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Evaluation of the Zipper System in Efforts to Increase Women's Representation to 30 Percent in Parliament

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Abstract: The low representation of women in parliament is a global problem, especially in Indonesia. The status quo shows that the role and representation of women in parliament is still very low, which has implications for legislation products that are not inclusive. Women are vital in legislation, especially in micro-policy aspirations related to welfare, education, equality, and household issues. The affirmation policy with a minimum female candidacy quota of 30 percent in Indonesia is implemented through the zipper system. However, unfortunately, it is still ineffective because women's representation is still very low. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method to analyze the inequality of women's representation in the Indonesian parliament. The data used secondary data, which has been collected and processed by other parties. The result of this study is an evaluation of the zipper system, which is still ineffective because it depends on the placement of candidate sequence numbers and political party awareness. The placement of women in number 1 is only 19 percent, while in number three, it reaches 67 percent, and in number 6, 65 percent. It has a big impact on the probability of low electability. With women's representation, women's voices can be heard and fought for in government, thus realizing an equal and inclusive government. Revamping the zipper system by requiring the placement of female candidates at number 1 is an effective solution to increase women's representation in parliament in line with descriptive representation theory, which emphasizes the importance of proportional representation from various groups of society in government.

Keywords: women's representation; zipper system; electability.

1. Introduction

Since the beginning of democracy, the low electability of women in the political realm has been a global problem (Asmanidar, 2015). The United Nations has implemented various conventions to accommodate women's political rights. One of them was outlined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1979, ratified by various countries. Indonesia also ratified it through Law Number 7 of 1984 concerning the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, which was then manifested through the Affirmative Action policy in Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning general elections and Law Number 2 of 2011 concerning political parties.

Affirmative Action is a special policy in an effort to quickly promote equality for women (Kania, 2015). The status quo shows that the role of women in parliament is still very minimal, which has implications for legislative products that are not inclusive. On this basis, the Affirmative Action policy is urgently implemented to accelerate equality and justice. The Affirmative Action policy with a minimum women's nomination quota of 30 percent in Indonesia is implemented through a zipper system. This policy has had results in the form of women's electability rate in the House of Representatives in 2009 amounting to 18.21 percent and increasing in the 2019 Election to 20.08 percent.

Even though it has increased the probability of being elected, the zipper system has never met the UN standard for women's representation in the legislature of at least 30 percent. The reason is that there are still many gaps for political parties to place female legislative candidates in less strategic positions, which has implications for women's very low level of electability. Political parties tend to place women in large serial numbers, while the public has a stronger tendency to elect legislative candidates in small serial numbers (1,2,3). Apart from that, patriarchal cultural factors also contribute to the level of women's electability. Female legislative candidates face many challenges both from society and from political parties. Stigmatization of women, being looked down upon, and even being considered unable to work are things that female legislative candidates often experience. As a result, Indonesia is currently ranked 108th out of 185 countries in terms of women's representation in legislative institutions (IPU Parline, 2023). This figure represents Indonesian women's very low level of representation in parliament. According to Judith Squires, there are three reasons why women's representation in parliament is important. First, by fulfilling the women's quota, women's agencies will be created to fight for gender and women's issues in policy-making. Second, the presence of women in parliament can ensure fair gender policies and that the principles of gender mainstreaming are integrated into every stage of policymaking. Third, female legislators can increase the number of women in policy-making institutions. For this reason, this article will examine the problem with two main focuses: First, examine and evaluate the current zipper system mechanism. Second, offering a more optimal and implementable renewal mechanism.

The research carried out cannot be separated from reference sources from previous studies, but the discussion of research writing develops women's representation not only from a practical and theoretical perspective but also dissects further the problems of the zipper system.

The first research, conducted by Aulya et al. (2022) only focuses on analyzing empirical data regarding the implementation of Affirmative Action regarding women's representation in political practice. The findings in this research state that several political parties listed in their Articles of Association and Bylaws have not

included an article that stipulates a 30 percent quota for women's representation, which violates the provisions of Law Number 2 of 2011 concerning Political Parties, which mandates Affirmative Action. A comparison of research carried out by the author with previous research by Aulya and her colleagues focuses more on a general analysis of the implementation of Affirmative Action in Law Number 2 of 2011 concerning Political Parties. In contrast, this research provides a more comprehensive analysis using qualitative descriptive methods. This research focuses on evaluating the zipper system mechanism, which aims to provide concrete solutions to increasing women's electability in parliament.

The second research, conducted by [Kertati \(2019\)](#) revealed that increasing women's representation in politics also has an impact on the Gender Empowerment Index (IPG), which measures the level of women's empowerment with a number of indicator. However, over time, due to various factors and fluctuations in the number of women in legislative institutions, the status quo shows that the 30 percent quota target has not been achieved. Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning general elections introduced by the government to support women's representation in parliament must be balanced with active commitment from political parties and public awareness. The difference between the author's and the second research conducted by Kertati lies in the research focus and theoretical framework used. Kertati's research focuses more on the impact of women's political representation on women's empowerment in the political field, as measured by the achievement of the Gender Development Index (IPG), by referring to the theory of women's political rights and gender bias theory. Meanwhile, this research prioritizes evaluating the implementation of Affirmative Action through the zipper system mechanism regulated in Article 246 of Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning Elections, which is considered an Affirmative Action policy. The approach in this research includes descriptive representation theory, gender justice theory, and queer performativity theory.

The third research, compiled by [Jumanah et al. \(2023\)](#) raises the issue of women's representation in politics and provides strategies for increasing women's participation in politics, including a 30 percent quota policy for women's representation. This research also includes a discussion of the zipper system mechanism, which allows more women to be elected as members of parliament. Although there are similarities in efforts to increase women's representation, this research focuses more on the aspect of women's representation in parliament and presents a more in-depth analysis of the zipper system mechanism as an implementable solution.

The fourth research, conducted by [Hevriansyah \(2021\)](#) focuses attention on the political rights of women's representation in the context of legislative elections and proportional representative systems. This research also compares with South Korea, where the quota for women's representation in elections increased from 30 percent to 50 percent thanks to the "Zipper" list method." Researchers concluded that stability in women's representation was achieved in the South Korean parliament. The proportional representation system provides opportunities for all parties to maximize the support they receive. The difference between this research and those of Hevriansyah is the focus and theory used. Previous research emphasized the political rights of women's representation in legislative elections using the general theory of proportional representation. Meanwhile, this research will explore the concept of the zipper system mechanism. We will discuss how women's representation in the Indonesian parliament, which is still low, can be increased by placing women at number one on the list of candidates. Another significant

difference is that this research focuses on the zipper system mechanism regulated in Article 246 of Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning general elections as part of the Affirmative Action policy.

The fifth research, conducted by [Niron and Seda \(2021\)](#) discusses the issue of women's political representation and the challenges faced by female candidates in the 2019 legislative elections. Although there are similarities with this research regarding the serial number placement of female candidates in legislative elections, there are significant differences in the scope of the research. This research is more in-depth in analyzing women's representation in parliament.

The sixth research, conducted by [Sahu and Yadav \(2018\)](#) focuses on women's political participation and decision-making. This research highlights that women's political participation includes not only the number of women in formal politics, voting behavior, involvement in political associations, and roles in decision-making and policy-making. We also note that the success of women's participation in election contestation is strongly influenced by an electoral system that supports diversity and special measures that encourage women's candidacy. Although there are similarities in discussions about Affirmative Action for women in politics, our research will focus more on the implementation of the zipper system mechanism.

The normative regulation of women's representation of at least 30 percent in Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning elections and implementation through the zipper system has not been able to increase women's electability rate to at least 30 percent according to UN standards, as in the introduction above. Therefore, the authors tried to evaluate and provide a solution by improving the Zipper System mechanism by placing women at number one. The creators developed this perspective idea by conducting a study of electability data through serial numbers from previous elections, which had a high probability of being elected for female candidates who were placed in small serial numbers.

2. Methods

This research uses a qualitative descriptive method with a literature study research approach. This research aims to analyze the phenomenon of inequality in women's electability in Indonesia. The data used is secondary data, namely data previously collected and processed by other parties ([Sugiyono, 2008](#)). Qualitative descriptive methods allow researchers to explain, describe, and interpret these phenomena in the Indonesian social and political context ([Nugrahani, 2014](#)). Using secondary data, this research will examine the trends and factors that influence women's electability in Indonesian politics, as well as provide a deeper understanding of the roots of existing problems.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The Urgency of Women's Election of at Least 30 Percent in Parliament

According to data from the Ministry of Home Affairs on June 30, 2022, Indonesia's population is 275,361,267 people, with a percentage of men being 54.48 percent and women being 49.52 percent. Based on existing population data, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference in the ratio of men and women in society. However, the situation becomes contradictory when looking at the comparison between men and women in parliament ([Tridewiyanti, 2012](#)). The achievements of women in the executive sector are indeed a barometer of women's

progress in terms of political quality (Syafputri, 2014). However, this does not appear to be optimal and is not in line with the legislative side. This is evident from the results of the 2019 general election, where women's representation in the House of Representatives only reached 20.8 percent, while men dominated with 79.2 percent (Sekretariat Jenderal MPR RI, 2023).

The lack of women's electability of at least 30 percent in parliament has implications for the stigma of discrimination against women in politics (Sondakh, 2007). Moreover, women are vital in legislation, especially in micro policy aspirations related to welfare, education, health, anti-violence, equality, and the household. This issue will never be resolved if women are not directly involved in decision-making (Wulandari & Agustyati, 2014). Bari's research (2005) shows that countries with women's representation above 33 percent rank high in human development. The quantity of women in the House of Representatives and the Regional Legislative Council is an important aspect to creating influence in every policy because women have a different perspective in seeing and solving problems; namely they are more inclined to think holistically and are gender-responsive (Wahyudi, 2018).

Reality shows that the role of Indonesian women in parliament is not yet seen as significant. This is influenced by the low quantity of women who occupy central positions in government (Umagapi, 2020). For example, the House of Representatives for the 2014-2019 period failed to pass the Domestic Workers Bill and the Gender Equality and Justice Bill (Umagapi, 2020). Another example is the draft Sexual Violence Crime Bill (RUU TPKS), which has been discussed since 2014 but was only passed into law on April 12, 2022. It took eight years for the government to pass this bill despite the people's aspirations. Gender issues have been raised for a long time. One of the reasons for the length of the legislative process is the lack of women's voices in parliament. Once there was public pressure and the struggle for women's voices in the House of Representatives, the Sexual Violence Crime Bill was immediately successfully passed (Paulina & Madalina, 2022). The same thing also happened in the Regional Legislative Council legislative process. Regional Regulation No. 4 of 2016 concerning the Implementation of Immunization in West Sumatra Province, for example, there is a lack of women's participation in discussing regional regulations because of all the members of the Regional Legislative Council of West Sumatra province, there are only 3 (three) women who are involved up to the final faction opinion and general report stage, so that the resulting legislative product cannot be maximized.

In fighting for women's representation in the House of Representatives and the Regional Legislative Council, Indonesia adopted Affirmative Action by formulating a quota of at least 30 percent of women's representation. The 30 percent figure was formulated based on research by the United Nations Divisions for the Advancement of Women (UN-DAW) study (Sweinstani, 2019). The minimum quantity of 30 percent is the international standard for women's representation, which allows for a change in the quality of decisions made in public institutions (Nurcahyo, 2016). This quantity will allow for a change in each decision. Although several legal regulations have been enacted to legitimize women's political participation, the relationship between women and the world of politics remains complex. This is reflected in women's representation level, which is still much lower than that of men on the political stage and in official political institutions. Patriarchal culture is still a significant obstacle to women's involvement in the public sphere. However, these challenges can be gradually overcome by adopting a gender equality perspective. The concept of gender equality brings an innovative approach to changing the mindset and communication patterns between men and women, where both have equal rights

when trying to play a role in the public sphere (Nimrah & Sakaria, 2015). The quota system functions as an effective compensation mechanism to overcome gender inequality and provide wider access to women in the political process.

Women's representation of 30 percent in parliament must become a real reality and not just a formality in nominations. Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning general elections requires that there be at least 30 percent representation of women in all aspects of political life, including in the management of political parties at the central level, the list of legislative candidates, membership of the general election commission, the team selection process, and also in The General Election Supervisory Agency membership, both at the central, provincial and district/city levels (Nazia, 2022). The urgency of women's representation is in line with critical mass theory, which emphasizes goal solidarity when women reach a certain level of representation (Childs & Krook, 2008).

3.2. Evaluation of the Zipper System Mechanism in General Elections in Indonesia

Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning general elections has mandated the representation of 30 percent of female members in parliament. This policy is a form of affirmative action that aims to accelerate women's election and create gender equality in the legislature. Implementationally, the zipper system places female legislative candidates in positions where every time there are three legislative candidates, one of them must be filled by a female legislative candidate. Article 246 of Law Number 7 of 2017 regulates the zipper system mechanism concerning general elections, which places female legislative candidate candidates in one of three names, starting from the smallest serial number to the highest or lowest serial number. Initially, the Zipper system was considered effective in accelerating women's electability in the legislature. However, until the 2019 election, the zipper system had never reached an electability rate of 30 percent. In 2004, women's representation in the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia was very low, with only 11.24 percent of all elected members being women (Thalib, 2014). This figure reflects serious challenges in realizing gender equality and women's political participation. To overcome this problem, in the 2009 Election, Indonesia implemented a "zipper" system (Kurniawan, 2014; Nuraini, 2014). This means that there is one female candidate for every three legislative candidates (Salfa, 2022). The aim is to increase women's representation in parliament. Even though these steps have been taken, women's representation in the House of Representatives has not yet reached the ambitious target of 30 percent. Several factors that influence this include cultural and social obstacles that still influence the role of women in politics, challenges in selecting quality female candidates (Wiroko, 2017), and the need for strong supervision and law enforcement of the "zipper" rule. Women's empowerment and broader changes in political culture and society are also key to achieving fairer and more balanced representation in the House of Representatives. This is very important so that the perspectives and interests of women are represented effectively in policy-making in Indonesia, especially in the form of legislative processes. Article 246 of Law Number 7 of 2017 clearly states this provision concerning general elections. However, the problem is the zipper system has never achieved the 30 percent female representation figure as described in the introduction (Niron & Seda, 2021).

This is caused by the implementation of the zipper system, which is very dependent on the placement of candidate serial numbers and is determined by the

awareness of political parties. Moreover, there is no commitment from each political party to increase women's representation (Prihasta, 2020). Only 19 percent of women were placed at number one, while those at number three reached 67 percent, followed by number six at 65 percent (Niron & Seda, 2021). This has an impact on the low probability of selection. The following is a calculation of the electability of male and female candidates based on serial numbers:

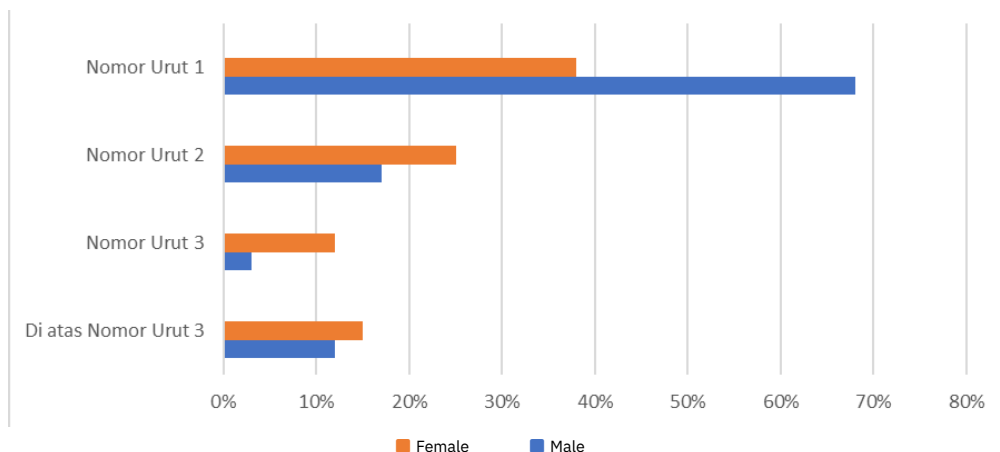


Figure 1. Elected Legislative Candidates Based on 2019 General Election Serial Number

The non-optimal implementation of the zipper system is not only limited to the national level in the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia but also occurs at the regional level, including in provincial and district/city Regional Legislative Councils. In 2019, data shows that women's representation in the provincial Regional Legislative Council only reached 18.03 percent, while in the district/city Regional People's Representative Council, it only reached 15.25 percent. This shows that the challenges in increasing women's representation in politics are national and local.

Improving the "zipper" system to increase women's representation in Indonesian politics requires special attention to the issue of placing the serial numbers of female candidates. Currently, political practice still tends to give higher priority numbers to male candidates, which ultimately affects the chances of women's representation. To overcome gender stereotypes and discrimination, firm and concrete action is needed. One step that can be implemented is to require the placement of female candidates at number 1 on the list of candidates. With this step, each political party will automatically give the first serial number to female candidates, significantly increasing their chances of being elected.

Improving the "zipper" system to increase women's representation in Indonesian politics requires special attention to the issue of placing the serial numbers of female candidates. Currently, political practice still tends to give higher priority numbers to male candidates, which ultimately affects the chances of women's representation (Kusuma, 2022). To overcome gender stereotypes and discrimination, firm and concrete action is needed. One step that can be implemented is to require the placement of female candidates at number 1 on the list of candidates. With this step, each political party will automatically give the first serial number to female candidates, significantly increasing their chances of being elected.

This step provides fairer opportunities for female candidates and sends a strong message of commitment to realizing gender equality in politics. In the context of the international target of at least 30 percent female representation, using a "zipper

system," which requires the placement of female candidates at number 1, could be an effective solution to achieve this goal. However, it should be noted that implementing this step will require strong support from political parties, strict law enforcement, and careful monitoring to ensure this rule is implemented properly. With a firm and progressive approach, the hope is that women's representation in Indonesian politics can experience significant positive change, creating a more inclusive and equitable decision-making environment (Kliwantoro, 2023).

3.3. Transformation of Women's Representation Through Placing Serial Number 1 in the Zipper System

Seeing the various gaps in the zipper explained previously, which make it impossible to realize women's electability of at least 30 percent in parliament according to United Nations standards, we provide a new idea by placing female legislative candidates at number 1. This idea is a mechanism for improvement and renewal of the "zipper" system. It is the right step to increase the probability of their selection without discriminating against men. Analysis from the Center for Political Studies at the Universitas Indonesia noted that male legislative candidates with serial number 1 had an electability percentage of 68 percent and female legislative candidates 48 percent. This strengthens the perspective that the number sequence of legislative candidates has a significant influence on voter preferences (Cakra Wikara Indonesia, 2023). The results of this analysis reflect that the placement of serial numbers in the list of candidates in general elections can influence voters' choices. Candidates with lower serial numbers, such as serial number 1, may be easier for voters to remember and therefore, more likely to get the vote (Meliala, 2020). This phenomenon can influence the electability of both male and female candidates but can especially influence female representation, as seen in the difference in electability percentages between male and female legislative candidates. This analysis also highlights the importance of a deeper understanding of how voters make their decisions and how factors such as serial number order can influence their preferences. To increase women's representation in politics, research like this can help design more effective campaign strategies and overcome obstacles that influence the electability of female legislative candidates. In addition, it may be necessary to make changes to the electoral system to ensure that voter preferences are based on a deeper understanding of candidates' qualifications and vision rather than simply on a serial number sequence.

The opinion expressed by Dr. Susan Franceschet about the greater chance for women to be elected with a small serial number highlights the importance of serial number placement in Indonesian politics. Recent data notes that the majority of elected legislative candidates in Indonesia, around 80 percent, are number one and two, with around 64 percent of elected members of the House of Representatives coming from number one legislative candidates, confirming this view. This phenomenon reflects that the order of the serial numbers in the list of candidates significantly impacts the probability of their election. Placing lower serial numbers, such as serial numbers one and two, may be easier for voters to remember, giving them an edge in elections. However, it is important to note that voter preferences should not only be based on serial number order but also a deep understanding of the candidate's qualifications, vision, and work program. In response to this data, electoral regulations or systems may need to be reviewed to ensure that voter preferences are based on more comprehensive information, not just a serial number sequence. Additionally, greater efforts could be made to improve voters' understanding of competent candidates, regardless of their serial number order, so

that voters can make more informed decisions in general elections. This will help create a more inclusive political environment and encourage greater women's participation in Indonesian politics (Sunda, 2022).

Table 1. Number of Elected Legislative Candidates 2019 Based on Serial Number

Serial number	Number of Legislative Candidates	Percentage
1	367	63,83
2	105	18,26
3	29	5,04
4	27	4,70
5	21	3,65
6	8	1,39
7	10	1,74
8	3	0,52
9	3	0,52
10	2	0,35
Total	575	100,00

Source: Cakra Wikara Indonesia (2023)

Conceptually, democracy is giving the people the power to elect their representatives, and this step allows voters to choose based on the competence and vision of candidates regardless of gender. This concept is also related to the theory of queer performativity, which recognizes gender diversity in the political realm. Providing equal opportunities for women in placing serial numbers is one way to recognize that all individuals, regardless of gender, have the potential to play an active role in politics and decision-making. In addition, descriptive representation theory also has important relevance in this context. Placing female candidates at higher serial numbers provides symbolic representation and ensures that women's perspectives and experiences are truly represented in political decision-making. This is very important because women often have different views and interests that must be acknowledged and addressed in policy.

The rationalization behind efforts to increase women's political representation is based on several relevant factors. First, Article 28H paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia as the basis for the principle of gender justice in the electoral system. In the context of general elections, the a quo article has an important role in ensuring the implementation of gender justice in election law. Second, the zipper system implements the open legal policy of the General Election Law. Its implementation provides flexibility in the form of implementation that can be adapted to current needs and conditions. Third, if it is placed in a small serial number, especially one, the probability of being selected is higher. This factor is based on the understanding that voters tend to choose candidates with small serial numbers because they are easier to remember and recognize (Ramadhan, 2021). Fourth, there is no need to change the general election system to increase women's representation. Changing election laws requires time and complexity; however, focusing on revising PKPU regulations, especially by referring to Article 246 of Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections as a reference. The mechanism for placing women at number 1 is the simplest solution. Data shows that if all women were placed at number 1, their electability rate would exceed 40 percent, and their chance of being selected would exceed 60 percent.

Placing women at number 1 is a strategic step in encouraging women's participation in the political realm. Krook argues that quota systems do not have a uniform effect in increasing women's representation but rather depend on the context and strategies political elites take in relation to these quotas. This will create a significant change in the tendency of Indonesian legislation, which is more focused on public and masculine issues, to be more inclusive and pay attention to domestic issues, as the theory of legislative change states that the quota system depends on the context and strategies taken by political elites.

4. Conclusion

Indonesia adopted Affirmative Action by formulating a quota of at least 30 percent of women's representation in all aspects of politics. Unfortunately, women's representation in parliament of at least 30 percent has never been achieved. Even though the representation figure has increased, the increase is not yet significant. Reality shows that the current zipper system policy is not optimal in achieving women's electability of at least 30 percent as per UN international standards. Political parties' awareness of Affirmative Action is still very lacking. Political parties tend to place women in less strategic positions, which has implications for a very low probability of being elected. Thus, changing the zipper system mechanism is necessary by requiring political parties to place female legislative candidates at number 1.

The rationalization for placing women at number 1 is based on four main reasons. First, based on the constitutional mandate of Article 28H paragraph (2), which underlines the principle of gender justice in the political context. Second, using the Zipper system is implementing an open legal policy regulated in the General Election Law, allowing for flexibility in implementation according to current developments. Third, placing women at number one increases their probability of being elected because most people choose legislative candidates with low serial numbers. Fourth, this policy is a simple solution and can be implemented easily through revision of the General Election Commission (KPU) regulations regarding Nominations of Members of the People's Representative Council, Provincial Regional Legislative Councils, and Regency/City Regional Legislative Councils, as well as supervision by the Election Supervisory Body (Bawaslu), without the need to make changes to the very complex General Election system or Law. Therefore, this policy is very rational to implement in the upcoming 2029 general elections and will bring positive benefits in increasing women's representation in the House of Representatives and the Regional Legislative Council, making them more inclusive.

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