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Parties, Elections, Parliaments: Women in Politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina

A story in numbers

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List of Abbreviations

BiH	<i>Bosnia and Herzegovina</i>
CIK (Centralna Izborna Komisija)	<i>Central Election Commission</i>
FBiH <i>Herzegovina</i>	<i>Federation of Bosnia and</i>
OSCE	<i>Organization for Security and</i> <i>Cooperation in Europe</i>
PABIH	<i>Parliamentary Assembly of BiH</i>
PR	<i>Proportional Representation</i>
RS	<i>Republika Srpska</i>
Parties	
DNS (Demokratski narodni savez)	<i>Democratic People's Alliance</i>
HDZ BiH (Hrvatska demokratska zajednica)	<i>Croatian Democratic Union BiH</i>
HDZ 1990 (Hrvatska demokratska zajednica 1990)	<i>Croatian Democratic Union 1990</i>
NSRZB (Narodna stranka Radom za boljitak) <i>Betterment</i>	<i>People's Party for Work and</i>
PDP (Partija demokratskog progresa)	<i>Party of Democratic Progress</i>
SBB (Savez za bolju budućnost)	<i>Union for Better Future of BiH</i>
SBiH (Stranka za BiH)	<i>Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina</i>
SDA (Stranka demokratske akcije)	<i>Party of Democratic Action</i>
SDP (Socijaldemokratska partija)	<i>Social Democratic Party</i>
SDS (Srpskademokratska stranka)	<i>Serb Democratic Party</i>
SNSD (Stranka nezavisnih socijaldemokrata)	<i>Alliance of Independent Social</i> <i>Democrats</i>

Executive Summary

This report looks into the participation of women in politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is a gendered study of the 2010 election. Three things were examined:

- The position and distribution of women on electoral lists,
- The change in the position of women on the electoral lists as a consequence of voting,
- The presence of women in the political parties.

Following the 2010 election, where women made up 39,39% of candidates on the list, the legal requirement was raised to 40% in 2013 and is now in line with the BiH Gender Equality Law. In order to evaluate the likely impact this will have on the 2014 elections, the study looked into the 2010 election in order to see if any patterns regarding participation of women appear. Eleven parties were included: SDP, SNSD, SDA, SDS, SBB, HDZ BiH, SBiH, HDZ 1990 - HSP, NSRZB, PDP and DNS, based on the gains they made either in the state, or entity parliaments.

It has been found that the official figure of 11.95% of women as the top of the list candidates overestimates the participation of women, because the number is far lower among the parties that actually gained seats. Further, only 20.3% of women on the lists for the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH were listed higher than the legal requirement, and the number is even lower for the entity parliaments. It has also been shown that women slide down the electoral lists as a result of voting, with SBB lists being the only exception. Finally, party statutes and programs, as well as executive boards were analyzed in order to assess the representation and participation of women in parties, and it has been found that with a few exceptions (notably SDP) presence of women is a symbolic, rather than a substantive gesture.

The following conclusions were derived:

- There is no correlation between the percentage of women at the top of the list, the percentage of women that were listed higher on the list than the minimum legal requirement and the percentage of women parliamentary representatives;
- The highest percentage of women listed higher on the list than the minimum legal requirement is for the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH (20.03%), then FBiH Parliament (17.2%) and the lowest is National Assembly of RS (12.16%);
- Regarding the number of women at the top of the list, the entity lists fare better than the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH lists;
- In addition to being lower on the lists to begin with, women further dropped down the list of candidates as a result of elections;
- The smallest difference was on the lists for the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH and the highest difference with the biggest drop was on the lists for the National Assembly of RS;
- SBB was the only party where women climbed on the list and placed higher as a result of the election;

- There is a range, from the parties which have mainstreamed gender in their statutes, to parties that are only selectively opening their doors to women, to, finally, parties that are only including select women in select bodies, therefore limiting the access to higher party echelons to men, and there is a similar range in the content of the party programs - from cursory mentions of women in the context of motherhood, to references to the Gender Equality Law;
- SDP has the highest proportion of women in their executive bodies, while SDA has the lowest;
- There is a correlation between the attitudes towards gender equality in party statutes and programs, but it is impossible to establish correlation between the percentage of women in leadership positions in the parties and the percentage of women representatives from that party in the parliament.

Finally, quotas have contributed to positive change, but have possibly reached their limits. Without a change in the political culture that sees female and male candidates as equal, and more importantly treats them as such, quotas do little more than just up the numbers, without making politics more equitably gendered.

Introduction

Three steps are necessary for women's participation in parliaments: first they need to select themselves, then they have to be selected by their party and finally they have to be selected by the voters (Matland, 2005: 93). The first step is crucial, because although women represent more than 50% of potential candidates in most countries, very few run due to social limitations (Matland, 2005: 94). The focus of this paper will be on what happens once women *do* select themselves and therefore decide to become active participants in party and electoral systems which are premised on female passivity.

The electoral system of Bosnia and Herzegovina will be explained as a form of introduction. This will be followed by the outline of the research methodology and findings, which will then be elaborated and analyzed. It will be argued throughout this paper that the political system in Bosnia and Herzegovina with its focus on ethnic representation cannot achieve gender equality through a purely formalistic legal approach that has been employed thus-far.

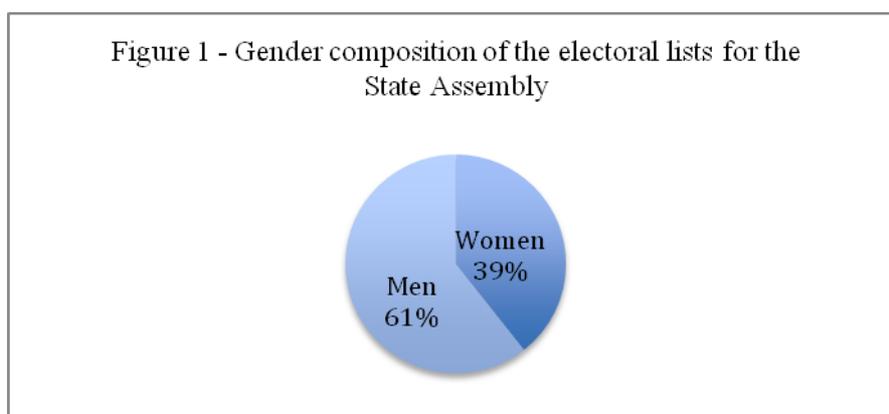
The Electoral System of BiH

Electoral systems can roughly be divided into three categories: majoritarian, mixed and proportional and the Bosnian model belongs to the latter category, which is considered to be the most favorable for getting women elected (Norris and Krook, 2011: 22). A simple explanation is that in PR systems parties aim to have a good cross-section of candidates which is representative of the social categories in a given electoral district and the complete exclusion of women would limit the voters' choices in an unacceptable way and cost the party valuable votes (Norris and Krook, 2011: 23). So in a sense the PR system attempts to imitate social and political reality, which explains why women are still significantly underrepresented in legislative bodies, even when they are placed on electoral lists.

Another variable is whether the lists are open or closed. Open lists allow voters to choose candidates from the list and are therefore more democratic, whereas closed lists limit voters' choices to parties. In highly patriarchal societies where voter preference is mostly for male candidates closed lists in combination with quotas could be more favorable to female candidates, but in BiH there is only a statistically insignificant difference between the two, with 25% of women being elected from closed lists, compared to 24% from open lists (Kadribašić, 2012/13: 4). In Bosnia and Herzegovina the lists are completely open for the seats in the lower levels of government (local and cantonal) and are semi-open for the entity and state level, where around 70% of seats are up for election, and 30% are used to achieve proportional ethnic representation (Kadribašić, 2012/13: 4).

Further, Art. 4.19 (4) of BiH Election law requires "equitable representation" of both genders on electoral lists, which is defined as 40% of the candidates on the list need to belong to the underrepresented sex,¹ in line with the Gender Equality Law (which was last amended in 2009). The Law also sets out rules for distribution of candidates on the list, so that one out of the first two candidates must be a member of the underrepresented sex, two in the first five, three in the first eight, and so on. What this means in practice is that a list with less than 40% of underrepresented candidates and incorrect distribution cannot be accepted by the CIK, but the law only regulates electoral lists and does not set quotas for parliamentary seats. This is a good indicator of the general attitude towards gender equality in legislative bodies - it is seen as an aspirational rather than a realistic goal, and is secondary to equal ethnic representation.

During the 2010 election in Bosnia and Herzegovina, out of the 8,242 candidates 3,035 were women, making up 36.82% of eligible candidates, and continuing the slow upward trend from 35% in 2002, to 36.2% in 2006 (Terzić and Bećirbašić, 2010: 19). On the lists for the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH 39.39% of candidates on the lists were women (figure 1), surpassing the legal requirement of 30% (which has been raised to 40% in March of 2013). The numbers are similar when it comes to the Parliament of FBiH (38.83%) and the National Assembly of RS (36.39%) (Terzić and Bećirbašić, 2010: 20).



¹ "Službeni glasnik BiH", br. 23/01, 07/02, 09/02, 20/02, 25/02, 04/04, 20/04, 25/05, 52/05, 65/05, 77/05, 11/06, 24/06, 32/07, 33/08, 37/08 i 32/10 - Quota was raised from 30% to 40% in March of 2013, „Službeni glasnik BiH“, broj: 18/13, art. 3).

2010 Elections

Overview

Eleven parties have been selected for the research, based on the 2010 election results: SDP, SNSD, SDA, SDS, SBB, HDZ BiH, SBiH, HDZ 1990 - HSP, NSRZB, PDP and DNS. Each of the parties had gained seats either in the state or entity parliaments, although not necessarily with female candidates.

The report explores the following issues:

1. *The distribution of candidates on the lists*: were the female candidates at the lowest legally required spots (2nd, 5th and 8th) in the majority of cases;
2. *The election of candidates from the lists*: were the female candidates, in the majority of cases, on a lower position on the list after the election;
3. *The attitude of political parties towards gender equality*: did the parties with gender sensitive programs and statutes and higher percentage of women in leadership positions have a more equitable distribution of candidates on the lists and a have a higher percentage of female elected officials.

Electoral lists for the State Parliament and entity parliaments were analyzed, based on electoral districts and then subdivided into parties that had gained seats in that district. The main variables that were collected from the research were:

1. Position of women at the top of the lists (the legal requirement is for one member of the underrepresented sex to be present in the top two spots on the list, and the focus here was on how many women were actually the top of the list, as opposed to being second, and therefore merely fulfilling the legal requirement);
2. Position of women on the lists in regards to the legal requirement (looking into how many candidates were on the 2nd, 5th and 8th position on the list therefore fulfilling only the legal requirement);
3. Position of women on the lists prior to the election, compared to the position of women on the lists post election (mapping out the connection between party preferences and voter preferences);
4. Presence of women in the parties (presence of women as a category in party statutes and programs, and presence of women in party leadership bodies).

The research results give a positive answer to the first two questions, but not the third. The results will be numerically and graphically presented, followed by an analysis that will attempt to answer the question as to why women go from being the 'underrepresented sex' on the lists to being even more disproportionately represented in legislative bodies.

Distribution of women on the electoral lists

It was found that:

- **There is no correlation between the percentage of women at the top of the list, the percentage of women that were listed higher on the list than the minimum legal requirement and the percentage of women parliamentary representatives;**

- **The highest percentage of women listed higher on the list than the minimum legal requirement is for the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH (20.03%), then F BiH Parliament (17.2%) and the lowest is National Assembly of RS (12.16%);**
- **Regarding the number of women at the top of the list, the entity lists fare better than the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH lists.**

During the 2010 election women made up 11.95% of candidates at the top of the lists overall and 14.29% in the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH (Terzić and Bećirbašić, 2010: 22). Table 1 breaks down the results for the parties that were studied and shows that women at the top of the list were few and far between, as were women that were placed higher than the legal requirement.

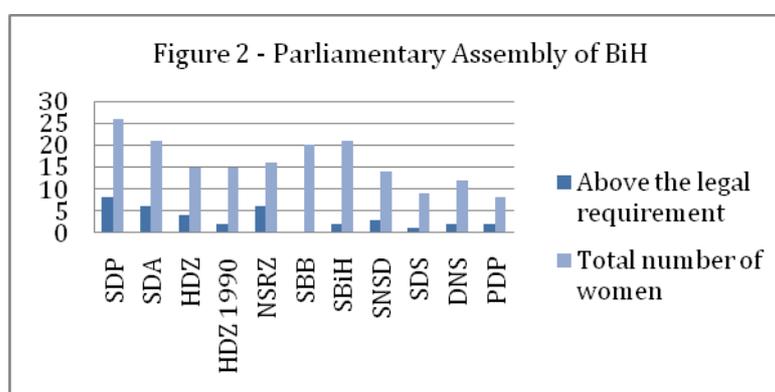
Table 1 - The distribution of women on the electoral lists for the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH.

Party	Percentage of women at the top of the list	Percentage of women listed higher on the list than the minimum legal requirement	Percentage of women Parliamentary Representatives
SDP	12.5%	30.7%	25%
SDA	0%	28.5%	0%
HDZ BiH	0%	26.7%	0%
HDZ 1990	0%	13.3%	0%
NSRZB	20%	37.5%	0%
SBB	0%	0%	25%
SBiH	0%	9.5%	50%
SNSD	0%	21.4%	25%
SDS	0%	11.1%	25%
DNS	0%	16.7%	0%
PDP	0%	25%	100%

To calculate the percentage of women at the top of the list, the number of women listed as number one was divided by the number of lists. To calculate the percentage of women listed higher on the list than the minimum legal requirement, the number of women listed above the 2nd, 5th and 8th place was divided by the total number of women on the list (in the top eight places). The limit of eight places was imposed for two reasons: it shows distribution of three female candidates, as opposed to two, providing more variables to work with, while at the same time it only looks at the places which might result in a victory, chance of which decreases as one moves farther down the list. There were several instances when the lists were shorter and in those cases women were either listed as last (usually as number six) or were excluded. If the 3rd female candidate was listed higher than number eight on the list, even if it was at the bottom of the list, it was counted as a +1 for that party, in order to distinguish those instances from when only 2 female candidates were placed on electoral lists with six candidates.

Parliamentary Assembly of BiH

Eight women were elected to the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH, making up 19% of elected officials. There is no correlation between the percentage of women at the top of the list, the percentage of women that were listed higher on the list than the minimum legal requirement and the percentage of women parliamentary representatives. There are several explanations for this. Firstly, the sample sizes vary (figure 2). For example, both the SDP and the NSRZB had one woman at the top of the list, but SDP had eight lists, whereas NSRZB only had five lists. Further, the percentage of women parliamentary representatives is influenced by two variables - the number of women elected and the number of mandates the party won. So for an example, out of SDP's eight mandates two belong to women, making women 25% of representatives, whereas PDP only won one mandate and it belongs to a woman, meaning they have 100% of female representatives.



The Parliament of FBiH and the National Assembly of RS

The same approach was adopted when analyzing the data for parties elected to the Parliament of FBiH (Table 2 and Figure 3) and the National Assembly of RS (Table 3 and Figure 4). The only parties included in both data sets are SDP and SDA, because they are the only ones that made significant gains in both entities, which offers useful insight. Although SDP results appear similar in both entities, in Federation this resulted in the election of female officials, while in RS it did not. One possible explanation could be that although the percentages are similar, there were almost twice as many women on the lists in the Federation than there were in RS (see Figures 3 and 4) and they won nine times as many seats, which clearly shows the limitations of smaller sample sizes.

Table 2 - The distribution of women on the electoral lists for the Parliament of FBiH.

Party	Percentage of women at the top of the list	Percentage of women listed higher on the list than the minimum legal requirement	Percentage of women Parliamentary Representatives
SDP	0%	29.7%	28.8%
SDA	18.2%	13.3%	13%
SBB	9%	12.1%	7.7%
HDZ BiH	9%	16%	25%
HDZ 1990	10%	8.7%	33.3%
SBiH	0%	10.7%	11.1%

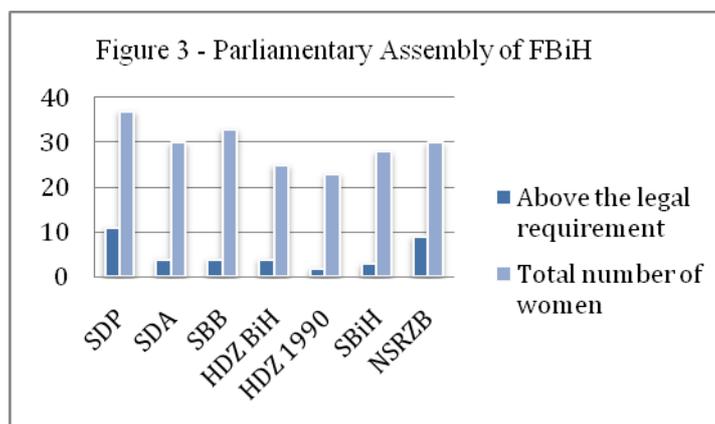
NSRZB	9%	30%	40%
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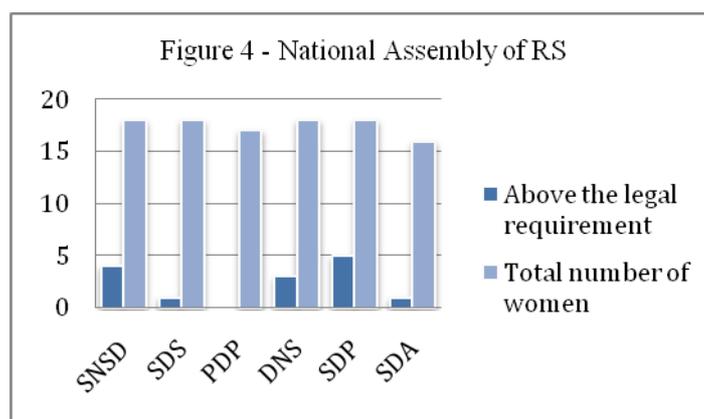
Table 3 - The distribution of women on the electoral lists for the National Assembly of RS.

Party	Percentage of women at the top of the list	Percentage of women listed higher on the list than the minimum legal requirement	Percentage of women Parliamentary Representatives
SNSD	0%	22.2%	24.3%
SDS	0%	5.6%	11.1%
PDP	0%	0%	14.2%
DNS	33.3%	11.1%	66.7%
SDP	16.7%	27.8%	0%
SDA	0%	6.25%	0%

Further, comparing the first columns of Tables 2 and 3 it becomes apparent that **there were more women at the top of the lists in Federation, than there were in RS, but also that entity lists fare better in that regard than the State Assembly lists.**

Regarding the number of women that were listed higher on the list than the minimum legal requirement, for the parties in the State Assembly the average is 20.03% (Table 1), for the Parliament of FBiH the average is 17.2% (Table 2) and for the National Assembly of RS it is 12.16% (Table 3). On the lists for the State Assembly, the percentage of women listed higher than the legal requirement was not an indicator of the percentage of female representatives that the party was going to have, but the correlation is stronger in the dataset for the Parliament of FBiH and the National Assembly of RS, with outliers being the parties with smaller data samples.





What becomes strikingly apparent when looking at Figures 2, 3 and 4 is that women were, in *most* cases listed at the lowest legally permissible positions. However, an important qualifier is that it has been shown that that is not always an accurate predictor of how many of them will be elected, which can be accounted for by voter preference, which is influenced by social values and representation of female candidates in the media, both of which will be discussed.

The position of female candidates on the electoral lists after the election

It was found that:

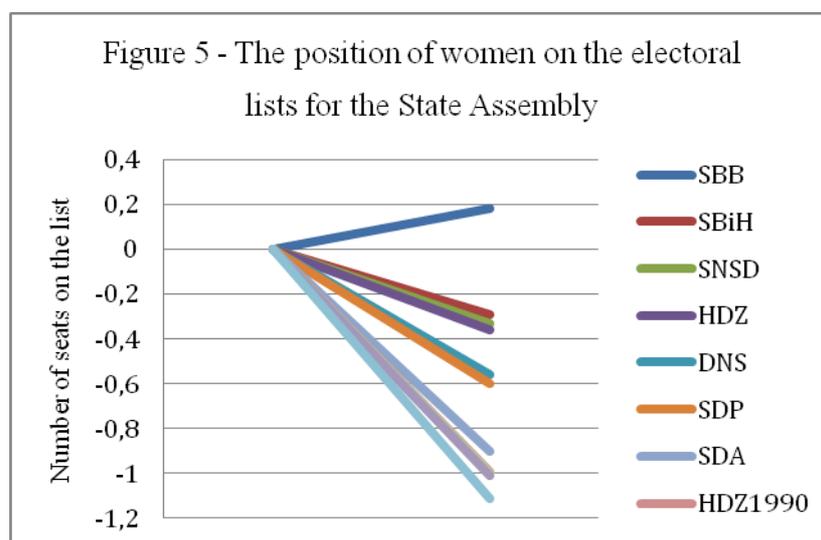
- In addition to being lower on the lists to begin with, women further dropped down the list of candidates as a result of elections;
- The smallest difference was on the lists for the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH and the highest difference with the biggest drop was on the lists for the National Assembly of RS;
- SBB was the only party where women climbed on the list and placed higher as a result of the election.

Having shown that the majority of the female candidates were listed at the lowest positions that were legally permissible the focus will now shift on what happened to their position during the election process. A slightly different methodology was adopted when approaching data collection for this part of research. In the previous part, all party lists were analyzed, including the lists from districts where the parties did not make any significant gains (not only in seats, but also where they have not won a significant proportion of the votes), however in this part only the lists from the districts where the parties have either won seats or a statistically significant proportion of the votes were included. The reason for this is that conclusions about voter preference can only be derived from samples where sufficient number of votes has been cast. Taking into account the small size of the electorate, voter turnout, administrative division which splits the country into eight voting districts on state level, and into twelve and six in FBiH and RS respectively, the sample sizes are rather small to begin with and including data from statistically insignificant districts where the party made no real effort to gain votes might distort the overall results.

The calculation was done by adding together the difference in the pre/post election position of female candidates on the list and dividing it by the number of female candidates to calculate the average. All candidates were included, and not just the first eight, because it was possible (and in fact it was a frequent occurrence) for a female candidate to slide from spots number 2, 5 or 8, to 11, or even 16. Counting this negative difference, but not the positive difference in which candidates from the bottom of the list rise to one of the top eight spots would make the results disproportionately negative.

Electoral lists for the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH

Figure 5 shows the change in the placement of female candidates on the electoral lists for the State Assembly.



SBB is the only party in which female candidates moved up the list during the election, and although the change is only for 1/5th of the seat, it is significant because SBB was also the only party (out of the ones included in the study) in which all the female candidates were at the minimum legally prescribed spots on the electoral lists for the State Parliament, yet that did not determine their ultimate success, indicating that voter preference can be influenced with gender-sensitive election campaign strategies. Ismeta Dervoz is a good example. Having been listed as number two on the electoral list, she got 29.57% of the votes in district 513 (Canton Sarajevo), 15% more than the male candidate who was listed as number one.

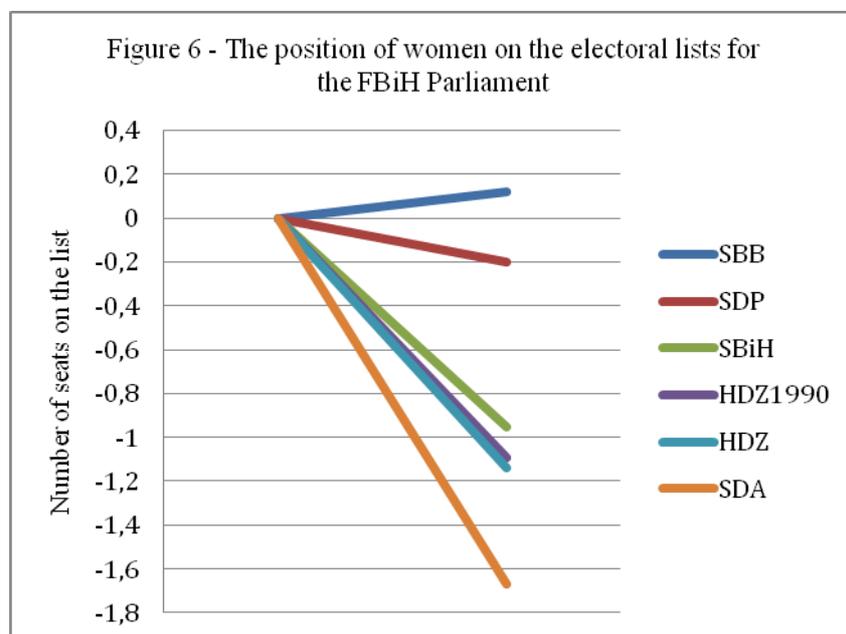
Both SDA and SDP had significant drops, where female candidates slid down almost an entire spot for SDA and above half a spot for SDP. Significantly there were no lists where the position of SDA women candidates improved. This corresponds to the data from Part 1, which indicates that although SDA had 28.5% of their candidates listed above the legal requirement, none were elected to the State Assembly, indicating that the effort put into making women serious contenders at the election was negligible and the distribution of female candidates on the lists was not with the aim of getting more women elected.

PDP and SDS had the sharpest drops, which conflicts with the data from Table 1, in which PDP scored the highest by having 100% female representatives in the State Assembly.

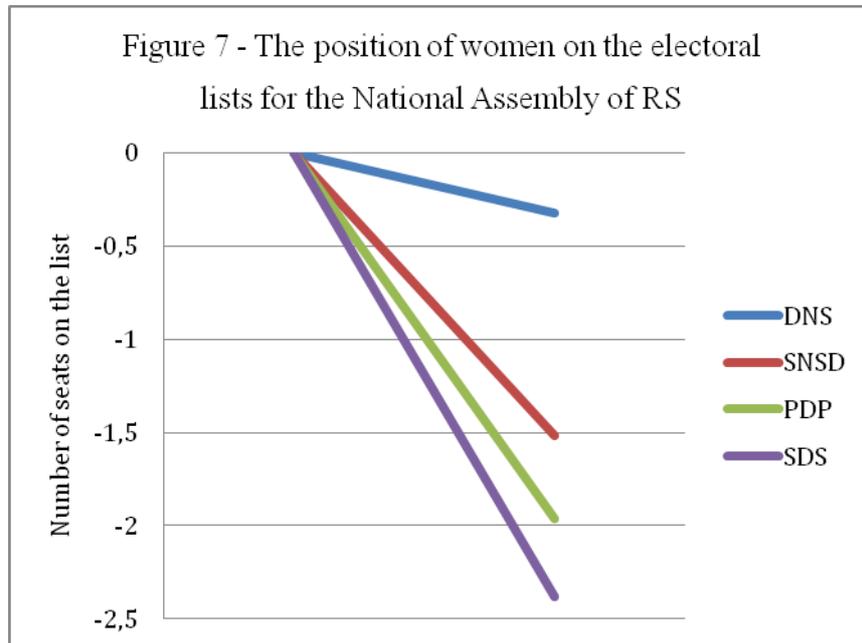
However, as was noted in Part 1, this can be explained by the smaller sample size, and also by the award of compensatory mandates, which were not controlled for. Vesna Krstović-Spremo was number five on the list in district 523, and her position remained unchanged after the election, but she got awarded a compensatory mandate, therefore rising PDP's gender score in the Parliamentary representatives category, while their score in other categories remains unchanged.

Electoral lists for the Parliament of FBiH and the National Assembly of RS

Figure 6 shows the results of applying the same method to the lists in the Parliament of FBiH and Figure 7 does the same for the National Assembly of RS.



In Figure 6 it is apparent that SBB is again the only party with a positive score, and SDA is the party with the sharpest drop of nearly 1.7 seats on average. Again, significantly, SDA did have some lists that scored 0 (women's position did not change on average), but had no lists where women's position had improved. SDP measured a slight drop, but compared to SBB still has a higher percentage and a higher number of female representatives in the Assembly. A possible explanation of this is that there were more SDP lists and some were also longer, allowing candidates to drop farther (arguably, they also could have risen higher, but that was rarely the case).



It is apparent from Figure 7 that there were **no parties with upward trends in the Assembly of RS, and the downward trends were sharper than in the State Parliamentary Assembly and the Parliament FBiH**. PDP and SDS marked the sharpest drops, just like in the Parliamentary Assembly, except here it was by almost two seats for PDP and by almost 2.5 seats for SDS.

The data presented shows that most women, on the majority of party lists slid down the list. The difference in position of women on the lists pre/post election is more acute in entity assemblies than in the State Assembly, primarily because the lists for the former are longer and therefore allow for bigger jumps.

Women in Parties

Parties with gender sensitive programs and statutes and higher percentage of women in leadership positions will have a more equitable distribution of candidates on the lists and will have a higher percentage of female elected officials.

It was found that:

- **There is a range, from the parties which have mainstreamed gender in their statutes, to parties that are only selectively opening their doors to women, to, finally, parties that are only including select women in select bodies, therefore limiting the access to higher party echelons to men, and there is a similar range in the content of the party programs - from cursory mentions of women in the context of motherhood, to references to the Gender Equality Law;**
- **SDP has the highest proportion of women in their executive bodies, while SDA has the lowest;**

- **There is a correlation between the attitudes towards gender equality in party statutes and programs, but it is impossible to establish correlation between the percentage of women in leadership positions in the parties and the percentage of women representatives from that party in the parliament.**

Party Statutes

The way parties approach representation of women in their statutes can be divided roughly into three categories. Firstly, there are parties which set quotas for participation of women in party leadership. SDP and HDZ 1990 are good examples of this. Art. 9a of the HDZ 1990 statute sets the quota of 30% participation of the underrepresented gender in party bodies. In art. 55 of the SDP Statute they proscribe that at least 35% of members have to be members of the underrepresented gender. The wording is particularly significant because it mirrors the wording in the electoral law, and does not imply that women will always be the underrepresented gender. The language is gender sensitive throughout the Statute, which cannot be said for most of the others. Second category are the parties which prescribe quotas, but for women and young people together. An example of this is the SNSD statute which requires women and young people to make up at least 30% of the members in the party bodies (art. 20), SDS which requires 1/5 of seats in the party to be awarded to women (art. 23). The final category are the parties which include women through the inclusion of the president of the Women's Forum (or a similar body). SDA (art. 35 and 40), SBB (art. 34 and 52) and HDZ (art. 23 and 35), among others, are employing this approach.

What this means in practice is that there is a range, from the parties which have mainstreamed gender in their statutes by using gender neutral language and setting quotas that allow for meaningful participation of women, to parties that are only selectively opening their doors to women, while using language to limit their aspirations, to, finally, parties that are only including select women in select bodies, therefore limiting the access to higher party echelons to men.

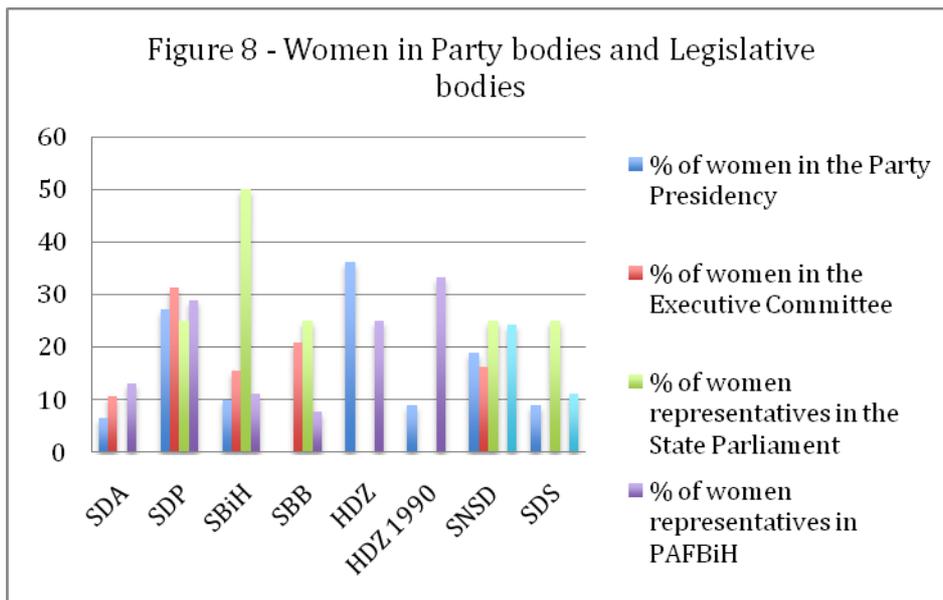


Figure 8 charts the percentage of women in party bodies, which was calculated by dividing the number of women in a given executive body, by the total number of members and data from Tables 1, 2 and 3 regarding women representatives in legislative bodies with the aim of comparing the two sets of data and analyzing whether any trends emerge. The biggest limitation persists from Part 1 and is the difference in data samples in Tables 1, 2 and 3, because a high percentage of women in legislative bodies does not necessarily correspond to more women. On the other hand, the data regarding women in party bodies suffers from that limitation to a lesser extent, especially the numbers on women in executive committees which all had well over a 100 variables. Because there isn't a uniform party structure there is a wide variety of party bodies, which explains the absence of one of the bodies for some of the parties. On the other hand, absence of the green column (*% of women representatives in the Parliamentary Assembly*) does not signify lack of data, but value 0, meaning that there are no representatives.

If one controls for the outliers, (e.g. SBiH 50% of women in Parliamentary Assembly of BiH, which is in reality one woman, or SDS and SBB, which are also in reality just one woman), it is possible to notice that generally some percentages hover in the range of same tens. For an example SDA is mostly in single digit percentages, ranging from 0-13, whereas SDP hovers from mid 20s to mid 30s and SNSD ranges from 16-25%. On the other hand SBB, HDZ and HDZ 1990 show lack of correlation and SDS does not offer enough variables to derive a conclusion (when the outlier is taken out of the consideration).

Party programs

How gendered the party programs are, is more of a qualitative than a quantitative assessment, because while gender sensitivity in language can be assessed objectively, the substance of the document is often more telling.

So for an example **the word 'woman' was mentioned 7 times in SDS's program, but only one mention was in relation to respecting the principles of gender equality** (with the aim of respecting international conventions) and the rest were in relation to family values, maternity rights, tax deductions for mothers of more than four children and pension rights, which were again discussed in relation to motherhood. Similarly in SDA's program women are only mentioned as mothers, as a category that warrants protection, and are therefore represented as entirely passive. Significantly the program was signed by a woman, Semiha Borovac, the president of the congress. HDZ's program doesn't mention women as a particular social category, but advocates the protection of family values, promotion of the virtues of motherhood and pro-natalist policies. SNSD also makes no mention of women, other than the relationship of mother and child, and the importance of family.

On the other end of the spectrum is SDP, which lists gender equality and equal gender representation in public and political life as one of their main program goals, mentions motherhood in the context of co-parenting, rather than the woman's domain and advocates reproductive freedom. HDZ 1990 also mentions women in the context of gender equality and equal participation of both genders in all spheres of life. SBB mentions women as a special category when it comes to tackling unemployment and destitution, indicating a level of awareness of gendered poverty.

Further, SBB also directly references the Law on Gender Equality in their program, the full implementation of which is one of their official goals, as is the increase in the funds given to the Gender Equality Agency.

To conclude, there is a correlation between the attitudes towards gender equality in party statutes and programs, but it is impossible to establish correlation between the percentage of women in leadership positions in the parties and the percentage of women representatives from that party in the Parliament. This points to a gap between the position of women on paper and the position of women in reality. Possible explanations will be discussed in the next section.

Lessons learned and the way forward

Is there a critical mass of women?

Having a certain (critical) number of women in parliament can mean better substantive representation of women (Dahlerup, 2002). Considering the underrepresentation of women in most party leadership positions and executive bodies and considering the fact that even in those parties where there are quotas women rarely surpass the prescribed number by more than a few percent, one could argue that the worse position of women, compared to that of men, during the pre-electoral and electoral period is a consequence of their underrepresentation in the parties, or more specifically of them not yet having reached the critical mass necessary for substantive change.

However, this can be challenged on several grounds. Firstly, the essentialist feminist theory is rather utopian in its assumption that women are more sensitive to the issues of oppressed groups (Beasley, 2005), and social constructionism which argues that power rather than gender relations impacts policies (Voet, 2006/07), is more consistent with participation of women in politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Terzić and Bećirbašić, 2010: 14). Women parliamentarians in BiH try to distance themselves from exclusively "women's issues", are often unaware of those issues, and are generally either politically passive, or propagators of party agenda (Terzić and Bećirbašić, 2010: 14). Women are the least frequent instigators of parliamentary debates (Terzić and Bećirbašić, 2010: 14). This attempt to achieve gender sameness by distancing themselves from their gender could be an explanation why having more women in party leadership positions does not necessarily mean better results for women in election. In a country like Bosnia, where ethnicity is the primary factor during the election, and is the single most defining aspect of any party, gender identity of women becomes secondary to their ethnic and party identity.

Media Representation

Gender Equality Agency conducted a research on media representation of women in the 2010 election and found that out of the around 1,130 names published by the media from 15-30th September 2010, only around 12% were women (Terzić and Bećirbašić, 2010: 34). In addition to women being vastly underrepresented, they were usually referred to in the second half of the articles and were rarely cited, therefore limiting their presence to names, but not opinions.

Again, "women's issues" were generally not covered, and female candidates were not asked about them specifically. The published photographs presented women as passive, either as good-looking party supporters or observers of political activity, rather than active participants. Media mostly failed to use gender sensitive language. Participation of women in campaign debates, compared with those of men is a staggering 6.66% (Terzić and Bećirbašić, 2010: 34-6).

All of this indicates a high level of under-representation of women in the media during the pre-electoral period, which impacts voter preference. In a highly patriarchal society, like Bosnia, media needs to shatter the image of women as passive observers and represent them more accurately - as active participants in party and political life. Considering that the media mostly reported press releases from the parties the ultimate responsibility lies with the parties to make sure that their female candidates get the right kind of media exposure and challenge rather than reinforce gender stereotypes. An example of a good strategy is SBB and Ismeta Dervoz.

The Way Forward

The Agency for Gender Equality and the Committee on Gender Equality of the House of Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly organized a forum on gender equality in political parties in BiH with the support of the OSCE mission in BiH, on May 7th 2014. Representatives of five parties (SDP BiH, PDP, HDZ BiH, SBB i SBiH) presented their parties' gender mainstreaming measures during the forum and were presented with a Statement of Purpose that they are encouraged to sign and implement during the pre-election period (Agencija za ravnopravnost spolova, 2014).

The statement consists of two parts, the first part focuses on the support that the parties will give to female candidates, while the second part focuses on the substantive policy objectives that the parties undertake to prioritize. Arguably the most valuable aspect of the first part of the statement is the obligation to include gender equality in the party programs and ensure that the male party members recognize the universal significance of gender issues, therefore ensuring wider and stronger support for issues that have traditionally been marginalized.² Further, an obligation to condemn sexist comments and hate speech is also introduced and if adhered to could be a valuable tool in exposing deeply rooted sexism within the political system.³ Other points call to compliance with the law and encourage equality, and are therefore fairly formalistic and contribute little substantively.⁴ The second part of the statement recognizes that women are discriminated against because of their gender and are therefore impacted differently by social policies. The focus is on mainstreaming gender in employment, childcare regulation, domestic violence prevention and particularly on protecting women from marginalized groups. The statement is supposed to be only the first step towards improving visibility and skills of female candidates before/in the elections. Eight workshops, with about 400 participants are expected to take place before the election with the aim of improving the quality of women candidates' election campaigns (Agencija za ravnopravnost spolova, 2014b).

²Agencija za ravnopravnost spolova, *Izjava o opredjeljenosti ravnopravnosti spolova za političke partije*, points: 4 & 5.

³ Ibid, point: 6.

⁴ Ibid, points: 1, 2, 3 & 7.

Conclusion

Once women select themselves and decide they would like to run, they still face obstacles in party attitudes that are deeply patriarchal, as well as party structures and hierarchies that were created and are maintained by men. The purely legalistic approach that has been employed since 1998 has been successful in getting more women on the electoral lists, but not in parliaments; the same way voluntary quotas employed by the parties have been effective in getting women to executive bodies, but not influencing party politics.

In order to change this, a change in the political culture is necessary that can be achieved by a two-pronged approach.

Firstly gender mainstreaming on the national level needs to happen, and needs to be more far-reaching than mere compliance with the Gender Equality Law. From inclusion of gender sensitive language in schools, to teaching children about feminism, the education system needs to address the outdated social attitudes that still persist and see women as objects, passive observers, and less capable of initiating change.

Secondly, parties need to approach gender equality more substantively - from making their programs tools of empowerment for women, rather than sources of even more limitations, to making sure women's voices are heard and not just counted, and making sure women are given equal chances of being elected - even if that means more initial effort. The training that the Gender Agency is doing, is a good start, but by no means is it enough - gender equality needs to become a norm that the voters demand and the parties comply with on their own.

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