

**Women's wellbeing in Local Government Councils of Sri Lanka: Political engagement and new gains under quota-mandated female representation**

S. Chandran

*Department of Political Science & Public Policy, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka*

Local government is an important avenue for obtaining practical experience in participating in politics, before moving on to the national arena. Advocates of quota-mandated representation argue that it opens up avenues for women to articulate their interests, enter arenas of political decision-making, and advance women's interests. However, there are negative opinions about the contribution and effectiveness of women in Local Government Councils: women's representation in local government does not guarantee that they will have any substantial influence over policy decisions, or that they will articulate women's interests, and it requires conscious and deliberate action on the part of the women to make a difference. However, the present research revealed a contrasting finding. Women's individual and collective actions showed that they are considerably comfortable and well acquainted with politics. This is because the 25% quota made substantial progress towards reserving political space for women and now women have started delivering their services effectively to society. The prime objective of this study is to examine women's wellbeing in their professional as well as personal lives, across their communities, due to their involvement in politics at local level. To collect qualitative data, in-depth interviews were conducted in the Vavuniya district. This research is confined to two local authorities in the Vavuniya district, namely Vavuniya South (Tamil) Pradeshiya Sabha and Vengala chcheddikulam Pradeshiya Sabha.

**Keywords:** *local government, political representation, quota system, wellbeing*