

Case Study: Indonesia

Enhancing Women's Political Participation in Indonesia

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The history of representation in the Indonesian Parliament is one of a long process of women's struggles in the public sphere. The first Indonesian Women's Congress in 1928, which prompted the emergence of an increased women's nationalist activism, is a turning point in history because of the role the Congress played in improving opportunities for Indonesian women to participate in all aspects of development. Women played a major role, in the armed services and generally in the public sphere, during the struggle for independence up to and after 1945.

However, after independence, along with the homecoming of men from the war, patriarchal values broadly re-emerged, as did the perception that the role of women was to manage the household. In the first general election of 1955, women made up 6.5 percent of those elected to the Parliament. Since this election, women's representation has ebbed and flowed, peaking at 13.0 percent in 1987. After the first general election of the reform era, in 1999, women made up 8.8 percent of the elected representatives, rising to 11.3 percent in 2004.

The under-representation of women in the Indonesian Parliament is due to a range of obstacles. This case study presents the history of women's participation, the various obstacles faced by Indonesian women gaining access to political institutions, and strategies to increase their representation in politics.

The National Context

Under normal political circumstances, general elections in Indonesia are held every five years. The first general election was held in 1955, ten years after Indonesia achieved independence from colonialism under the Soekarno presidency. From 1955 onwards, changes in the way in which general elections were conducted altered the numbers of political parties participating in the elections and brought about a different pattern of

women's representation within the political parties. The 1955 election was recognized as democratically acceptable: several candidates came from women's organization affiliated with the wide range of political parties which contested the election, and 17 women were elected to the legislature.

The second election was not held because the Constituent Assembly, which had been charged with amending the 1945 constitution, was unable to complete its task, and President Soekarno issued a decree in July 1959 that returned Indonesia to the terms of the 1945 constitution. At this point, Indonesia became a 'guided democracy'. The transition to the New Order of President Soeharto took place without an election. General elections were held in the New Order era in 1971, 1977, 1982, 1987, 1992 and 1997. In the New Order elections, with a system under which a single party was dominant, women's representation was determined by the party's national-level elites. The candidates were all chosen by and beholden to the national-level elites; some of them had close relationships with the party elites. Under the closed-list proportional representation (PR) electoral system, candidates were not necessarily involved actively in election campaigns, and there was often little relationship between those who were elected and their constituents.

The end of authoritarianism and the transition from the Soeharto government to that of B. J. Habibie in 1998 was followed by an early election in 1999. For this election, the electoral process underwent significant changes, and the recruitment of party candidates for the legislature, including women, required the approval of the regions, specifically the regional party officials (although this did not apply to representatives from the armed forces and the police, who served as legislators until September 2004). The majority of the women elected in 1999 participated actively in the electoral process, through community advocacy, discussions, speeches and other party activities associated with the election campaign.

After the 1999 election, Abdurrahman Wahid was chosen as the new president by the Majelis Permusyawaratan (MPR, People's Consultative Assembly) but was subsequently replaced by his deputy, Megawati Soekarnoputri, in 2001. During these two presidencies, a major process of constitutional amendment took place, under which Indonesia changed from an integrationist state in which the MPR was the single highest institution of the nation to a conventional presidential system with separation of powers. As a result, Indonesia held elections for the national legislature and for provincial and district legislatures in 2004, accompanied by the first election for the newly established second chamber of the legislature, the regional Dewan Perwakilan Daerah (DPD, Representatives' Council). These elections were followed by Indonesia's first-ever direct presidential election, conducted in 2004 using a Two-Round system.

The DPD, which is an upper house with limited powers, was elected using the Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV). At first sight surprisingly, there is a higher proportion of women representatives in the DPD than in the legislature (the Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat, DPR, House of Representatives): there are 27 women

out of 128 (21 percent) in the DPD compared with 11.5 percent in the DPR. The DPD, however, is unlike the national and local legislative bodies in that individual candidates, not political parties, are the participants in DPD elections. In some areas, women candidates clearly attracted support from women voters.

The new election law for the 2004 general elections made two important changes which could affect women's representation in the national and regional/district legislatures. The first was the introduction of a limited open-list system, in which voters could vote for a party and also a candidate from that party, and a candidate who received a predetermined number of individual votes would be elected even if not placed high enough on the party list. In practice, however, few candidates were able to poll enough individual votes for this to make a significant difference.

Much more important was the new provision requiring parties to 'bear in their hearts' the desirability of 30 percent of nominated candidates being women, which can be described as a 'maybe quota'. Although this was not imperative, and in addition it contained no provisions about the position of women on party lists, many parties did attempt to fulfil the requirement to propose 30 percent women candidates in their lists for elected bodies at all levels. This is an important first step, but needs to be strengthened and its enforcement made mandatory.

The requirement of 30 percent representation did not come only from women activists' awareness of the importance of legislation to improve women's representation in politics. Its origin also lay in the response of some parties in the legislature first to the consideration of the amendment to the constitution (although the constitution does not address the issue, either in its original or in its revised form), and then in debate on the new political party law of 2002. Although these attempts were not successful, they did motivate various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in favour of the expansion of women's representation to bring together and to approach and pressure the legislators working on the bill for the new election law. It was these movements that led to the agreement (article 65(1) of the election law, UU12/2003) that each political party participating in the election should bear in its heart the desirability of a minimum of 30 percent of women in each region for the national, provincial and district-level legislators in their lists of electoral candidates.

Representation of Women in the Legislatures (DPR, MPR, DPD)

In addition to the 1945 constitution and its amendments (completed in 2002), the policy basis for the functioning of the government was determined by the elaboration of the 1945 constitution that had been developed by the MPR in the Garis-Garis Besar Haluan Negara (GBHN, Broad Guidelines of State Policy). From 1988, these guidelines contained provisions regarding the role of women, and there has in addition been a junior Ministry for Women's Affairs (latterly for Women's Empowerment). In the 1999 Broad Guidelines, it was declared that the empowerment of women would be conducted through a twofold strategy. First, improvements would be made in

the position and role of women in the nation and state, through national policies formulated and implemented by institutions responsible for gender equality and justice. Second, improvements would be made in the quality, role and independence of women's organizations, in continuing efforts to empower women and safeguard the prosperity and well-being of the family and society. These guidelines applied to all state agencies, including the executive (the president), the judiciary (the Supreme Court), the legislature (DPR/MPR) and the state audit agency (Badan Pemeriksa Keuangan, BPK). Under the amended constitution, the Broad Guidelines no longer exist: they have been replaced by the president's vision and mission.

It is not, however, the provisions of legislation that hinder women's access to legislatures. In reality, the representation of women in legislative bodies at both the national level and the provincial and district levels (in the regional and District People's Representative Assemblies (DPRDs)) is still relatively low. In 1999, approximately 6 percent of the members of provincial DPRDs and fewer than 5 percent of the members of district DPRDs were women. Accurate figures for the number of women members of DPRDs are still not available after the 2004 elections—which speaks for itself.

Table 5: Women in Formal Political Institutions in Indonesia, 2005

Institution	Women		Men	
	Total	%	Total	%
DPD (upper house)	27	21.0	101	79
DPR (constituent assembly)	63	11.5	487	88.5
Supreme Court	8	14.8	40	85.2
State Audit Agency	0	0	7	100
National Election Commission	2	18.1	9	81.9
Governor (provincial level)	0	0	30	100
Mayor/Regent (metropolitan district/regency level)	5	1.5	331	98.5
Civil Service Echelon IV & III*	1,883	7.0	25,110	93.0
Judges*	536	16.2	2,775	83.8
State Civil Court*	35	23.4	150	76.6

* Data based on the speech delivered by the State Minister for the Empowerment of Women, Khofifah Indar Parawansa, 21 June 2001. This estimate is not believed to have changed greatly since 2001.

Source: Data formulated by the Division on Women and the Elections (CETRO), 2001; Profile of DPD Members 2004–2009; and the Secretariat of the Indonesian legislature (DPR-RI).

In the 2004 election, the number of women in the legislature increased by 2.5 percent in comparison with the election of 1999, as table 6 shows.

Table 6: Representation of Women in Indonesia: The House of Representatives (DPR)

	Women		Men	
	Total	%	Total	%
1950–5 (Provisional DPR)	9	3.8	236	96.2
1955–60	17	6.3	272	93.7
Constituent Assembly:1956–9	25	5.1	488	94.9
1971–7	36	7.8	460	92.2
1977–82	29	6.3	460	93.7
1982–7	39	8.5	460	91.5
1987–92	65	13.0	500	87.0
1992–7	65	12.5	500	87.5
1997–9	54	10.8	500	89.2
1999–2004	45	9.0	500	91.0
2004–2009	62	11.3	488	88.7

Note: Based on the 1955 election, the DPR contained 272 representatives, but President Soekarno formed the Constituent Assembly to revise the constitution. This assembly was dismissed by Soekarno in July 1959 because it was deadlocked.

Source: DPR Secretariat, 2001. Data formulated by the Division on Women and the Elections, CETRO, 2002. With this level of representation, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) places Indonesia in 75th position out of more than 180 countries in terms of women's representation in the legislature (January 2005).

Although there is an increase in the number of women representatives, there is still a tendency for women to hold posts that are traditionally seen as 'soft' (i.e. relating to women's issues), so that the distribution of female members in the commissions of the national legislature reflects traditional patterns for dividing responsibilities between men and women. The highest percentage of women members is found in Commission VIII (religion, social, empowerment of women), followed by Commission X (education, youth, sport, tourism, art and culture), as shown in table 7. Women's representation is relatively low in 'prestige' commissions which deal with economics, poverty and politics, which are significant in determining executive programmes and budget.

While the amended 1945 constitution states that 'all citizens are equal before the law' and that the 'government guarantees freedom of union and association, and to express opinions both orally and writing', nevertheless the low representation of women in politics persists. It is rooted in a patriarchal culture. In spite of positive action measures, such as the quota for women representatives, women are still facing various obstacles in achieving equality with men in all aspects of life.

Table 7: Members of Commissions of the Indonesian Legislature, by Gender, 2005

Commission	Women		Men	
	Total	%	Total	%
I. Defence, International Affairs, and Information	1	2.1	45	97.9
II. Home Affairs, Regional Autonomy, Bureaucracy, and Land Affairs	5	10.2	44	89.8
III. Constitution and Law, Human Rights, and Security	6	13.3	39	86.7
IV. Agriculture, Estate, Forestry, Sea Resources, Fishery and Food	2	4.0	48	96.0
V. Transportation, Telecommunications, Public Works, Housing, Village Development, and Less Developed Region	2	3.8	50	96.2
VI. Trade, Industry, Investment, Cooperatives, Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises, and Public Enterprises	5	9.4	48	90.6
VII. Energy, Mineral Resources, Research and Technology, and Environment	2	3.9	49	96.1
VIII. Religion, Social and Women Empowerment	14	31.1	31	68.9
IX. Population, Health, Manpower, and Transmigration	9	20	36	80.0
X. Education, Youth, Sports, Tourism, Arts and Culture	10	20.8	38	79.2
XI. Finance and National Development Planning, Banking, and Non-bank Institutions	6	10.7	50	89.3
Total (100%)	62		478	

Source: DPR Secretariat, 2002. Data formulated by the Division of Women and the Elections, CETRO, 2002.

Obstacles Preventing Women from Becoming Members of Parliament

There are several factors influencing the patterns of the recruitment of men and women as legislators.¹ They include the following.

- The cultural context in Indonesia is still heavily patriarchal. The common perception is that the political arena is for men, and that it is less preferable for women to become members of parliament.
- The selection of candidates by political parties is usually done by a small group of officials or party leaders, almost always men. In Indonesia awareness of gender equality and justice issues is still low. Male political leaders have a disproportionate influence over party politics and women do not receive much support.

- The media have yet to effectively mobilize the public regarding the importance of women's representation in parliament.
- Despite the existence of women's organizations fighting for the goal of increased representation of women (since 1999), there is little effective networking among these organizations, NGOs and political parties towards this common goal.
- Poverty and the low levels of education of women make it difficult to recruit women who have the political capabilities that would allow them to compete on an equal basis with men. The standard for qualification set by the 2003 electoral law allows candidates with at least a senior high school degree to compete in elections. The women who have the political abilities required tend to engage in advocacy or choose non-partisan roles.
- Women with families often experience obstacles, in particular opposition from their spouses.
- Political activities usually require large investments of time and money, and many women hold positions that are not rewarding financially.
- The large number of political parties contesting elections and winning seats in parliament can affect the level of representation of women. As political parties receive a limited number of seats in the legislature, these tend to be divided among male candidates who tend to be ranked at the top of the party election list.

Strategies to Increase the Representation of Women

First and foremost, the links between women's networks and organizations must be supported and strengthened.

There are currently several major associations of women's organizations. For example, the Kongres Wanita Indonesia (KOWANI, National Council of Women's Organizations of Indonesia) is a federation of 78 women's organizations which cooperates with women from a range of different religions, ethnicities and professional organizations. The BMOIWI (Federation of Indonesian Muslim Women Organizations) is a federation of approximately 28 Muslim women's organizations. The Center for the Political Empowerment of Women is a network of organizations that cuts across party, religious and professional lines and includes approximately 26 organizations. All these networks have significant potential to support increased representation of women in parliament, both in quantitative and qualitative terms, if they and their member organizations work together to synergize their efforts.

Further strategies include:

- increasing the representation of women in political parties by introducing a quota system within political parties and ensuring the accession of women to strategic decision-making positions;
- conducting advocacy with the leaders of political parties to enhance awareness of the needs of a significant voting block;

- enhancing women's access to the media as a tool to rally public opinion;
- empowering women through education, training and increased access to information; and
- introducing a formal quota with enforcement mechanisms to increase the number of women members of the legislature.

The Road Ahead

Since the Habibie administration (1998–9), there has been greater openness in the political system. The number of NGOs has grown and the limitations on the activities of political parties have been lifted. This new atmosphere has benefited women: NGOs active in the area of women's rights have enhanced their activities. During the Wahid administration, the situation improved further. Two political caucuses of women emerged—the *Kaukus Perempuan Parlemen* (Women's Legislative Caucus) and the *Kaukus Politik Perempuan Indonesia* (Indonesian Political Women's Caucus).

These associations began to develop a network for women in the parliament, leaders of political parties, leaders of mass organizations, and other stakeholders to increase and strengthen their efforts. In general, these associations lobbied for a legislated quota of at least 20–30 percent for women. The result was the inclusion in the new Electoral Law passed in February 2003 of the provision that political parties 'should bear in their hearts' including women as 30 percent of all electoral candidates. This was something of a victory for the groups that had lobbied hard for quotas, although its implementation has been weak. It was not universally welcomed at the time: then President Soekarnoputri expressed reservations during her Mother's Day address on 27 December 2001, saying that a quota would in fact reduce women's standing, and place an increased burden on women and on the institutions they would occupy.

Finally, aside from the issue of a quota, one pressing issue is that the level of representation of women in parliament could be increased and the aspirations of the community could be better channelled through further revisions to the electoral law. Until now the system in force in Indonesia has been a PR system. Many argue that PR gives women the best opportunity to increase representation, as women can be forwarded for election through the use of candidates' lists (see, e.g., chapter 3 of this Handbook). If women are well represented on these lists in a beneficial ranking, they stand a good chance of being elected. Revisions to the electoral law to ensure this can therefore have a positive impact on the election of women to the Indonesian Parliament in future.

Note

- ¹ For further detail of some of the obstacles, see Matland, Richard E., 2001. 'Sistem Perwakilan dan Pemilihan Kaum Perempuan: Pelajaran Untuk Indonesia' [Representation and election system for women: Lessons learned for Indonesia], in *Keterwakilan Perempuan dan Sistem Pemilihan Umum* [Women's representation and the electoral system]. Jakarta: National Democratic Institute and State Ministry for Women Empowerment, p. 22.

Further Reading

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