

Institutions, Gendered Norms and Electoral Reality of Women: Applying Feminist Institutional Lens to National Elections in Bangladesh

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Abstract

Today more women are entering into politics – the men's world – and claiming their due rights. Hence, the process to integrate women's perspective and needs in politics is not an easy task. Evidence indicates that women remain low in number in important decision-making positions in political institutions in almost all the regions of the world. Even women's electoral participation is much lower compared to men. Therefore, questions that are asked: What is the state of women candidates in the parliamentary elections? Why do the parties nominate few women candidates? What forces influence the nomination of women? To seek answers, this paper focuses on women's electoral participation in parliamentary elections in Bangladesh. Leaning on feminist institutionalism, it explains that different dynamics work at the nomination and election of women. Relying on both primary and secondary sources of information, the paper argues that ideological orientation informal norms and practices pressure of FPTP electoral system dictated by money and muscle power of candidates, and clientelism in the nomination process are inherently nested in the political parties and used as tools to discriminate against women in the nomination and participation in national elections. The article highlights a few strategies-adopting affirmative action for women in the political parties and enforcing the existing electoral rules and regulation effectively; and mandating gender equality training and education as part of social and political activities of parties – to feminize the power space.

Key words: Gender, Institutions, Political parties, Parliament, Election

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Introduction

Women representation in the past 25 years has more than doubled in the parliaments, reaching 24.9 per cent in 2020, up from 11.3 in 1995 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2020). This ushers hope but when compared to men it only indicates the extent of inequality that persists in political institutions around the globe. For many reasons such as the state of democracy, economic development, women's labor force participation, socio-cultural norms and electoral system women are constrained to equally take part in politics (Norris, 2006 ; Paxton, Hughes & Painter, 2010; Reynolds, 1999). However, one cannot delineate a single factor to explain the low-level representation of women in political institutions. Rather, it is argued that a wide range of institutions in social and political context influence women's access to important positions in politics. The formal and informal norms and practices of these institutions mostly shape women's psyche, interest, and ability to participate in politics as per men. To be more precise, feminist institutionalists argue that institutions are structured from the male's perspective about life and work but ignore women's views and needs. Such gendered nature of the institutions affects women in how they gain equal access to economic, social and political resources to participate in politics (Fuente & Verge, 2013; Krook & Mackay, 2011). Therefore, political institutions constitute the primary elements in the analysis of women's political participation (Mackay, Kenny & Chappell, 2010). By establishing certain formal and informal norms and practices, political institutions like political parties, electoral system and parliament tend to dominate actors' decisions that ultimately evolves into discrimination against women. Women experience discrimination first in their own parties where male dominated parties use women political activists for narrow personal and political interest (Dahlerup & Leyenaar, 2013) but resist women's access to important decision-making positions in parties. Women's presence in parliament is considered as an invasion of male power space and women are seen as 'space invaders' (Puwar, 2004). Hence, when it comes to electoral participation a different dynamic works against women. Discrimination against women become more vivid in the nomination process where ingrained ethos masculinity shapes the procedure and psychology of decision makers (Bjarnegård & Zetterberg, 2011). At the electoral level, gendered societal norms, electoral campaign and violence marred the prospects of many women candidates (Ohman, 2018; Siddhu & Meena 2007; UNDP, 2011). Both the process of getting a nomination and winning the election continues to be a great challenge for women and their entry to parliament. It has been estimated that an increase of one percent in the number of female candidates will result in only a 0.67 percent increase in female legislators (Paxton & Hughes, 2007:

103). Thus, the low number of women in parliament can be partly attributed to the low number of women candidates in elections.

To describe the presence of low number of women in power positions, Piscopo (2006) used the term 'institutional stickiness of gender discrimination' (p. 8). In this endeavor, we borrowed this term "institutional stickiness of gender discrimination" to explain how gender discrimination is inbuilt in the electoral politics of Bangladesh. However, in this paper we focus only on the political parties in relation to nomination of women in national elections. Key questions include: What is the status of women candidates in national elections? Why do parties nominate few women candidates in national elections? Do parties favor men candidates to women? What factors influence the nomination decision of parties? This study makes an attempt to find answers to these questions. The focus of the study has been mainly on understanding women's electoral participation from different dimensions. From this perspective, this explanatory study has adopted a qualitative approach. We have extensively reviewed secondary literature on women and politics to get an understanding of the current status of women's political participation in global and national context. We then conducted a few Key Informant Interviews (KII) with women politicians and parliamentarians to validate the findings of secondary content analysis and explain the challenges that women face in electoral politics.

The article has three sections. Section one briefly mentions the socio-cultural status of women in Bangladesh and presents the trend of nomination and election of women in national elections by major political parties. In section two, different aspects of political parties are analyzed in relation to women's status and position within the parties, ideology, structure and nomination practices of the parties. Finally, a brief discussion on the findings is presented with a few suggestions to enhance the electoral participation of women before a conclusion is made at the end.

Socio-cultural and Political context of Women in Bangladesh

Socio-cultural context of Women

Bangladesh is a small South Asian country with approximately 17 million people and with problems of growing inequality, high rate of unemployment and environmental disasters. Although the constitution has guaranteed equality between men and women, the provision has not been translated into an effective mechanism to bring gender equality in society. Gender inequality persists in almost every sector and women are still low in numbers in important positions in politics, administration and employment. According to the Gender parity index, 38 percent of adult women were involved in the labor force compared

to 84 percent of men and the estimated average annual income of women is 40 percent that of men. Only one in 10 leadership roles are occupied by a woman (Daily Star, 2019). Bangladesh ranks 98 in the world with 8 percent women in the cabinet and only 20.8 percent in the parliament (IPU, 2020). This low representation of women in political institutions is linked to the discriminatory practices of social and cultural institutions that have long remained male dominated in terms of their beliefs and practices. Women in patriarchal societies like Bangladesh are denied equal access to time, education and resources like men; and it impacts women's civil society participation and networks – both formal and informal – required for entering into electoral politics.

Political and Electoral context of Women in Bangladesh

The analysis of the official quantitative data on national elections reveals that the number of party nominated women candidates remains low in parliamentary elections in Bangladesh. At present there are more than 40 parties in Bangladesh registered under the Election Commission (EC). However, parties in Bangladesh that have assumed state power and won a considerable number of seats in parliament are few in number. Major parties include Awami League (AL), Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), and Jatiya Party (JP- Ershad).

In the first election after the independence of Bangladesh of 1973, only two women were nominated by two political parties among the 14 parties. Political parties like AL which endeavor on the idea of equality and lead the independence movement did not nominate a single woman in this election. In the subsequent elections of 1979, 1986 and 1988 held during the period of the military regime of General Zia and Hussain Muhammad Ershad 13, 15 and 6 women were nominated. However, a positive change in the number of nominations of women was observed after the country restored parliamentary democracy in the 1990s. In the fifth and seventh elections of 1991 and 1996, 40 and 32 women were nominated by 75 and 81 political parties. The eighth parliamentary election of 2001 witnessed the nomination of only 30 women candidates by 54 contesting parties. The number of party nominated women rose to 51 in the 2008 election held after two years of civil-military rule (Firoz, 2013). In the 10th parliamentary election of 2013, 12 political parties participated and 27 women contested in the election (The Daily Star, 2014). In the 11th parliamentary election of 2018, a total of 38 candidates were nominated by political parties. The percentage of party nominated women candidates increased incrementally from 0.16 percent in 1973 to 3.69 percent in 2018. It needs to be mentioned here that a significant number of women contested the national election as independent contestants. Unfortunately, none of these women were elected to the parliament of Bangladesh.

Table 01: A comparative view on male and female candidates in national elections of Bangladesh (1973-2018)²

Year of election	No. of candidates			Party nominated candidates			% percent of women of total candidates	No. of women elected	% of women in general seats
	Total	Female	Male	Total	Male	Female			
1973	1209	2	1207	1089	1087	2	0.16	0	0.0
1979	2547	17	2537	2125	2112	13	0.66	2(by election)	0.66
1986	1980	15	1965	1527	1512	15	1.01	3+2 (by election)	1.66
1988	1192	8	1184	978	972	6	0.67	4	1.33
1991	2787	40	2737	2363	2323	40	1.43	4+1 (by election)	1.66
1996	2574	36	2538	2293	2261	32	1.39	5+3 (by election)	2.66
2001	1935	38	1897	1451	1421	30	1.96	6	2
2008	1567	59	1508	1416	1365	51	3.76	20	6.66
2018	1841	68	1773	1745	1707	38	3.69	22+1 (by election)	7.6

(Sources: Report on 2nd Parliament Election, 1973; Report on 5th Parliament Election 1991, pp. 51, 52 & 65; Report on 7th Parliament Election, 1996, pp. 24-25; Report on 8th Parliament Election, 2001, pp. 24-26; Report on 9th Parliament Election, pp. 59-60; Election Commission Report 11th Parliament, 2019)

Although the increasing number of women candidates shows a positive development but compared to male candidates (1707) such a low number of women candidates only reconfirms inequality and practice of gender discrimination in the parties. The low number of women candidates in national elections ultimately results in a low number of women in parliament. The available data indicates that, over the last four decades, representation of women in the parliament has increased from only 4 percent in 1973 to 20.5 percent in 2018. Such an increase in the number of women is mainly attributed to the provision of 50 reserved seats. The number of women elected in general seats remains below 10 percent. Without the provision of reserved seats, women's representation in parliament continues to remain low against the male and it only increased to 7.6 percent in 2018. The quantitative data on women's electoral participation and representation in parliament provides the fundamental basis for the qualitative analysis of gender discrimination in parties.

² The 6th and 10th parliament are not included in the table. The 6th and 10th parliamentary elections were controversial and major political parties refrained from participating in the elections.

To examine the discrimination against women and their experience in parties, we need to understand how the electoral process operates. A simple explanation of the electoral process is suggested by Kunovich & Paxton (2005). According to this view, both men and women have to go through two filter points in the electoral process. During the first filter, candidates must be selected by the respective parties in order to run for political office. And in the second, contestants must be selected by the voters to achieve political office. Therefore, parties are the first crucial stage for both men and women to get into the electoral process (Caul, 1999; Siddhu & Meena 2007). At the first stage of filtering, different factors influence the process of nomination. Ideology of the party, number and position of women within the party's decision making structure, and formal rules and informal practices of nomination are the determining factors for getting a nomination. Therefore, analyses of these features from a feminist institutional perspective is necessary to explain how these features are bent to nominate a low number of women candidates in election.

Political parties in Bangladesh – Institutionalized site of Patriarchy

For women, parties are the gateway into formal politics, as they recruit and select candidates for political office. Women's first and formal orientation about politics starts by getting involved with parties (Siddhu & Meena, 2007). Both formal and informal rules and practices of the parties determine the access of women to important positions and their entry into parliament (Paxton, Kunovich & Hughes, 2007). A number of research studies have been conducted to understand what features of political parties tend to be conducive for women's political and electoral participation. It has been found that women tend to be nominated in higher numbers in parties which are ideologically left, have women in leadership and decision-making positions, or those which have women wings or sections within the party structure.

Women are leaders but men are influencers

Research has informed a positive link between the presence of women in leadership and decision-making positions and the increased number of women's participation in elections (Kunovich & Paxton, 2005). Women due to their shared gender identity and experience are found to be more dedicated to the cause of women's emancipation. Presence of a greater number of women in a party's decision-making positions can exert influence to repeal the discriminatory practices and to support the nomination of a greater number of women. However, such propositions tend to be more applicable in a democratic and egalitarian country context. In societies like Bangladesh, hierarchical gender relations determine the presence and position of women in the parties.

Although major parties in Bangladesh have women leaders, even these women leaders could not mount any sustainable changes in the masculinized party structure and culture as they are also bred in patriarchy (Chowdhury, 2008). Women continue to remain low in the decision-making positions within all the major parties like AL, BNP, and JP despite a legal provision to ensure 33 percent representation of women in all the committees.

Women's representation in the decision-making bodies and in central committees of the major parties' like AL, BNP and JP remains low and ranges between 5 and 19 percent. The 81-member Central Working Committee of AL has only 19 women (almost 26 percent) and four women are included in the 17-member Presidium. Only two women found their way to the 40-member Advisory Council. In the BNP, only one in the 19-member Standing Committee is a woman. Eight women are included in the 73-member advisory body representation (11 percent) and two women among 10 are made organizing secretaries. The 502-member National Executive Committee has room for only 65 women. Jatiya Party (JP-Ershad) has only 32 women in its 377-member central committee (Islam, 2020; Molla & Bhattacharjee, 2017). The other faction of Jatiya Party (Manju), has 16 women in its core committee of 101 members (15.8 percent) and Bangladesh Muslim League has 12 women in its 101-member central committee (Islam, 2020). Parties, however, justify this under representation of women in committees on the ground for a lack of qualified women. However, these parties, when needed, included women in the list to meet the legal and electoral requirements. As a woman politician remembered:

Just before the election of 2008, the party was instructed by the EC to submit the report about the status of implementing 10% of women's representation in committees. Our party included names of some women in the list without even informing them. Many of those women are still unaware of the fact that they were co-opted in the committees. (KII - 4)

Women politicians across parties during the interviews resented such attitudes and practices of the parties towards women. They expressed that male politicians act against the women and resist their assumption to the position of power and authority. As expressed by a woman politician, *"When a woman is considered for a post in important committees, males do not consider the age or status of that woman, they only want to malign her character, spread rumors and try to stop her advancement at any cost (KII -3)"*. Male politicians to maintain their superior positions within the party will restore to anything or any means to destroy the spirit and courage of women. One woman explained her story:

During a telephone conversation, when my name was proposed by a senior leader for inclusion in the district level committee, a male local leader on the other side of the phone responded negatively and mentioned me as characterless. I was there – at the office of the senior leader- and listened to everything. I came back home and literally cried the whole night. (KII - 7)

The low number of women in the committees or in other words, domination of men in the committees implies the less influence of women in the decision making of parties and less opportunity for women to be nominated for election. Even the legal provision as Representation of the People Order Act 2009 fall short to challenge the masculine face of the political parties.³ The parties' apathy to include more women in committees only confirms the gendered nature of the political parties where females are made leaders but men remain at the center of the decision-making process.

Women wings of parties – Instrumental or essential?

Political parties in Bangladesh have women wings. The women wings of the party mainly recruit women political activists at different levels. For example, Bangladesh Women Awami League, Bangladesh Youth Women League are the women wings of AL; and Nationalist Women Party is the women wing of BNP. In general, women's wings are only auxiliary organs of the parties. These women wings are not integrated in the central party structure nor do they have any real agency to influence the party decisions. The members of women's wings are rarely given any post in central committees. Thus, women political activists are used as a tool to carry out political activities without any opportunity to progress to mainstream politics. KII - 2, one of the respondents, explained the situation of women as follows, "*Women are not given any posts in the central committees. Women are made only members and general secretaries of the women's wing. This is not justice.*" Another woman politician who has been actively involved in politics for a longtime expressed her realization as follows:

During any anti-government procession or demonstration, women activists are found to be at the front row. First, I was excited and took pride in leading the protest from the front.

³ Bangladesh Election Commission (BEC) through Representation of the People (Amendment) Order Act 2009, made it compulsory to ensure the representation of 33 percent of women in the executive and central committees of the parties by 2020. Among the 40 registered parties, only the left-leaning Gano Front has ensured representation of 33 percent of women (Prothom Alo, 10 January 2017; Bdnews 24.com 18 March 2018).

Later I realized that this is a tactic of the male leaders. Women are used as a shield to protect themselves from attacks and police brutality. (KII-6)

Although parties encourage women to enter the political realm but restrict their entry into the core of power politics. These women politicians were hardly considered for nomination in the election. Even when a few are given nominations, they are does so in unwinnable seats. As noted by KII - 3, a respondent, *"Sometimes women political workers are nominated in such seats which are really difficult to win (areas known as AL or BNP forts)"*. Such practices only confirm the prevailing anti-women attitude in the parties although in Bangladesh, decision of voting does not depend on the sex of the candidates but on the particular parties they represent. Yet, the parties are reluctant to nominate women candidates in large numbers in winnable seats. As a woman explained:

I have been working in my area for a long time. I have a good reputation and people love me. That constituency is the forte of my party. Whichever party nominates, man or woman will win in the election. Party did not give me the nomination and selected a male candidate. This is partly because of the opposition of male politicians at different levels who are reluctant to accept women as candidates. (KII- 9)

Ideology of the party- Does it benefit women or men?

Ideology of the party is found to be associated with the nomination of women candidates in elections. It has been argued that rightist parties, because of their traditional view of women, nominate less women in elections. On the contrary, left leaning parties which are liberal and based on the idea of equality nominate more women in election (Rule 1987). So, the question is to what extent do political parties of Bangladesh truly act on the party ideology?

In Bangladesh, ideological orientations of the major parties like AL, BNP, Jatiya Party (JP), National Communist Party are of either centre right, centrist or rightist, and only a few are Centre left. Among these parties that assumed the state power AL is considered as centre-left while BNP and JP are ideologically centre-right. Other parties like leaning Bangladesh Communist Party National Communist party are far left while religious based parties are rightwing in ideological practice (Jahan, 2014). This implies that the norms of gender equality in most of the right leaning party structures and practices are likely to be absent. However, it is expected that parties like AL and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) will act on the norm of gender equality due to the left leaning orientation. AL being a center

left and the oldest party is expected to nominate more women compared to other right leaning parties but in reality, the number of women nominated remains low over the years. For convenience we analyze the nomination of women by major parties AL, BNP and Jatiya Party. In the national election of 2018, AL nominated 19 women out of 258 candidates (7.3 percent), and its allies – JP nominated only two women among its 173 candidates (1.15 percent) and JSD nominated only one female candidate. The right leaning party like BNP, along with the 20-Party Alliance and Jatiya Oikya Front, nominated only 16 female candidates for 300 seats (5.33 percent) (Prothom Alo, 2018). It shows that the nomination of women candidates in left leaning old established parties like AL remains below 8 percent over the years. None of the left leaning parties has adopted any proactive mechanisms. Although the parties continue to express their interest and commitment to international and national gender equality covenant, it only confirms that the practices of political parties do not reflect their ideology when it comes to ensuring gender equality in power space. The left leaning ideology of equality matters a little when it comes to preserving the deeply held values and practices of patriarchy.

It has become evident that major political parties have female leadership at the top but when it comes to the position of women in important decision-making bodies, women are nowhere near men. AL, BNP and JP have alternatively assumed state power since the independence of Bangladesh. AL has won the first, seventh, ninth, tenth, and eleventh national elections in Bangladesh. The BNP won the second, fifth, sixth, and eighth national elections and two Presidential elections in 1978 and 1981. The JP won the third and fourth elections. Unfortunately, their commitment during the elections to increase representation of women in parliament remains a mere promise only. The fact is, political parties express their interest and commitment to gender equality from the position of being signatories of international human rights and women rights covenant but in reality, they don't follow it in their own parties. What can be drawn from the analysis is that political parties are captive of men and women are merely viewed as workers only – needed during election and party programmes – not as leaders.

The candidate nomination process: Where women struggle against misogyny in disguise

As we discussed the informal practices and attitudes of parties towards women and their access to positions of power, it became expected that such attitudes would prevail at the nomination of women in national elections. The data presented earlier clearly demonstrates that party nominated women candidates remain low in number in all the elections compared to men. So, the question we

need to ask is, what credentials do parties look for in a candidate for national election that most female politicians lack?

Both men and women have to pass through the first filter – the nomination process – to participate in the election. But the secret and vague candidate selection process influences the prospects of women's electoral participation most (Gallagher, 1988). The stereotyping beliefs of male political leaders that women are not capable of competing with the males thwarts the prospects of women aspirants. KII-6, one of the respondents shared her frustration as follows, *"I sought nomination several times. I have been in politics since my student life, [I] worked hard and endured many sufferings. Yet, the party did not give me a nomination because of my gender identity"*.

The nomination process of candidates has a different dynamic in Bangladesh. Diverse factors influence the nomination decision where candidates have to bring different strength – political dynasties, money, muscle power or support of powerful mentors (Maitrot & Jackman, 2020). A kind of power network influences the nomination process where top leaders in the influential positions bestow their favor to the potential candidates in return of money or favour or promises for partnership in benefit reaped from being a member of parliament. Males – due to their access to different power networks, ability to control muscle powers and having sources of legal and illegal income – are the preferred candidates. Other than political dynasty, financial strength is the second most important criteria parties look for in a candidate. Such informal norms ultimately disadvantage the women aspirants since women are generally less involved in corrupt practices. Also, women in general, due to their limited workforce participation, income and property do not have financial strength in equal terms with men. KII-7, a woman politician mentioned, *"I wanted to contest in general seats. People in my constituency love me. But I failed to get the nomination. Different politics work in elections."* The analysis of the nominations of the 2018 election indicates that three groups of candidates got nominations. First, leaders with a long and successful track record of winning elections; second, family members of influential political leaders/families and lastly, the businessmen with a solid financial base.

Hence, part of the biases towards male and businessmen can be attributed to the First-Post-the-Post (FPTP) electoral system in Bangladesh. In this system, in a single constituency, only a candidate with the highest number of votes is elected, and the party with the highest number of seats forms the government (Norris, 2006). The parties weigh the ability of opposition candidates and nominate those who are able to counter the financial strength and muscle power of opposition candidates. There is no denying that to win election

money, muscle power and network matters most and women in most cases do not possess the required qualities or resources to win elections. A female legislator understood the reality and mentioned, *"Parties need seats to form government and to implement the party's vision and ideology; they don't need to favor women"* (Interview with KII-10). Another however complained that, *"Parties nominate businessmen or those who have money depriving women and dedicated political worker"* (Interview with KII-11). This view of women politicians is valid if we track the number of businessmen in all post-1991 parliaments of Bangladesh. Accordingly, 59.4, 47.8, 52.1 and 59 percent members of the fifth, seventh, eighth and ninth parliament were businessmen and many have criminal records. In the current 11th parliament, a significant number (182) of Members of Parliament are businessmen (Firoz, 2013; Liton & Mollah, 2018; Majumdar, 2009). The increasing number of businessmen winning nominations and elections post 1990 only reconfirms the influence of money and muscle power in the election.

The findings and experiences of women politicians reveals that although many women have been able to overcome the socio-cultural barriers to enter politics, ultimately they are constrained by the dominant masculinist norms and practices of the political parties. As discussed, political parties are male dominated and women's inclusion in politics is used strategically to mobilize public support and voters. In these institutions, women are under-represented in low numbers in decision making bodies with little or no room to influence the candidate selection process. It is obvious that male political leaders are not yet ready to equally share the power and positions with women and they tend to continue to dominate the party decision making process. Although most parties adhere to women empowerment, when it comes to regender the nomination practices, the apathy of party leaders is evident. The negative discrimination against women candidates is exacerbated by informal selection processes and power networks of male politicians. Not to mention that the FPTP electoral system puts additional pressure on parties to select the candidates who have money and muscle power to win the election and most of them are men. So, what we can postulate is that, like any institutions, political parties are inherently inclined to gender discrimination. To bring gender equality, changes can be initiated in different forms. For instance, the Election Commission must pressurize the political parties to ensure implementation of RPO Act 9 with a possible inclusion of a new provision to nominate a certain percentage of women in winnable seats in the election. Countries like France, Morocco, Albania have such mechanisms. In France parties face sanction in failure to ensure half of women candidates in party lists. Albania, enacted the regulations mandating that political parties nominate at least 30 percent of either gender,

or have to face the sanction of reduced public funding (Ohman, 2018). Also, parties can generate an electoral fund to support qualified female candidates. In addition, women's wings should be integrated with the central party structure to pave the path for women to enter mainstream politics. Most importantly parties must adhere to gender equality norms by mandating education and training on gender equality in parties' social and political activities.

Conclusion

The analysis of women's electoral participation in Bangladesh reveals several facets of politics. Despite the fact that the constitution recognizes equality of women and men, very little has been achieved to materialize the idea of equality within the societal and political institutions. Women as political activists, aspirants or candidates face discriminations within the political institutions. Not to mention that such discrimination is linked across socio-cultural and economic institutions of the country. Women are discriminated against in terms of getting equal access to education, financial stability and political network due to the gendered nature of the society. This cycle of discrimination continues in political parties where women merely remain as a tool to strengthen a party's position without much representation in decision making positions. Male politicians are seldom interested in sharing their space with females. They resist women's induction in committees and important positions. To make it worse the gendered and informal nomination process discourages and deprives potential women without money, muscle power or family names. Moreover, due to the FPTP electoral system, parties bet more on male candidates with strong financial bases. Fact is, the barriers women aspirants and candidates face in electoral politics are common and entrenched in almost all societies but to different degrees. What is important is to understand that to uphold the true spirit of democracy and development, more women should be allowed to participate in the elections and make their way to the legislature. Toward that end reforms in the structure and practices of social, political and legal institutions are imperative.

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