



A DIAGNOSIS OF WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION: Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea

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**SUB-REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON SPECIAL
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Candidates' Profiles

- The twenty-six women contesting 2006 elections in Solomons did not typify the traditional female role.
- Varied social backgrounds, some members of chiefly families, others from families holding church leadership, a number having their own or a family business, which provided standing and support for their candidacies.



Candidates' Profiles- Solomons

- Significant percentage married to foreigners, educated outside Solomons, or had lived abroad.
- Large number did not live in their electorates ,failed to build constituency support base. 81% lived in Honiara, stood in different constituencies
- Notable percentage were widowed, divorced, or separated.



Candidates' Profiles-PNG

Of the 47 women attending the Diagnostic Workshop (less than 50% of female candidates):

- 15% university educated, almost 50% attained senior secondary Grades 10-12;
- Over 50% between 40-50 yrs, with 20% 50+



Cultural Barriers- '*Big Man*' leadership

- Closely related to the lack of visibility of women in leadership and public life is the notion of 'big man' leadership.
- The "big man" leadership system is commonly founded upon the three fold model of Warrior, Feast giver and Priest roles.



Cultural Barriers- '*Big Man*' *leadership*

- Big man leadership system is strongly associated with masculinity, strength, power and wealth and therefore leaders are expected to be men.
- Leadership is more acquired than hereditary and is transactional, based on indebtedness and networks of exchange, of giving and receiving goods. (which applies to the political system)



Cultural Barriers- PNG

This cultural bias was highlighted in 2002 by Dame Carol Kidu:

On several occasions, both in 1997 and 2002, some men (and perhaps women) rationalised their decision to vote for me in spite of my sex by saying that, 'She understands these things because she is a "nao hahine" (expatriate) but we would not vote for our own women.'

Kidu, C & Setae, S, 2002. 'Winning and losing in politics: Key issues in Papua New Guinea', Development Bulletin, no. 59, pp. 51-53



Cultural Barriers- Solomons

- Some traditional elders asserted that the appropriate place for women was inside the household and the garden.
- leadership positions were only for men, in one instance demanding pigs as compensation for a woman challenging traditional leadership, in another threatening to fine any woman voting for a female candidate.



Cultural Barriers- Solomons

- Religious leaders were also influential in upholding male leadership norms, claiming that the Bible does not support women in leadership.
- Supporters of male competing candidates often deliberately undermined the position of these women candidates, asking unmarried women whether they were going to become an “O2”, a second wife, without control of finances.



Areas of focus

- Electoral systems and processes
- Training and Capacity Building
- Finance
- Campaign
- Partnerships



National Electoral System- PNG

- The 'First-Past-The-Post' (FPTP) system which operated in PNG prior to the 2007 elections had the 'winner takes all', with political parties less likely to nominate women candidates.
- In 2007 for the first time since independence, PNG at a national level used the system of Limited Preferential Voting (LPV) which should have been more favourable to women.



Organic Law on Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates –PNG

This law should have enhanced women's chances of political representation, since in addition to having a voice on the Integrity Commission, the law stipulates:

- a representative of the National Council of Women must serve on the Central Fund Board of Management (CFBM).
- Section 62 provides financial incentives to political parties to put forward women candidates – if a woman candidate gets 10 percent of votes in her constituency, the CFBM is required to refund 75 percent of associated expenses.



Organic Law on Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates –PNG

- Despite the financial incentives for parties to field female candidates, the number of women candidates endorsed by political parties in 2007 was relatively low.
- Of the 34 officially registered political parties, only 21 endorsed women candidates numbering 36 altogether.
- As in the Solomons, majority of women candidates stood as independent candidates



National Electoral System- Solomon Islands

- Both at the national and provincial levels, the 'first-past the post' (FPTP) system,
- coupled with an unregulated weak party structure generated a predominance of independent candidates and a necessity for unrestricted levels of campaign funding.



Candidate Registration

- PNG candidate registration disadvantageous for independent women candidates who regarded K 1,000 registration fee as a barrier;
- Also criticized the candidate criteria as too lax allowing convicts and polygamists to register.
- Last minute registrations and parachuting “fly-by-night” candidates into electorates were seen as not favouring women.



Voter Registration

- In PNG voter registration was regarded as problematic with the common roll seen as inaccurate, incomplete and inconsistent, and the need to renew registration unclear to voters.
- Some women candidates witnessed male candidates actively tampering with the common roll and bribing electoral officials, and a widespread practice of voter substitution.



Voter Registration

According to the reports of a number of women candidates in Solomon Islands:

- Registrar was located in a particular place in the village and people had to go there to register, whereas in previous elections registration had been undertaken 'door-to-door'.
- In some instances, officially appointed registrars sub-contracted the task, often to individuals involved in campaigning for parliamentary candidates, who then either registered voters who supported their candidate or used the process to canvass support.



Polling Stations-PNG

- PNG candidates raised issues of voter intimidation, tension among voters, lack of separate male and female polling booths (trialled in some areas- any evaluation?)
- Bribery and corruption evident with double voting, ballot boxes kept overnight in insecure places, well financed candidates feeding the electors before they voted,, polling staff being candidates' family members.



Polling stations- Solomon Islands

As noted in the Commonwealth Observer Report on the 2006 elections:

The majority of the polling stations visited were totally staffed by male officials. Only three polling stations visited had a woman as a presiding officer. There were some women polling assistants and polling agents but they were in a severe minority”.



Voter and civic education

- In Solomons no gender-sensitive content explaining the importance of women's vote to defend women's interests, encouraging women to vote and to stand for election and leadership positions.
- Failed to raise awareness of citizens about their part and responsibility in reducing corruption.



Voter and civic education

- In PNG, through Electoral Support Program (ESP), AusAID funded the development of a Training Manual , Everybody's Business! Awareness Training for Civil Society to increase understanding about good leadership and democratic governance.
- A separate section, Topic 5 *Women and Elections- a Woman's Road Blocks to Voting* the issues of gender equality and women's leadership were not mainstreamed throughout the other topics



Training and Capacity Building

- In Solomons in 2006 women candidates had access to two capacity building trainings, one run by the Women in Leadership (WIL) programme of the National Council of Women, the other by UNIFEM.
- The WIL Programme aimed to develop the capacity of potential female candidates and to equip them with the required skills in public speaking and campaigning.



Training and Capacity Building

- UNIFEM Australia undertook training using the UNIFEM Pacific Women and Political Empowerment Manual which focused on building confidence, public speaking, campaigning and good governance.
- Between 50 to 70 participants attended the training including 18 potential candidates.
- But very few actual candidates participated in either trainings.



Finances - Campaign costs

- In both Solomon and PNG finances were seen as biggest barrier to women's participation;
- Campaign funds were either personal/family finances or raised in informal sector by selling water, fruit, chickens etc and by support from business community, tribe, clan and family members.
- Much of it was spent on staff, transport, fuel, food, managers and scrutineers.



Finances - Campaign costs

- In PNG was claimed that bribery and vote-buying were widespread, with K50 being paid to electors for Vote 1, K30 for Vote 2 and K 20 for Vote 3 under the LPV system.
- Media access was also costly and thereby prohibitive for women candidates, with a radio programme costing K1,000 and other campaigning equipment such as 2xcruisers, plus speakers, 2 x K4000, Outboard motors – boat.



Finances - Campaign costs

- In Solomon Islands, failure by the Electoral Commission to enforce its regulated campaign expenditure ceiling of \$50,000 resulted in astronomical amounts being distributed among the electorate
- particularly on the eve of the election, ("devil's night") often by candidates who had rarely visited their constituencies either before or during the month-long campaign.



Campaign

- In both PNG and Solomons, majority of women campaigned on community issues: health, education, welfare, environment, anti-corruption, gender inequality.
- Voters were desensitised to issues of integrity and honesty.
- Women candidates used their community status, community groups, party policies, family name and relationships and personal profiles.



Campaign

Despite lack of funds, women employed a number of campaign strategies to reach out to their constituencies:

- Rallies,
- village-to-village visits and public meetings,
- sensitization workshops for campaign teams,
- meetings organised with women's organisations and youth groups in villages to share their ideas and manifestos and gain support.



Campaign Strategies and Media

- In both PNG and Solomons, candidates invited people for campaign dinners or made presentations to their congregations after the church services.
- Pamphlets, flyers and posters were also used by some candidates.
- BUT failure to develop a clear women's electoral message or to have a common campaign strategy was a major area of weakness for all women candidates.



To be a Successful Candidate : Alice Aruhe'eta Pollard, August 2006

If it was for being religious or a committed Christian member of a church, No, it didn't work for me

If it was for being interested and connected to my rural communities, No, it didn't work for me

If it was for working with rural women, No, it didn't work for me either

If it was for a member of a political party, No, it didn't work for me

If it was for commitment to family values, No, it didn't work for me



To be a Successful Candidate : **Alice Aruhe'eta Pollard**

If it was for high educational attainment, No, it didn't work for me,

If it was for thorough campaigning, No, it didn't work for me

If it was for a member of a chiefly and church leader family, No, it didn't work for me at all

If it was for good leadership, No, it didn't work for me,

What did the winning candidate have that I don't have? \$\$\$, he is a male and had support from the powerful ascribed traditional leadership.