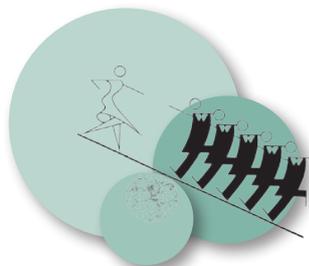


# Women in Parliament in 2010

## The Year in Perspective



### At a Glance

In 2010, there were renewals for 67 chambers in 48 countries. Half of these renewals brought more women into parliament. In one-fifth of the chambers women's representation stayed the same as in the previous legislature. More worrying is that in 28.5% of cases fewer women made it to parliament.

By the end of 2010 women held 19.1% of all parliamentary seats worldwide, an all-time high that confirms the pattern of slow progress over the past 15 years from a world average of 13.1% in 2000. The number of chambers that have reached the UN target of 30% now stands at 43, a slight drop from 2009. Sixty-two chambers remain below the 10% mark, and 10 chambers have no women at all.

At the leadership level, two parliaments saw women speakers elected for the first time: Mozambique and the United Republic of Tanzania. Women account for 14.1% of presiding officers in parliament. Similarly, a number of countries appointed their first female head of state. Currently nine countries have elected women as head of state and 13 have appointed a woman as head of government. However, the election of a women leader does not necessarily equate with stronger representation of women in parliament, and in many instances these countries (Brazil, for example) recorded slight setbacks.

### Ten Chambers Reach 30% or More Women Members; Five Elect None

The number of chambers that have reached or exceeded in 2010 the target of 30% of women members has grown in recent years. Six single/lower houses and four upper houses that had renewals in 2010 appointed 30% or more women members. This means that the total number of chambers that have reached the target is 43. Three of the newly renewed



▲ Tanzanian women wait in a line to vote at a polling station outside Dar Es Salaam. © ImageForum

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Globally

- The world average for women in parliament, in all chambers, is 19.1%. It continues the recent pattern of small but significant gains: the average was 13.1% in 2000 and 16.3% in 2005.
- Overall, progress is slow, even though most elections in 2010 led to more women in parliament than in previous polls.
- In 2010 ten chambers reached the United Nations target of 30% or more women members. There are now 43 chambers worldwide that have met this target.
- Ten of the chambers that had renewals in 2010 finished up with 10% women members or less. Five other chambers that were renewed ended up with no women members.
- Quotas remain an effective way of increasing the number of women in politics.
- A key issue affecting women candidates in the 2010 elections was the lack of media coverage or of public appearances by women candidates.

### Regionally

- The average for the Arab States remained low despite advancements in several countries, mainly due to the introduction or strengthening of quota mechanisms.
- Northern European and Nordic countries maintained a relatively high percentage of women in lower houses: Belgium with 39.3%, the Netherlands with 40.7% and Sweden with 45%.
- No progress was made in the Pacific Island States: no women candidates won seats in Nauru, the Solomon Islands, Tonga or Tuvalu.

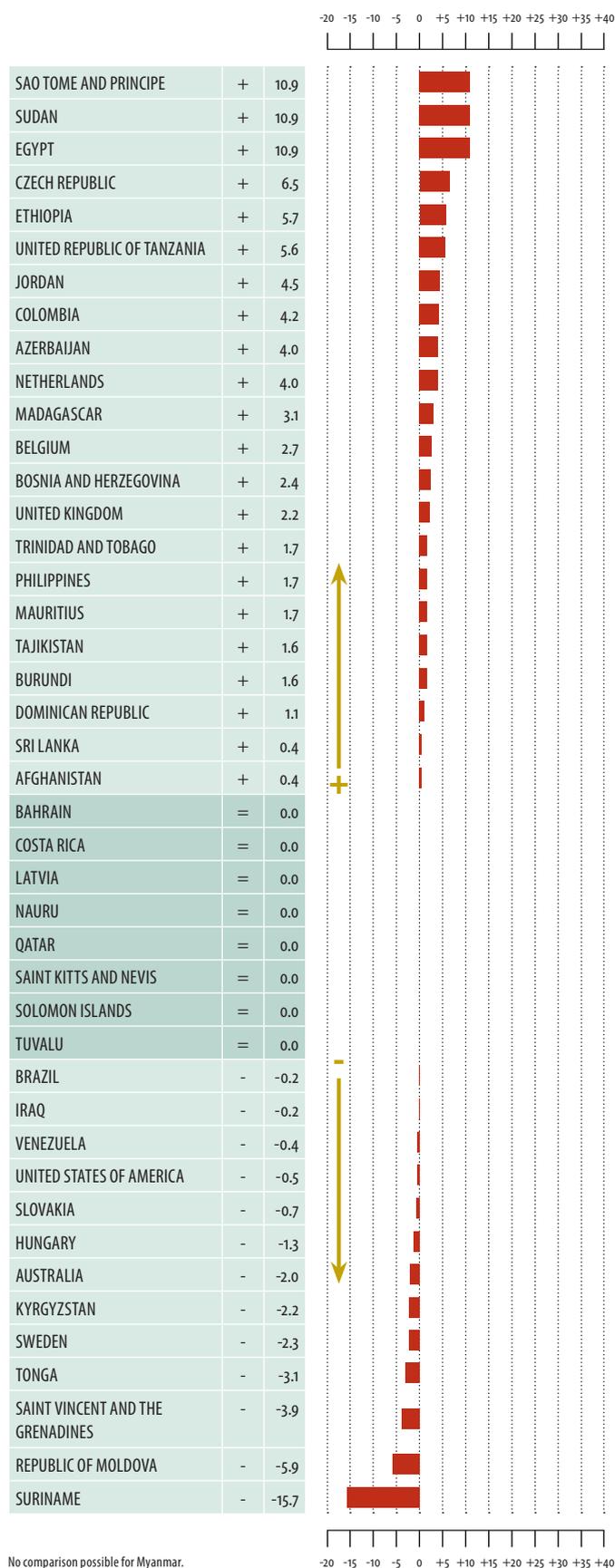


**TABLE 1**

**Parliamentary Renewals in 2010**

*A. Progress and Setbacks of Women in Lower or Single Houses of Parliament Renewed in 2010*

The figures show the percentage point difference between renewals in 2010 compared with the previous legislature



*B. Women in Lower or Single Houses after Parliamentary Renewals in 2010*

Country	Total seats	Total women	Percent women	Quota
SWEDEN	349	157	45.0%	Yes*
NETHERLANDS	150	61	40.7%	Yes*
BELGIUM	150	59	39.3%	Yes**
COSTA RICA	57	22	38.6%	Yes**
UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA	350	126	36.0%	Yes*
BURUNDI	106	34	32.1%	Yes**
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO	42	12	28.6%	No
ETHIOPIA	547	152	27.8%	No
AFGHANISTAN	249	69	27.7%	Yes**
SUDAN	446	114	25.6%	Yes**
IRAQ	325	82	25.2%	Yes**
AUSTRALIA	150	37	24.7%	Yes*
KYRGYZSTAN	120	28	23.3%	Yes**
PHILIPPINES	280	62	22.1%	Yes*
CZECH REPUBLIC	200	44	22.0%	Yes*
UNITED KINGDOM	650	143	22.0%	Yes*
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	183	38	20.8%	Yes**
TAJKISTAN	63	12	19.0%	No
LATVIA	100	19	19.0%	No
MAURITIUS	69	13	18.8%	No
REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA	101	19	18.8%	No
SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE	55	10	18.2%	No
VENEZUELA	165	28	17.0%	No
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	435	73	16.8%	No
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	42	7	16.7%	Yes**
AZERBAIJAN	125	20	16.0%	No
SLOVAKIA	150	23	15.3%	Yes*
SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES	21	3	14.3%	No
COLOMBIA	166	16	12.7%	No
EGYPT	512	65	12.7%	Yes**
MADAGASCAR	256	32	12.5%	No
JORDAN	120	13	10.8%	Yes**
SURINAME	51	5	9.8%	No
HUNGARY	386	35	9.1%	Yes*
BRAZIL	513	44	8.6%	Yes**
SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS	15	1	6.7%	No
SRI LANKA	225	12	5.3%	No
MYANMAR	326	14	4.3%	No
BAHRAIN	40	1	2.5%	No
NAURU	18	0	0.0%	No
QATAR	35	0	0.0%	No
SOLOMON ISLANDS	50	0	0.0%	No
TONGA	26	0	0.0%	No
TUVALU	15	0	0.0%	No

\* One or more political party adopted a voluntary measure to increase the number of women candidates  
 \*\* Legislated candidate quota

chambers have passed the 40% mark, bringing the number of chambers with more than 40% of women members to 11.

Some chambers are moving towards the 30% benchmark after small increases in the number of women members. Trinidad and Tobago, for example, is now at 28.6% (up from 26.8%). If these trends continue, many more chambers will meet the UN target in the next five years.

Post-conflict states continue to make progress. Seven chambers elected in 2010 more than 25% women and Burundi has two chambers with more than 30%. All of these states have legislated quotas.

Ten renewed chambers have less than 10% women members; five others have no women members of parliament at all. The Pacific region is home to four of the single-chamber countries with no women members, a clear sign that more needs to be done there to promote women in parliament.

## A Look at the Regions

### Arab States Lead on Progress Thanks to Quotas

Although they are at the bottom of the world table in terms of women's representation in parliament, the Arab States continue to advance: 4.3% in 1995 to 9.5% in 2009 to 11.7% in 2010. The large variation in the percentages in the region reflects the differences between countries with quotas and those without them.

Resistance to the participation of women in politics was evident in a number of the Arab States but it did not necessarily reduce the number of women politicians. One candidate in Bahrain withdrew after her campaign tent was burnt down, few women registered as candidates and only one woman, who was unopposed, was elected. This contrasts with the relatively high percentage of women appointed to the upper house of Bahrain (22.5%).

In Jordan, the quota system was strengthened, doubling the number of seats previously reserved for women. There are now 13 women parliamentarians, including the first woman to be elected through direct competition—a rise of 4.5 percentage points. Jordan's first Bedouin woman parliamentarian was also elected in 2010 under the quota system.

Sudan saw its first woman run for the presidency, despite a *fatwa* prohibiting women from running in elections. The country's lower house quota facilitated a gain of 10.9 percentage points.

Egypt's quota system of reserved seats for women, approved in 2009, resulted in an increase of 10.9 percentage points, reaching 12.7% of women in parliament.

In Iraq, although the number of women parliamentarians in the lower house rose, the overall proportion fell slightly with the addition of 50 more seats. In addition,

most political parties failed to fill their 25% women candidate quota. The Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq highlighted that action must be taken to rectify the situation, but it has not provided any specifics on doing so.

Qatar was the only Arab country to appoint no women parliamentarians in 2010. Despite the fact that officially there is no legal impediment to women taking part in politics, no woman has yet been appointed to parliament.

### Americas Improve and Elect Three Women Heads of State

In the Americas, where 15 chambers were up for renewal, the average improved slightly and three more women heads of state were elected. One such success occurred in Costa Rica, which maintained its impressive 38.6% of women in parliament. The Costa Rican electoral code provides for a 40% quota for all women in public elections. In the two other states with new women leaders, Brazil and Trinidad and Tobago, there was not much change, and even a slight decrease in Brazil's lower house and Trinidad and Tobago's upper house.

The US mid-term elections witnessed a record number of women running for the lower and upper houses of Congress, but this did not translate into major gains. The Democrat Party fielded more than 70% of women candidates, but lost seats.

### Nordic Countries: Swedish Women Lose Seats

The Nordic countries maintained their position at the top of the regional chart with a 41.6% average. Sweden's chamber was the only one to be renewed in this region in 2010, and although it maintained an impressive 45% of women in parliament, it experienced a decrease of 2.3 percentage points. This could be due to Sweden's proportional electoral system, under which many of the smaller parties won one seat each, and the fact that many of the right-wing party lists are headed by men.

### Little Change in Europe

The European average remains stable at 20%. Most of the 14 chambers being renewed saw little change, generally less than three percentage points. The exception was the Czech Republic, which saw 6.5 and 3.7 percentage point increases in its lower and upper houses, respectively. Nevertheless, not one woman cabinet minister was appointed in the Czech Republic.

Neighbouring Slovakia elected its first woman prime minister, but there were slight decreases in terms of the

number of women in parliament. Belgium's renewal resulted in more women members, while the average in the Netherlands increased to 40.7%.

Despite an election law in Bosnia and Herzegovina that specifies that one in three candidates must be women, only 16.7% of members of parliament are women. This is an improvement, though: a rise of 2.4 percentage points as compared to the previous election in 2006.

The UK's lower house saw a 2.2 percentage point gain (up to 22%). However, given that women accounted for 18% of parliamentarians in 1997, it is clear that more needs to be done to encourage a push towards parity.

In Latvia the number of elected members of parliament remained at 19%, although the number of women candidates increased slightly in comparison to the 2006 election. In its third election in two years, the Republic of Moldova elected six less women parliamentarians, a decline of 5.9 percentage points (down to 18.8%).

Kyrgyzstan elected fewer women members than previously, yet it still has one of the highest rates of women parliamentarians in the sub-region. The country elected its first women president in 2010. Roza Otunbayeva is a pioneer in this sub-region as she does not owe her position to a dynastic succession.

With a rise of 4.5 percentage points bringing women's representation up to 22%, Uzbekistan is on track to reach the 30% target in its lower house. The 2010 Senate renewal process resulted in a total of 15% of women representatives, possibly because political parties must nominate at least 30% of women candidates.

## A Similar Picture in Sub-Saharan Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa saw no significant change, although there was good news on an individual country level as only three chambers lost ground.

Ethiopia, Madagascar and Tanzania for their part recorded improvements.

Burundi consolidated its achievement of 30% representation of women in the lower house with an increase of 2.5 percentage points to 32.1%, as well as a significant rise in the upper house (to 46.3%), due to a considerable degree to its quota system. A quota also was implemented for the first time at the municipal level.

Women's representation in Sao Tome and Principe increased from 7.3% in 2006 to 18.2% in 2010 without any quota being in place. Mauritius saw an increase in the number of women candidates and a small gain in the number of women parliamentarians, up to 18.8%.

## Asia Loses Ground

Asia saw a slight decrease in the number of women parliamentarians, with its average falling to 18% in a year of high-profile elections in the region.

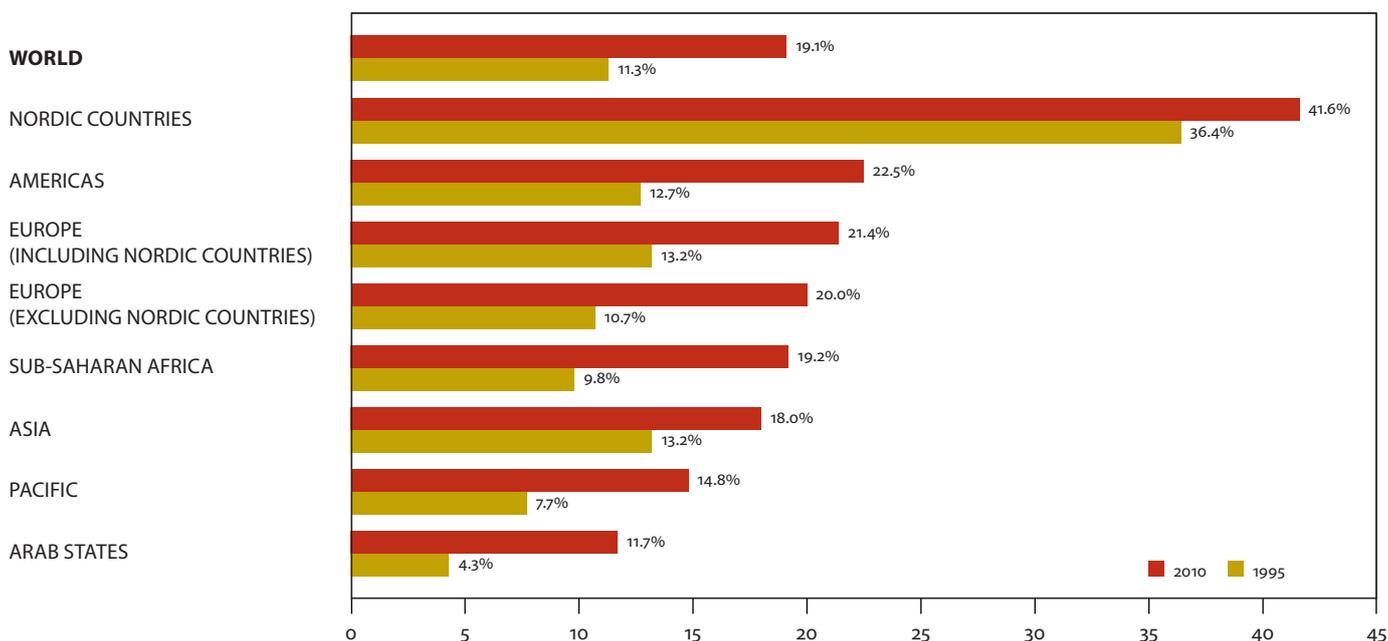
International interest in Afghanistan's polls was intense as a record number of women candidates stood despite the killing of five volunteers working for one of the women candidates, incidents of harassment and the tearing down of election posters. In the end Afghanistan saw an increase of just 0.4 points.

The situation in Sri Lanka remained the same while renewals in India's upper house produced 10.3% of women

**TABLE 2**

World and Regional Averages of Women in Parliament, 1995 and 2010

*Situation for all chambers of parliaments combined in December of each year*



parliamentarians, slightly less than the 10.8% in the lower house in 2009. India's upper house approved the Women's Reservation Bill in March 2010 (first tabled in 1996), under which one-third of legislative seats in the national and state legislative assemblies are reserved for women. The bill still has to be approved by the lower house and 15 of India's 28 states before it can become law. The debate ignited by discussion of this controversial piece of legislation shows that there is still a lot of disagreement on how to improve women's participation in politics.

In the Philippines, where there have been two women presidents in the past 25 years and the proportion of women in government has increased every year, the figure for women in the lower house rose by 1.7 percentage points to 22% while the upper house figure fell by 4.3 percentage points to 13%.

## **Pacific Region Continues to Resist Women Members**

The percentage of women parliamentarians in the Pacific States fell from 15.3% in 2009 to 11.7% in 2010. This figure is not a true regional average as Australia's relatively high proportion of women members inflates the figure for other states that have few or none.

Despite training and sensitisation initiatives on the need to encourage women to participate in elections, of the five countries with renewals in 2010—Australia, Nauru, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Tuvalu—only Australia elected any women parliamentarians, including its first woman prime minister.

## **Quotas: Update on Progress**

Quotas remain the single most effective way of increasing the number of women in politics. Five countries with legislated quotas, Afghanistan, Brazil, Costa Rica, Iraq and Kyrgyzstan, remained stable or saw small declines in their lower houses in 2010.

Many countries that have no legislated quotas in the national parliament have voluntary party quotas. In addition, there can be local-level quotas even when there are none in the national parliament. This is the case in Namibia and the Philippines. The result is a greater number of leadership roles for women at different levels of politics.

Egypt's 2010 election result raises questions about the reserved seats quota system. While it led to a 10.9 percentage point increase in the number of women members, not a single one was elected from outside the quota system. This is a setback as, previously, nine women had been elected to parliament through the normal electoral process. Given that Egypt's quota system is a temporary measure (due to expire in 2020) designed to 'jumpstart' a new era of female partici-

pation in politics, it will be interesting to see the results of the next election and gauge whether the reserved seat system is the best way forward and whether or not it should be accompanied by other support mechanisms for women.

## **Media Coverage of Candidates**

Many factors continue to affect women's participation in politics at the national parliamentary level, including cultural and societal variables and access to financial resources.

A key issue affecting women candidates in the 2010 elections was the lack of media coverage of them or public appearances by women candidates. A survey of daily election stories in Tanzania revealed that men politicians dominated as both subjects and sources of election stories. In Sudan, there were reports that women were losing out in terms of media coverage, and in Bosnia and Herzegovina a woman campaign worker complained that while photographs of women candidates were common, their opinions were rarely published. The election of Australia's first woman prime minister, Julia Gillard, met with a media frenzy and a common focus on her flame-coloured hair and choice of attire. Attitudes were probably not greatly advanced by the production of the Czech Public Affairs Party's racy calendar of women politicians.

A number of women's interest groups in the US decided to take action on gender-biased reporting, setting up an organization called 'Name It. Change It' to monitor sexist coverage of women candidates in the press. On its website they cite media reports of weight loss by women candidates and comments on their appearance. While such monitoring is a step in the right direction, more needs to be done to combat the negative depiction of women in the media and to encourage the media to give women candidates the same amount of coverage as men.

## **Training Women to Participate in Elections**

While quotas are an effective way to address underrepresentation of women in parliament, more training in how to participate in elections is also necessary.

Many countries that held polls in 2010 organized workshops to train women in how to participate in elections and encourage them to run for seats. Vanuatu hosted workshops for women from countries such as Nauru, the Solomon Islands, Tonga and Tuvalu and examined the barriers preventing women from participating in elections. Women from political parties in Kyrgyzstan received training, and women candidates in Jordan were coached in campaign strategy development, communications and election-day campaigning.

## Women Presiding Officers in Parliament

*Situation as of 1 January 2011:  
38 of the 269 Posts (14.1%)*

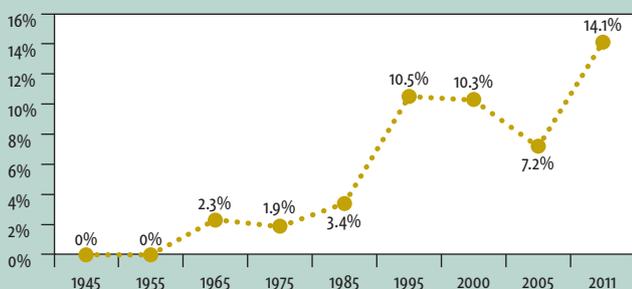
On 1 January 2011, women held 38 (14.1 %) of the 269 presiding officer posts in parliaments around the world. This is more than double the total for 2005 (18).

The post is important as it is the highest position of power in a parliament. Women are slowly making inroads in this area, which has historically been dominated by men.

In 2010, two women took up presiding officer posts for the first time in Mozambique and the United Republic of Tanzania.

**FIGURE 1**

Trend in Women Presiding Officers, 1945–2011  
(January of each year)



### 28 Presiding Officers in Single or Lower Houses of Parliament

Albania (People's Assembly); Antigua and Barbuda (House of Representatives); Austria (Nationalrat); Bosnia and Herzegovina (House of Peoples); Botswana (National Assembly); Bulgaria (Naradno Schranie); Chile (Cámara de Diputados); Czech Republic (Poslanecka Snemovna); Dominica (House of Assembly); Estonia (Riigikogu); Ghana (Parliament); Iceland (Althingi); India (Lok Sabha); Latvia (Saeima); Lesotho (National Assembly); Lithuania (Seimas); Mozambique (Assembleia da Republica); Netherlands (Tweede Kamer der Staten Generaal); Pakistan (National Assembly); Romania (Chamber of Deputies); Rwanda (Chamber of Deputies); Saint Lucia (House of Assembly); Serbia (Narodna Skupstina); Suriname (Nationale Assemblée); Turkmenistan (Mejlis); United Republic of Tanzania (Bunge); Uruguay (Cámara de Representantes); Uzbekistan (Legislative Chamber).

### 10 Presiding Officers in Upper Houses of Parliament

Antigua and Barbuda (Senate); Bahamas (Senate); Belize (Senate); Gabon (Senate); Germany (Bundesrat); Grenada (Senate); Saint Lucia (Senate); Swaziland (Senate); United Kingdom (House of Lords); Zimbabwe (Senate).



▲ A Kyrgyz couple are about to cast their votes. © ImageForum

Suriname's Ministry of Home Affairs convened a workshop on quota policy and the participation of women in decision-making. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Slovakia, including professional women's associations, ran campaigns to help women enter politics. NGOs in the Czech Republic provided special training for women candidates.

Not all training led to greater participation or wins for women in elections in 2010. However, electoral process education is a long-term tool to empower women to participate in politics and hopefully increase the pool of women candidates.

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