

While there are no legal restrictions on the role of women in politics, they remain underrepresented in government. Only forty women are elected to the 500-member DPR. Surveys have shown that while more than one-third of civil servants are women, less than 6 percent are in positions of authority. However, on 23 July 2001, the National Assembly of this overwhelmingly Muslim nation voted into office its first female president, Megawati Sukarnoputri. This was after the National Assembly expelled her predecessor Abdurrahman Wahid due to corruption charges.

Many women activists conceded that the quality of female politicians has improved in the past couple of years. In the parliament, the female members announced in mid-October 1999 the formation of a non-partisan women's caucus.

The Guidelines of State Policy explicitly state that women have the same rights, obligations, and opportunities as men. However, guidelines adopted in the past 20 years also state that women's participation in the development process must not conflict with their role in improving family welfare and the education of the younger generation. Marriage law designates that the man as the head of the family.

Although some women have a high degree of economic and social freedom and occupy important positions in both the public and private sectors, most women do not have such status and they constitute a disproportionately high percentage of the lower end of the socioeconomic and political scale.

Female workers in manufacturing generally receive lower wages than men. Many female factory workers are hired as day laborers instead of as full-time permanent employees, and companies are not required to provide benefits, such as maternity leave, to day laborers. Women's rights activists report that there is a growing trend in manufacturing to hire women to do work in their homes for less than the minimum wage.

Unemployment rates for women are approximately 50 percent higher than those for men. Women often are not given the extra benefits and salary that men are given when they are the heads of households, and in many cases do not receive employment benefits for their family members, such as medical insurance and income tax deductions. Income disparity between men and women diminishes significantly with higher educational achievement. Some women's activists believe that a growing number of professional women are advancing in a variety of fields, especially in the legal profession. However, no statistics are available to support this assertion. According to a study conducted during the year, only 20 percent of top managers and affluent consumers in Jakarta are female.

Law Number 21/1999 requires that the Government to formulate national policies to forbid and eliminate discrimination (including by gender) in the workplace. However, there were no implementing regulations in effect and discrimination continued in practice.

Despite laws that provide women with a 3-month maternity leave, the Government acknowledged that pregnant women often are dismissed or replaced while on leave from their jobs. Some companies require women to sign statements that they do not intend to become pregnant. Labor laws mandate 2 days of menstrual leave per month for women, although this leave is not allowed in all cases.

Women disproportionately suffer from illiteracy, poor health, and inadequate nutrition. The illiteracy rate among women is 17 percent, compared to 10 percent among men; the national illiteracy rate average for citizens over 15 years old is 12 percent, according to a UNICEF report. The Government is making efforts to reduce the high maternal mortality rate, which is 425 per 100,000 live births, according to official figures, and as high as 650 per 100,000, according to estimates from other sources. In Irian Jaya, the maternal mortality rates is 1,025 deaths per 100,000 and in Maluku 796 deaths per 100,000 live births.

Violence against women remains poorly documented. Women's rights NGO's estimate that only 15 percent of domestic violence incidents are reported. According to a legal aid organization involved in domestic violence issues, about 11 percent of rural women suffer some form of domestic violence. Experts on the subject agree that the number of incidents has risen since the onset of the country's economic downturn starting in mid-1997, which has been aggravated

by social changes associated with rapid urbanization. The Government has acknowledged the problem of domestic violence in society; however, violence against women, especially when it occurs within the home, largely is perceived by the public to be a private matter and not within the purview of the Government.

Rape is a punishable offense, and perpetrators have been arrested and sentenced for rape and attempted rape, but reliable statistics are unavailable. Women's rights activists believe that rape is underreported seriously due to the social stigma attached to victims. Some legal experts report that unless a woman immediately seeks an examination at a hospital that produces physical evidence of rape, she will be unable to bring charges successfully. A witness also is required in order to prosecute for rape, and only in rare cases can a witness be produced, according to legal experts. Some women reportedly fail to report rape to police because the police do not take their allegations seriously. The maximum prison sentence for rape is 12 years, but observers claim that sentences usually are much shorter. Mob violence against accused rapists frequently is reported. An August 1999 conference of forensic experts recommended the adoption of standard procedures be adopted for examining and taking statements from rape victims, in an effort to improve the successfulness of rape prosecutions. However, by year's end, no rape investigation standards were in place, nor were uniform procedures followed.

Rape by a husband of a wife is not considered a crime under the law. Cultural norms dictate that problems between a husband and wife are private matters, and violence against women in the home rarely is reported. While police could bring assault charges against a husband for beating his wife, due to social attitudes they are unlikely to do so.

The country is a significant source, transit point, and destination for trafficking in women and children for the purpose of forced prostitution and sometimes for forced labor. It is widely alleged that TNI-backed militias raped numerous women during the 1999 violence in East Timor and kept many as sex slaves. Kirsty Sword-Gusmao, the wife of East Timorese independence leader Xanana Gusmao, reported to the international press in November that 33 pregnant East Timorese women returned to East Timor and claimed they had been abducted and forced to serve as sex slaves for the TNI in West Timor.

Female domestic servants also are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. In some cases, unscrupulous recruitment agencies have promised women employment as domestic servants overseas and then held them against their will for extended periods until jobs are found for them. Women working abroad as domestic servants often risk various forms of abuse, exploitation, and other cruel treatment. The Government has taken some steps to assist its citizens working abroad, but advocates charge that much more needs to be done.

Harassment is not a crime under the law, only "indecent behavior." However, sexual harassment charges may damage a civil service career. The law reportedly only covers physical abuse, and requires two witnesses. Female job applicants and workers have complained of being victimized sexually by supervisors. Many groups criticized the 1997 Manpower Law for failing to address sexual harassment and violence against women in the workplace and for providing inadequate protection in areas of employment where women regularly suffer abuse, such as overseas employment and household service. As of year's end, the Manpower Law was undergoing extensive revisions.

In 1998 the Government, in consultation with women's NGO's, established a National Commission on Violence against Women. The Commission's mandate is to improve and coordinate government and NGO efforts to combat violence against women and to provide assistance to victims. During the year, the Commission reported that violence against women resulting from the economic crisis continued to rise.

In November 1999, a group of government officials and NGO representatives signed a declaration calling for the development of a joint strategy to end violence against women. The group drafted a 2001-2004 national action plan, which incorporates a "zero tolerance" strategy of violence against women, creates safety mechanisms to protect women against violence, and establishes new legislation to penalize perpetrators of such violence. In February the Government signed the Protocol of the U.N. Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). However, national legislation and implementing regulations to support the action plan have not yet been enacted. The Government provided technical support, but not funding, to establish and administer a women's crisis center in a leading public hospital in Jakarta. Foreign governments have funded some of these crisis center projects.

The Government provides some counseling for abused women, and several private organizations assist women. Many of these organizations focus on reuniting the family rather than on providing protection to women. Many women rely on the extended family system for assistance in cases of domestic violence. Both public and private initiatives to assist female victims of violence were undertaken during the year. There are a small but growing number of

women's crisis centers, including a drop-in center founded in Jakarta by the government-sponsored National Women's Organization (KOWANI) in 1996 and a crisis center for women in Yogyakarta that is administered by an NGO. Women's Partner (Mitra Perempuan), a crisis center for women that opened in 1997, runs a 24-hour hotline and a temporary shelter for abused women. The hotline receives several calls each day from battered women. The National Commission reports a general increase in the number of female victims of violence seeking assistance from crisis centers, attributing the increase both to a growing awareness of services and to an increase in the incidence of violence against women. Some public hospitals in Jakarta, Yogyakarta, and Surabaya have integrated crisis centers that assist and protect abused women and children. These centers are co-sponsored by the Government and the Women's Crisis Center (Pusat Krisis Perempuan). One of these centers, located in a Jakarta hospital, reported 30 cases of rape, 31 cases of domestic violence, and 37 cases of child abuse during a 4-month period during the year. Jakarta, Surabaya, and Yogyakarta police have opened "women's desks" in their precincts to assist rape and domestic violence victims and to investigate their cases.

Under the Constitution, women are equal to and have the same rights, obligations, and opportunities as men. However, in practice, women face some legal discrimination. Marriage law defines the man as the head of the family. Marriage law for Muslims, based on Shari'a (Islamic law), allows men to have up to four wives if the husband is able to provide equally for each of them. Court permission and consent of the first wife is required, but reportedly most women cannot refuse. Cabinet officials and military personnel customarily have been forbidden from taking second wives, although reportedly a few ministers in President Wahid's Cabinet have second wives. In 2000, Government Regulation 10/1983, which stipulates that a male civil servant must receive the permission of his superior to take a second wife, came under considerable attack and renewed scrutiny. The Minister of State for Women's Empowerment that time, Khofifah Indar Parawansa, proposed that the regulation be revoked or modified, arguing that supervisors often use the regulation as leverage over subordinates and that the regulation is an embarrassment to women. She also asserted that many men avoid the regulation by establishing illicit relationships. Other women, including former First Lady Sinta Nuriyah Abdurrahman Wahid, opposed revoking the regulation, arguing that it protects women. Some women's groups urged the Government to ban polygyny altogether.

In divorce cases, women often bear a heavier evidentiary burden than men in obtaining a divorce, especially in the Islamic-based family court system. Divorced women rarely receive alimony, and there is no enforcement of alimony payment. According to Shari'a, a divorced wife is entitled to only 3 months of alimony, and even alimony for this brief period is not always granted.

The 1958 Citizenship Law states that children's citizenship is based only on the citizenship of the father. Children of citizen mothers and foreign fathers are considered foreigners and require visas to remain in the country until the age of 18, at which time they may apply for citizenship. They are prohibited from attending public schools and must attend private, international schools, which usually are more expensive. There were considerable efforts during the year to change the law, but the restrictions remained.

Foreign women married to citizens also face difficulties. Their children are citizens and thus are not allowed to attend international schools unless they get special permission through the Ministry of Education. Such women usually are taxed as foreign heads of households, but they do not have property, business, or inheritance rights. There was much discussion about problems with the citizenship law, and NGO's and the Government appeared to agree that the law needed revision. However, by year's end, the Government had not taken any action to remedy these problems.

During the year, hundreds of thousands of women and children were displaced by violent conflicts in Central Sulawesi, Maluku and North Maluku provinces, West Kalimantan, Irian Jaya (Papua), and Aceh. In addition to those directly victimized by violence, a substantial number of those displaced suffered from nutritional deficiencies and other health problems.

Women's advocacy groups remained active throughout the year. Numerous NGO-organized conferences and rallies concerned with women's issues were held, as well as some that were organized by academic institutions and government ministries. 🇮🇩