

Women's Studies Institute of China

The Shadow Report of Chinese Women's NGOs
on the Combined Seventh and Eighth Periodic Report
Submitted by China under Article 18 of the *Convention on
the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against
Women*

**Temporary Special Measures and the Political
and Public Life
(Article 4 & 7)**

(For public information)

September 2014

Temporary Special Measures and the Political and Public Life (Article 4 & 7)

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I. Efforts and Progress

The relevant regulations and policies have been enacted or modified. In 2007, the Fifth Session of the Tenth National People's Congress adopted the *Decision on the Number and Election of Representatives of the Eleventh National People's Congress*, specifying that the proportion of women representatives shall not be less than 22% at the Eleventh National People's Congress. In 2010, the Eleventh National People's Congress adopted the new *Organic Law of the Villagers' Committees of the People's Republic of China*, stipulating that there should be women members in each villagers' committee, and female village representatives shall account for more than one-third of the village assembly attendants. In 2009, the State Council Information Office published the *National Human Rights Action Plan of China*, requiring that there should be at least one female member in the people's congress, political consultative conference and government at each level, while the proportion of female civil servants should be increased across all national authorities at all levels. In 2011, the State Council promulgated *China National Program for Women's Development (2011-2020)*, specifying objectives for progressively increased proportion of principal female leaders at all levels of leadership across local governments and authorities at the county (prefecture) level and above, for example, 30% in villagers' committee members and 10% in villagers' committee heads.

Women's political engagement has been advanced. In 2006, the Organization Department of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee held a national forum on the training and selection of female leaders, stressing the need to recognize the dual contribution of women leaders to the society and the family as well as to provide preferential policy for the selection and appointment of female leaders equally eligible as males. In 2007, the ACWF recommended the relevant authorities on the promotion of outstanding women in all walks of life who are young, educated, capable of political engagement, and experienced in grass-roots work. The ACWF and the UN Women jointly launched the project for Chinese women's political engagement, taking a multi-faceted approach to improve women's participation in the people's congresses, governments and villagers' self-governance organizations at all levels, such as introducing policies, enhancing gender awareness among decision makers and accelerating the capacity building of women. In addition, some non-governmental organizations are working with local government departments to enable women into the two committees (the villagers' committee in the rural areas or the residents' committee in the urban areas).

Progress has been made in women's participation in political and public life. In 2013, female representatives accounted for 23.4% of the total at the twelfth NPC, 2.1 percentage points higher over the eleventh NPC in 2008. In 2010, female leaders

accounted for 11.2% of the total leaders assuming the same position at the provincial and ministerial level, an increase of 0.9 percentage points over 2005. In 2011, the proportion of women members in the villagers' committees nationwide reached 22.0%, up by 6.5 percentage points compared to 2005. In 2012, female representatives took 23.0% of the total seats at the Eighteenth CPC National Congress, which increased by 2.9 percentage points compared with the previous session in 2007. Furthermore, Chinese women have been active in international political affairs. In 2010, there were 1,639 female Chinese diplomats, accounting for 30.8% of the total number of diplomats of the country, including 14 female ambassadors, 9 female consul-generals and 103 female counselors, representing 8.4%, 14.3% and 25.8% of the diplomats at the same level respectively. Women's NGOs have also embraced new development. According to statistics, currently in China there are more than ten thousand non-governmental women organizations of various types at all levels, an increase of about 40% over 1995. A trend of diversification has emerged in grassroots women's organizations, with assorted associations and women's volunteer organizations growing on an ongoing basis.

II. Gaps and Challenges

Some existing regulations and policies hinder the rise in the proportion of women engaged in politics. For example, there are local regulations prohibiting women aged over 40 from attending the competition for section-chief positions or forcing female civil servants below the section-chief level to retire at the age of 55 (while males at 60). All these call for an urgent need to change such provisions and measures unfavorable for women's political engagement.

The proportion of women engaged in politics is still yet to be increased, given the relatively small number of female leaders serving in principal and key positions. The proportion of female representatives has not yet reached 30% at the NPC, while the small number of female candidates and winners in villages' committee election remains a prevalent problem: As of early 2009, the proportion of female heads of villages' committee was only about 2.7% across China. Principal female leaders are outnumbered by male peers in proportion, especially imbalanced regarding the posts carrying important government functions. Among the 124 executive leaders newly elected from the provincial-level party committees, the central government, the NPC and CPPCC in 2013, there are only seven female leaders, accounting for 5.7% of the total. Moreover, in respect of international affairs, women assuming key leadership positions also account for a relatively low proportion.

Awareness should be raised regarding the importance of women's engagement in political and public life. In the field of politics, discrimination against women is still common in the traditional custom, where people are not conscious enough with the significance of engaging women in political decision making. Some people think that women are poor leaders and incompetent to act as principals, who therefore should be family-oriented instead of pursuing political achievements.

Training for female leaders, especially grassroots backbone female leaders, is still far from well-established. Training efforts are flawed in poor relevance, insufficient gender mainstreaming of courses, considerable funding gaps, imbalanced allocation of training resources, and little access to training for grassroots backbone and community women leaders and other problems.

III. Suggestions in Response

On the basis of in-depth survey and research, more systematic, detailed and comprehensive regulations and policies should be developed to increase policy transparency, openness and interoperability, providing more preferential initiatives for women so that they can participate in political and public life backed by a solid underlying system.

The proportion of women engaged in politics should be stipulated, coupled with efforts to establish mechanisms supporting women's political participation, substantially enhance women's presence in domestic governments at all levels as well as on the international political arena, and increase women's engagement and execution in decision-making of international affairs.

The culture of gender equality should be advocated to eliminate discrimination against women and stereotypes demeaning women, while raising awareness of the importance of women's participation in decision-making and social affairs of the country, to create a favorable social environment for women to get fully and equally engaged in political and public life.

It is also essential to adopt diverse training methods, develop practical and appropriate training programs, improve the relevance of training content, and place particular emphasis on gender equality so as to endow female leaders with the ability of leadership and political participation.

Appendix

Catalog of the Organizations

Women's Studies Institute of China

The Women's Studies Institute of China, founded in January 1991 and sponsored by the All-China Women's Federation, is a national institution specializing in comprehensive studies on women and gender issues. The Institute has conducted studies on women-related theories, history, empiricism, and laws and regulations. It has also made comparisons of domestic and foreign theories from a multidisciplinary perspective, sparing no efforts to promote women's development and gender equality.

Website: <http://www.wsic.ac.cn>