

## Breaking Glass Ceiling:-

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Malaysian government's policy under the 9<sup>th</sup> Malaysia Plan was made explicit from 2006-2010, that the Public Sector will attempt to fast track at least 30% women into decision-making positions.
- 1.2 To further ensure continuity of this drive, the Women Parliamentary Caucus has championed on this policy. We have to forge ways to get our voices heard through the political channels comprising of all women parliamentarians regardless of their political beliefs. We work together through the Caucus to project the importance of women in the nation building.
- 1.3 Our membership is as follows :

i.	PARTI	POSTS	NUMBER
	Barisan Nasional	Ministers	2
		Assistant Minister	2
		Back Benchers	6
	DAP		4
	Keadilan		3
	PAS		3
	Independent		1
	<b>Total</b>		<b>21</b>

### 2. What do we do?

We are there to “PROJECT” and to “PROTECT” women.

#### 2.1 Project Women? What Is It?

- i. Today many women are also in the labour force because of the changing lifestyles. I am proud to be placed in a position where I can speak up for our women.
- ii. Women are partners in the Malaysian nation building. This is because the significant growth in incomes of Malaysians, the expansion of business networks that Malaysia has been able to engage in for over twenty years and the prevalence involvement in politics, have become a driving force for women to move forward in the labour force.

- iii. We have to “project” these women who have worked alongside the men. Why? If we don’t, who else would?
- iv. In this respect, on behalf of women in Malaysia, we have requested the media, be it the television, the radio or the printed media to interview ‘women holding position’ at decision-making levels to talk about their career, share their experiences and their plans to help other women.
- v. The overall employment situation of women has not evolved significantly since year 2001.
- vi. **Statistics 2001-2007**

a. **Public Sectors**

POSITION	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	% F
Secretary General	27	23	4	14.8
Director General (Federal)	68	60	8	11.8
Chief Executive (Federal Statutory Bodies)	64	55	9	14.1

b. **Ambassadors, High Commissioners and Permanent Representatives to the UN**

POSITION	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	% F
Ambassador	90	76	14	15.6
High Commissioners	10	6	4	40.0
Permanent Representatives to the UN	3	3	0	0.0

c. **Women in Decision-Making in the Judiciary**

POSITION	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	% F
Chief Justice of the Federal Court, Malaysia	1	1	0	0.0
President of the Court of Appeal, Malaysia	1	1	0	0.0
Chief Judge of the High Court, Malaysia	1	1	0	0.0
Chief Judge of the High Court in Sabah & Sarawak	1	1	0	0.0
Judges of the Federal Court of Malaysia	8	8	0	0.0
Judges of the Court of Appeal of Malaysia	21	18	3	14.3
Judges of the High Court in Malaya, Sabah & Sarawak	48	35	13	27.1
Judicial Commissioners of the High Courts in Malaya, Sabah & Sarawak	16	11	5	31.3

Source: *Statistics on Women, Family and Social Welfare 2007, MWFC*

d. **Corporate Sectors, 2001-2007**

POSITION	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Members of Board of Directors	10.1	10.5	10.1	9.9	10.2	7.6	5.3	7.41
President, VP, MD, CEO, COO, Sen, GM	12.0	12.1	12.3	13.5	13.9	14.3	24.0	

Source: *Statistics on Women, Family and Social Welfare 2007, MWFC*

e. **Respondents' Opinion of Key Recommendations**

Category	Recommendations	Yes			Total Valid Count	% Yes
		W	M	T		
Legal/ Regulatory	Quota	52	36	88	130	68
Legal/ Regulatory	Local Council					
Legal/ Regulatory	Gender Equality Laws					49
Structural	Gender Balance in Selection Committee					
Structural	Gender Sensitive Criteria for Selection					81
Cultural	Gender Sensitization Programme					

*Source: Statistics on Women, Family and Social Welfare 2007, MWFC*

- vii. At this juncture, I do not want to make a comparison of women prior to the independence times and post independence. I believe in updating ourselves by making comparison of women development in other countries from the 70s till today will give us a better insight on women development.
- viii. According to a survey carried out by MWFC in 2007, women form 45.9% of the Malaysian labour force in all sectors of Malaysians economy.
- ix. Women still form a disproportionately low percentage employed at decision-making levels. They are legislators, senior officials and managers.

## 2.2 Why?

- i. Cultural and social attitudes towards what constitutes “male” or “female” jobs result in occupational segregation, although the extent of the problem varies from country to country, and from job to job.
- ii. Women are mainly concentrated in the “feminized” professions such as nursing and teaching (horizontal occupational segregation). At the same time they remain in lower job categories than men (vertical occupational segregation).

- iii. There is a significant improvement among women in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, women are making small inroads into non-traditional fields such as Law, I.T. Computer Science and Engineering.
- iv. Women are slowly given recognition by their employers where they are promoted and given family-friendly policies in order to retain them.
- v. It is also an accepted fact that women who choose non-traditional jobs also face special constraints in their work place such as limited access to mentoring and female role models and sexual harassment.
- vi. Having said that, there is no reason to believe that the low levels representation of women at decision-making levels is caused by problems of supply because it is widely known that at almost all levels of education it clearly shows that female outnumbered the male students.
- vii. It is only at the postgraduate levels that the percentage of women furthering their education decline because women are prevented from doing so due to family obligations.
- viii. In higher education, for the year 2007/2008, for example----% of undergraduates are women but at the postgraduate and masters levels, the number falls to---% and ----% respectively.
- ix. In politics:
  - a. 10.8% of MPs in the 12<sup>th</sup> Parliamentary election are women (21 women MPs)
  - b. 80% of state legislators or ADUN
  - c. Women Cabinet Ministers

### 2.3 The “glass ceiling” phenomenon?

- i. Not only are educated women out there have exceeded the unit with regard to number for supply or labour in decision-making positions, they are also proven to be capable and efficient. This is a proven fact that at most times women are the “real doers” which help their organizations achieve excellence.
- ii. In the past, a women filled up the international Trade Ministry post. She had proven to have perform excellently in her Ministry.

- iii. It is also a common perception in the Asian patriarchy that, women are expected to take a step back in their family.
- iv. The work life Balance (WLB) phenomenon appears to have a greater association with women, because the degree of women's role in building a quality family higher institution is placed on the women than the men. By far it is commonly uttered that the women's and priority is the family.
- v. It is often argued that there may be enough women available with the right academic qualifications. Since most bosses are men, naturally, they tend to think of men more than the image of women's. Hence, men are the natural choice to succeed them.
- vi. In politics, women are undeniably very active, as proven by the proportion of women members in the country's main parties.
- vii. In the process of selecting a candidate, factors such as remote, almost inaccessible, rural constituencies' are deemed tough for women to win because of the related needs to be present in these constituencies.
- viii. The process of selecting a candidate is normally not women-friendly. It is uncommon for male politicians to make way for women. This is mainly because there are generally more men representing the political party at the national level.
- ix. A phenomenon that women themselves is to take the blame for our difficulty in achieving the 30% target is that "women are their own worst enemies" when there is a "fight" within political parties involving men and women, women find it hard to win party post, because women don't vote for their own gender.
- x. In the Malaysian culture, Malaysian women in general are conditioned to easily accept men in leadership roles. Women have the tendency to forget that they have a target to achieve i.e. 30%.

### **3. Protect Women?**

- 3.1 Often we read about women being abused, physically or mentally. There are also women being discriminated.
- 3.2 We in the Caucus work closely with the NGOs. We value the great efforts driven by the NGOs. As Malaysian woman and as a representative from the Women Parliamentary Caucus, I am so proud to work with NGOs who have been working so hard to protect our women through the amendments of laws, for instance.

3.3 And now, we have the **SOROPTIMIST** inviting us to participate in this forum where we can share our thoughts and also to listen to the voices of our women.

3.4 As we go along, we will study all legislation related to women. More elements will be worked out to ensure that women who enter their motherhood tenure are not penalized financially, such as the elimination of retirement plan for failures for career breaks, the provision of unpaid leave of absence with a guarantee of a job upon her return to work, and more opportunities for women working part-time.

#### 4. **Our Main Agenda?**

4.1 The Women Parliamentary Caucus has a specific objective to see to the government's policy on women's representation at the decision-making level achieve the 30% target.

4.2 Apart from debating in Parliament, we have also requested to meet with the Minister for Women, Family and Community Development.

4.3 We want to find out actions taken by the Ministry to achieve the 30% target for women to sit in decision-making positions. Perhaps, we can also make suggestion to the Human Resource Ministry to reward corporate bodies which implement the government's policy.

4.4 To discuss, (with the Minister for Women, Family and Community Development) on the action plans drafted during the workshop held in November 2008, how to implement them and by when?

#### 5. **Recommendations**

5.1 Enact a Gender Equality Act. It was reported in a draft integrated Report entitled *"Towards Achieving at Least 30% women at Decision making Levels in Malaysia"*, an initiative from the MWFCD, that there should be a provision for temporary affirmative measures (positive discrimination) such as legislative quota of at least 30% women at decision making levels across all sectors to facilitate a quick redress of the current gender imbalances by 2015.

5.2 Many governments throughout the world have acted to promote Gender equality in all sectors of society with varying degrees of success by introducing quota systems. The quota systems is an affirmative action tool intended to ensure that women constitute a critical minority of at least 30% on decision making bodies. This practice has been successfully implemented in Europe. Although a study is necessary to ensure such system would work in Malaysia, we still require temporary corrective measures seeking to increase the women's population in decision making and policy making processes.

- 5.3 Exclusive Women's Ministry establish and focus on function and objectives dedicated to gender equality matters and empowering of women.
- 5.4 Data based on successful women.
- i. The media has been requested to project successful women in their various fields. Some succeeded in business, some through their positions in the GLCs, in government services, and some even succeed as home managers.
  - ii. The MWFCDD must be at the fore front in ensuring that they keep an up-to-date genuine record of successful women data base.
  - iii. Girls and women in general may emulate successful women through their attractive profiling.
- 5.5 On politics, perhaps quota systems is an ideal way of ensuring representation of women like being practised in other countries. e.g.:
- i. Reserved seats are seats in the legislature literally put aside for women Countries that implemented this system are Pakistan, Bangladesh, Tanzania and Uganda.
  - ii. Party quotas are measures adopted voluntarily by political parties to ensure that a certain proportion of its candidates are women. This system was practiced by the British Labour Party.
  - iii. Legislative quotas are measures passed by parliament mandating political parties to nominate a certain proportion of women candidates as adopted by Argentina, Peru, Indonesia, South Korea and more.  
*Source : Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development*
- 5.6 Enact a Sexual Harassment Act to create a friendly workplace free from sexual abuses from male superiors.
- 6. Our urgent needs!**
- 6.1 Inculcate gender perspective programmes through education policies and teaching materials.
- 6.2 Gender awareness interactive events to be conducted by the MWFCDD.
- 6.3 Create greater political awareness among women.
- 6.4 Increase networking amongst women.

**7. Conclusion**

- 7.1 Finally, if women always keep in mind the 30% target, I believe that they will be more intelligible and professional in their daily practices towards work and politics.
- 7.2 Ladies, learn from men, support your own gender. Be 'gentle women' like gentlemen do.

Thank you.