

Dear Friends,

*This issue of **Women in Action** focuses on the role of women in politics in the different regions. Because this topic has a very broad scope, we have limited the coverage to two main areas: women in electoral politics and women in community politics. We have selected articles which take a look at the significance of women's participation in local and national government systems and the extent women influence policies and legislations.*

We have also included articles that describe women's political actions at the community level. Are these efforts outside established political institutions and parties more effective? Should these take precedence over legislative campaigns at the national level?

In addition, we felt that a more extensive coverage should be given to women in Eastern Europe and the Middle East since they are in a unique position of testing the waters of new democracies. Likewise, after the 1989 democratic revolution, women in Mongolia have played a stronger role in political decision making.

As far as women's political participation is concerned, high political positions and the individual successes of women in party politics do not guarantee a change in women's political status and their ability to exercise their political rights. For real transformation to take place, we must start in the community. It is in an activist role that women can make a difference.

One of the most successful ways women have been able to influence politics has been through the formation of strong women organizations with the capacity to pressure and lobby political parties and bodies. Two major questions that women are exploring today are that of raising women politicians from the ranks of the activists women's movement and that of establishing stronger and mutually supportive linkages between women in electoral politics and women activists in the global women's movement.

Establishing linkages between women in electoral and community politics would mean substantive and meaningful participation of women in politics. We welcome our readers to share their experiences and views with us on this issue.

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