

Tackling Women Leaders Under-Representation in Politic in Sabah, Malaysia

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Abstract : Women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all level of decisionmaking process are essential in order to achieve sustainable development goals by 2030. This paper discusses how women in Malaysia generally still find themselves under-represented in political institutions. Leaders from various political parties in Malaysia were all on the same page in their commitment to achieve the target of fielding 30 percent women candidates in election which in turn will increase female representation in the country's legislative bodies. However, despite their pledge on making equal opportunities to women in decision making process, the 30 percent target has yet to be achieved be it in the federal election nor respective state elections in thirteen states conducted throughout the country until now. Sabah's political landscape with regards to women leaders' representation in politic mirrors that at the federal level. During the 15th Parliamentary General Election which was conducted in November 2022, despite Sabah Women's significant numbers as voters in the electoral rolls which recorded 49.36 percent (833,847 women voters); only 17.6 percent or 21 women candidates out of 119 candidates in Sabah were fielded by the political parties contesting in the election. Sabah has 25 parliamentary seats. Out of 31 women members of Parliament who won the 15th General Election, only 3 women members of Parliament are from Sabah. Even in the 2020 Sabah State Election only nine (9) percent of the candidates or 43 women out of the 447 total candidates were fielded. The current Sabah State legislative Assembly saw only eight (8) percent or 7 women Assemblymen out of 79 Assemblymen in the legislative body. The number of female leaders in the legislative body in Malaysia has never exceeded 15 percent with the highest being 14.86 percent in the Lower House (Dewan Rakyat), 14.42 percent in the Upper House (Dewan Senat) and merely 8 percent in the Sabah State legislative Assembly. Thus, this paper will further discuss the strategies to tackle women leaders underrepresentation in politics particularly in Sabah, Malaysia and to provide suggestions to overcome this issue.

Keywords : women, leaders, politic, Sabah, Malaysia

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