

# Strengthening the Women Representation

Tindak Malaysia Training #2

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# Why Women Representation is Weak in Malaysia

- Among the main factors why women representation is still weak in Malaysia
  - The capability and win-ability of women candidates compared to male candidates
  - The capacity and tenacity of women to serve
  - Domestic commitments of women where they still need to balance between work and family commitments
  - Malaysia is still a largely patriarchal and a male-dominated society
  - Strong preferences for male politicians compared female politicians in Malaysia
  - Male politicians in Malaysia refusing to leave their positions

# Why Increase Women Representation

- Representation of women in politics in Malaysia: Malaysia was ranked 145<sup>th</sup> out of 192 countries based on survey by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)
- Main reasons to increase women representation:
  - To reduce corruption in politics
  - Reduction in race-based politics
  - To ensure better policies by women who represent half of the electorate
  - To have more diversity and inclusivity in politics with women representation
  - To capitalize on the unique skills and capacity of women
  - To consider the views of women in policy making and decisions

# Why Increase Women Representation

- Main reasons to increase women representation (Continued):
  - More focus on social issues
  - To enhance human rights by dealing with issues of inequality and stereotypes of women
  - Will bring about positive changes in the existing culture of our Parliament

# Which way forward? - Reserved Seats and Legislative Quotas

- Reserved Seats – a number of seats specifically for a certain demographic such as women
- Reserved Seats is a method to address underrepresentation of a community. It is the least used quota form used globally
- Zuraida's COMWEL proposal of 30% seats for women is a form of reserved seats
- In Malaysia, institutionalizing reserved seats require constitutional amendment
- Reserved Seats can have its own women representatives elected via directly in single member constituencies or party lists for national sized constituencies

# Which way forward? - Reserved Seats and Legislative Quotas

- Legislated (Mandated) Candidate Quotas sets **a minimum number of candidates** are women (for this discussion)
- Examples of Legislated Quotas
  - Zipper/Zebra arrangements alternating between men and women candidates
  - One in every three candidates should be a women
  - The top two candidates are not of the same sex
- Legislated Quota **will work if there are sanctions** and **enforcement of sanctions**
- Example of Sanctions: Withdrawal of government subsidies, rejecting candidate list
- Legislated Quota with Closed List Proportional System: A sure Way to increase women representation

# Which way forward? - Reserved Seats and Legislative Quotas

- Top Up Women Only Additional Seats -TWOAS (Penang)
  - **Conditional, hybrid** of **Reserved** Seats and **Legislative Quotas**
  - **Conditional**: This class of women seats are added only if state elections of Penang failed to yield 30% women representatives (minimum 12 seats out of 40). If state elections yield 12 women representatives in the elections, TWOAS is not activated
  - **Reserved** Seats: This class of seats exclusively for women are nominated by the state government. State Governments of Sabah, Terengganu and Pahang have amended constitution for state government to create nominated seats. Penang is looking to use this option for the creation of women reserved seats
  - **Legislative** Quotas: Women Candidates may be chosen from certain demographic aspects: Age/Single Mother/Disability/Ethnic Minority



# Which way forward? - Reserved Seats and Legislative Quotas

- Top Up Women Only Additional Seats -TWOAS (Penang)
  - Came to existence due to poor women representation in Penang State Legislative Assembly (DUN)
  - When TWOAS is activated, Penang DUN grows in size using a mathematical formula which ensures 30% of women representation of total DUN (which will be composed of members directly elected in single member constituencies and party lists – which feeds into nominated seats)
  - A temporary measure
  - TWOAS Women Representatives have one constituency to focus – the entire island. Hence, TWOAS representatives are to form statewide policies
  - A form of one ballot Mixed Majoritarian System (MMM) where governments are formed on two lists – nominal list and party list in parallel form

# Which way forward? - Voluntary Quota

- Voluntary party quotas have been increasingly popular among left and centre-left parties such as Green, Socialist and Social Democratic parties in many countries in Europe.
- It is up to the political parties to voluntarily impose quotas on the number of women representatives in their respective political parties
- Contributed to significant advances in the representation of women in national parliaments in countries as diverse as Sweden, Bolivia, Mozambique, Namibia, Norway, South Africa and Spain.
- It is easier to adopt, as they only require action from within political parties
- Such quotas can be implemented without changing the existing electoral boundaries and electoral system
- Voluntary quota is effective in Malaysia if and only if all or most of major parties adopt in every election cycle

# Which way forward? – Public Financing for Parties

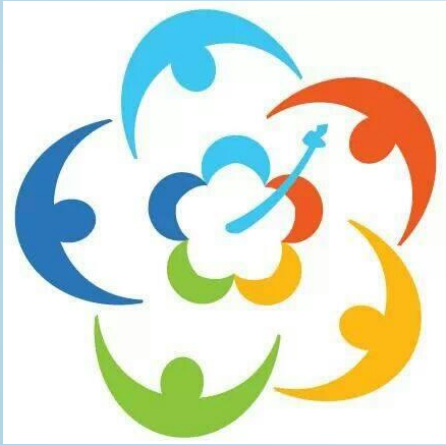
- Dangling a carrot for parties who field winnable women candidates
- Idea mooted in a [Bersih Report](#) (2021)
- In this report, from the wider pool of public monies to finance political parties, RM 10 million is to be allocated to parties in order to increase women representation
- This seat-based direct public funding means that public funding will be given on a proportionate basis to any political party based on the number of female MPs that each political party has.
- The more female based representatives that a party has, the more public funding the party receives on an annual basis.
- Public Funding can be used to train future women leaders

# Summary

	<b>Reserved Seats &amp; Legislated Quotas</b>	<b>Voluntary Quota</b>	<b>Public Financing for Political Parties</b>
<b>Advantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fastest way to increase women representation</li> <li>• Temporary Measure to build critical mass of women representatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build on Political Will of a party, rather relying on legislative enforcement</li> <li>• Can be used to send a strong message to voters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carrot method that incentivizes parties to field winnable women candidates</li> <li>• Amplifies impact of other pro women measures</li> </ul>
<b>Disadvantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Require enforcement of sanctions</li> <li>• Doesn't address root issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First Past the Post System in Malaysia will not translate this method into results effectively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires strong political will to ensure monies are distributed fairly</li> </ul>

# Moving Forward

- Seat based Funding for Parties stands out as a long term viable solution for the women representation cause
- Political Will must be built to facilitate the adoption of Public Financing of Political Parties (with Seat Based direct funding for parties who yield winnable women candidates)
- Within the realm of appointed local governments, carrots must be dangled to local governments to appoint more women representatives (who in turn may be contesting in general elections)
- More space and will must be shown to groom future women leaders



End

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