament, provincial and municipal assemblies as well as elections for the National Assembly. The reform will also apply to list elections in the Territorial Assembly of French Polynesia and for Wallis and Futuna, and in elections for the Provincial Assembly and Congress of New Caledonia (communes with less than 3.500 inhabitants are exempt).

For local elections in constituencies with over 3.500 inhabitants, the lists must be made up of an equal number of candidates of both sexes; the lists that do not respect these rules are not registered. As a direct result of this sanction, in 2001 47,5 per cent of the councillors elected in towns with more than 3.500 inhabitants were women (Doublet 2002). For the election of candidates to the lower house, political parties face financial sanctions if they do not put forward 50 per cent candidates of both sexes. As is noted elsewhere in this *Handbook*, enforcement is a major problem in this field, and the French regulation has an important feature of promoting enforcement. Parties will lose part of the public funding based on the number of votes during the first ballot of election to the lower house (Doublet 2002). They are penalized when the difference between the number of candidates of each sex goes beyond 2 per cent of the total number of candidates on the list. For example, if a party presents 55 per cent of candidates from one sex and 45 per cent from the other, the 10 per cent gap between the sexes results in a 5 per cent reduction in the public funding it receives. At the extreme, a party presenting 100 per cent candidates from the same sex will have its public funding reduced by half.²

This type of “incentive” tied to public funding has been proposed by a number of women’s organizations as one way to address the low recruitment of women worldwide.

4.4. Specific Financial Barriers

Childcare costs are a legitimate and necessary expense for many candidates seeking nomination. The Canadian Royal Commission into Electoral Reform and Party Financing recommended that childcare costs should be included as legitimate expenses for both nomination contests and general elections. Childcare is currently considered a personal expense in the campaign period but not in the nomination process.

BOX 11.

SUMMARY OF OPTIONS FOR FUNDING REFORM

1. Limit campaign spending in primary or nomination contests.
2. Provide early money to women contestants.
3. Limit campaign spending and impose campaigning time limits.
4. Establish networks for the financing of women’s electoral and nomination campaigns. This is particularly important for women in systems where there is no access to public funding.
5. Provide incentives through public funding: The amount of funding a party receives could be linked to or dependent on the number of women candidates it puts forward for election.
6. Include childcare costs in nomination and election expenses.
7. Conduct more research into the effects of campaign financing on women and explore more avenues for reform.

Endnotes

¹ The finding is according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union and includes parliaments which have not been elected through credibly free electoral processes.

See <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>

² Two laws have been adopted to affect the changes: Law no. 2000-463 of 6 June 2000, and Law no. 2000-612 of 4 July 2000. On the debate in the Assemblée Nationale on the bill promoting equal access of women and men to electoral mandates and elected offices, see Assemblée Nationale, Rapport d’information fait au nom de la Délégation aux Droits des Femmes et à l’égalité des chances entre les hommes et les femmes [on bills no. 2013 and 2012], document no. 2074, 18 January 2000 on the Assemblée Nationale Internet site: www.assemblee-nationale.fr/rap-info/i2074.asp.

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