



**Assessment of the application of the 'Parity Law'  
in New Caledonia, French Polynesia and  
Wallis and Futuna**

(April–June 2007)



**SPC**  
Secretariat  
of the Pacific  
Community

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Lucie Bargel  
Stéphanie Guyon  
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## PREFACE

The inclusion of women in all decision-making processes was one of the priority areas of the global action programme approved by the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995.

The Pacific Platform for Action adopted in Nouméa in 1994 also prioritises the need to train women in political and managerial skills, support women seeking positions of responsibility in the formal and informal sectors and promote the election of competent women to political office and their appointment to decision-making positions. It states that women's contribution to decision-making is vital in pursuing the goal of sustainable development for communities and countries.

The 'parity law', passed in France on 6 June 2000, is designed to facilitate equal access for women and men to electoral office and elective positions. This equal gender opportunity law goes a long way towards meeting the requirements of articles 7 and 8 of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), ratified by France in 1985.

Although the scope of this law extended to all French overseas departments, territories and countries, its application commenced only recently, from 2001 in French Polynesia and from 2004 in New Caledonia.

A joint study by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community and the Government of New Caledonia has shown that introducing this law has led to a significant increase in the number of women sitting in political institutions, with special reference to the Congress of New Caledonia and the Assembly of French Polynesia. The parity law has not had the same influence on these countries' governments, however, where women are still a distinct minority.

Many obstacles still prevent women from operating on an equal footing with men in the political arena. This study emphasises the importance of increasing women's representation at every level in political institutions, through recommendations directed to political parties, elected assemblies, civil society and regional development agencies.

Increased political representation for women should be pursued relentlessly, to give real substance to the commitments given to gender equality in every field of development and at every level by Pacific governments at regional conferences of Pacific women.

The Secretariat of the Pacific Community, through the Human Development Programme, and the Government of New Caledonia, wish to thank Mrs Lucie Bargel, Mrs Stéphanie Guyon and Miss Isabelle Rettig for the relevance of their research findings on the application of the parity law in New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of a study of the application of the parity (equal gender opportunity) law in political life in New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna.

In 2007, six years on from the first 'equal-representation' elections, little information was available on the positive or negative effects of this law. Not much progress had been made in devising ways of dealing with the negative effects or shortcomings identified as a result of the law's introduction. The first full assessment of its application in France had just been issued, however.<sup>1</sup> Two student dissertations addressed the immediate application of the law in French Polynesia in 2001<sup>2</sup> and in New Caledonia in 2004.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, Berman's legal research<sup>4</sup> yielded an initial socio-political analysis of aspects of the law's application in New Caledonia. Sufficient time had elapsed to review the medium-term effects. This review was initiated in Vernaudon's work for the Pacific Regional Workshop on Advancing Women's Representation in Parliaments,<sup>5</sup> and continued in this study.

This report first addresses the genesis of the parity law and its effects on the increase in the number of women in assemblies in France and the French Pacific jurisdictions. It compares the number of elected women at the 'commune' (basic local government) level, the provincial level, the territorial level and the government level in these three territories before and after the application of the parity law. The focus is on the social and political effects of the law's application on the many people involved in political and social activity in the countries considered. First, the political parties were legally obliged to put forward equal-representation candidate lists at the elections: the effects on party operations and candidate enlistment are shown. Detailed reports from elected women who have benefited from the parity law follow, to help identify favourable conditions for women to engage in politics.

The practical circumstances of women newly elected to assemblies were studied. The specific positions held by women in the institutions in which they sit were assessed, to shed light on the roles and responsibilities of women in politics. Elected women were interviewed, to discover some of the difficulties they had faced on entering political life. Lastly, the report identifies the positive developments ushered in by the law, for both elected women and for political life and national development.

The local interviews helped us to establish how to assist the promotion of women in politics, and to recommend some options to strengthen and refine local development policies, thus fostering equal gender representation.

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<sup>1</sup> Catherine Achin, Lucie Bargel, Delphine Dulong, Eric Fassin, Christine Guionnet, Stéphanie Guyon, Clémence Labrousche, Stéphane Latté, Pierre Leroux, Sandrine Lévêque, Frédérique Matonti, Marion Paoletti, Christiane Restier-Melleray, Philippe Teillet, Aurelia Troupel, 2007. *Sexes, genre et politique*. Economica, 'Études Politiques', 184 p.

<sup>2</sup> Diana Chebret, 2003. *La parité en Polynésie française. Outil de l'émancipation politique des Polynésiennes françaises?* AES dissertation. University of French Polynesia. 86 p.

<sup>3</sup> Zoé Magariños-Rey, 2004. *The application of the parity law at the provincial elections on 9 May 2004 in New Caledonia*, in collaboration with the Women's Bureau of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community. 54 p.

<sup>4</sup> Alan Berman, 'The Law on Gender Parity in Politics in France and New Caledonia: A Window into the Future or More of the Same?', *Oxford University Comparative Law Forum* 2, 2005. <http://ouclf.iuscomp.org/articles/berman.shtml>. Alan Berman, 2006. *Kanak women and the colonial process*. *Cambridge International Journal of Law in Context* 2(1): 11–36.

<sup>5</sup> Rarotonga, Cook Islands, 19–21 April 2006.







## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 2.1 Reviewing the law's application

This quantitative and qualitative study considers the application of the parity law in the French Pacific communities. Quantitatively, one initial fact immediately emerges: where it has been applied, the parity law has had a significant impact on the number of women elected, provided that large political parties exist and play a central part in political competition. Consequently, the percentages of women elected to the Congress of New Caledonia and the Assembly of French Polynesia have increased from 17% to 46% and from 12% to 48% respectively; in Wallis and Futuna on the other hand, where political life does not revolve around political parties, the number of women elected has stagnated at a very low level. The second main conclusion is that the law has had the effect of driving change even where it has not been introduced: 31% of municipal elected representatives in French Polynesia are now women, compared with only 19% before 2001, even though the law will only apply in these communes from 2008. In contrast, this 'ratchet' effect is not found at the highest political level, in governments.

Qualitatively, the effective implementation of the law is highly dependent on the reaction of the various political parties, who are the law's main target audience. Some parties in both countries (New Caledonia and French Polynesia) were reluctant and found it hard to recruit women for the lists of election candidates. Others took ownership of the law in a positive way. These parties started or reactivated women's groups, who went out to explain to women the content of the law and how political institutions operated, and sought to persuade them to stand for election. These parties also brought in political training programmes for women who had just started in politics, to help them overcome fears associated with their lack of experience. In these ways, the successful integration of women was made easier.

The qualitative research showed that women who have taken advantage of the opportunity offered by the application of the law are often those who already had a professional and/or NGO activity, in other words women who already played a visible part in their community and who were encouraged by the law to extend that role into a political commitment. Furthermore, women who agreed to be candidates did not have young, dependent children, or had not yet had any children, or their children were grown up and no longer lived under the same roof. Women with young children were notable absentees from the new 'feminised' assemblies. In some cases, their spouses had objected to their involvement in politics. Family constraints played a central part in the decision to engage or not to engage.

Once elected, because they were less politically experienced than men, women did not fill the same roles. The executives of the elective institutions not concerned by the parity law have continued to be mainly masculine arenas, where most decisions are really made. Changes to the parity law in February 2007, extending its scope to municipal executives, should improve that situation. Even when they become members of executives or committees, elected women often continue to operate in areas traditionally assigned to women, such as education, social welfare or youth. Women are also asked more often than men to deal with daily practical issues in the community. Finance, works, physical planning, etc. have remained male areas. This gender-based division of political work reflects the gender-influenced sharing of domestic chores and job market.

Elected women also seek speaking opportunities less frequently than men within the assemblies, and the opportunities they take to speak vary depending on their political experience. Newly elected women are





more inclined to speak if a matter has previously been addressed at the committee stage, whereas unprepared verbal exchanges tend to be the preserve of the most experienced political figures, the vast majority of whom are men. Indeed the women who were interviewed said that they experienced specific difficulties in the division of areas of responsibility, and in speaking opportunities. The women's technical knowledge about how the institutions functioned or how agenda items were handled, especially the budget, was strongly influenced by their particular professional experience. Those who had the most difficulty had not previously had a professional activity. Indeed the more similar the skills they had acquired in their previous work to those required in politics, the more competent the elected women felt; those who had occupied high public service positions therefore felt more comfortable. This sense of capability influenced whether or not they chose to speak: women only spoke at assembly sessions if they were sure that they were familiar with the matter at hand. Even when they did have the required abilities, however, many women preferred to remain silent when faced with more experienced and often older men. This situation is tending to change and women are gradually beginning to speak up as they acquire more political experience.

In performing their duties, elected women must not only cope with the sometimes hostile reactions of their male counterparts, but must also earn the trust of senior public servants who do not always accept a woman as their supervisor, especially when she is a newcomer who may be seen as somewhat incompetent. These difficulties are also related to some aspects of social organisation and in particular the lack of communication between men and women on the topic of equal representation, relationships between men and women and their respective places.

Lastly, elected women have special difficulties to overcome in organising their family life. Because their political positions are so time-consuming, they must reorganise their personal timetable in order to continue to look after domestic work and raise their children. Their spouses infrequently agree to renegotiate their work or home commitments and this disruption of elected women's personal organisation is often a source of tension in the family. These difficulties vary in significance depending on whether the women can rely on assistance from other members of their family or not. Conjugal tension is not just due to the division of family tasks, but also comes from the change in status of female politicians, who acquire a public visibility and reputation in their own right, which their spouses sometimes find difficult to accept. In the French Pacific communities, this therefore produces a situation already observed in France, the jeopardising of the partner relationship after the woman is elected.

Despite these specific problems encountered by elected women, some positive developments can also be observed. Although they are relatively few in number, some newly elected women do manage to play their role fully within the executive where other (male) elected members acknowledge their abilities and legitimacy. These women often have in common high qualifications and the experience of supervisory duties in the private sector or, more frequently, in the territorial local government structure in which they achieved elected office.

More broadly, elected women tend to show solidarity and develop a mutual assistance ethic, enabling the resolution of at least some of their difficulties. The women who are most successful in politics serve as role models for younger and less experienced women, whom they encourage to engage.

The increasing female presence in assemblies has also led to some changes in political practices. Women take their role as elected representatives seriously and seek to improve effectiveness, both in the management of public funds and the work of committees and assemblies. They often bring debate back to the point at issue, or call for more moderation in the countervailing positions taken by the political parties. Their specialisation in education, social affairs and solidarity also has positive effects on these spheres, which are better defended and given more attention. Similarly, their presence in the assemblies helps to





attract greater attention to women's rights issues. Thus as women begin to have a role in the assemblies, their specific experiences in society bring new political action areas to prominence.

These research results have enabled us to identify situations favourable to elected women and also those that lead to specific difficulties.

## 2.2 Recommendations

### 2.2.1 Political parties

- a) Plan early to compile lists and approach women in advance.
- b) Start or intensify training for women activists.
- c) Encourage the establishment of women's groups in parties.
- d) Improve access by women to responsible roles in parties.

### 2.2.2 Elected assemblies

- a) Restrict the simultaneous holding of multiple offices.
- b) Improve training: broaden access to training sessions, emphasise the practical dimension of training (through role play involving speaking to a camera, making a speech, etc.), and arranging mentoring by more experienced elected men and women.
- c) Stimulate the awareness of assembly presidents and committee chairs on the participation of women, so that they will encourage women to speak in debate.
- d) Work towards a reorganisation of institutions and parties so that the daily expression of a political commitment is not especially restrictive for women (late-evening meetings, different timetables, lengthy absences, etc).
- e) Promote non-difference on the basis of recognition of the characteristics specific to each gender (as constructed historically and socially).

### 2.2.3 General training

- a) Broaden access to training in law and public finance, communication, etc.
- b) Promote training and economic independence for women in order to increase their capacity to participate in political life and at the same time help create a healthier relationship between financial power and political power.

### 2.2.4 Civil society

- a) Facilitate women's access to positions of responsibility in all the organisations that can prepare them for representative office (NGOs, trade unions, churches, etc.).
- b) Intensify the dialogue with men on the place of women in democracy: organise educational briefings, attempt to launch a debate on parity, which has not yet occurred, and foster a real sense of ownership of parity.
- c) Find the point of balance between the recognition of women's rights and the concern to protect the cultural heritage, and avoid dividing society on this issue.

### 2.2.5 Regional level

- a) Foster a francophone network within the regional network, to enable the effective application of the parity law.
- b) Promote experience-sharing on the application of this law at the regional level.







### 3. THE PARITY LAW AND THE BACKGROUND TO ITS APPLICATION IN WALLIS AND FUTUNA, FRENCH POLYNESIA AND NEW CALEDONIA

#### 3.1 Moving towards parity

##### 3.1.1 Major political under-representation of French women

At the end of the twentieth century, 50 years after obtaining citizenship in 1944, French women remained generally excluded from political representation. In 1997, only 10.9% of the members of the National Assembly were women, putting France in 84<sup>th</sup> place worldwide in the representation of women. During the 1980s and the 1990s, the proportion of women increased significantly in the municipal (21.7% in 1995) and regional (25% in 1998), councils but remained very low in all other institutions (general councils, senate, the National Assembly, government).

##### 3.1.2 The parity movement

Given the institutional obstacles (extensive holding of multiple offices, single-member system) and the lack of action within French parties to increase the representation of women, the idea of a binding law eventually began to seem the only solution.

The debate on parity began in November 1993 with the publication in Le Monde newspaper of a manifesto in which 289 women and 288 men called for legal provision to be made to promote the access of women to electoral office. After extensive public debate and debate within political parties, the parity law was adopted thanks to the advent of an alliance government between the Socialist Party, the Greens and the Communist Party.

#### 3.2 The parity law and the outcomes of its implementation in France

On 8 July 1999, Article 3 of the French Constitution was amended to state that 'the law promotes equal access for men and women to electoral office and legislative responsibilities'. The Law dated 6 June 2000 imposes parity (equal access for men and women to political office) in all elections by various methods:

- Municipal elections (in communes with more than 3500 inhabitants only): in this list-based election, parity is compulsory in a group of 6 (three men and three women per group of six, with no obligation to alternate strictly).
- European and regional elections (list-based polling): compulsory parity with strict alternation.
- Legislative elections (single-member system): parity is only incentive-based with parties sustaining financial penalties if they do not include as many women as men in all electoral constituencies.

In elections where parity is required, the representation of women has increased significantly (by 43.6% in the European Parliament and by 47.6% in the Regional Councils). The municipal councils have some





catching up to do (30%), however. And women continue to be extensively excluded from the executives, with only 3.8% female regional presidents, 37.3% female regional vice-presidents and 10.9% female mayors.

When the law offers incentives only, as in the legislative elections, progress has been insignificant (an increase from 10.9 to 12.1%). Indeed the major parties have shown a preference for paying fines rather than respecting parity.

To remedy the under-representation of women in the executives, at the request of President Jacques Chirac, a new law was debated in Parliament and enacted on 31 January 2007, requiring parity in municipal and regional executives.

### 3.3 The application of parity in the French Pacific communities

#### 3.3.1 Wallis and Futuna

In 2003, the population of the Territory was 14,967, 10,088 on Wallis (67.4%) and 4879 on Futuna (32.6%). Women represented 49.8% of the total population.

Boys and girls enjoy equal access to primary schooling. More girls than boys then go on to attend the general junior secondary school streams while one third of the boys enter technical education. Girls are also in a majority in the general and vocational education classes in the upper secondary levels. Twice as many girls as boys then obtain the Baccalaureate, but young men then outnumber young women two to one at the highest university levels (post-graduate).

Men and women in formal employment are paid salaries at equivalent levels but the vast majority of the population (2/3) are not in paid employment. Of 1374 women receiving salaries, 294 are primary school teachers and 286 public servants.<sup>6</sup> Only 20 of these women hold senior positions in the administration where men outnumber them by 4 to 1 (83).<sup>7</sup>

##### 3.3.1.1 *The mobilisation of women*

The Catholic religion plays a major part in the Wallisian and Futunian societies. Primary education is run by the Catholic Mission and secondary education, an entirely public endeavour, includes the teaching of catechism.

The first steps towards a structured network of women were prompted by the Missionary Sisters of Mary in the mid-1970s. The association's main goal was to encourage traditional craft-making, particularly by organising overseas training. The first craft exhibition outside the Territory took place in 1986.

The first women's affairs office (*Délégation à la condition féminine*) was established in the early 1980s, but only really began operating in 2005.

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<sup>6</sup> STSEE Statistics Dept of Wallis and Futuna, 2003 figures.

<sup>7</sup> STSEE 2003 figures.





With the support of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) Women's Bureau, young women with no qualifications were sent for training from this time on to the Community Education Training Centre in Fiji. Subsequently, a basic education unit was set up at the hospital and became the support centre for health promotion drives and craft training. The Territorial Council of Women was established in 1993 prompted by a desire by women to group the craft associations together but also to address women's issues in general. From 2000, the Council began to receive a grant of 1 million (XPF) annually from the Territorial Assembly. In 2001, the Council began supporting the establishment of local federations (two on Futuna, one on Wallis) bringing together all the women's associations (such as agriculture, crafts, fishing). The Council has become the main partner of the women's affairs office. Every three to four years it stages an exhibition outside the Territory, which is the sole opportunity for some women without paid employment to travel abroad.

During a 2001 visit, the 'overseas minister' announced the appointment of a second officer. The current officer took up her duties in 2005. She began by setting up a core discussion group comprising women elected to the Territorial Assembly, and the President of the Council of Women. Since then, this committee has been the main tool of the women's affairs office. It has introduced a local action plan based on the national action plan and the Pacific Platform for Action. With the committee's encouragement, the 'SOS Violence' association has been reactivated, with the special goal of preventing incest. In 2006, the office employed a second person. In April 2007, the assembly president announced the establishment of a Committee on the Status of Women, which eventually came into existence as the Committee on Culture and the Status of Women (June 2007).

We should also note that a women's group takes an active part in the thinking on possible institutional reform, which has become a matter of public debate since the crisis in traditional leadership (2005) and the death of the King of Wallis (2007).

### *3.3.1.2 The political context and the application of parity*

In 1961, the Protectorate of the Islands of Wallis and Futuna became an Overseas Territory.<sup>8</sup> This new status marked the entry of the Wallisians and Futunians into the French democratic system and structured the cohabitation of customary and religious institutions and the new forms of French presence. The institutional transition, guided by a Gaullist elite, produced an attachment by voters to the local political right. Contrary to New Caledonia and French Polynesia, no pro-autonomy or pro-independence movement found a voice in the game of competitive politics. For the past 20 years, only the PS (Socialist Party), the 'UDF' (right of centre) and the National Front have occasionally recorded good results but, generally speaking, politics corresponds more closely to competition between local leaders. Political programmes are far from fully debated and election campaigns amount to extravagant parties, nights of traditional discussion and multiple gift-giving to potential voters.

The institutional configuration is conducive to voting on the basis of very local issues or interests, at family, clan, village, district, kingdom or island level, but only infrequently at the level of the Territory as a whole.

In November 1999, the Assembly's Standing Committee issued a favourable opinion on the draft parity laws (Resolution No 125/CP/99). A Prefectural Order dated 25 July 2000 (N°2000-293) extended the promulgation of the law to the Territory, despite an amendment lodged by Senator Laufoaulu requesting that forming lists comprising women only could continue, which, he believed, would help promote women's

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<sup>8</sup> Concerning the move to TOM status, refer to Alison Lotti, 2005. History 'DEA' dissertation.





involvement and the likelihood of their being elected. The law was applied for the first time at the 2002 territorial elections and only relates to the Assembly (there are no communes in Wallis and Futuna).

The Territory is divided into five electoral constituencies, reproducing the boundaries of the two Kingdoms of Futuna and the three customary districts of the Wallisian Kingdom of Uvéa. Every five years, twenty representatives are elected by universal suffrage using a list-based system of proportional representation. Seats are allocated to candidates on the various lists in the order in which they appear on the list on the basis of the number of votes obtained by their list.

In 1992, only about 10 women were candidates on the 32 lists presented (a total of 133 candidates). Three of them were in the top position on a list, the only position possibly offering a seat. After the election, two of these women became the first female members of the Assembly. In 1998, two women were elected on lists comprising mainly women.

In 2002, parity was observed in drawing up the lists, but had no impact on the results: three women were registered on lists but none elected. The high number of lists, the low number of lists led by women, but also the constraints inherent in an election campaign, such as cost and travel, hinder the effective application of the law. Only one woman, with the benefit of the success of the list on which she was in second position, secured a seat.

After a member became ineligible, a second woman entered the Assembly in 2004. The number increased to three during the term of office concerned when one more female member joined the Assembly in 2005, after another member's death.

At the latest elections in April 2007, two women in the leading position on lists were elected; both had sat in the previous legislature. In June 2007, a third female member entered the Assembly, taking advantage of the departure of a male member, who was elected to the French Parliament to represent Wallis and Futuna.

### 3.3.2 New Caledonia

Women account for 49.5% of the population of New Caledonia; in 2004, there were 114,300 women in a total population of 230,800.<sup>9</sup>

#### 3.3.2.1 Women in New Caledonian society

Women enjoy equal access to the educational system in New Caledonia: girls and boys attend the junior secondary schools, where attendance is compulsory, in equal numbers and the girls become a majority in the upper secondary classes. The girls mainly opt for general education streams while many boys choose technology. Girls have more success at the Baccalaureate than boys (67.9% success rate for girls and 55.3% for boys in 1997). Girls then show a keen interest in university studies and accounted for 3/5 of tertiary students in 1997.

A majority choose literary and legal studies. After being in a majority in the undergraduate classes, however, young women represent only 46.5% of students at post-graduate level. Women therefore leave the university system earlier than men, either to start a family or to enter the job market.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> INSEE (Institute of Statistics and Economic Research of New Caledonia) figures.

<sup>10</sup> These figures and assessments come from the Southern Province report for the CEDAW Convention, Nouméa, October 2005.





In 2004, 42.0% of the active population in New Caledonia were women, compared with 38.5% in the 1996 census and 37.8% in 1989.



This increase in the proportion of women expresses the constant increase in female activity. In 15 years, the number of women in the active population in New Caledonia has been multiplied by 1.7. This feminisation is going ahead at various rates: it has been faster in the Southern Province (+77% women in work) than in the Loyalty Islands (+32%) and the Northern Province (+23%). Whatever the age group concerned, however, the presence of men in greater numbers is confirmed; it is more pronounced in the generation over 50 than in the 25 to 39 year age group. The employment rate for the New Caledonian population aged 14 years and over emerges as 47.7% in the 2004 census, higher for men (55.3%) than for women (40.1%).<sup>11</sup>

### 3.3.2.2 *The Kanak women's movement: from the 1970s to the 2000s*

The association for 'a smiling Melanesian village' set up in 1971 by Scholastique Pidjot, the wife of a member of the French Parliament, helped to create a structured women's network. This group's activities were restricted to a specific social sphere — the clan, the village — producing a movement advocating cultural revival and internal social cohesion. The principle of the 'smiling village' was to encourage women to attend to their home and village environment for the general well-being of the community and especially for their husbands' sake in a fairly traditional gender-based distribution of tasks (cleanliness in the villages, environmental health, home decoration and organisation of small village markets).

This community-based work was of prime importance in the staging of the Festival Melanesia 2000 (1975). Often referred to as the starting point for a process of cultural renaissance, the success of this festival owes a great deal to the active involvement of women, as Marie-Claude Tjibaou explains:



The women of the Movement went on to join groups, taking part in demonstrations at the time to combat alcoholism and to promote cleanliness in the villages. Then the Festival project came up and, because they were active and well structured, Jean-Marie Tjibaou brought them in . . . With the traditional leaders, they were the energy that made this festival of Kanak culture a success, an explosion.<sup>12</sup>

From 1975, some activists, including Déwé Gorodey, had opened the debate on the place of women in the Independence Movement within what would become Palika, and took part in the world conference on women in Mexico. In 1982, the 'Group of Exploited Kanak Women in the Struggle' (GFKEL) with some sixty activist members, was set up, but the group quickly found itself marginalised within the *Front de libération nationale kanak socialiste* – 'Socialist Kanak National Liberation Front' (FLNKS) and ceased its activities in 1986.<sup>13</sup>

Kanak women played an active part in the 'Troubles',<sup>14</sup> for many their first experience of political involvement. The men acknowledged the change that occurred during these events in these terms:

<sup>11</sup> ISEE, Institute of Statistics of New Caledonia.

<sup>12</sup> 'Everyone vibrated with the same strength and the same conviction', Interview with Marie-Claude Tjibaou, 1985. *Journal de la Société des Océanistes* 100–101.

<sup>13</sup> For the history of the women's movement in New Caledonia, we refer to various articles by Christine Salomon including: Christine Salomon, 2003. *Quand les filles ne se taisent plus. Un aspect du changement postcolonial en New Caledonia* (When the girls won't keep quiet. An aspect of post-colonial change in New Caledonia), *Terrain* 40:133–150.

<sup>14</sup> Period of confrontation in New Caledonia.





Before the Troubles, in politics, at meetings, the women were not even invited, there were men only, full stop . . . early in the Troubles, the women stormed into the debate.

First of all, on the barricades, the women brought them saucepans of hot food and the men were on the barricades with their rifles, with chairs, playing cards and pétanque. The women weren't even there, then they started to speak up, saying that they did most of the work and that at least they wanted to go to the meetings. I remember striking images with the women over that whole 84, 85, 86 period: the women stayed in the background, there were women standing up in the at the back of the room or who were outside looking in through the window and not saying anything. I remember the first women who spoke up and I remember the image of a friend of mine who was at the desk up front and the women spoke a few times and he picked up a bowl from the table and threw it at the women, it smashed into pieces at the back of the room and we didn't know what for. Afterwards he said that he had had enough of seeing the women dare to speak up, so it was quite tough for them.<sup>15</sup>

Kanak women have therefore contributed extensively to the 'success' of the Independence movement even if they were not visible and the history of their participation in the struggle has not been fully documented and recognised. In the decade that followed the Matignon Accords, however, the FLNKS did not nominate any female candidates in 'electable' list positions.

Consequently the women became deeply committed to women's groups, in particular taking advantage of the establishment in 1989 by the French Administration of women's rights departments.<sup>16</sup> In 1992, the 'SOS Violences sexuelles' association was set up with Marie-Claude Tjibaou as its President followed, in 1999, by 'Women and Conjugal Violence', chaired by Eliane Ixeco, and 'Women and Citizens', led by Françoise Caillard, to name only a few.

At the institutional level, despite the reluctance of some elected members, the Islands Province set up a Women's Committee, during the current assembly term, following the Southern Province and the Northern Province, which had established women's affairs sections in the 1990s. A women's status office has also been introduced in the government and also recently an 'Observatory of the Status of Women'. The institutional and NGO networks dealing with women's rights are therefore well structured.

### *3.3.2.3 Political context, debate<sup>17</sup> and application of parity*

The central political split, in New Caledonia as in French Polynesia, stems from the position taken on belonging to France, which divided the pro-Independence factions and the Loyalists or Autonomists, with their historical ties to Gaullist circles since the active involvement of the overseas territories in the French Resistance.

Until the end of the 1990s, New Caledonia and French Polynesia experienced a political situation featuring an enduring monopolisation of institutional posts and resources by a dominant party, defending the French presence, and a highly personalised and therefore limited form of political competition.

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<sup>15</sup> Interview, Chair of a local committee of a pro-Independence party, Northern Province (New Caledonia).

<sup>16</sup> Christine Hamelin, Christine Salomon, 2007. Kanak women have had enough of men's violence. *Journal de la Société des Océanistes*.

<sup>17</sup> Refer to Alan Berman, 2005. *The Law on Gender Parity in Politics in France and New Caledonia: A Window into the Future or More of the Same?* Oxford University Comparative Law Forum 1. <http://ouclf.iuscomp.org>. In this article, Alan Berman describes at some length the forms of resistance by some male Kanak leaders (notably in the FLNKS and the Customary Senate) and the response by women determined to see it through.





In New Caledonia, colonial history has built a society with various distinct ethnic identities. The indigenous Kanak people obtained French citizenship and the associated right to vote in 1946.<sup>18</sup> Until the 1970s, the majority party, 'Union Calédonienne',<sup>19</sup> brought together Kanaks and modest European settlers. Gradually and with the increasing influence of younger people, Kanaks rallied in a struggle against colonial injustice and for Independence. Two completely opposing tendencies then began to dominate the political scene: the demand for Independence based on the return of land, and the desire to maintain the colonial heritage by remaining part of France. Two parties came to dominate the political landscape: the RPCR<sup>20</sup> (from 1978) and the FLNKS coalition<sup>21</sup> (from 1984). After a period of extreme tension, close to civil war (*les événements* or the 'Troubles'), the Matignon Accords (1988) set France on a path towards negotiated decolonisation. The Nouméa Accord signed in 1998 extended this commitment and made effective the transfer of responsibilities required to exercise sovereignty. In 2004, a new centre-right party, 'Avenir Ensemble' ('Future Together'), took control of the institutions before losing its influence in the 2007 general election, which saw a resurgence of the 'UMP' and a bipolar political scene.

Gender parity has not really been addressed in a broad political debate in New Caledonia as in mainland France. Some discussion occurred when Senator Simon Loueckhote (RPCR) tabled an amendment to postpone the application of the parity law to the 2008 municipal elections, which was strongly opposed by women in politics, such as Déwé Gorodey:



When the parity law was enacted in France, there were reactions here. Of course there were positive reactions, from community-minded women, but what I did not accept was when Senator Simon Loueckhote said that Pacific women were not ready; he organised a debate in a local hotel and I took the opportunity to tell him what I thought. I went and told him: 'No, if the women are not ready, it's because you men haven't prepared them. So rather than saying that, prepare the women from your party, that's what you should do.' There were just three of us against the whole RPCR machine, but in the end the law was applied.<sup>22</sup>

The opposition to this position, fairly spontaneously, mobilised women from various backgrounds, united in the cause:



There were just 3 or 4 of us to start off with; then we were impudent enough to ring round everyone and we called and called and that led to a very broad movement organised around 'phone calls and a key demonstration that we staged here at 'Place des Cocotiers'; and then, with the petition, we collected more than 2000 signatures in one week that we sent immediately to Chevènement, who was responsible for that area at that time and he passed it on; we are on record in the Assembly and the Senate. We were quoted when Mr Loueckhote made his statement. Mr Chevènement responded that this was Mr Loueckhote's wish but not that of the women of New Caledonia and that he had evidence . . . so Loueckhote was forced to back down.

<sup>18</sup> The other non-European components of the population also obtained it belatedly. Wallisians and Futunians (10% of the population of New Caledonia) have been entitled to vote since 1961.

<sup>19</sup> Resulting from the merger (1953) of religious groups (UICALO and AICLF) seeking to prevent mass migration to the local Communist Party.

<sup>20</sup> RPCR: 'Rassemblement pour la Calédonie dans la République' (Rally for New Caledonia in the Republic).

<sup>21</sup> FLNKS: 'Front de libération nationale kanak et socialiste' (Socialist Kanak National Liberation Front).

<sup>22</sup> Interview, Déwé Gorodey, Vice-president of the Government of New Caledonia.





... We nearly all came from an organisation, a trade union, a political party, etc., etc., and the woman in the street was in there with us too; it only went on for the time needed to put a stop to that. At the time it was a cause that strongly mobilised the women, which affected them a lot.<sup>23</sup>

In the end the amendment to postpone the application of parity was rejected and the parity law has been applied in communes with more than 3500 inhabitants since 2001, and in provincial assemblies and the Congress since the 2004 elections. Table 1 shows the progress in the proportion of women elected in New Caledonia before and after the application of the parity law.

■ Table 1. Proportion of women elected in New Caledonia before and after the parity law<sup>24</sup>

	Before the law	March 2005
Government	2/11 18% <sup>25</sup>	3/11 27%
Congress (2004 elections)	9/54 17%	25/54 46%
Islands Province (2004 elections)	0/14 0%	7/14 50%
Northern Province (2004 elections)	3/22 13.6%	11/22 50%
Southern Province (2004 elections)	11/40 members 27.5%	20/40 50%
Provincial Assemblies	14/76 members 18%	38/76 50%
Communes < 3500 inhabitants (2001 elections)	43/333 12.9%	60/410 14.6%
Communes > 3500 inhabitants (2001 elections)	30/370 8.1%	160/343 46.6%

<sup>23</sup> Southern Province female Assembly Member (New Caledonia).

<sup>24</sup> Adapted from a table by Béatrice Vernaudon.

<sup>25</sup> Annie Beustes and Déwé Gorodey, in the first Government following the Nouméa Accord (Lèques Government, 1999–2001).





### 3.3.3 French Polynesia

#### 3.3.3.1 Women in French Polynesian society

Women account for 48.8% of the population of French Polynesia; in 2004, they numbered 123,400 of a total population of 252,900.<sup>26</sup> Between 1951 and 1996, the percentage of women in the active population increased from 13.1% to 46.8%, while that of men rose from 54.4% to 68.5%<sup>27</sup>.

Women have set up and manage 39% of individual businesses, or one quarter of all enterprises in French Polynesia. The businesses run by women are principally companies offering domestic services (65%), educational services (55%), or activities in manufacturing, the hotel and restaurant trade, and health and social support (48%). Salary-paying work is also distinctly divided by gender. Domestic services, teaching, health and commerce are fundamentally female areas of activity. Women tend to be shop and office assistants, while agricultural and manual workers are mainly men.

Women are also in a majority in the territorial administration: they account for 70% of the mid-level professionals in teaching, health, the public service and related sectors. Gender also influences positions held in the hierarchy: women represent only 38% of senior public servants and members of the intellectual and artistic professions. Progress in the level of qualification of young women is enabling them to move gradually into the highest professional positions.

Unemployment is higher among women than men, however: 39% of women and 29% of men under 25 years are looking for work. In the 25 to 49 age group, 8.7% of women and 7.5% of men are in this situation.

Two hundred and sixty (260) women's groups (groups in which more than half the members are women) were recorded in 2003,<sup>28</sup> 72% of which were engaged in craft activities, 8% in social work and 8% in the promotion of women's status. Among these groups, the Council of Women, a federation of ten women's associations, was established on 22 June 1982, after the First Regional Conference of Pacific Women organised by the South Pacific Commission<sup>29</sup> (Papeete, 1981). The Council's purpose is to 'bring together the associations working on women's status and rights and the children of French Polynesia, especially so as to be . . . their spokesperson with the various levels of government and territorial, national and international organisations, so as to define coordinated action'. The Council of Women runs two hostels, one for female victims of violence and their children, opened in 1989, and the other for elderly women, opened in 1992. In addition, 'women's political groups have existed for at least 20 years in the case of the longest-standing ones and exist within – and under the domination of – the major political parties . . . They are characterised by their attendance to decorating meeting venues, making flower garlands to welcome guests and preparing refreshments for the participants.'<sup>30</sup>

At the institutional level, the first women's status officer was Flora Devatine, who was appointed by the French Government in 1979.

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<sup>26</sup> These figures and all the following statistical data (unless the contrary is stated) concerning women come from *Vahiné en chiffres* (Vahiné in Figures), Statistical Institute of French Polynesia and Ministry of the Family and Women's Status of French Polynesia, March 2006, 8p.

<sup>27</sup> Diana Chebret, *La parité en Polynésie française...*, (Parity in French Polynesia), dissertation quoted.

<sup>28</sup> Diana Chebret, *La parité en Polynésie française...*, (Parity in French Polynesia), dissertation quoted.

<sup>29</sup> In 1997, the South Pacific Commission (SPC) became the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC).

<sup>30</sup> Diana Chebret, *La parité en Polynésie française...*, (Parity in French Polynesia), dissertation quoted.





Today, the Territorial Information Centre for Women's and Family Rights (French Polynesia) (CTIDFF), linked to the women's status office, provides women with information and legal assistance on marriage contracts, separation procedures, salary-earners' rights and conjugal violence. Sandra Levy-Agami, in the 2005–2007 CEDAW report for French Polynesia,<sup>31</sup> reports that 'in contrast with New Caledonia, women's status in French Polynesia is organised and pursued by the NGO network', and not by the public institutions.

### 3.3.3.2 Political context and application of parity

In French Polynesia, the dominant party, *Tahoera'a Huiratiraa*, which is 'autonomist' in orientation, has been in power in a coalition since 1972 and alone since 1991. It is led by its President Gaston Flosse, born in 1931, mayor of a large French Polynesian commune since 1965 (until his son-in-law took over the office in 2001), President of the Assembly of French Polynesia from 1972 to 1991 and President of the Government of French Polynesia from 1991 to 2004. He has also been a member of the Executive Committee of the French political parties UDR and then the RPR since 1972, a member of the European Parliament from 1984 to 1989, Secretary of State for the Pacific in the Chirac Government from 86 to 88, a member of the National Assembly from 1978 to 1997,<sup>32</sup> and a Senator since 1998. 'He controls all the wheels of French Polynesian society – the economy, sport, the university – and has put in a system in which patronage scales the heights.'<sup>33</sup>

The second political party, *Tavini Huiraatira*, pro-Independence in its views, brings together activists of the anti-colonial and anti-nuclear movements, which developed in French Polynesia and the neighbouring countries from the early 1970s. Its leader is its President and founder Oscar Temaru. In French Polynesia, French nuclear testing extensively disrupted local socio-economic structures, and continued until 1997.

The adoption of the parity law was not supported by political groups or players in French Polynesia and was not publicly debated there either. But it was immediately promulgated and was therefore applied from 2001. The parity law was applied to the Assembly of French Polynesia (the Territorial Assembly until 2004) on the basis of strict alternation. Each list presented in each of the six electoral constituencies (Windward Islands, Leeward Islands, Tuamotu East-Gambier, Tuamotu-West, Marquesas Islands, Austral Islands) had to comprise men and women in alternating order.

The law was applied to the Assembly elections in May 2001, then the early elections held in May 2004 after the dissolution of the Assembly in order to implement French Polynesia's new institutional status, and lastly the May 2005 by-elections after the annulment of elections in the Windward Islands.

The parity law was not applied to the 2001 municipal elections in French Polynesia. It did not apply until 2008 in communes with more than 3500 habitants not forming part of other communes, i.e. nine communes out of 48, eight in Tahiti and one in the Leeward Islands. Political leaders however believed for a while that the law would be applied and had already begun to recruit women for municipal election lists. In this way, the law had a knock-on effect and helped increase the representation of women in the municipal councils (from 19% to 31%) (see Table 2).

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<sup>31</sup> La place de la femme océanienne dans la société moderne (The Place of the Pacific Woman in Modern Society). 2007, 7p.

<sup>32</sup> With an interruption from 1988 to 1993.

<sup>33</sup> Sémir Al Wardi, Tahiti ou la difficile alternance (Tahiti or the Difficult Alternation). Le monde diplomatique, June 2005. See also Sémir Al Wardi, Tahiti et la France. Le partage du pouvoir (Tahiti and France. The Sharing of Power), L'Harmattan, Logiques politiques, 1998.




**Table 2. Proportion of women elected in French Polynesia before and after the parity law** <sup>34</sup>

	Before the law	March 2005
<b>Government</b>	5 women/18 ministers (28%)	4 women/18 ministers (22.5%)
<b>Assembly (2001 &amp; 2004 elections)</b>	5 women/41 members (12%)	27 women/57 members (47.5%)
<b>Communes (2001 elections)</b>	182 women/976 municipal councillors (19%)	316/1010 municipal councillors (31%)
	2 women/48 mayors (4%)	5 women/48 mayors (10.4%)
	8 women/91 'delegate' mayors (9%)	20 women/91 'delegate' mayors (22%)

Parity does not however prevail in the government: women remain significantly under-represented in ministerial positions. Similarly, the advisory bodies are largely male preserves. Of the 41 members appointed to the Economic, Social and Cultural Council, only 8 are women, for example.<sup>35</sup>

This report addresses only the Assembly of French Polynesia (APF). The first Representative Assembly of French Polynesia began sitting in 1945. Since then, and until 2001, only 11 women have sat in this Assembly.

Until 1961, there were no women elected, and from 1961 to 1967 only two women out of a total of 30 members. The first, Céline Oopa, entered the Assembly in 1961 to take the place of her husband, Marcel Oopa, member of the French Parliament and member of the Territorial Council, and son of Pouvanaa a Oopa, the first political leader in French Polynesia. She sat for a whole term, from 1962 to 1967, with Rose Raoulx. From 1967 to 1972, there were no elected women. In 1972, Tuianu Le Gayic was elected as a Councillor: she kept her seat until her death in 1995. She was also mayor of Arue, a large commune in the urban area of Tahiti, and President of the Council of Women. With Flora Devatine, Tuiani Le Gayic was one of the first female political leaders in French Polynesia. From 1972 to 1985, women represented 5.8% of the members of the Assembly, then 8.6% from 1986 to 2001. The application of the parity law therefore brought a major change to the composition of the APF.

<sup>34</sup> From a table by Béatrice Vernaudeau.

<sup>35</sup> Diana Chebret, *La parité en French Polynesia...*, (Parity in French Polynesia), dissertation quoted.







## 4. COMPILING LISTS

The parity law applies to the compilation of lists of candidates for elections. It is explicitly directed at political parties which, in France, are the bodies that choose candidates with a chance of success at the elections; candidates without the support of a party have very little chance of winning and none whatsoever in national elections. The French Constitution has been amended (Article 4) to stipulate that 'political parties and groups contribute to the implementation of this principle under conditions determined by the law'. The example of Wallis and Futuna shows that, in a political system where parties have no significant role, the influence of parity law is also limited. In New Caledonia and French Polynesia, in contrast, the political parties occupy a central position in political life, especially in the choice of candidates at elections. This section will therefore address parties' reactions to the parity requirement and the various methods used to recruit female candidates (4.1). Parity has also influenced women themselves by encouraging them to stand (4.2).

### 4.1 Political parties

The legally binding requirements of parity law could have been expected to create difficulties for the political parties. The law forced the parties to remove men already elected from the lists, and to disappoint the expectations of young male activists. Parity also meant adding to the lists women who had not previously been active in politics. Thus the parties' usual way of compiling lists was disrupted. They reacted in different ways: some introduced systems to recruit and train women, in readiness to apply the law. The ease of recruitment of female candidates varied from party to party, depending on their size and political anchorage.

#### 4.1.1 The disruption of party habits

Political party leaders feared the effects of the parity law, which would reduce their room for manoeuvre in choosing candidates. Some have tried to avoid having the law applied in their constituency. In Wallis and Futuna, Senator Robert Laufoaulu tabled an amendment to exclude the Territorial Assembly from the application of the parity law, on the basis that the only two women elected to the Territorial Assembly came from women-only lists; the amendment was rejected. In French Polynesia, the application of the parity law at the 2001 municipal elections was postponed until 2008, because of the election method in use. Senator Simon Loueckhote, the current President of the 'Rassemblement pour la Calédonie' (RPC) party, also put forward an amendment to postpone the application of parity to the municipal elections in New Caledonia until 2008, which in the end was rejected. He argued that Melanesian women 'were not ready, because of the burden of custom, to move into elective functions as early as 2001'.<sup>36</sup>

First, the political parties were concerned that they would not manage to find enough women to include in their lists. For example, 'our colleague ... had raised the practical difficulties he had met in including four women on his list for the provincial elections, with two of them subjecting their candidacy to the specific condition that they would not have to take part in the election campaign.'<sup>37</sup> This fear of being unable to find

<sup>36</sup> Report by M. Bernard Romans on the draft law to facilitate equal access for women and men to elective positions, National Assembly, n°2268, 22 March 2000.

<sup>37</sup> Senate report.





women to include in the lists is linked to the competition between political parties. Each is afraid that their adversaries will identify 'better' candidates, in other words women with political, professional or NGO experience, etc.



We had to get organised for this law, because on the Kanak side, it was men who were on the lists; we had to find women suitable for the lists, have a debate between us and the women because we, well it's not as if we were upset but... to tell them that they have to be strong, because you are in a public position and on the other side, facing us, are our political opponents, from the right wing, and they have women with a certain amount of training and political and administrative experience, who have skills already and that's mostly what it was about ... there was that fear that this might be a further disadvantage for us.<sup>38</sup>

Secondly, the party leaders feared that they might make the male activists unhappy as well as the elected men, whose ambitions they would thwart if they wanted to be on the list. Sometimes, apparently, the former elected men who wanted to stand for election again and continue to hold their seats reacted very negatively to the law. These reactions are primarily an issue for the party leaders, who were blamed sometimes aggressively by these men for their removal from the lists.



I remember being present at an incident with the representative of [name of commune], [a man], one evening at the Central Committee meeting, he started to moan and said 'I refuse to be behind what's-her-name'; we closed the doors, as the journalists were there, because the guy was screaming and shouting 'bastard' because he couldn't stand the idea of being behind [a woman] who was from [that commune] as well. So [that woman] said 'Listen there is no problem for me, you can have my place.' But we couldn't do that otherwise it would have been one man after another on the list. So we had to do all kinds of things to calm this guy down because he couldn't bear finding himself in that position.<sup>39</sup>

These reactions can also be problematic for the women who enter the lists and have to face the hostility of men excluded or their colleagues. In particular, the women who were not politically active found themselves facing men who had been dropped, but who are often important in the political, NGO or religious worlds. In French Polynesia, for example, the parties were forced to remove deacons from their lists to include anonymous unknown women.



In 2001, it turned nasty. Because men had to be removed. The ones who made the biggest fuss were the ones who were already on the lists. The ones to whom we said 'Oh, sorry we're going to put a woman in your place'. That got really nasty. They were often deacons! It was really difficult for the party leaders! The party leader recruited a lot of church people because he knew that the voters were in that congregation. In the church, you often can't find any women interested in politics, so he took women from civil society.

Then they said 'Wait, you are taking me off, but I represent 600 people', because there was that too, often the women who were put on the lists had no political clout, they were just chosen at random

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<sup>38</sup> Interview, member of the leadership of a big party, New Caledonia.

<sup>39</sup> Interview, member of the leadership of a big party, French Polynesia.





because we had to have women, we needed women, and they replaced men who carried weight. And I can tell you that it wasn't easy for the women who were on the lists in 2001.<sup>40</sup>

In the same way, in New Caledonia, the women who were newly added to the lists had to face hostile reactions from men who had held electoral office for some time.



Each party section puts forward names and the regional committee prepares the list. But this was not easy to do. In 2001, yes, it was quite flexible because it was the municipal elections and parity was applied in groups of six. It was different then and it was easier to do. But in 2004, in the section, it was okay but after that ... the Islands Province, that's three islands, you need male and female candidates from the three islands; that was more difficult, especially with the previously elected men, the relationship changed. It went cool, it was very difficult ... it led to changes in attitudes towards me, we no longer had the same relationship with the reluctant men. It was not easy, it was rough, I came in and they wouldn't speak to me, not all of them, but some of them. I just put up with it and I said that in any event they were going to have to come to terms with it too, but it was difficult. It varied from place to place and then after a year it was accepted<sup>41</sup>

In some cases, the political parties' apprehensions proved to be unfounded. The law disrupted the way lists were made up by rewarding the involvement of the faithful activists or long-standing elected members. However, these examples do not represent the whole reality of the application of the parity law: the situations vary depending on the party concerned.

#### 4.1.2 Different ways of taking ownership of the law

While some people tried to act in such a way that parity was not applied, other political parties looked ahead and introduced recruitment and training strategies for women. In French Polynesia, starting in 2000, the main party in power gave female activists responsibility for establishing an association to encourage women from the communes to get involved and to train them in the functioning of political institutions. Members of the group visited villages to organise public meetings for women. Since 2003, there has been a federation of women in this party, organised into local committees, which offers training in public speaking, running meetings, and so on. In New Caledonia also, some parties have made efforts to recruit and train women who had been to some extent committed to the party.



Before the application of the law, we set up a training scheme for women, in particular at the political level, so as to defend the positions of the party in the institutions at every level. Within the political bureau, we have a committee responsible for workshops and the party leaders run the training sessions. The training themes were the Nouméa Accord, the functioning of the institutions, the positioning of the party since the Accords and the economic and social situation in New Caledonia. We reached out to the women activists within the party and often the female activists are women whose husbands are in the party, and also young women who have administrative responsibilities, who are active and who espouse the party's ideology.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Interview, member of the leadership of a big party, French Polynesia.

<sup>41</sup> Interview, woman elected to the Assembly of the Islands Province, New Caledonia.

<sup>42</sup> Interview, man, member of the political bureau of a big pro-Independence party, New Caledonia.





These parties have also often made the effort to include women in their governing bodies and therefore enabled them to take part in the compiling of electoral lists and the definition of party strategy. In fact, previously, women were very poorly represented in the top echelons of party hierarchies and party women's groups and, even if they were present, were little heeded.



Our party is the first to have established a women's committee. We based it on the Kanak model, because Kanak women were very active during the difficult years, and also on the New Zealand Maori women's movements, where women were very active, as were the Hawaiian women, and that's what inspired us to set up a women's committee here 20 years ago. But even with this committee, it wasn't necessarily listened to as it should have been and we were reduced to doing domestic tasks; they would say well, there's a meeting, who is going to make the cakes and decorations, etc . . .<sup>43</sup>

Consequently, the parity law accelerated women's representation in some political parties. Although there was no obligation, these parties opened their higher levels of leadership to women.



2001 was a real turning point. Before 2001, the (name of party) executive committee comprised only men. The Political Council, a broader body, had to have some women in it too. Since 2001, they virtually forced their way in because of parity; (the President) opened things up; I was already a member of the Political Council and I had come in just before the 2001 elections, to the executive committee, and without me being asked whether I wanted to or not, in fact, I heard about it while I was at the Congress!<sup>44</sup>

The entry of women to leadership levels of political parties enabled them to take part in decision-making, but also helped train them in how the party was run and more generally to address political issues. Sometimes, therefore, their presence was specifically intended to enable them to gain a better understanding of their political party, even if they could not take part in decision-making.



In 2004, I ended up on the list again, but in a higher position, I was the third woman. I had been on the executive committee, for the past two years, I was one of the few non-elected members, there may have been 10 of us altogether. Because they wanted me to understand how it all worked from the inside.

But I have no responsibilities, I was there, I could speak, I could attend, I think I was entitled to vote, but the party President has a way of coordinating things and everyone's opinion counts. So he listened to my opinion and, yes, people remember some of the views I expressed at the time. I was a new voice, a young voice, the voice of a woman who has been to school...<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Interview, member of the leadership of a big party, French Polynesia.

<sup>44</sup> Interview, member of the leadership of a big party, French Polynesia.

<sup>45</sup> Interview, woman elected to the APF.





For other parties, in contrast, the parity law was experienced solely as a constraint, which disrupted the usual way that lists were compiled and introduced the risk of placing them at a disadvantage in electoral competition.



I had a few problems compiling my list in 2002, but I just had to put up with them. In 2007 the problem has still not been solved. As politicians, we reason in terms of assembling a list to attract as many votes as possible.

As we have always been accustomed to having a man, we speak to the elder brother of an influential or important family, in other words it's always a man and so on and so it hasn't been easy. If I put a woman in second position, I won't get the same number of votes as if I chose someone influential in second place.<sup>46</sup>

For these parties, the presence of women on their lists is necessarily a handicap because the pool of influential women to draw on is not as large as the group of men they usually approach.

#### 4.1.3 Size of the party and recruitment network

In fact, the political parties have had varying degrees of difficulty in finding women. In some local party sections, women were already politically active and involved in sufficient numbers for the compiling of lists not to raise any difficulties.



This was not a problem for us because women already had a clear presence and we went beyond parity, because in the bureau there are five women and four men, so that is not a problem provided that there is a big enough pool of women candidates, but the women must want it that way too. We approached women who are committed because we are a political list and women must become committed first, because if the women are not motivated then we are not going to chaperone them. We are politically active women.<sup>47</sup>

Other parties, even if women had a lower profile than men, benefited from a recruitment network through which they could offer women an opportunity to join in the electoral contest. These parties already knew where to search for their female candidates.



With the women activists in the party, often they are women whose husbands are in the party, except for one woman who had always been a political activist and also the young women who have administrative responsibilities and who are active, who espouse the party's ideology.

Those are the ones we went to bring in and then we were obliged to ask them if they were ready and able to take up these responsibilities. People who have to represent a party carry a lot of responsibility because they have to defend our positions.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Elected man, Territorial Assembly, Wallis and Futuna.

<sup>47</sup> Interview, Mayor of a rural commune, Grande Terre, New Caledonia.

<sup>48</sup> Interview, Member of the leadership of a big party, New Caledonia.





Most of the political parties, however, were obliged to bring in women from outside the party to include in electoral lists. They sought to enlist those who were already known, who already worked for NGOs or the churches or who were members of influential families and who could therefore attract votes for the list, especially qualified, often young, women many of whom worked for the administration, who could offer technical expertise in the management of public affairs.

Depending on the size of the party and its position in the political game, these recruitment networks were accessible to varying degrees. The big parties had contacts in the NGO world, on whom they could call to mobilise women.



I am the director of a practical training school, I do training, so it was important in terms of communication, and I was in the trainers' groups. That's how I was chosen in 2001 by [mayor of the town]. Through another school principal who was already one of his deputies, he got in touch with me. He said 'oh, you should come with us, we are looking for women!'.<sup>49</sup>

Similarly, the parties which occupy positions of institutional power can more easily contact administrative staff, enabling them to approach women. Recruitment was more difficult for the smaller parties with no such network. Sometimes people even ended up placing a female family member on their list although they preferred not to.



I was not a member of a party. In terms of voting, it's more or less related to the family. I vote where they are members of the family on the list. I wasn't in the party for which I am currently an elected member. But someone from my family came to see me to put me on the list because of the parity factor. My immediate reaction was to say no, because I don't know anything about politics, although it's true that I had been working as a primary school replacement teacher and then a warden and then I just stayed at home, I've got eight children. I stayed at home, I looked after my children and my husband who works as a teacher. He came back a second time; first he asked my husband's permission to put me on the list. My husband did not say no but he said to sort it out with me. But in fact my brother-in-law put my name on the list without my agreement. As you only sign after the election. So I said 'Well, if you've put my name down'. It wasn't really that I didn't want to, but I knew nothing about politics. I have not had any responsibilities in an association or anything like that.<sup>50</sup>

The parity law therefore had major effects on all the political parties – which did not always cause difficulties. Some parties went along with the law and managed to find female candidates for their electoral lists and managed to train them for political responsibility when necessary. The law was a constraint, however, for those parties most reluctant to embrace parity and those with no access to a sufficiently large potential pool of acceptable female candidates. Some hostile reactions to new women coming into politics hindered their smooth integration into the political sphere.

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<sup>49</sup> Interview, municipal councillor in a big town, French Polynesia.

<sup>50</sup> Interview, elected woman, New Caledonia.





Clearly, the argument that there are not enough women, often put forward by opponents of the parity law, has not proved valid in practice: the political parties have managed to compile gender-balanced lists. In French Polynesia, parties have even managed on two occasions to compile gender-balanced lists for the territorial elections since 2001 and found new female candidates each time. Indeed, of the six women elected to the APF between 1996 and 2001, four again sat from 2001 to 2004 and of the 27 women elected from 2001 to 2004, only 12 are still sitting in 2007. Had it been so difficult for parties to find women candidates, they would have been compelled to persuade the same women to stand, which has not been the case.

## 4.2 The female candidates

From their own point of view, how have women reacted to the parity law? Has the law made it possible for women who already wanted to stand for election to achieve office? Has it been an incentive for hesitant women? Has it revealed women who previously showed no interest in politics?

This report will present reactions from women who were approached to be included in the list. Some, already politically active, had never been elected before parity was introduced (4.2.1). Others had not been involved in politics, but were already engaged in NGO work; the party leaders had to persuade them to agree to be added the lists (4.2.2). Yet others declined the invitation to enter politics (4.2.3).

### 4.2.1 Female political activists

Although few, some women were already active in political parties before parity. They could obtain recognition as activists, but were not always elected. The parity law gave them the incentive to take that extra step.



I have been active in this party since it was established (in the 1970s), I am one of the founder members and therefore part of the leadership. I had never wanted to be included in a list to stand for election, even if the party had been asking me to do so for some time. In 2001, with the advent of parity, I could no longer refuse.<sup>51</sup>

Many of these female activists had preferred not to engage with elections and political institutions because they saw these areas as a male world, hostile to them. The parity law has ensured that these women would not be the only ones elected among a high proportion of men, but that they would come into institutions with greater female representation.



It took me a long time to first stand for election because I was not interested in institutional responsibilities. I was more interested in community work initially, to organise the party at the grassroots level.

And I had a career, I was a teacher, I am a French teacher. Institutional politics, electoral office and the profession wasn't my priority and still is not.

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<sup>51</sup> Interview, elected woman in the APF.





*Why was institutional politics not a priority?*

 For me, it is very clear, it is because politics is a man's world. And in fact, up to now, I had thought that women's contribution should be where women are to be found, in other words outside the institutions and more where women are, where people are, because here, it is parity which has brought women into the institutions.<sup>52</sup>

Clearly, women who wanted to become more actively involved could do so under circumstances that they saw as more favourable, because the parity law ensured that they would not automatically be placed in unelectable positions on electoral lists, as in the past.

 I was contacted by the activists from my party, but I already wanted to become more fully involved. I wanted to show a deeper commitment. I was involved but in a more passive way, I was active but without wishing to be out in front. In any event, most of the lists were mainly formed of men, there were women, but only at the bottom of the list.<sup>53</sup>

The female activists in the political parties were, in this way and thanks to the law, able to move into more visible political activities than those they were previously involved in. Nevertheless, in most cases the political parties did not have enough women activists in their ranks to fill the electoral lists. They therefore reached out to women who were involved in NGO's, even if they were not really activists.

#### 4.2.2 Women involved in NGO and church groups

Many of the female elected representatives we met mentioned their initial hesitation to 'go into politics', and many of them stated that they would not have become involved without the legal obligation. These women were more mostly already involved in group activities, in NGOs, as part of their professional or religious work, but still saw politics as radically alien to their energy and work.

 There was X who had come to see me before the elections, three years before, and I turned it down because I said that I didn't know anything about politics. He kept on coming back and I said that I would try. He approached me repeatedly saying that politics was just everyone's daily life and that it's not something huge or extraordinary. I wasn't sure what to do.<sup>54</sup>

Similarly, this female chair of an association, involved in defending her interests, first refused to be entered on a list for the elections to the Assembly OF French Polynesia.

 Well that's how I entered politics! (laughter) they came and got me. Initially I didn't know how to go about politics, I always made it clear that I was not a politician. But they said to me 'But you are doing politics every day!'

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<sup>52</sup> Interview, elected woman, New Caledonia.

<sup>53</sup> Interview, elected woman in the Assembly of the Islands Province, New Caledonia.

<sup>54</sup> Interview, elected woman in a small commune, New Caledonia.





You're involved in politics every day by being the president of a women's group and by so doing you are in politics daily!' I said 'Oh really?!'<sup>55</sup>

Thus parity law was a trigger for many women to be were drawn into politics. Since 2001, some of them have made great progress in political life,<sup>56</sup> and this report will return to that point, although they had no political ambitions previously.



In 2003 [the leader of a major party] called me to ask whether I wanted to go into politics and especially in [my commune], because I had gained maturity and I am from [that commune]. When you look at it from outside, when you talk about politics, you always say 'Oh! That's really not an easy world to be in. He responded by saying 'Well you know that politics, initially, is supposed to be a matter of service to the community.' . . . The sentence struck me. I said to myself, 'Well after all, if I can make my contribution, why not?' And that's how I started in politics, and I do not have any regrets about it today.<sup>57</sup>

This young woman, a senior member of the territorial administration, was involved in the life of her religious community, as was her husband. In French Polynesia, religions and churches play an important part in the political scene;<sup>58</sup> Gwendoline Malogne-Fer has studied the relationship between women holding responsibilities in the Protestant church and those in politics.<sup>59</sup> That young woman would never have considered going into politics if the president of the leading party had not persuaded her to do so. Today, she is an elected member of the Assembly of French Polynesia and will be in the top position on the list for the municipal elections in her commune in 2008, with very good prospects of winning. In her case, as in others, the law has really triggered a change.

#### 4.2.3 Women who declined

Some women who were approached refused to be included in a list, however. For some, their commitment to NGO work was enough and they preferred not to become involved in a new activity for which they feared they would not have enough time.



Here, there is also work organised around religion, these women are already involved in women's groups in the villages and in the church women's groups and they are already busy. So to have another political activity in addition to that is too much. Some of them managed to do so but there are not many. Women do things thoroughly, and they don't have time to do several things simultaneously.<sup>60</sup>

The vast majority of the women who declined did so for family reasons; they felt that they were not available for political life either because they had to look after their children, or because their husband was against it. Sometimes, it was a matter of not threatening the traditional division of work between men and

<sup>55</sup> Interview, elected woman in the APF.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Part V The Positive Developments.

<sup>57</sup> Interview, elected woman in the APF.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Bruno Saura, 1993. *Politique et religion à Tahiti (Politics and Religion in Tahiti)*. Papeete, Editions Scoop/Polymages.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. 2005. *La Féminisation du Pouvoir au sein des Institutions Ecclésiastiques et Politiques en Polynésie française*, (*The Feminisation of Power in the Ecclesiastic and Political Institutions of French Polynesia*), *Revista de Estudos da Religião* 5(3).

<sup>60</sup> Interview, senior official at the Assembly of the Islands Province, New Caledonia.





women, and between husband and wife. A member of the French Polynesian association responsible for recruiting women reported such difficulties, especially in the rural areas:

 The further you are from Tahiti, the less the women feel concerned. For them it was the natural thing to stay at home and leave their husbands to play politics. It was difficult because we were not dealing with guys who were against parity, it was the women themselves. They said: 'That's young people's business, you have gone to school, and you have no respect for anything any longer, and you don't have any children.' Or they would say: 'I'm going to ask my husband.'<sup>61</sup>

This traditional division of roles assigns to women the responsibility for bringing up children. Women with young children were therefore very reluctant to become involved, because they thought they must give priority to that duty.

 Being a woman at home with the children was the most difficult thing. A woman will worry much more about the future of her children, and running the home, than a man. Generally speaking, that's the first thing they said: 'I am interested, but I have children, I don't want to leave them at home in the evening and come home late'. Very few, very few indeed of the women said 'Well yes, okay then, I will go into politics, that's no problem because my husband is going to stay at home and look after the children'. We may have encountered that just two or three times. To work and have children is the normal thing but to have children and go into politics, well that's something they find it difficult to accept.<sup>62</sup>

Often the arguments women use to decline to be a candidate, their lack of availability or the need to look after children, hide another reason: the objection, either explicit or tacit, of their husband.

 A lot of women declined because of their family situation, even if they were working. Often they did not say exactly why, they did not say that their husbands didn't want them to. For example, they said that they were not available for these responsibilities. The first excuse was that they were not ready and that the family economy would be disrupted. But we did nevertheless find women but they were often married women whose husband was already in the [party].<sup>63</sup>

The ways in which women came to be included on equal gender opportunity lists had a direct influence on the profile of elected women: these were women who had been approached by parties because they were representative or had abilities and whose family situation enabled them to accept this offer.

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<sup>61</sup> Interview, member of the leadership of a big political party, French Polynesia.

<sup>62</sup> Idem

<sup>63</sup> Interview, member of the leadership of a big political party, New Caledonia.





## 5. THE PROFILE OF ELECTED WOMEN

The statistics presented in this report concern only elected members of the Congress of New Caledonia and the APF. Because there are very few elected women (2) in Wallis and Futuna, a detailed comparison of the profiles of elected men and elected women was not possible. A qualitative analysis of the profiles of elected men is presented instead.

### 5.1 Elected women are younger

Men and women are present in virtually equal numbers in the 40- to 60-year age group; 10% of women, however, are under 40, whereas none of the men are under 40, and few women are over 60 (14% compared with 40% of men).

■ Table 3. Percentages of men/women by age group elected to the Assembly of French Polynesia

	Between 30 and 40 years	Between 40 and 50 years	Between 50 and 60 years	Over 60 years
<b>Women</b>	14.81%	29.63%	37.04%	18.52%
<b>Men</b>	-	30.43%	34.78%	34.78%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>8.00%</b>	<b>30.00%</b>	<b>36.00%</b>	<b>26.00%</b>

■ Table 4. Percentages of men/women by age group elected to the Congress of New Caledonia

	Between 30 and 40 years	Between 40 and 50 years	Between 50 and 60 years	Over 60 years
<b>Women</b>	4.00%	36.00%	52.00%	8.00%
<b>Men</b>	-	20.69%	41.38%	37.93%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1.85%</b>	<b>27.78%</b>	<b>46.30%</b>	<b>24.07%</b>





■ Table 5. Summary: Percentages of men/women by age group elected to the Assembly of French Polynesia and the Congress of New Caledonia

	Women	Men
Between 30 and 40 years	10%	-
Between 40 and 50 years	33%	23%
Between 50 and 60 years	43%	37%
Over 60 years	14%	40%

## 5.2 Elected women more likely to be single or have fewer children

Our only statistical data under this heading concern the elected members of the APF. Interviews in New Caledonia suggest that the same inequalities between men and women persist in conjugal and family status as those recorded in French Polynesia. More elected women in the APF than men do not live with a partner: 73% of them are married or living with a partner, whereas 95% of men are in this category; 9% of elected women are single (no men) and 18% are separated, divorced or widowed (5% of men).

Elected women have fewer children than their male counterparts. More women than men have not had any children or have one or two; only one third of them have more than three children, whereas 70% of men are in this group.

■ Table 6. Men/women elected to the Assembly of French Polynesia, classified by their numbers of children

	No children	1 or 2 children	3 or 4 children	More than 4 children
Women	12.50%	45.83%	33.33%	8.33%
Men	4.76%	23.81%	52.38%	19.05%
Total	8.89%	35.56%	42.22%	13.33%

We can deduce from these figures that having many children may have been a hindrance to the political involvement of women. The interviews confirmed that a majority of elected women either waited for their children to be grown up before becoming involved in politics, or entered politics at a young age, before having children. Elected women living with partners and having young children are rare.

## 5.3 Better qualified elected women

Elected women at the APF are more highly qualified than the elected men. Half of them at least have the Baccalaureate (compared with 40% of the men) and many more have a qualification above degree level. In the same way as in French Polynesian society as a whole, the increasing time spent in education has been





more advantageous to women: in the 20 to 39 year age group, 18% of women have the Baccaalaureate compared with 12% of the men.<sup>64</sup>

■ Table 7. Level of qualification of men and women elected to the Assembly of French Polynesia

	Below the Bac.	Vocational qualification without the Bac.	Bac.	Bac.+3 yrs (Degree)	Further than Bac.+3 yrs
<b>Women</b>	16.67%	33.33%	8.33%	16.67%	25.00%
<b>Men</b>	28.57%	28.57%	0.00%	28.57%	14.29%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>23.08%</b>	<b>30.77%</b>	<b>3.85%</b>	<b>23.08%</b>	<b>9.23%</b>

As a consequence of their higher qualifications, more women enter the professions (16% compared with 9.5% of men) and are in the upper echelons of the public service (21% compared with 15% of men). The majority of elected men and women work in the mid-levels of the public service: 31.5% of women and 47.6% of men.

Finally, fewer women are retirees on election (10.5% of women and 17.6% of men), which is related to their younger age.

We have no statistical data available on the level of qualification of the members of the Congress of New Caledonia. The very minor differences in professional status observed between women and men elected to the Congress imply that educational inequalities must be less pronounced there. A majority of male and female Congress members belong to the supervisor echelons and mid-level professions of the public service.

<sup>64</sup> Vahiné en chiffres (Vahiné in Figures), 2006.





Table 8. Professions of men and women elected to the Congress of NC

	Farmers	Craftspeople	Traders	Directors of businesses with 10+ staff	Professionals	Public service supervisors	Business managers	Mid-level public service professionals	Mid-level business professionals	Public service staff
<b>Women</b>	0 0.00%	1 4.55%	1 4.55%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	8 36.36%	2 9.09%	8 36.36%	1 4.55%	1 4.55%
<b>Men</b>	2 8.33%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	1 4.17%	2 8.33%	9 37.50%	3 12.50%	6 25.00%	0 0.00%	1 4.17%
<b>Total respondents</b>	2	1	1	1	2	17	5	14	1	2
<b>%</b>	4.35%	2.17%	2.17%	2.17%	4.35%	36.96%	10.87%	30.43%	2.17%	4.35%

#### 5.4 Politically inexperienced elected women

In French Polynesia, half of the men were already Assembly members before 2001; in New Caledonia, this figure was 79%. In contrast, the vast majority of women (93% in FP, 72% in NC) were elected after 2001. In French Polynesia, where they were 35% in 2001 and 45% in 2004, also means that many of the women elected in 2001 were not re-elected in 2004, because almost half of the currently elected women have only been in office since 2004 – and a little less than one third of the men. Thus women contributed significantly to the renewal of the elected members in 2001 and 2004.

Table 9. Men and women elected to the French Polynesia Assembly, classified by date of first term of office<sup>65</sup>

	Before 2001	2001	2004
<b>Women</b>	7.14%	35.71%	46.43%
<b>Men</b>	50.00%	16.67%	29.17%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>26.92%</b>	<b>26.92%</b>	<b>38.46%</b>

<sup>65</sup> The total of the lines does not amount to 100% here because some elected representatives entered the APF in mid-term after the resignation of other members, in particular on appointment to a position in the government.




**Table 10. Men and women elected to the Congress of New Caledonia, classified by date of first term of office**

	Before 2001	2001	2004
<b>Men</b>	79.31%	6.90%	13.79%
<b>Women</b>	28.00%	28.00%	44.00%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>55.56%</b>	<b>16.67%</b>	<b>27.78%</b>

In addition, in French Polynesia, almost half (41.7%) of the men elected to the Assembly have already been ministers, but only 14% of the women.

### 5.5 Elected women less likely to hold multiple offices

Because of this political inexperience, but also because the parity law has not yet been applied at the commune level, 75% of the women in the APF have no other office than the one they hold as a member of the Assembly. Only 39% of the men are in this situation. More than one third of the men elected to the APF are also mayors, but only 10.7% of the women (4 of the 5 female mayors in French Polynesia).

**Table 11. Local elected offices held by men and women elected to the Assembly of French Polynesia**

	No other office	Municipal councillor	Deputy Mayor	Delegate Mayor	Mayor
<b>Women</b>	75.00%	7.14%	0	7.14%	10.71%
<b>Men</b>	39.13%	0	13.04%	8.70%	34.78%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>58.82%</b>	<b>3.92%</b>	<b>5.88%</b>	<b>7.84%</b>	<b>21.57%</b>

In New Caledonia, parity has applied to municipal elections since 2001 and more female members of Congress hold multiple offices. Women less frequently hold multiple offices, however (52% of women have no other office compared with 41% of men), but more significantly women hold a 'lower' office if they do have more than one electoral function; 32 % are municipal councillors, 16% deputy mayors and none are mayors whereas 38% of men also hold mayoral office.





■ Table 12. Other elected offices held by men/women elected to the Congress of New Caledonia

	None	Municipal councillor	Deputy	Mayor	Senator
Men	41.38%	6.90%	10.34%	37.93%	32.45%
Women	52.00%	32.00%	16.00%	-	-
Overall	46.30%	18.52%	12.96%	20.37%	1.85%

■ Table 13. Summary: multiple offices held by men/women elected to the Assembly of French Polynesia and the Congress of New Caledonia

	Women	Men
None	66%	41%
Municipal councillor	17%	6%
Deputy mayor	8%	12%
Mayor or delegate mayor	9%	38%
Senator or MP (French Parliament)	-	3%

The elected women sitting in the Congress of New Caledonia and the Assembly of French Polynesia are therefore younger than the men: biologically younger and, like the women of their generation, they are better qualified and have fewer children. They are also politically younger, because most came in as a result of parity law, and were only elected in 2001, and only to the Assembly. There would be merit in taking this survey further by collecting data on the men and women elected to the provincial assemblies and municipal councils, which we were not able to do during this consultancy.

## 5.6 Wallis and Futuna

Since entering politics, female candidates (in 1977) like elected women (from 1992) in Wallis and Futuna have shared the main characteristic of being or having been public servants. The two elected women interviewed in April had previously been a teacher and a territorial public servant respectively.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>66</sup> The third councillor took office after the survey.





Only one third of the women in the active population have paid employment and out of this proportion of salary-earning women, 53% are in the public service. Financial stability is therefore a pre-requisite for entering politics because the cost of campaigning can be high.



I have been a political activist since 1983; I was a member of the executive committee for the elections. I have always wanted to contribute to political work but I never wanted to stand for election, never. I was there to help if you like, but I never wanted to stand, for the very good reason that it is very costly, it is very costly in Wallis to stand for election. If you want to finance your campaign on your own, and without anybody else's help, you need to find six to seven million for an election, but now with the conflict that we have at the moment, this has reduced the cost for the good reason that we have not gone to the various *fale fonu* in our district, we have five *fale fonu* and every time we visit, we have to prepare an envelope [containing money], we have to buy drinks and there are various events like this one after another, so it costs a lot. Without mentioning the meetings, the meetings are something else again ... when you are second on the list have to finance the campaign as well but less than the person who is top of the list ... Politics is an expensive business. There are a lot of women on Wallis who would like to get started in politics ... and in fact on Wallis it is the women who are driving progress, not the men. Most of the participants at political meetings are women.<sup>67</sup>

And if expense concerns men who are active in politics, it seems to be especially restrictive and indeed a source of discrimination for women. However, some elected women wanted to be exceptions to the rule, for example a former elected woman from Futuna.



During my campaign, I was fighting for two things that seemed essential to me. 1) an elected representative is not someone who holds power, but who is there to serve everyone, and 2) everyone is free to choose the person they trust. Candidates must not be bought like a bag of sugar. I wanted to fight against the fact that some candidates pay the voters to vote for them.

It can also be noted that the level of qualification of female candidates and elected representatives is consistently higher than the territorial average, which is not always true of male candidates and elected men.

The current two elected women were both in second position on the candidate lists in 2002, when the parity principle was applied for the first time. As can be seen from the men in top position on lists, the objective at that time was to find women capable of attracting the same number of votes as influential men from one of the big families. They therefore opted for influential women in the same way. Two examples from the previous term were an elected woman, the wife of the traditional leader of the capital village of Wallis, and another woman from a large family. Their status should not detract from their abilities, as they were seen as having 'natural' qualities or qualifications appropriate for elective office. In 2007, they chose to capitalise directly on that potential: one ran against her former list leader (they had taken sides for opposing camps during the customary crisis), and the other replaced the man above her on the list (as he had been declared temporarily ineligible).

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<sup>67</sup> Elected woman, Territorial Assembly, Wallis and Futuna.







## 6. PARITY AND THE REAL EXERCISE OF POWER IN THE ASSEMBLIES RESULTING FROM PARITY-BASED ELECTIONS

### 6.1 The executives

#### 6.1.1 Executives with low female representation

The main hindrance to the application of gender equality in the three French Pacific countries lies in the low level of female representation among executives at every level of political life, from the communes to the assemblies. This difficulty reflects the obstacles that continue to hinder women's access to responsibilities when there is no legal obligation. Similar problems in mainland France led to the issue of a new decree in January 2007, applicable from the next elections, to make parity a requirement in local government executives, including those of the French jurisdictions in the Pacific, for communes enjoying all the relevant responsibilities.

##### 6.1.1.1 The assemblies

The first gender-balanced APF is characterised by an effort to include women in the executive. A man is President of the Government, while a woman, Lucette Taero, is President of the APF. Seven (7) women and three (3) men comprise the Assembly's office-bearers. The standing committee is chaired by a man. Of the twelve (12) special committees of the APF, seven (7) are chaired by women. In 2007, the government, the APF and the APF's standing committee were chaired by men. Of the nine (9) special committees, five (5) are chaired by men and four (4) by women (Table 14). The institutions of the APF therefore show a relatively high level of female representation. However, the real executive of the APF, the government, included only four (4) women out of sixteen (16) ministers in 2007 (Table 14).

■ Table 14. Women and men in the executive of the Government and the Assembly of French Polynesia in 2007

Gender	Government	Chairs of political groups	Chairs of special committees	Office-bearers
Women	4	0	4	7
Men	12 Inc. the President	3	5	3 Inc. the President

For the first time, in 2004, two women, Marie-Noëlle Thémereau and Déwé Gorodé were appointed President and Vice-President respectively of the Government of New Caledonia, although women remain in a minority. Only three (3) of the eleven (11) government members were women. The executive of the Congress of New Caledonia elected in 2004 after the parity law appears a little closer to the gender-balance norm: six (6) of the eleven (11) office-bearers are women.





The Standing Committee of Congress elected on 28 July 2006 is chaired by a woman and has five (5) women among its eleven (11) members. The Congress is still presided over by a man, however, and of nine (9) vice-presidents, only two (2) are women (the 1st and 6th vice-president). If parity seems to be close to prevailing among office-holders, it is because the two secretaries and 'questeurs' (Congress financial and budget officers and administrators) are women.

Lastly, only four (4) of the eleven (11) committees and one (1) of the four (4) political groups are led by women.

■ Table 15. Women and men in the executive of the Government and the Congress of New Caledonia in 2007

Gender	Government	Chairs of political groups	Chairs of special committees	Office-bearers
Women	3 Inc. the President	1	8	6
Men	8	3	4	7 Inc. the President

In **Wallis and Futuna**, the executive of the Assembly operates with four (4) office-bearers (president, vice-president, first secretary, second secretary). Office-bearers are elected each year in November during the administrative session. The Standing Committee also comprises four (4) members also elected in November: one representing Alo, one Sigave and two Uvea. One of the three (3) current female members has secured the chair of the Education, Youth and Sports Committee, one of the most important committees.

### 6.1.1.2 The Provinces of New Caledonia

Only the executive of the Assembly of the Southern Province is gender-balanced. The president is a man, but the 1st and 3rd vice-presidents are women. Political alternation and the commitment to involving civil society shown by the 'Avenir Ensemble' political group seem to have made it easier for women to take their place in the executive. In contrast, the executives of the Northern Province and the Islands Province have no female members. Some women would have liked to be included, but found difficulty gaining acceptance. Most were newcomers to politics and it was hard to take over from men with long electoral records who were older and more experienced. These outgoing elected men apparently prevailed with no prior discussion, because their legitimacy is strong and uncontested:



I would have been interested in being part of the executive, but the discussion was between my colleague and me, both from the same party. We had a Vice-Presidency. For my colleague, it was self-evident that it should be him, because: 'I'm the man and I am older than you, so it's as simple as that.'





*S: Did you see that as being the natural outcome too?*



No because we hadn't talked about it, so I tried to tell him that it would be a good idea to talk about it because it's not just automatic; and he has other responsibilities too. But there was no discussion; he said he could do it all and there was no more discussion.<sup>68</sup>

### *6.1.1.3 The communes in French Polynesia and New Caledonia*

In the communes, the low ratio of women in positions as heads of executives is just as evident. In New Caledonia, for examples there is only one female mayor (commune of Farino, less than 3500 habitants) in a total of 33 communes. In French Polynesia, there are five women mayors in the 48 communes. On the other hand, there are more women in office as deputy mayors: 42/96 deputies in the 11 communes of New Caledonia which have applied parity law and 15 deputies out of 107 in the 22 communes not obliged to offer equal gender electoral opportunity. In French Polynesia, there are 20 female delegate mayors out of a total of 91.

In the 11 communes subject to the parity law in New Caledonia, the mayors have played the parity game reasonably well in the membership of the executives (see table, Annexe 1). This quantitative outcome is far from sufficient, however, because the proportion of female deputies does not necessarily mean genuine access to responsibilities by women. In some communes, for example, the mayors have achieved a superficial effect by appointing women as the second or third deputy, without giving them any real responsibilities. Some second or third deputy mayors, for example, in fact have no delegated responsibility. These are the words of one of these second deputies:



I don't really have any particular area of responsibility; I just have the authority to sign certain civil status documents; I am responsible for the annex, here where I live; I perform weddings and sign civil status documents. People come and see me at the annex, or even at home .... In all the committees, it's the mayor who is the Chair; and the vice-chairs are men who run all the committees. In terms of the committees, I am just in the education one, but we only meet to talk about granting scholarships. I am also in the 'indigenous peoples' rights' committee, but we are only brought in for the meetings. There is a women's committee, but it is not operational.<sup>69</sup>

The interviews conducted in this commune, which has four female deputy mayors out of a total of seven, indicated that women have very little influence over the decisions taken on behalf of the commune; none of the female deputies has any real portfolio and say that they are only very infrequently involved in meetings or at the municipal council proceedings. In a nearby commune, the Secretary-General of the municipal administration reports the same lack of real responsibilities in the hands of female deputies in his commune:



There are elected women who are capable of being the dynamos; these are the elected women who are accustomed to leading men, and who often also have a supervisory role in another capacity.

<sup>68</sup> Elected woman in the Islands Province Assembly New Caledonia).

<sup>69</sup> Second deputy, commune of 4000 inhabitants, New Caledonia.





*S: why are these women not deputies?*



That is a good question (silence)... the female deputy mayors have no area of responsibility. In the township of L., they have included a woman, and another one in the township of M. But they are nevertheless on some committees, and there are some women who are in positions of responsibility.<sup>70</sup>

Here again, the mayor has chosen as deputies women with no political experience, but who are capable of representing a particular locality in the commune in which they are sometimes given responsibility for the annex. These female deputies have no 'delegation', in other words a specific area of responsibility: the mayor gives them a partial and subordinate political role which does not threaten his own prerogatives. However, in that commune, there were women with long political experience, some of whom would have liked to have been in the executive. When the list was compiled, the mayor therefore sidelined the women with political ability who were most likely to acquire power as deputies.

Nevertheless, some women who were politically active and committed to their commune did not wish to become part of the executive when invited to do so. The obstacles that they refer to relate to their low availability, but apparently they are hesitant about occupying visible positions where they would need to be at centre stage, preferring to work for their commune in a more discreet manner.



I declined a position as Deputy Mayor, because I feared the responsibilities, in particular that of conducting marriages on Saturday and Sunday! Because that is a responsibility that is taken in turns. At my age, I do not have a long life stretching out ahead of me; and time is so precious that it is okay to work from Monday to Friday, no problem, but not Saturday and Sunday. That is a sacrifice I would not like to make. I've been responsible for the budget of the municipality for the past two years, as I looked after the Finance Committee here, and I am also responsible for personnel; these delegated responsibilities require a lot of attendance at the municipal offices. But not more. One of the deputies should have these delegated responsibilities. But I was considered from the outset as a deputy, but without the title; so I was given responsibilities. This does suit me, to have responsibilities without the title. It's true, they do have an allowance of a hundred and something thousand francs per month, plus the official car, the telephone, but benefits is not what I'm looking for.<sup>71</sup>

Sometimes this wish not to be included in the executive or in high positions in the executive has a customary dimension: the idea is that you should not have a higher status than an older male relative.



At election time, the atmosphere is tense, so the other guy is already the first deputy, another one wants to be a deputy, another one wants something else, he wants something else, so the discussion is tough; and all these things come into play, when there is tension in the air in that way . . . she should have been the first deputy, at the beginning, but as [a man] wanted the position, she preferred to . . . I

<sup>70</sup> Secretary-General, Commune of New Caledonia.

<sup>71</sup> Interview, female municipal councillor and elected member of the APF, French Polynesia.





don't know whether it was just an excuse . . . anyway that's what she did, I can't be ahead of my uncle, so she applied the custom method, and we didn't talk about it again after that . . . <sup>72</sup>

There are therefore still far fewer elected women than men in the various executives of the French Pacific countries. In particular, very few occupy a position as the head of an executive, president of an assembly or mayor. Attaining positions of responsibility is still difficult for women. In addition, a high degree of specialisation in the responsibilities held by women can be observed. The advent of women in the local government institutions is in fact characterised by a distinctly gender-based division of work.

### 6.1.2 Female tasks/male tasks: gender-based division of work

We looked at the male and female chairs of committees of the APF, the Congress and the three provincial assemblies of New Caledonia in order to identify the logic prevailing over gender-based work specialisation within the institutions. Table 16 presents these data in summary form. Apart from committee chairs, it shows committees in which a majority of members are women (F), those in which a majority of the members are men (H) and committees in which there is a gender balance (P).

This table clearly shows that specialisation in political work is similar to that observed in other social spheres: men reign over finance, budget, economic development, infrastructure and transport, while women are given women's development, culture, health, social protection and teaching. The distribution of committees on a gender basis is therefore relatively identical between the various institutions considered. This gender-based division of work is in fact quite pronounced because most of the committees chaired by men or women usually also comprise a majority membership of representatives of the same gender.

The responsibilities given to women through committee membership often stem from a choice; elected women frequently state that they asked for the delegated responsibilities they have because they felt more comfortable and competent with these. Sometimes these responsibilities have been forced on them. These choices or assignments of responsibility extend the gender-based division of work and in particular the dichotomy between the female domestic sphere and the male public sphere. Traditionally, women are in charge of care and related areas (the sphere of care and attention to others and in particular dependent persons) such as health, social protection and education, because care-related activities extend female domestic activities such as caring and raising children into the public sphere.

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<sup>72</sup> Top-of-list, Commune, New Caledonia.





Table 16. Committees with a majority of women (F) or men (H) and committees with equal gender representation (P)

Committee Chair	APF Committees (11)	NC Congress Committees * (12)	Islands Province Committees (8)	Southern Province Committees (14)	Northern Province Committees (8)
Man	<p><b>H.</b> Budget</p> <p><b>H.</b> Economic Affairs Committee</p> <p><b>H.</b> Finance</p> <p><b>H.</b> Institutions and International Relations</p> <p><b>F.</b> Communication, Cultural Heritage</p>	<p>Finance and Budget</p> <p>Economic and Fiscal Legislation and Regulations</p> <p>Administrative Organisation, Public Service</p> <p>Public Infrastructure and Energy</p> <p>Transport and Communication</p> <p>Sport</p> <p>Agriculture and Fisheries</p> <p>Customary Affairs</p>	<p><b>H.</b> Finance, General Administration</p> <p><b>H.</b> Economic development</p> <p><b>H.</b> Infrastructure, Transport, Housing, Energy</p> <p><b>H.</b> Youth and Sport</p>	<p><b>H.</b> Budget, Finance and Heritage</p> <p><b>H.</b> Economic Development</p> <p><b>H.</b> Rural development</p> <p><b>H.</b> Youth, Sport and Leisure</p> <p><b>H.</b> Public Infrastructure, Energy and Transport</p> <p><b>P.</b> Private Education</p>	<p><b>H.</b> Economy</p> <p><b>H.</b> Land</p> <p><b>H.</b> Finance</p> <p><b>F.</b> Environment, Social Affairs</p> <p><b>F.</b> Education</p>
Woman	<p><b>F.</b> Health</p> <p><b>F.</b> Family, Parity Social Protection</p> <p><b>H.</b> Physical Planning, Environment, Urban Planning</p> <p><b>P.</b> Education and Research</p> <p><b>P.</b> Employment and Public Service</p> <p><b>P.</b> Civil Affairs Housing</p>	<p>Legislation and General Regulations</p> <p>Work and Vocational Training</p> <p>Health and Social Welfare</p> <p>Education and Culture</p>	<p><b>F.</b> Education and Vocational Training</p> <p><b>F.</b> Health, Social Affairs</p> <p><b>F.</b> Customary Affairs, Land Development</p> <p><b>F.</b> Women's Affairs Committee</p>	<p><b>F.</b> Housing, Urban Planning</p> <p><b>F.</b> Health and Social Action</p> <p><b>F.</b> Environment</p> <p><b>F.</b> Personnel and General Regulations</p> <p><b>F.</b> Employment and Vocational Training</p> <p><b>F.</b> Education</p> <p><b>F.</b> Culture</p> <p><b>F.</b> Women's Status</p>	<p><b>F.</b> Women's Status</p> <p><b>F.</b> Culture, Sport and Leisure</p>

\* The authors had no information on the membership of the committees of the Congress of New Caledonia.





Allocating delegated responsibilities or committee membership when executives are assembled is therefore an extension of the professional activities of elected men and women, and this approach to assigning responsibilities appears 'natural' to everyone because it has already been taken into account when the lists were compiled:



If we are talking about future enlistment for the municipal elections, I reason more in the following way; of course we are going to respect this, because the law obliges us to observe parity, therefore the men in my team have a more economic development profile, etc, etc and the women are, well that's just how it turned out, it was quite a random process!

I didn't choose; it was when I looked at the list afterwards – they are very much oriented towards culture, the social area and education, so they are very close to the children, etc. It's a fairly conventional arrangement; in the end, it's the usual system, without us doing it deliberately.<sup>73</sup>

In the political sphere as in the salary-earning area, this division of work is distinctly nonegalitarian because traditionally female areas are less valued than traditionally male areas. Similarly, there is an explicit if not always evident hierarchy in the committees and delegations of responsibility, with the most prestigious and sought after being budget, finance and economic issues, in other words the most male-dominated committees and delegations. The gender-based division of work therefore keeps women away from the main places of power.

## 6.2 Speaking trends

The application of parity also raises the issue of how women take part in the functioning of the institutions, in particular their speaking records within the assemblies at every level. Asking for the floor is a traditional difficulty for women who are less used to it than men. We will address at a later stage the way in which they experience and conceive this difficulty. In this study we will try and measure how frequently women do speak in the two assemblies concerned, the Assembly of French Polynesia and the Congress of New Caledonia. This 'measuring' exercise suggests that women speak less often than their male counterparts, but that women are asking for the floor more often as they acquire more seniority and experience

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<sup>73</sup> Mayor, Commune of New Caledonia.

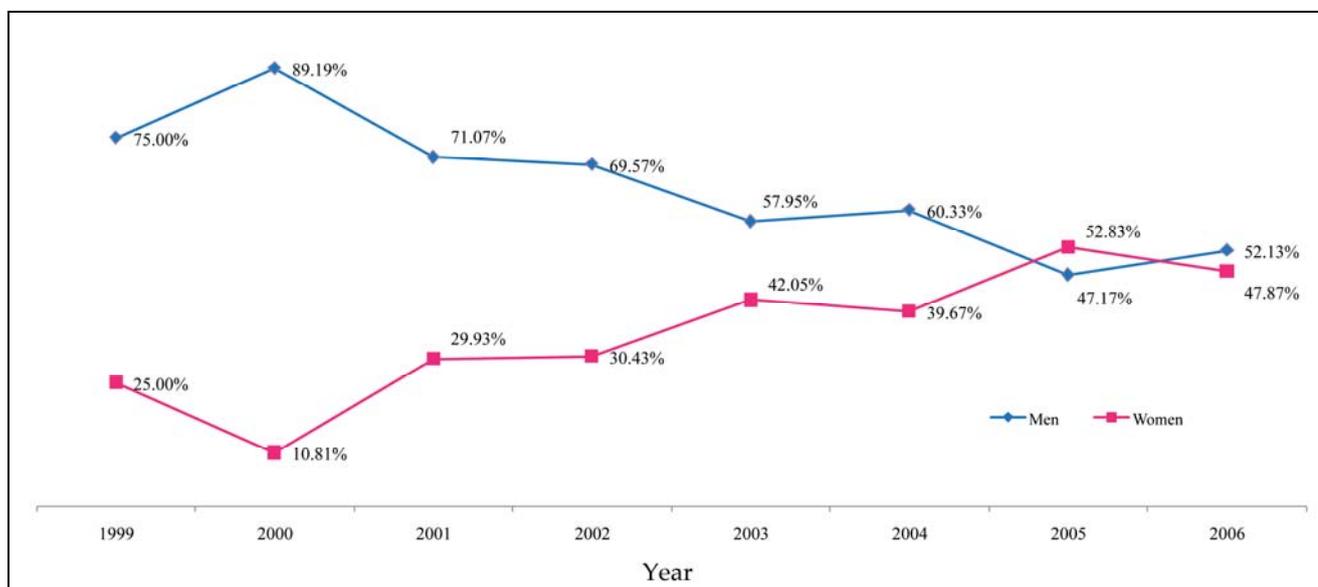




## 6.2.1 Women speak less

### 6.2.1.1 French Polynesia: the gradual achievement of a new balance

Figure 1. Speaking trends for the members of the Assembly of French Polynesia



Initial monitoring of the number of times women and men requested the floor<sup>74</sup> at the APF showed that, in the early stages of the first parity-based assembly in 2001, women spoke far less than men. Women took the floor for only 28.93% of the time, although women represented 47.5% of all elected members of the APF. But as the term progressed, women gained experience and asked for the floor more frequently. By 2006 they were speaking as often, or even slightly more often than the men (52.13% female speakers), with the proportion of elected women remaining constant.

### 6.2.1.2 The Congress of New Caledonia

At the Congress of New Caledonia, clear progress in female speaking time can also be noted, although the trend is less marked than in French Polynesia. Women accounted for 24.44% of total speaking time in 2003, before the first parity-based provincial elections, and to 39.34% in 2006. Women, who account for 46% of the elected members of Congress, have almost caught up with men, and hold the floor only slightly less often. In addition, the application of parity to the Congress of New Caledonia, because of the electoral timetable, occurred later than in French Polynesia and it is therefore legitimate to think that the elected women in the Congress will continue to speak more.

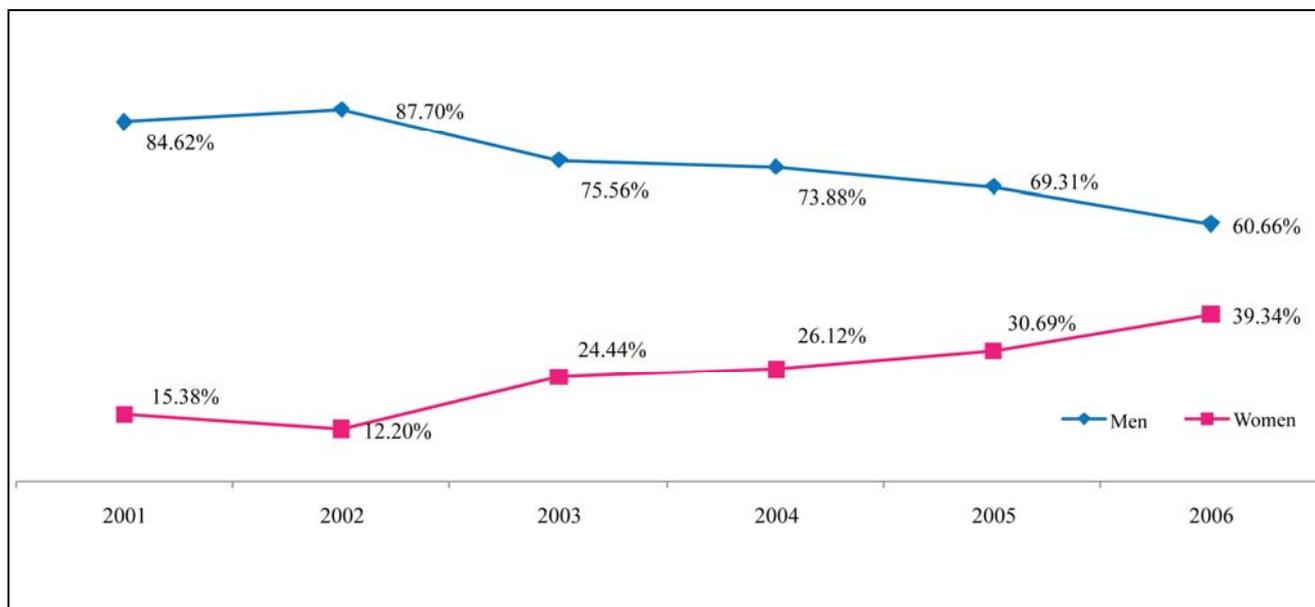
This outcome in the two assemblies is worth noting because it clearly illustrates one of the positive aspects of the parity law: some obstacles to women fully exercising political responsibilities are mainly due to their own political inexperience. As they acquire such experience, elected women are able to overcome their initial difficulties. This is one of the main arguments in favour of a pro-active political approach to the representation of women.

<sup>74</sup> For a description of the statistical measuring system, see the annex on methodology.





Figure 2. Speaking trends for the members of the Congress of New Caledonia



These results should however be put into perspective; we were not able to conduct statistical monitoring in the two assemblies for which we had session records. The situations differ markedly, depending on the institution concerned.

At the Congress and the APF, we are dealing with a population of quite well qualified and politically often experienced elected women, even if they may be fulfilling their first term of office (experience as activists, in an NGO, employment on a political staff or in local government administration, etc). At the local level, in the communes, some elected women have more trouble in making their voice heard and seniority is not always enough to offset this. One elected women from a commune in the Islands Province explained for example that she never spoke at the municipal council meetings except on 'other business', and also stated that only one female counsellor ever spoke. Similarly, in another commune in the same province, the commune Secretary-General told me, as he showed me the most recent municipal council meeting minutes, that only three of the many elected women on the municipal council regularly asked for the floor.

In some communes, however, elected women described quite egalitarian speaking practices such as systematically going round the table for everyone to have a chance to speak at committee meetings or municipal council preparatory meetings. These elected women said they regularly spoke at such meetings and during municipal council meetings as part of this system.

Some elected men also tend to remain silent, but it is the women who are still the most broadly excluded from speaking opportunities. It would also be worth extending the statistical surveys that we were only able to conduct for the Congress of New Caledonia and the APF, to the local government units concerned by parity. In this way we could gain a full picture of the inequalities in speaking time between men and women by locality and institution.

In the same way as we have described in connection with the organisation of work, not only do women speak less, but there is a kind of role specialisation in the topics addressed by men and women.





## 6.2.2 A change in women's discourse and a change in the topics women address

A statistical and qualitative analysis of speaking time at the APF and the Congress of New Caledonia has revealed that the positions taken when speaking in session vary quite significantly on a gender basis.

The women are often rapporteurs, which is in fact the only kind of speaking time that is virtually parity-neutral. However, the role of rapporteur remains an asymmetrical one in practice. As rapporteurs, the women's role is often limited to reading, and they do not necessarily respond to the questions on the report read. Conversely, when a man is the rapporteur, it is usually he who answers the questions. The last two presidents of the Congress often complimented female rapporteurs on their reading by saying 'Thank you for that excellent reading.'<sup>75</sup> These compliments may admittedly represent a form of encouragement for newly elected women unaccustomed to speaking, but they tend to lock them up in a limited concept of the rapporteur's role. Compliments are sometimes quite explicitly gender-biased: 'Maybe Mrs X could replace her colleague, as she so brilliantly did earlier on. It is always very pleasant to hear her voice. Mrs X, the Congress is anxious to listen to you' to quote one of the presidents to an elected woman.

Explanations of voting decisions, which are in general provided by the leaders of the political groups, are in contrast still very male-dominated. The parity arrangements have in fact had little secondary impact on the access of women to responsibilities within the parties, which remain bastions of male power. Only a few women with sound political experience explain voting. But similarly, newly elected males are also excluded from this kind of intervention.

Arguments on points of order, of which there were many at the beginning of the second term of the Congress of New Caledonia in the same way as in the APF from 2004 onwards, with two successive motions of no-confidence, also tend to set men against one another. Outgoing elected men with extensive political experience in the Congress are very familiar with the by-laws, the mode of operation and the history of the institution, which enables them to make the best possible use of, or on the contrary to dispute, the procedures used. There are debates about the use of particular rules of procedure and disputes over the way in which some texts are amended or not amended during sessions. Some former female elected representatives may take part in these exchanges to some extent, but they remain a largely male preserve.

Although they are in a minority here too, women do take part in the many other adversarial discussions that form part of the life of the Congress. The use of irony and humour is preferred by men, but women may also participate in lively exchanges and attacks on their political opponents. In this kind of argument, however, outgoing elected male representatives often refer to aspects of the institution's history and older considerations or vigorously debated points from the distant past, thus excluding the female newcomers who are not familiar with the history of the institution.

Women continue to be poorly represented in discussion on the most common issues, but they do speak up in all kinds of sessions on any topic. They often speak for a shorter time than men. They also frequently express themselves on issues considered to have a female dimension (health, social sector, education, etc).

Lastly, the interviews conducted with female elected representatives in the communes imply that they are more concerned than men by the need to remain in touch with the grassroots on practical and everyday

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<sup>75</sup> Minutes of the Congress of New Caledonia, downloadable from the website of the Congress of NC.





issues. For example, a number of public service supervisors and personal political staff members of local government elected representatives (men or women), say that women mainly speak on very local matters:



With regard to debating and political analysis, the men are always better at that, more comfortable, with political history, socialist concepts and philosophical considerations. Women tend to raise more practical grassroots issues, why is there no toilet and shower block in the village, how the old-age allowances are paid out, the women tend to focus on more down-to-earth issues. But in terms of the overall political debate, the men control that, they are always at centre stage.<sup>76</sup>

Alternatively:



When they intervene, it is to address practical issues, such as: 'Mr Mayor, the road to . . . is in poor conditions, it needs repair', but political interventions such as: 'We do not charge for water supply but is that a good thing, are we preparing people in this way?' They don't get involved in that kind of thing, but tend rather to say: 'We need to improve the floral decorations in the town centre.' The women who really participate have already got used to addressing issues from an overall and political point of view.<sup>77</sup>

Lastly, observing the ways parity is applied in practice has shown that the law has had an unexpected effect. When the lists were compiled, the leading names on each list approached a number of women who had never been in electoral office, some of whom had little political experience. This approach to politically inexperienced women led to a strong team focus on the list leader. The new female recruits thus owe their political apprenticeship and legitimacy to the person who approached them and to whom they carry a debt. On the other hand, politically experienced elected women or women with institutional skills find it easier to exist independently.

## 6.3 Political experience, institutional competence and independence of elected women

### 6.3.1 Female newcomers and dependence on the leader of the list

The women who entered politics with the parity arrangements were often approached by a male head of list. A number of elected women therefore see their office as functioning in a relationship of fidelity to that head of list, who is almost always a man. A female elected representative from French Polynesia, for example, who represents her political activity as one of service to other, male, elected representatives, said:



It is an honour that I have experienced as a woman but I didn't really feel political; I was working for politicians, for Mr X, Mr Y, but I didn't feel as if I was going to become a minister and all that; no, that's not what I'm interested in, it's all the work behind the scenes; that's why I said I have always been a behind-the-scenes woman.

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<sup>76</sup> Member of an elected woman's personal staff, New Caledonia.

<sup>77</sup> Secretary-general of a commune in New Caledonia.





Well that's the reason why, one day a journalist from somewhere I can't remember where, absolutely wanted to do a magazine article on me, and I said no, because that's not my style; it's because I was working behind-the-scenes, thanks to men who had trust in me, Mister Z first and then Mister X later. In fact, it's always been those two men, for me, who I should promote.<sup>78</sup>

Some female political newcomers, some of whom had little previous political activity, are very dependent on their head of list; they say that they consult their mayor regularly, who provided them with the ideological baggage and assistance with how to work in office:



It was a small party, they put me on the list. I spoke up a little during the campaign; the leader told me what I should do. In the villages, he let me speak. When anything came up, he came to see me and we talked about it.<sup>79</sup>

These women therefore have little in the way of resources to enable them to become independent from their head of list, and it is not unusual to hear certain political groups referred to by the name of their head of list, like a senior public servant who refers to the parties present within a provincial assembly: 'The majority, is parties A, B, C and another party, Mr X. The opposition is M Z's party.' For two of them, he refers only to the male heads of list although there is one elected woman from each of these two parties.

Because of such ties, these elected women often have little political freedom compared with their head of list or their party leaders. Parity has in this way sometimes reinforced party discipline because these female newcomers did not dare go against their party's directives:



The really terrible thing, is that the women, when they came out of the chamber, told us that they agreed with us. But there was pressure from their party leader, they all voted exactly the same way! They said 'I have no choice!' I would have thought that the fact that there were women in the assembly . . . but that even that was not enough. Still just as submissive . . . Very few women speak. They just come in to vote. They raise a finger. They vote according to the instructions that have been issued. Once what happened, maybe we had been persuasive, was that some voted, for; there was a suspension of the session, and a meeting outside, but that is the method (of the party leader); he called them together and chastised them; when they came back, everybody voted against! We thought, well how can that happen!<sup>80</sup>

These elected women have a vested interest in being loyal to their party leader because of their limited political capital; they run the risk of not being re-elected, or not being able to continue to sit for the full term of elected office if they oppose their head of list.



One elected woman just pulled out completely. She's been absent for the past two years, but its associated with her party, there have been problems . . . these are internal party problems; it's a way of rebelling.

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<sup>78</sup> Interview, municipal councillor in a big town, French Polynesia.

<sup>79</sup> Deputy, commune of New Caledonia.

<sup>80</sup> Interviews, elected woman in the APF.





She was a young woman, 20 years old, with no political or administrative experience; I don't know whether she had the Bacca-laureate and, since she has been elected, she has not taken part in any committee meetings, she doesn't come to the provincial assembly meetings either. The party has given up on her. They have dropped that young woman.<sup>81</sup>

That does not happen often, but this is not an isolated instance; other examples have also been quoted in other institutions.

### 6.3.2 The benefit of political experience

Here again, however, the political experience of elected women is of prime importance. Outgoing elected women or women with other forms of political experience (experience in any political office, supervisory level experience in the administration) are much more resourceful when they must put forward their views and assert a form of independence from the heads of list:



Some women already had political experience at party level, while others had no experience; there was one who had been a government member, another who had been on the political staff of various people; the others had no experience. For some of them, they had been party activists, but that is quite different from performing as an elected member. For some of them, the results were good.<sup>82</sup>

Or again, in another local government institution:



The most active women on the council are the women who have already had a role in the institutions, women who are already familiar with the inner workings.

For example, Mrs X had been a health minister in one of the governments; she had had trade union responsibilities. When she came in, she was automatically comfortable with speaking and organisation. The same goes for Mrs Y; she was in a managerial role in health. So there are no problems for those women, obviously. Where difficulties do arise, it is with women who are newcomers, but that applies to men too. So they are completely non-operational. Women who have already had responsibilities carry on. I think that when the lists were compiled, unprepared women were approached. They agreed without knowing what to expect. So women like Mrs Y are exceptions.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>81</sup> Interview with elected man's staff member, New Caledonia.

<sup>82</sup> Senior public servant, Province of New Caledonia.

<sup>83</sup> Secretary-general, commune of New Caledonia.







## 7. INITIAL DIFFICULTIES EXPERIENCED BY ELECTED WOMEN

### 7.1 Gender, feeling competent and taking the floor

#### 7.1.1 Technical understanding of the issues

Many female political newcomers were chosen by their party because they already held positions of responsibility within local government administrations. These newly elected women have no difficulty with the technical understanding of discussion items, the budget or the functioning of the institution.

Similarly, women who had undertaken higher study or who were professionals in the areas under their responsibility as elected representatives had no difficulty in dealing with the relevant issues. On the other hand, they often encountered problems early in their term with understanding public finance.



Dealing with public affairs is not difficult, on the contrary, I like doing it. And as my committee is education, and that's my job, I'm familiar with it. No, it's not difficult.<sup>84</sup>

In contrast, female newcomers to politics who had not done any higher study often had major difficulties at every level with understanding what was going on (how the institution operates, procedures, issues, budget).

Among the difficulties these women faced, understanding the budget was the aspect most frequently referred to by elected women. We must of course point out that a certain number of elected men, especially when they are newcomers, also experience similar difficulties; it is, however, more difficult for them to admit this. Women who were elected for the first time with the parity arrangements are accustomed to being introduced as political novices; they are therefore more inclined to confess their lack of knowledge on some aspects of their office than their male counterparts.

Some elected women found institutional sources of support to help them understand the issues or the budget or to perform certain tasks specific to their office. Such support may lie inside or outside the institution to which they have been elected. For example, a woman elected to a provincial assembly says how a kind of mentorship was developed with a senior public servant from another local government unit in the early days of her term. She asked him to reread the vote explanations or worked with him on other issues. This mentoring arrangement came to a natural end when the woman settled into her office properly. Another elected woman turned to a staff member of another elected representative from her party. This approach is productive because these elected women sought technical support from competent and experienced staff who did not threaten their independence as elected representatives, because they were not working in the same local government unit. Other female elected representatives have nevertheless turned to senior public servants in their institutions.

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<sup>84</sup> Elected woman, Provincial Assembly, New Caledonia.





Others, and there are many, are assisted by elected men from their institutions with more experience, and sometimes by the head of the executive. Many say, for example, that they frequently approached the mayor or president early in their term, to ask for the speeches to be read back to them. Such support may have some positive aspects, but also strengthens the leadership position of the heads of executives and, as has already been pointed out in the previous section, the dependency of elected women on those people. Some elected women have also remained fairly isolated in trying to cope with their difficulties; they therefore had to learn on the job through practice and experience:



You see, we have no training. You go in there, you observe others, those who have been there for a while; that was the case with me. At the beginning, I really felt like an extra, we were all just extras in a film. Even when you have taken part in the campaign, when we have been into the city neighbourhoods, in fact we didn't know much about anything. But I think what saved me, I'm not sure how the others experienced this, is that I extensively observed the attitude of the men in politics. . . . for example, we hadn't won after the first round of voting, (in the municipal elections). And I cried. I said no! We have gone and lost. I heard my mayor say: 'You never cry in politics.' These are small things, but they were useful to me later. And then I realised why. Because we have to project an image to other people who are looking at us. You must not accept defeat, you have to go on. Well, that's what influenced me, and I will always be grateful to the Mayor for that. But at the beginning, when you are a beginner, you'd like someone to tell you what you should do. But no-one tells you anything in fact. You need to be very observant.<sup>85</sup>

### 7.1.2 Taking the floor

When they do not feel competent in a particular area, the elected women do not allow themselves to speak on the subject concerned. The deputy mayor in a commune of New Caledonia (Islands Province) explains in this regard that, except for one female representative, no women had taken the floor on financial issues, and even she did not feel able to speak about anything but local issues concerning the villages:



It is difficult, especially with discussions on the budget, and I know nothing about finance. But when there are miscellaneous matters to address, we can talk about what's happening in the villages and what people need in my village. Otherwise, in terms of financial issues, so far, all we do is read the documents. It's always the Secretary-General who speaks and the other elected men, those who are accustomed to doing so, also take the floor. There are about 10 women. There is one who speaks, because she is also a member of the elected provincial assembly, she finds it easy to speak and maybe she knows what she's talking about.<sup>86</sup>

But even when they are familiar with the topic and would have something to say, women often remain silent. If they do not speak up under circumstances such as those, it is principally due to traditional social organisation, to the social relationship between the sexes, in particular in Melanesian society. Consequently, many elected women say that they do not speak up out of respect for men's public status, and this applies even when they are acutely aware of the inequalities between men and women and want to reduce them. It is

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<sup>85</sup> Interview, elected woman in the APF.

<sup>86</sup> Interview, deputy mayor, medium-sized commune in New Caledonia.





not always easy not to reproduce the inequalities between the sexes, even when you are aware of them and you criticise them:



I am part of the older generation. I sometimes find it difficult, even when I know that we have these rights. There's always this respect for the men, for the elders. I always find it a bit difficult. I see that the other women dare to speak out and personally I would like to be like them, but I don't do it.<sup>87</sup>

In Melanesian society, many elected women refer to 'respect' to explain that they are embarrassed about speaking up, as Christine Salomon says:



The basic constantly reasserted value, respect, should be understood as respect for hierarchy which is one of the foundations of social rules.<sup>88</sup>

This self-censorship of women is even more marked when they come face-to-face with older men in the various political arenas, especially men from their kin group:



At the commune level, there are three female delegates on the Executive Committee and, out of the three, there is only one woman. She is also the chair of the village section; she has a strong personality . . . The women have a lot to say; they do the basic work within the local committee, etc, but they do not go any further than that. That is obvious! When someone has to speak in the party structures and bodies, whether at the Executive Committee or elsewhere, they opt to remain silent out of respect in fact, because there are a lot of blokes who are there and in general it is the uncles who are there. This difference is respectful, because there is the cultural influence that makes it the way it is; I would say unfortunately so because they are doing themselves down; it's due to the cultural pressure; it's all a bit stupid. One female delegate will never speak up if X (one of the main party leaders to whom she is related) is there, because they are from the same family. Well that's the reality and that's the way it is!<sup>89</sup>

Women's reluctance to take the floor occurs in all parts of New Caledonian Society. However it has been less marked in the European group where gender social relationships and less hesitancy associated with kinship may make it easier for women to be more visible in the public sphere. Perhaps early access by these women to higher study may also make it easier for them to speak in public.



Every Monday we have an inter-departmental meeting; we discuss issues. The Mayor moderates the session; he goes round the table, and everyone has a chance to speak. This is the context in which problems should be raised . . . it is very interesting. It's easy to speak here, because everyone knows everyone else and we all help each other.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Interview, woman elected to a Provincial Assembly, New Caledonia.

<sup>88</sup> Christine Salomon, "Quand les filles ne se taisent plus", *Op.cit.*, p.139.

<sup>89</sup> Interview, man, member of a big party's executive committee, New Caledonia.

<sup>90</sup> Interview, Deputy Mayor, medium-sized commune, New Caledonia.





Difficulty in asking for the floor is mainly due to women's 'self-censorship' in a place where they don't feel entitled to speak.

There are however sometimes hostile reactions to the newly elected women who have accentuated this feeling of illegitimacy. A number of elected women from the same local government entity talk of the icy reception they received from outgoing elected men towards women elected through the new parity arrangements:



We got a cold reception, it was very difficult . . . it led to changes in attitudes towards me; we no longer have the same relationship with those reluctant people. It wasn't very easy; it was difficult. When I came in, they wouldn't speak to me, not all of them, but some . . . how did we react to this coldness? I said to myself, I'll just have to demonstrate my abilities, that was how I reacted.

*S: Were they implying that you were not up to it?*



Through jokes, insinuations, but not directly . . . I said to myself 'I'll have to teach them a lesson, but I'm going to do it through my work' . . . they continue to hinder me behind my back, the kinds of things we do around here, withholding information or providing wrong information for example. We haven't won the battle yet. We have to demonstrate that we are capable, because often they are just waiting for us to make a blunder. In meetings, you have to insist because they didn't really want to give us opportunities to speak at institutional meetings. It's better now. They didn't prevent us from speaking, but if you didn't speak up firmly, the decision was taken without us saying anything first.<sup>91</sup>

However, such difficulty with speaking out can be overcome. Some kinds of experience, such as trade union work, help women to overcome these problems:



About speaking in public, you wonder when to speak up . . . I learnt that when I was a trade union activist. Because to motivate the membership, tell them what to do, that's what you have to do. You also have to be able to talk to their bosses. Within the trade union, at a federal meeting, and there are staff from the provinces, the communes and contract staff; it's already like a mini-assembly. This is exactly what happens at the (provincial) assembly, it gets you ready for the next part. It was after being active within the trade union that I was able to take on roles and play my part in the commune and the province. There were a lot of women in the union.<sup>92</sup>

In the same way, experience speaking in certain church circles enables women to feel more comfortable speaking as an elected representative. In French Polynesia, the church has apparently often played such an emancipating role:

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<sup>91</sup> Élected woman, Provincial Assembly, New Caledonia.

<sup>92</sup> Interview, elected woman, Provincial Assembly, New Caledonia.





In our church, we have an opportunity to deliver the Sunday sermon. And there is a class of women who we can address every Sunday. I used to do so quite often in the church; and then sometimes you are asked to make presentations about the department. For me, speaking is not a handicap.<sup>93</sup>

The situation varies greatly depending on the church concerned, however; for women, belonging to a church and having responsibilities in that church only makes exercising political office easier when the church itself promotes women's participation in gender-balanced institutions and services. Responsibilities women acquire within women's groups, for example, don't necessarily help them to overcome the difficulty they have in speaking to a mixed audience.

Finally, it seems that younger women, especially if they are qualified, find it easier to speak in public. Also, in some contexts, even elected women who find it difficult can learn to speak more easily in public. An elected woman from a provincial assembly in New Caledonia explains how she manages to speak when she is encouraged to do so:



I am in the committee on culture, women, health and finance. I made the choice myself, except for finance, my group leader asked me to go to that one; we distribute the committees among ourselves so as to be present everywhere.

As with the finance committee, there are only men, I am the only woman; we did that to change things a bit, I am on my own. It is tough; that's where you have to speak on the agenda items for each committee, and that's where you have to fight. I have never spoken at finance committee meetings; it's not too complicated but it makes a big impression. The men have been in there since the provinces were set up; they are older than me and, what is more, they are men. Sometimes when you have to vote, they ask me whether I'm voting for them or against them. They all speak up, but they don't ask me for my opinion. Sometimes I feel like saying something, but it gets ignored. I do take the floor to some extent in the culture, health and women's committees, but in those ones, the female committee chairs asked me for my opinion; but in the finance committee, they don't ask me for my views. In the health committee, the female chair asks me for my position. The female chair of the culture committee does too. When I speak, I usually do so to defend issues concerning my commune for people I have met or who I know. The women's committee chair is also a woman; I speak up there too, I say what I think and I take part in women's meetings. We had been to Tahiti for the CEDAW convention. The other elected women know; they encourage me. It's not that I am frightened, but I was a beginner.<sup>94</sup>

As can be seen from this account, the increasing proportion of women in the committees is already making it easier for this elected woman to request the floor. But the lack of any women in the finance committee inhibits her from speaking, as does the behaviour of committee chairs toward her, which is another constraint. The male chair of the finance committee does not consult her and she remains silent in that committee's meetings. However, when she is approached, she does intervene and is happy to be able to do so. There again, determination pays off; female committee chairs place these elected women in leadership positions by asking all the women to speak. And when they have to, they do it and speaking gets easier and easier as they acquire more experience. If the awareness of committee chairs and assembly presidents was raised on this issue, such infrequent encouragement might become more widespread.

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<sup>93</sup> Interview, deputy mayor in a medium-sized commune, French Polynesia.

<sup>94</sup> Interview, elected woman, Provincial Assembly, New Caledonia.





## 7.2 Cooperation with men working in the administration

As we have seen above, good cooperation between elected women and public service personnel reduces and indeed eliminates some of the initial difficulties experienced by female political newcomers. But it is not unusual to see these relationships become more complicated as well.

A significant number of testimonies by elected women refer to administrative barriers which arise because some men seem unable to accept being under the orders of women. They often seem to consider that their position (senior manager, head of department, political office) and their seniority (they were there before parity) give them legitimate cause to question the authority of often newly elected female representatives.



These are people who were with me during the campaign; the two men were already party members and it is to some extent the bureau which chose them. It was not easy to work with them at first; as these are people who had been in politics for a long time, they know better than me, so they did not want to listen.

When, for example, I asked them, when we were receiving people, to take documents with them to their office, and we make a copy to keep in the central office, but the people have to take the documents away to their office and sometimes they don't say this to people. I just can't seem to be able to give orders; here at home, yes I can, but at work, I can't; with the women, I can, but it doesn't really work very well with the men.<sup>95</sup>

And when an elected woman rejects these attitudes and manages to maintain her authority, her reputation is damaged and the event may, as in this instance, end up with the colleague leaving.



It's 2007, and this is my third head of (department). I think that they find it hard to have a female boss, but maybe I am a little bit too much, I also know that I have a strong personality. When I say it's blue, it's blue, it's not light blue. They don't say so, but I think that they went because of the relationship difficulties. The committee decides on the general strategy and they have to implement those decisions; they should not make adjustments as they see fit.

*S: Do you feel that they were not faithfully implementing your directions?*



No, not at all. They would say that the President won't realise, she's just a woman. A number of times, I intervened to say that was not what I asked them to do, 2 or 3 times and then they just avoid me. Because we can't manage to discuss things sincerely on a face-to-face basis. The first left on sick leave; he came back, and there were more problems. After six months, the second also left. Things were easier with the third, he is younger. With him, we have discussions; and I've toned it down as well. I talk to him and I call him; if he agrees, he says so, he explains his position; sometimes when I see that his reasoning is valid, I follow his suggestions. The others would pretend that they agreed with me when they didn't.

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<sup>95</sup> Interview, elected woman, Provincial Assembly, New Caledonia.





*S: Did they complain?*

 Yes, well, they said that with me, there was no mucking about; or they made jokes along the lines of 'The Iron Lady'.<sup>96</sup>

In many other cases, it is a matter of wariness on the part of male administrative staff toward elected women.

 They try and understand what they can understand and the administration tries to give them the right information so that they don't make any mistakes. We remind them of the fundamentals of accounting, but often they don't try and find out; what they want is for the funding to be accepted, full stop. Some have experience; they are beginning to realise.<sup>97</sup>

But there is also the feeling that they don't have the same togetherness in working with women. The women often have to handle a double or triple day's work and, in this way, the gender-balanced institution sees its daily practices undergo significant change.

 I have worked with women and with men. But my experience is that it was easier with a man, to share, we would have a drink together after work. With the women, I was always careful that elected women did not make mistakes on any particular issues and I had a lot of respect for them. In terms of the working relationship, I have always respected elected women as leaders, as people I should report to on a daily basis. The relationship is not the same; it's easier with a man, it was more like we were mates. With women, it's 8 to 5, and that's the way it is. With men, after six o'clock, we go on working, we have a drink together, we keep on talking; that's the difference.<sup>98</sup>

We were therefore able to identify a number of forms of resistance on the part of the male administrative staff. If such repeated sexist attitudes have continued to put some elected women off, on the whole they have, over the term of office, found ways of putting their viewpoint across and changing that situation.

### 7.3 Reconciling public life and private life

The statistical data (on the compilation of lists and the profile of elected women) show that their private life can become a considerable hindrance to women's political involvement, whereas this is almost never the case for men. Committed women (often after consultation and/or agreement from the spouse and family) tend to have fewer children and those children they have tend to be older. The vast majority of the elected women we interviewed stated that, without their husband's support, they would have found managing the domestic daily routine impossible. The few women with large families or young children were supported with help from their extended family (they tended to live with or close to their parents, brothers and sisters, etc), and not just the partner.

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<sup>96</sup> Interview, elected woman, Provincial Assembly, New Caledonia.

<sup>97</sup> Male senior public servant, Province, New Caledonia.

<sup>98</sup> Elected woman's personal staff member, New Caledonia.





 It's true that I was elected in 2004, and my husband has only really come to grips with that this year. Running the house, daily chores, arguments, it was disastrous. I am lucky enough to have a lot of sisters; so the first year, I relied on my sisters a lot. I had a lot of arguments with him. He didn't do any more straight away, even if it was a family project that I was getting involved in. With him, it was alright. With the family around us, it was a disaster: 'We wanted you to get married for you to be around!'; especially the uncles, not the women . . .<sup>99</sup>

Being elected to office therefore requires women to make a major organisational effort by disrupting the traditional family order.

 I got myself organised. Now my 12-year-old daughter goes to a crèche. We have no choice. It's the crèche, and her grandmother picks her up when I have meetings that finish late. During holidays, she used to be with me all the time. But now I have to find supervised activities for her. It's true that we feel very guilty about the children. But then I believe it's really a matter of organisation.<sup>100</sup>

Such efforts are not given much credibility by the women's male colleagues, who continue with practices that remain somewhat exclusive.

 When I came in, it was tough, there was a big difference, because in the teaching sphere everything is organised, planned; but here (at the Assembly) you do what you like . . . they come in at 10 or 11 o'clock in the morning and sometimes they work at night, or late in the evening, we tend to finish very late . . . these working hours are not very practical for a woman; that's why I wanted there to be a female president of the assembly to change the organisational side of things a bit.<sup>101</sup>

These female pioneers must also handle the feelings that go with such a reorganisation of their everyday lives. Many of them feel guilty about giving their children less time if they do have children and are often taken to task about it. It's only with great perseverance that they manage to persuade and reassure others.

 I am neglecting my family a bit. Becoming involved in NGOs, provincial office, municipal office, . . . I talk about it with my husband, with my young daughter who I have brought back home and who lives with us; she understands very clearly. It's definite that early on people made comments to me such as 'But you're never at home!' Before I was elected, we had a family meeting and I explained to them that, for five years, that's the way it would be: 'This is what you have to expect, I won't always be around, I won't always be available, you'll just have to cope!' And every time something went wrong, I came back home and I repeated it . . . It's not easy for my husband; he is supporting me now, but sometimes he had had enough. I tell him all the time: 'You agreed to it, now we have to go through with it.'<sup>102</sup>

Many experiences of separation or disputes within partner relationships also come with political commitment, sometimes even before the election.

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<sup>99</sup> Elected woman, Provincial Assembly, New Caledonia.

<sup>100</sup> Elected woman, Assembly, French Polynesia.

<sup>101</sup> Elected woman, Territorial Assembly, Wallis and Futuna.

<sup>102</sup> Elected woman, Provincial Assembly, New Caledonia.





 I went into politics because I was separating from my husband and I needed to have something to cling onto. First I did a degree, at the age of 40, and then I studied for my master's degree at the same time as I worked as a politician. My husband, with him you can't even study; he's a real macho, there's no point studying, being a primary school teacher is quite enough. That wasn't the way I saw it, I wanted to carry on. That's why I left; it's stupid as anything. My dream was to have a degree. I got it at the age of 40; and I was so happy . . . and then I began my political career.<sup>103</sup>

Most men take a poor view not only of domestic re-organisation (often synonymous with a fairer distribution of tasks) but also of their partner's new visibility.

 Another aspect that bothered my husband, was the fact that he now had a 'public' wife; it bothered him to see me on the television, in the newspapers. At home we squabbled over it, and about his wife being seen everywhere: 'You don't belong to me any more.' I told him: 'I never did belong to you.' This really offended me; 'I'm not your object, your little pebble; we're married, that's all; I don't belong to you body and soul.' What also should be said, I think, is that this parity business is something they find it hard to absorb.<sup>104</sup>

In becoming women with a public profile, even locally, elected women expose themselves to criticism and to rumours and see their reputation, sometimes indeed their honour, publicly discussed. The whole thing is made worse by the small size of the communities concerned (everyone knows everyone else) where partisan affiliations can also become a source of stigma.

As soon as the lists are compiled, the practical circumstances surrounding the enlistment tend, in the speeches of political leaders, to give legitimacy to the absence of women in the recruitment process.

 At the executive committee meetings, there are only men. And generally we take young men because they are the ones who travel extensively through the [customary] areas, who visit all the local committees, in the basic party sections, to see whether there are any problems; they speak if there are meetings. So we have preferred to choose young boys to do this; it's easier for them [than for the women] to find a bed for the night wherever they happen to be; it's for these practical reasons.<sup>105</sup>

Apart from the urban areas [everywhere on Wallis and Futuna] political commitment brings with it a lot of travelling: during the campaigns [visiting villages and townships] but also as part of the term of office [party congress in the capital, overseas travel]. Repeated absences and late-night meetings are therefore regularly a source of conflict, which can sometimes be impossible to resolve.

 In some ways, this does influence your life with your partner. I was married and trade unionism, it is true, took up a lot of my time; I got divorced, and then I lived for 14 years with my latest husband and then it was politics. However he had encouraged me to go into it, and his parents too, and also

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<sup>103</sup> Elected woman, Assembly, French Polynesia.

<sup>104</sup> Elected woman, Provincial Assembly, New Caledonia.

<sup>105</sup> Leader of a big political party, New Caledonia.





my mother. But, it's true, that when you're in politics you come home late from meetings. We split up.

Sometimes I say to myself that it might be my fault. It's true that we feel guilty about the children. That's a question you always ask yourself.<sup>106</sup>

On 4 July 2007, the local daily newspaper published an article pointing out that the arrival of women on the public political stage had not always gone smoothly.



He can't stand the idea of his wife being in politics:

Yesterday morning, the police took in yet another violent husband. The day before, this 50-year-old man had sent his wife to the hospital emergency unit after inflicting injuries requiring an eight-day absence from work. While in custody, the man confessed to his actions. He explained that he acted out of jealousy and said that he couldn't stand the idea that his wife could have political activities in addition to her professional life. He was referred to the courts and this is where his future is due to be decided next Friday under an immediate appearance procedure. *Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes*, 4 July 2007.

Lastly, public comment is not the same for female elected representatives as for elected men. Comments are made about a woman's physique and beauty, and women are often suspected of having a special relationship with the political leaders.



Often they just say look pretty and shut up. They look at you, they say that you're quite attractive, they say: 'Oh yes she will be elected because she is pretty.' I think that's just awful. They sometimes say that about me, because you're not bad, because we like you, that's all wrong, it's disgusting. That really hurt me a lot.<sup>107</sup>

The tensions and adjustments referred to in this section are part of a general change in social gender relationships in the three societies where the research was conducted. In all areas of social life, women are less and less willing to submit to the traditional hierarchy and are gradually renegotiating their place: the problem for some political staff of following the orders of a woman, for women to give orders to a man and for husbands to agree to do more work at home, are all just different aspects of the same process: an evolution in social relationships between the sexes influenced by women's entry into politics. And whatever the ethnic group or community concerned, this change in perceptions and discourse (less so in terms of practices for the moment) is tending to become uniform (see recent work by C. Salomon). For example, a number of indigenous women, with prompting from the Vice-President of the Government of New Caledonia, have opened up a debate on the place of women in the customary institutions. Dialogue, although difficult, has therefore commenced. The chiefly houses of Wallis and the Kings of Futuna, who were approached as part of this survey, referred to the enthronement of Queens on Wallis in the past and their assent to the gradual integration of women into the customary institutions.

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<sup>106</sup> Elected woman, Assembly, French Polynesia.

<sup>107</sup> Elected woman, Assembly, French Polynesia.





## 8. POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS WITH PARITY

### 8.1 Women who deservedly achieve recognition

With the advent of the law, a certain number of women have acquired legitimacy and at last secured elective office. Their outstanding qualities have enabled them to assert themselves within the institutions. In some cases, these newcomers had notable careers as activists, which gave them the historical legitimacy and at the same time the appropriate abilities for this singular experience. In New Caledonia, this is true especially for a number of women whose participation in the institutions of New Caledonia is the extension of a commitment they began with the struggle for Independence.



I am in the economic and fiscal regulation committee and the general regulation committee in Congress, and the tender committee for New Caledonia and I am also an alternate member in the advisory committee on lending to the President of the Islands Province. I look after things like the FEDR (rural electrification fund) management committee and the FIP (commune infrastructure and operating fund) management committee; I took all the financial and economic stuff. Sometimes I asserted myself and was able to because it's true that I have my own past behind me, and little by little in my political career I have taken or been given responsibilities when the party entered the institutions . . . I was part of the FLNKS delegation which went to sign the Matignon Accords at the request of Jean-Marie Tjibaou ; it was much more symbolic, because I had lost my brother. At that time I sat on the party executive committee.<sup>108</sup>



It is [name of an elected woman] after all, she has a past to bear, and it is a heavy burden. So for her, to move into politics, well it was just the natural thing, the natural thing! She carries the family torch high; she is the only one today who is [elected woman's family name] in politics. The rest are our leading activists; but out in front of them is that little woman [name of woman ].<sup>109</sup>

Other women, often younger, assert themselves in their work as elected representatives through skills acquired during their university education.



I went to a particular school; the first year, I studied in Paris, the second year in Belgium, the third year in England. I passed my qualification with a distinction, which enabled me to sit for another examination because I wanted to go on – an MBA<sup>110</sup> in the United States in 93–94. I went to France. I said to myself that there were men of freedom who had fought for children like me to be able to achieve their dreams.

<sup>108</sup> Elected woman, Congress, New Caledonia.

<sup>109</sup> Personal staff member of elected men/women, New Caledonia.

<sup>110</sup> MBA: Master of Business Administration.





Knowledge is a form of freedom, because with knowledge you can achieve power, because today I am where I am. I am here because somebody came and looked for me. Why? For this educational capital.<sup>111</sup>

Some women had also occupied supervisory positions before being elected, either in the private sector or in local government, and in this way had experience which gave them some authority in some areas.

These women's careers therefore enabled them to do their work comfortably and to be recognised, especially by their male counterparts, for the quality of their work, including that done in traditionally male fields such as finance or the economy.



It is true that women are on the lists but, once elected, they tend to be restricted to female areas. Although these are very important areas, the men are not in a hurry to get on the health or social or cultural committees, and yet culture in this country . . . so that's where they put the women. Those things are basic. Personally, when I was working in the administration, I always took an interest in finance and the economy; when I was elected in [X] commune, I was elected to the finance committee, and also the economic development committee. In the Congress, when choices had to be made, well... [elected woman's first name], social? No, that's not my thing! And first of all, it's not my thing because I don't know anything about it, it's something too important to me, and also, in reaction to that. Why are you putting me here? Because I am a woman?

Although most of them are novices, therefore, these newcomers showed that they were able to take their place fully within the institutions.



Parity has helped women to show what they can do. With the support of the men, but each in her own way, they have been able to achieve some emancipation in comparison with what they wanted to make us into.<sup>112</sup>

And lastly, the sceptics thought that it was too early for parity in the Pacific, but eventually they had to recognise that women deserved their places in the assemblies.



For me, at the time, I said it was too early, but in the end it worked out quite well. At the beginning, I was not reluctant but I was wondering how it would work out and politics had previously been a male area only. But it didn't work out too badly, in 2004 we saw women coming in who had been to university and that was an improvement. That is a bonus.<sup>113</sup>

## 8.2 Mutual support practices

The difficulties encountered by some newly elected female representatives in office (refer to profile of elected women) have led to the emergence of forms of solidarity between women and these often go beyond

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<sup>111</sup> Elected woman, Province, New Caledonia.

<sup>112</sup> Interview, elected woman in the APF, French Polynesia.

<sup>113</sup> Interview, former senior member of a big pro-Independence party, New Caledonia.





party boundaries. This solidarity may take an organised form, as it has for some elected women in French Polynesia:



I organised training sessions for the women who worked with me: how to hold meetings, have secretaries, prepare minutes, etc.

I prepared documents, I even gave them boxes to tick, because many of them didn't know how to write, how to prepare lists of participants, with a model to go by.

This means that even a woman who hasn't got a lot of formal education can manage. I organised role-playing games, I put a woman in my place and I said: 'Go ahead! You're in charge of the meeting!' And you know we sometimes laughed uncontrollably because we really are from every social background and intellectually we didn't all have . . . I have a woman in one commune, she is a fisher; she catches fish and sells her catch on the road side. Can you imagine! I made her the President, she only speaks Tahitian, and I said to her: 'You know, you are as important as me because if you weren't here, I would not exist'; that is a kind of training too. Those women, they are extraordinary, they are not afraid of anyone, they can give you a real telling-off as well as anyone else. And I say to myself, that's because there must be respect in politics, we are from all sorts of backgrounds and we need everyone.<sup>114</sup>

But it is also a kind of mutual assistance system in difficult situations, especially when you have to face up to hostility from some men:



If I see the men talking and it goes too far, I have to get involved myself; you see, we help each other out. We support one another. Yes, for example recently there was an exchange with an elected man about a balance sheet. One of the elected women said to an elected man: 'We may just have been elected but how long have you been in?' He did not answer, he was cross. And what is more another woman repeated it: 'We have just arrived, but you been around [for a long time] and only now are you realising that there are problems.' It was over scholarships. There is solidarity between elected women. And the president often himself says: 'They support one another, so gentlemen . . .'

And then afterwards, some apologise. There is always a consensus. People take back what they said: 'Maybe I went a bit too far, but what I wanted to say was . . .' But we never insult each other as they do in other provinces, no, we are Kanaks. We have too much respect for one another.<sup>115</sup>

These forms of solidarity often come from more experienced women. For example they encourage newly elected women to speak up. Committee chairs may personally invite other elected women to give their opinions on the topics addressed. And yet others share their knowledge and foster information exchange between women, such as the female municipal councillor who helped her opposition colleague to analyse the commune's budget.

This solidarity effect extends beyond the field of institutional political practices by contributing to a general change in social gender relationships. These new elected women, whatever their background, act as models for other women.

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<sup>114</sup> Interview, member of the leadership of a big party, French Polynesia.

<sup>115</sup> Elected woman, Province, New Caledonia.





Women have woken up in politics here. More and more, you will see a lot of women at meetings, and they speak up, they don't just sit there, they really participate. I think that the position of X has meant that people have seen that women were just also capable of being in politics. She was one of the first.<sup>116</sup>

Myself, I was at the SPC, an elected woman called me . . . she said to me: 'I want to get you started'; she was my godmother, so to speak, she was the President of the Association. She said to me: 'Come with me.' That's how I got started . . .

When I came back from France, I had always been interested in that, but in fact it was through her, because I liked her values, because she was an honest and straightforward woman . . . and she loved putting the young women forward, S was spotted by B and H is also one of B's girls; that's what we were referred to as at the time, B's girls.<sup>117</sup>

I realised that women would only manage to make things possible when they had successful women to identify with. And that meant that successful women had to be seen in every area, so that an awareness of what was possible could filter down to street level. Otherwise these women would remain exceptional, inaccessible models, etc. Parity for me therefore had the basic virtue of bringing in 50% female representation in one stroke and, necessarily, in New Caledonia more than elsewhere, women who people knew; everything then became possible! The whole purpose was that at the highest levels of power we should be in these positions and then it all just cascades down over society as a whole.<sup>118</sup>

### 8.3 A renewal of political practices

The large-scale entrance of women into the assemblies led to the transformation of a number of political practices. Women often embody change and distinguish themselves by a stated wish to fight against inertia and ineffectiveness. They are very careful about the usefulness and feasibility of projects and compliance with timetables.



For me, women play a leading role in the modernisation of society, for example, in the islands, women have got deeply involved in the economy, and there are a lot of female business managers.

As they are the ones who organise the home, they achieve a higher level, they have stricter operating rules and the companies are successful whereas with us men, it is . . . The women offer that little bit more. What I can see in terms of provincial organisation since 2004, when they came in, is that there is much more critical comment.

Among the women, there are two or three who were political staffers who are now elected representatives; these were people who were in the institution and who have seen how things started and then stagnated and now they are speaking up strongly because they want to give some impetus to things. So they complain loudly. That's how the Province works, on a kind of lack of political will to

<sup>116</sup> Interview, elected woman in the APF.

<sup>117</sup> Interview, municipal councillor in a big town, French Polynesia.

<sup>118</sup> Interview, elected woman, Congress NC.





do things, with delays on some issues which make no progress in the provinces, and they say that we do not pay enough attention to some problems. It is to alert people, and that makes it possible to do health promotion. When you look at the health budget for the province, it's more the women who are concerned about it. Today's elected women. Nowadays we men are more careful too.

Since the women came in, we have been more careful about the way we speak, the issues we address, and often the women are people who make sure that we go forward and that we make true progress. For example, when we say in the 'planning contract' that we are going to do a particular thing, the women ask us to make sure that things will really happen.<sup>119</sup>

They provide a new impetus.

There is a difference between men and women in the way they approach things. Let me take an example: there is a woman who is down there in the market, she lives there, so she is a squatter, she actually lives at the market, she is an activist for the [opposition party], she lives in the market because she says that it is [her party], the Mayor at the time, who funded the market, so therefore it belongs to them. She doesn't want to go, so we try very diplomatically to talk to her about it so that she will leave, and we offer her various things, whereas the woman who was in charge of it is (a deputy) and she wanted to send in the gendarmes to throw her out! The women are more reactive, they want an answer or a solution straight away, whereas the men like us tend to try and smooth things over; well anyway that's what I have seen here in the commune . . . there are times when that way of doing things is positive. It helps disentangle situations, especially at meetings, when we are always putting things off; when they speak up in that way, they break the logjam.

Some of them are also totally opposed to patronage and nepotism as sometimes practised by their colleagues.



You acquire authority through your experience and you are then respected in what you do. (...) when we can into (power), we managed to tear apart the system that was there, which governed the country in terms of the political and economic balance of power because, while they have the economy in their hands, they also dominate politics. Huh! They have the economy, they have tourism, they have the mines, etc. My objective was that and so we won and they appointed me Vice-President and I'm in charge of tourism. . . . I am an administrator of all the key instruments; it was very clear for me, I was taking a job, I am not interested in being there just to say: 'I am the Vice-President, I couldn't care less about that! What I want is access to these positions.

I've realised, it's not power for the sake of power, its power for action, for the values which have always motivated me . . . [ proposes a collaborative project to the presidents of the Northern and Islands provinces ] . . . a joint tourism development plan approved by the three provinces for the next 10 year period, that had never been done before! . . . that is one of the fundamental values of the new balance.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>119</sup> Interview, man, member of an elected man's personal staff, Provincial Assembly, New Caledonia.

<sup>120</sup> Interview, elected woman, Congress, New Caledonia.





The advent of women therefore came with a renewal in political practices, disrupting some of the men's habits. Because they have different backgrounds to their male counterparts, women are more willing to base their practices on practical considerations and proper management of public assets, for example the New Caledonian women elected representatives who protested against the use of municipal vehicles for private purposes by male elected members.

Furthermore, the refocusing of discussion or appeals for better practices often come from female newcomers. Let us refer to just a few examples of exchanges during debate at the Congress of New Caledonia:

An elected a woman to another elected woman who had just referred to 'little village Kanaks' and mispronounced the name of a Kanak counsellor:



You're not in a very good position to call us a little village Kanaks; we have just travelled 300 km, and we've got better things to do. You need to be polite but you need to be respectful as well, so let's try and make some progress!

As an elected female member says:



Here there are those who are accustomed to the procedures and the newcomers. It would be a good thing for us, the newly elected members, to learn how things are done, but regarding the official procedures, the way things are done here should be a learning process for everyone.<sup>121</sup>

As seen above, women contribute quite readily to the avoidance of traditional confrontation processes.

In New Caledonia for example, the female President<sup>122</sup> and Vice-President of the Government, who come from opposing parties, have found ways to collaborate on a number of issues. On Wallis and Futuna, the two newly elected women plan to work together on the priority issues regardless of crosscutting antagonism from the groups to which they are affiliated. In French Polynesia also, female party leaders advocate the end of the confrontation between the pro-autonomy block and the pro-Independence block.



It's not just the women. French Polynesian society aspires to moderation. There is such confrontation between the two blocs that they have thrust French Polynesia into a divisive society in a totally sterile debate.

Today, the question is not whether we are going to consult the population about self-determination, it is: what are the keys for consistent and harmonious development in French Polynesia? And as we can see, Mrs X also appears to be a sensible and moderate person. But it is not only women, there are also men. It is a skilful mixture of the two, you can't have one without the other. You can calm

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<sup>121</sup> Extracts from the records of sessions of Congress during the current term (2007).

<sup>122</sup> 2007.





things down a bit, each use a bit more of the idea of public interest in a setting where you get the feeling that it is more the struggle for power than anything else that counts.<sup>123</sup>

## 8.4 Women's contribution to policy-making

### 8.4.1 A more cross-cutting approach to public policy

The arrival of women improved and changed the way assemblies addressed issues relating to health, social services, culture and education. Most of the women, who had previously worked in the NGO or public service areas, had a strong commitment, which often led to their move into politics.

Accurately measuring the changes resulting from their participation is difficult, but their many abilities in these areas have had an undeniably positive effect on the development of public policy. The links that they maintain with the NGO sphere in the rural and urban areas make them both particularly sensitive to community needs and also creators of change in the territories, through their participation in preventive work and cultural events.

Locally, a significant shift in the approach during discussions in the assemblies on these matters, as demanded by these female newcomers, has been recorded, as they suggest new approaches.



On the other hand, when the women request the floor, it is always to talk about children, people in hardship, health, we clearly perceive their sensitivities. We were sensitive to these matters ourselves but we are more interested in building roads, building airfields and buying boats. There are distinct preferences . . . Maybe it's because culture and health are the areas women traditionally run; there are more actions such as help for the elderly, scholarships for education. Culture [an elected woman] has written a charter to democratise access to culture. In terms of economic development, these are cross-cutting themes; they refine the discussion so that projects take into account every aspect and that there is no disruption in the village or no negative impact on health. Men often don't have the time to think about all those things; in our society, these are women's issues. Before, there was very little done on these matters, they were neglected.<sup>124</sup>

On vocational training, I worked with the three provinces on the trades traditionally seen as male areas such as tiling . . . And we positioned some young girls from our villages to get some thinking going, to bring about some changes in the community. And the results were good; with mining trades training, of the 42 students, there were 27 women and they all came out with their qualifications, including nine with a distinction in 2006. We are very happy. All the boys were boys and the women were mothers, they were just two young single girls.<sup>125</sup>

What we are seeing here is a paradigm shift, from a modernist approach to public policy (such as infrastructure) toward a more holistic approach, focusing on sustainable development and including culture, education and health.

<sup>123</sup> Interview, elected woman in the APF.

<sup>124</sup> Interview, senior public servant, man, New Caledonia.

<sup>125</sup> Interview, elected woman, Province, New Caledonia.





## 8.4.2 Public policy-making favourable to the promotion of women's status

### 8.4.2.1 Higher visibility and more attention for violence against women

In French Polynesia, the first step in raising the visibility of violence against women was the preparation of a social anthropology thesis on this topic by Patrick Cerf, a gynaecologist and expert physician to the courts. In 2002, the French Polynesian Ministry of Health commissioned a quantitative survey on this form of violence, co-supervised by Patrick Cerf and members of ENVEFF128, Maryse Jaspard, responsible for scientific supervision of the quantitative survey, Elizabeth Brown and Claudine Pirus).<sup>126</sup> The results reveal an alarming reality: 42% of women are victims of physical violence during adult life, 14% of women are victims of sexual violence at least once in their life and 17% of women had been victims of domestic violence over the 12 months before the survey period.

Lastly, 25% of women were suffering or had suffered various forms of violence (psychological, physical, sexual) during their adult life. Only 12% of these women had obtained a medical certificate and 5% reported the matter to the police. These facts are broadly reported by the media and NGOs. One woman elected to the APF has given a public account of the domestic violence she suffered.

Against this background, prevention and information campaigns were launched, as initiated both by institutions and NGOs. The *Vahine Orama Association*, established in November 2003, organised a day on the theme of 'Stop Violence!!!' (*Violence, ça suffit*) at Papeete Town Hall on 4 March 2006, bringing together the various partners involved in the struggle against violence, to urge women who suffer domestic violence to seek information and advice from the gendarmes, the police, the courts, lawyers, hostels, NGOs and churches. On 3 May 2006, the Council of Ministers determined that an initial medical certificate for any person suffering physical violence should be issued free of charge at the public hospital. This certificate used to cost between 4000 and 7000 francs and was not refundable. On 6 May 2006, the gang rape and murder at Pamatai of an 18-year-old girl, found dead and naked near the expressway bridge, after being raped by at least 18 individuals including several underage ones, again placed violence against women in the spotlight.

In New Caledonia, a major survey on violence against women was conducted between 2002 and 2003 by an anthropologist (Christine Salomon) and a sociologist (Christine Hamelin), with the support of the Government and the Provinces.<sup>127</sup> At the present time (and since 2004), extensive briefings are being organised on this report.

According to the findings of this survey, the rates of violence recorded in New Caledonia are comparable (slightly higher) with those of French Polynesia. In the year preceding the survey, for example, 22% of women had suffered repeated insults, 22% physical brutality and 9% serious sexual assault. All the communities are concerned; Kanak women were shown to be in the most unfavourable situation, and European New Caledonians were shown to be 3 to 5 times more exposed to violence than Frenchwomen.

In addition, the rates of early sexual violence (before the age of 15) endured by New Caledonian women are particularly high (12%) both in the greater Nouméa area and in the rural mainland and the islands, and this affects both European and Pacific Island women. As a result of this survey, at the government's request, the

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<sup>126</sup> Final report on the Quantitative survey on violence against women in French Polynesia, Idup, April 2003

<sup>127</sup> Study on "Health, living conditions and security for women in New Caledonia" conducted by a multidisciplinary team from INSERM





INSERM research team is preparing a guide for the identification and management of victims of violence, intended for the country's health professionals.

In this way, political activism is strengthening the fight commenced in the 1990s by women's groups (see the first part of this document).

In Wallis and Futuna, the 'SOS violences sexuelles' association was set up in 1995, after a visit by a delegation from New Caledonia, one of whose members was Marie-Claude Tjibaou. After a long period of operational instability, the association gained a new lease of life in 2005. The association offers social and legal support to victims and provides for the education of children in the hospitals concerned, so that they are not marginalised. It also plays a preventive role, by organising information meetings in the *fale fonu* of the villages and making regular visits to junior and senior secondary schools. The association recently added a free telephone hotline to the service.

#### *8.4.2.2 Action to promote gender social and professional quality*

At the same time, in New Caledonia, various measures promoted by elected women are fostering social development by improving women's status at the territorial level. Examples are the extension of family allowances, or the 'second-chance' scholarship to enable women of all ages to resume their education. Locally, elected women have taken initiatives making it possible to include women fully in economic development projects.

For example, one female provincial assembly member started a training programme for young women in trades traditionally regarded as male sectors, which is producing good results. More broadly, the creation of the observatory on women's status should in the coming years make it possible to monitor the situation and help to oversee the admission of women into public policy-making.

Further, on Wallis and Futuna, the Territorial Council of Women is working with the women's affairs office on a development project to help improve the financial circumstances of women with no training. As the prospects for economic development in the territory are very restricted, the women who have already formed groups (see the parts of this document dealing with the context of the application of the parity law) find in this project both resources to gain training in traditional craft techniques and also a number of tools which can increase their productivity (mechanical bark cloth laminating machine). The marketing and exhibiting of such craft products outside the territory offer these women more opportunities to travel.







## 9. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the time-scale and changing nature of the events described in this report should be emphasised. The first women who entered politics to stand for election after the application of the parity law have now been actors on the political stage for the past six years. They have acquired experience and have often managed to overcome the initial difficulties. The women we interviewed stress this change; although most of them referred to the difficulty they initially had with public speaking, many added that this is no longer an issue. Experience in political activities is in fact a major determining factor in their success. In general, women may have less political seniority than men, because this world had remained virtually inaccessible to them until 2001, but a number are beginning to compete on an equal footing with their male counterparts. This trend will accelerate in future years and more and more women will possess the political seniority that will enable them to be familiar with the rules of the political game and make a success of their participation.

The presence of these female politicians, as revealed by the parity arrangements in the assemblies, has also had an impact on women who are not politically active. Now that the political world has ceased to be an entirely male domain, it is easy to imagine that there will be more and more women seeing themselves as having a political vocation in future. The list-compilers are in fact now reporting that it is not as difficult as it was to find female candidates for elections as each election comes along. Whereas in 2001 they had been forced to identify and then try and persuade women to join them, some are now more often approached by women who wish to be involved, for example in the 2008 municipal elections, as candidates. Indeed sometimes there are too many to fill the number of places on the list. Here again, it is easy to imagine that, over time, trying to enter politics will appear just as natural to young women as it does to young men.

This report therefore offers an assessment of the application of the law, six years after its introduction, which is far from being frozen and final. Women's place in politics continues to develop in terms of daily practices, in a less visible but just as important way. These conclusions will therefore need to be reviewed and updated in the years to come.







## ANNEXES

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*Annex 1. Methodology Applied in the survey*

*Annex 2. Interview Guide*

*Annex 3. Questionnaire for Elected Men and Women in New Caledonia*

*Annex 4. Acronyms and Abbreviations*

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## ■ Annex 1 – Methodology applied in the survey

### Methodology applied in the survey

The survey conducted as part of this mission to assess the application of the parity law is basically a qualitative survey using semi-directed interviews. A total of 104 interviews were conducted and recorded.

In French Polynesia, 18 interviews were conducted with women only, including 6 female members of the APF, 3 members of party leaderships, 2 female municipal council members and 4 members of women's interests defence groups.

■ In New Caledonia, 53 interviews were conducted, 33 with women and 20 with men. Interviewees included 2 members of the government, 15 male and female Provincial Assembly and/or Congress members,<sup>128</sup> 16 male and female municipal councillors, 4 members of political party leaderships, 6 senior public servants or members of elected representatives' personal staff, 3 traditional leaders, 6 women's NGO leaders and 2 church people (pastor and deacon).

■ In Wallis and Futuna, 34 interviews were conducted, 11 with women and 23 with men. Interviewees included 8 male and female assembly members, 10 former male and female elected representatives and or candidates, 9 senior public servants or members of elected representatives' personal staff, 3 traditional leaders and 4 women's NGO leaders. Lastly, we also met anthropology and social science researchers specialising in these territories.

The interviewers contacted elected men and women in the institutions where parity was applied in New Caledonia, in French Polynesia and in Wallis and Futuna. When requesting these interviews, we observed that the women felt more concerned about research on the parity law than the men and were therefore more inclined to agree to an interview. Although no elected men turned down such an interview when directly requested, we did encounter some forms of evasion: some initial contacts did not bear fruit, some appointments were cancelled and some elected men talked to us out of courtesy, while saying they had no comment to make on the topic and cut the interview short in this way. Similarly, when we contacted municipal administration secretaries to ask for appointments with elected men and women, some called us back to offer appointments with women only. This difference in interest between male and female elected representatives on the subject of the place of women in politics explains why most of our interviews were with women.

The interview guide, included in Annex 2, comprises four main sets of questions concerning the activities of elected men and women before holding office, the exercise of that office, their own political future as they see it and lastly their wishes in terms of action liable to favour their political activities.

The guide has been adapted on the basis of the conduct of the interview and the time available; we did however endeavour to obtain responses from the elected men and women on each of the four sets of questions, in as detailed a manner as possible. The interviews were recorded, with the agreement of the person interviewed, and the anonymity of the exchange guaranteed.

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<sup>128</sup> Of these 8 elected men/women from provincial assemblies, 2 are also municipal councillors, but we have included them as provincial assembly members only.





As priority in the interviews was given to elected women, we sought to compile data to enable us to compare their political trajectories with those of elected men. A questionnaire, reproduced below, was prepared for completion by elected members of the Congress, provincial assemblies and communes of New Caledonia. We had few responses however – around fifty, and again many more women responded, making statistical comparison impossible. To gain a more representative sample, we would have needed to obtain permission to hand out the questionnaire during a session of one of the assemblies, and to be present to explain the purpose of the survey and distribute then collect the questionnaires from the elected men and women, which we were unable to do. The questionnaire prepared as part of this study could however be useful in conducting this kind of exercise in the future.

To obtain sociological data to enable a comparison of the populations of elected men and women, we consulted the websites of the Congress of New Caledonia and of the Assembly of French Polynesia. These sites offer detailed information on the elected representatives, and thus comparable information on men and women. The information available was checked and verified from other sources we had to hand (interviews, questionnaires returned, the press) when that seemed necessary. We therefore have comprehensive data for the whole population of male and female elected representatives covered by our research; they were processed statistically using SPAD data mining and data analysis software.

Session written records, available on these websites, were also processed statistically, to measure the speaking times of elected men and women. In order to consider different kinds of session, for each year we selected the records of the first sitting of the budgetary session and the third sitting of the ordinary administrative session. For each speaking request, we coded the date and type of session, the gender of the speaker and the nature of the remarks (speech, rapporteur's work on an agenda item, brief question, comments in disagreement, long intervention such as a vote explanation). In total, 1184 interventions were coded in this way, giving us a sufficiently extensive and representative sample.





## ■ Annex 2 – Interview Guide

### Interview Guide

#### Before election

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##### ■ *Social and family background*

- Where do you come from?
- Do you live, or have you lived, anywhere else?
- Do you belong to a well-known or 'traditional leadership' family?
- What is your parents' profession?

##### ■ *Educational record*

- What is your educational background?
- What is your highest qualification?
- Where were you educated?
- As an adult, have you resumed studying or received professional training?

##### ■ *Professional background*

- Do you have a professional activity?
- If not, what is your income/livelihood?
- If so, what is it?
- How have you developed professionally?
- Are you an active trade unionist?
- If so, have you received any training as part of your union work?

##### ■ *Political trajectory*

- Are you a member of any associations?
- If so, which ones? (pupil/parent associations? local activities? women's associations?)
- Have you taken part in political events ('Troubles' in New Caledonia, etc)?
- Do you have responsibilities in these associations or movements?
- Who were the leaders?
- Was it a mixed gender environment? Was there any discrimination against women?
- Was the issue of the place of women/parity raised in these movements?
- Are you a member of a political party (same questions as with the associations)?
- Are other members of your family/close friends involved in politics? (relatives, partner, teacher, etc.)

##### ■ *Electoral trajectory*

- How did you come to be on a list for the elections?
- Did someone approach you?
- Who?
- Why did you agree?
- Did you decide alone or with other people (husband)?
- How did you participate in your first electoral campaign?





- Did you speak at meetings?
- Did you do door-to-door campaigning?

## Exercise of office

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### ■ *Taking office*

- What happened when you first entered office?
- Were your activities what you expected (any special difficulties: in understanding issues, budgets, council resolutions)?
- Did you have people around you to give you advice (territorial public servants, former elected members, etc.)?
- Are you happy with the way things have gone so far?
- Is there anything you want to change in the way the municipal administration operates?
- Did you manage to make any changes?
- Have you received any training for elected representatives?

### ■ *Local executive*

- How was the composition of the executive negotiated?
- Did you choose your position?
- Who are the other elected members?
- What kind of relationship do you have with the other elected members?
- With the other elected women, with other newly elected male members?
- With former elected representatives?
- What kind of relationship do you have with territorial public servants?
- Are you a member of any committees?

### ■ *Time commitment*

- How much time do your elective duties take up?
- Does this lead to difficulties in your family?
- In your profession?
- What is your timetable for a typical week? This week, for example?
- Meetings: Describe what happens at meetings of the Municipal Council/ the Assembly/ the Congress?
- Do you take the floor on a regular basis?
- Was it difficult for you to speak early in your term?
- What is the relationship between the majority and the opposition?
- Who speaks the most? The Mayor/President of the Assembly?
- For elected women from the majority: do you decide in advance who will speak on each issue?

### ■ *Development*

- What kind of issue are you interested in?
- What action do you intend to take?
- What are the commune's development projects?
- Are you taking part in them?
- Do you intend to?
- Why?
- Is there any municipal action specifically intended for women? What is it? Who is involved?





■ ***Relationship with voters***

- Do you meet voters?
- What do they ask for?
- Has becoming an elected representative changed your reputation / made you better known?

**For future**

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- In the future, would you consider standing for the same office? For other offices?
- What are your political values, the action that you would want to defend for the future?
- Are you supporting any particular candidate in the presidential election? Or in any other national polls?

**For the purpose of practical recommendations**

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- What are your wishes in terms of improving the way you perform in office (training, discussion groups, etc.)?
- What specific difficulties do you come across?







■ Annex 3 – Questionnaire for elected men and women in New Caledonia

**Questionnaire for elected men and women in New Caledonia**

The survey in which you are invited to participate is part of an SPC research project on the application of the parity law in the French-speaking Pacific territories.

The purpose of the questionnaire is to improve our understanding of the men and women elected in the communes and to the provincial assemblies. The success of this project depends on you. The more carefully you answer the questions, the more accurate the image of New Caledonia's elected representatives in 2007 will be.

The data will be processed anonymously.

Thank you for your participation!

**1) What is your age?** (please tick the appropriate box)

<input type="checkbox"/>	-30 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	40–50 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	50–60 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	+ 60 years
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**2) What is your gender?**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Man	<input type="checkbox"/>	Woman
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**3) What is your level of education?**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Lower secondary	<input type="checkbox"/>	Upper secondary	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bac.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bac +: ... (State how many years of education after the Bac.)
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**4) What is your profession?**

.....

**5) What is your current marital situation?**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Single	<input type="checkbox"/>	Living with partner	<input type="checkbox"/>	Separated
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If you live with a partner, what is your partner's profession?

.....

**6) Do you have any children?**





	None		1 or 2		3 or 4		More than 4
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**7) What political office(s) do you currently hold?**

.....

**8) Is this the first time you have been elected?**

	No		Yes
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If not, what office(s) have you previously held?

.....

**9) In what year were you elected for the first time? .....**

**10) In what year did you first stand for election? .....**

**11) Do you believe that you are experiencing any particular difficulties in your current office?**

	No		Yes
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If so, please specify (taking the floor, technical or legal aspects, reconciling elective obligations with professional or family ones, etc.):

.....  
 .....

**12) Are you a member of a political party?**

	No		Yes
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If so, in what year did you first join the party? .....

If so, do you have responsibilities within the party?

	No		Yes. Please describe them: .....
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**13) Is your partner involved in politics?**

	No		Yes
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If so, in what capacity: .....

**14) Are you a member of one or more association(s)?**

	No		Yes
--	----	--	-----

If so, do you have responsibilities within these associations?

	No		Yes Please describe them: .....
--	----	--	---------------------------------------

**15) Do you practise a religion?**

	No		Yes
--	----	--	-----

If so, which one?.....

If so, do you have responsibilities within your church?

	No		Yes Please describe them: .....
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**16) Which community do you belong to?**

.....

**17) Do you have any traditional leadership responsibilities?**

	No		Yes Please describe them: .....
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Please return the completed questionnaire to us in the attached envelope by 27 April 2007.







#### ■ Annex 4 – Acronyms and abbreviations

### Acronyms and abbreviations

**APF**, Assembly of French Polynesia

**CEDAW**, *Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women*. The Convention was adopted on 18 December 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly and came into force as an international treaty on 3 September 1981.

**CTIDF**, 'Territorial Information Centre for Women's and Family Rights' (French Polynesia)

**FLNKS**, Front de libération nationale kanak socialiste, 'Socialist Kanak National Liberation Front'



