

“After Tibet lost its independence, democracy almost fell in the lap of the Tibetan community in exile. As a result, we have not had as many discussions as we should have had about the importance of women’s empowerment, representation, and participation in a democracy.

While women have traditionally enjoyed many social freedoms in Tibetan society, they are still missing from decision-making bodies in our community in exile. The Dalai Lama has been very vocal about women’s empowerment, and the Tibetan Women’s Association has made some contributions by hosting women’s leadership trainings and gender sensitization workshops. A Women’s Commission within the Central Tibetan Administration would build on these achievements to further empower Tibetan women in exile—socially, politically, and economically.

Having learned about the lives and struggles of women in other countries, I think that Tibetan women have a lot to appreciate and a lot to be thankful for. But there is still work to be done, and I believe that we can do it. ”

— Dr. B. Tsering, June 14, 2012





Empowering Tibetan Women In Exile: Reflections and Recommendations

Dr. B. Tsering
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June 14, 2012

The views expressed in this presentation are those of the speaker and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Endowment for Democracy or its staff.

Presentation Overview

- Historical and Political Overview
 - ▣ Situation of Women Before and After 1959
 - ▣ Women's Leadership in Exile Tibetan Society

- Women & Civil Society: The Tibetan Women's Association
 - ▣ Aims
 - ▣ Initiatives

- Empowering Women through Policy
 - ▣ Women's Empowerment Policy of the CTA
 - ▣ Recommendations for Strengthening Women's Empowerment

Historical & Political Overview

Pre-1959

- Independent Country
- Population: approx. 6 million
- 2.3 million sq. km
- 3 provinces
- 4,000 m above sea level
 - Highest plateau in the world
- 1949: Invaded by Communist China

1959

- Lost Independence
- Dalai Lama and ~80,000 Tibetans go into exile in India

Post-1959

- Total Exile Population: 128,014
 - India: 94,203
 - Nepal: 13,514
 - Bhutan: 1,298
 - Elsewhere: 18,999
- Exile governed by Central Tibetan Administration (CTA)

Situation of Tibetan Women Pre-1959

Tibetan women benefited from...

- Lack of discriminatory laws
- Widow remarriage
- Lack of dowry system
- Lack of clothing restrictions
- Polygamy and polyandry
- Equal opportunity for spiritual practice

But...

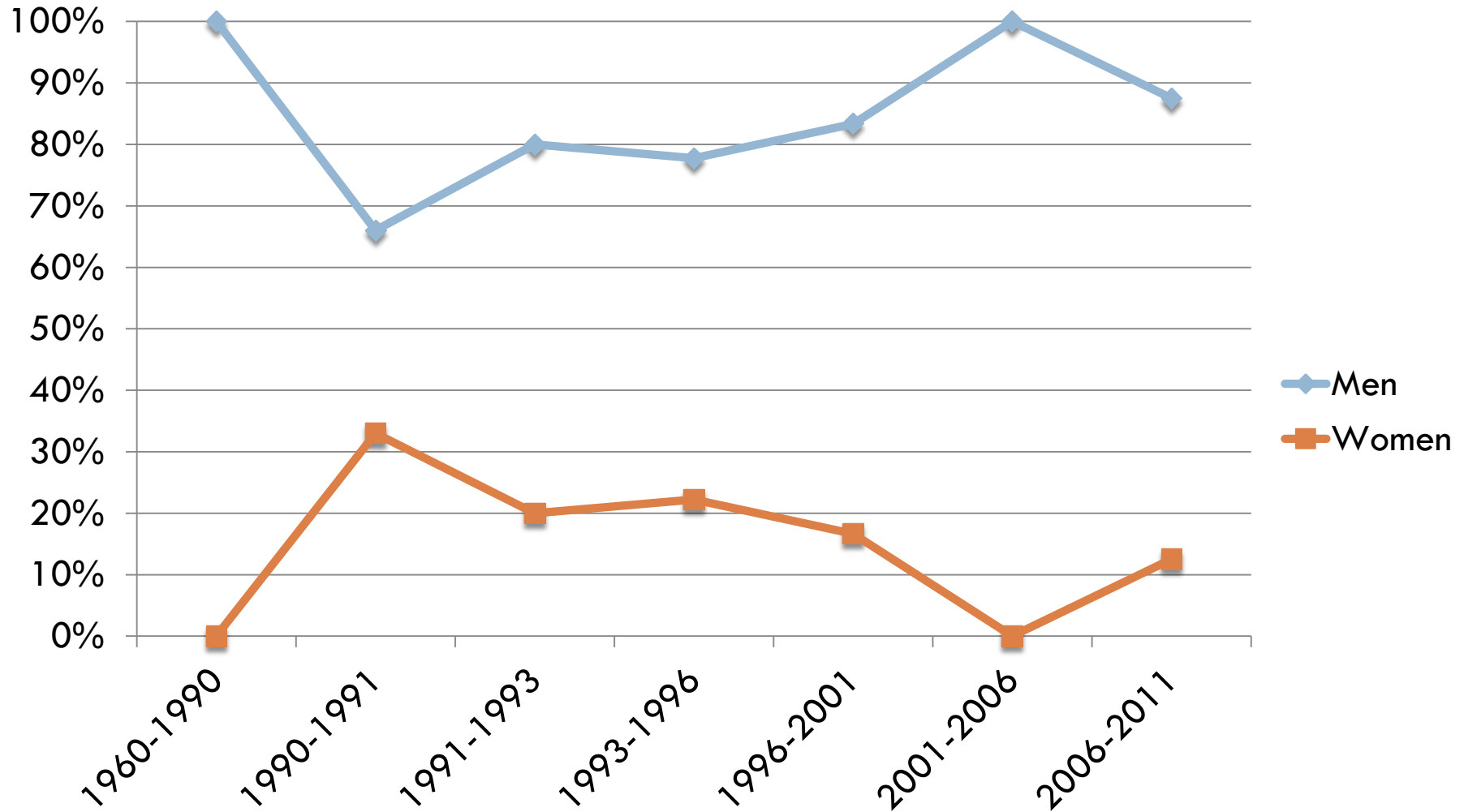
- No Geshe Ma (Nuns not taking Geshe exam (PhD))
- Education for girls was not a priority
- Women did not serve in the government
- Family lineage transferred through boys
- Women did not participate in politics

Situation of Tibetan Women in Exile

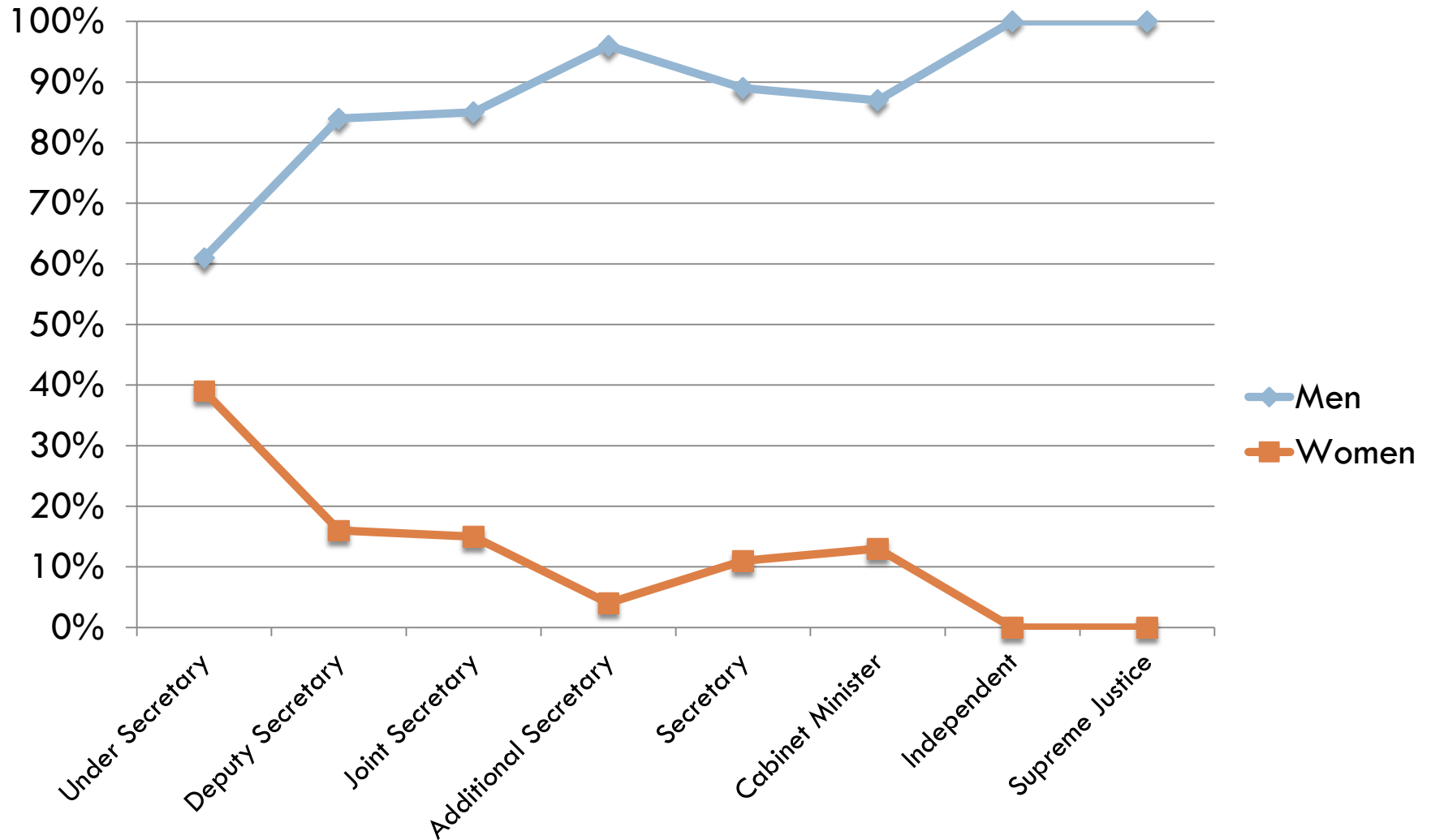
- Since 1959, Women Have Had...
 - ▣ Equal Franchise Rights
 - ▣ Equal Opportunity for Education
 - ▣ Equality Opportunity for Jobs with Equal Pay
 - ▣ No Preference for Boy vs. Girl Children

- But Currently...
 - ▣ Women are Missing in Decision-Making Bodies
 - ▣ Women are Stuck in Gender-Stereotypical Roles

Women's Representation in the CTA Cabinet Remained Low Over Time



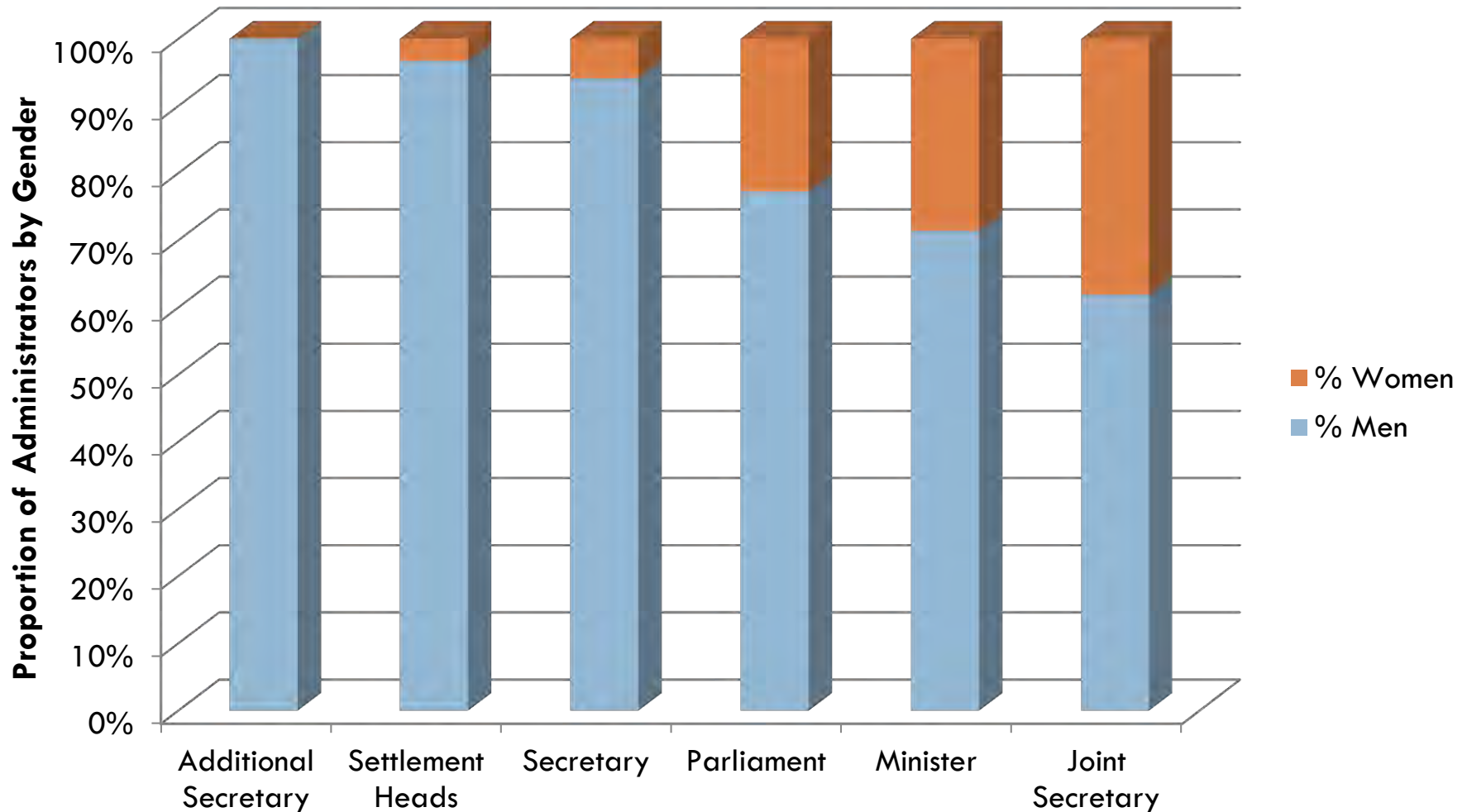
Representation of Women in Administrative Positions Decreases as Rank Increases



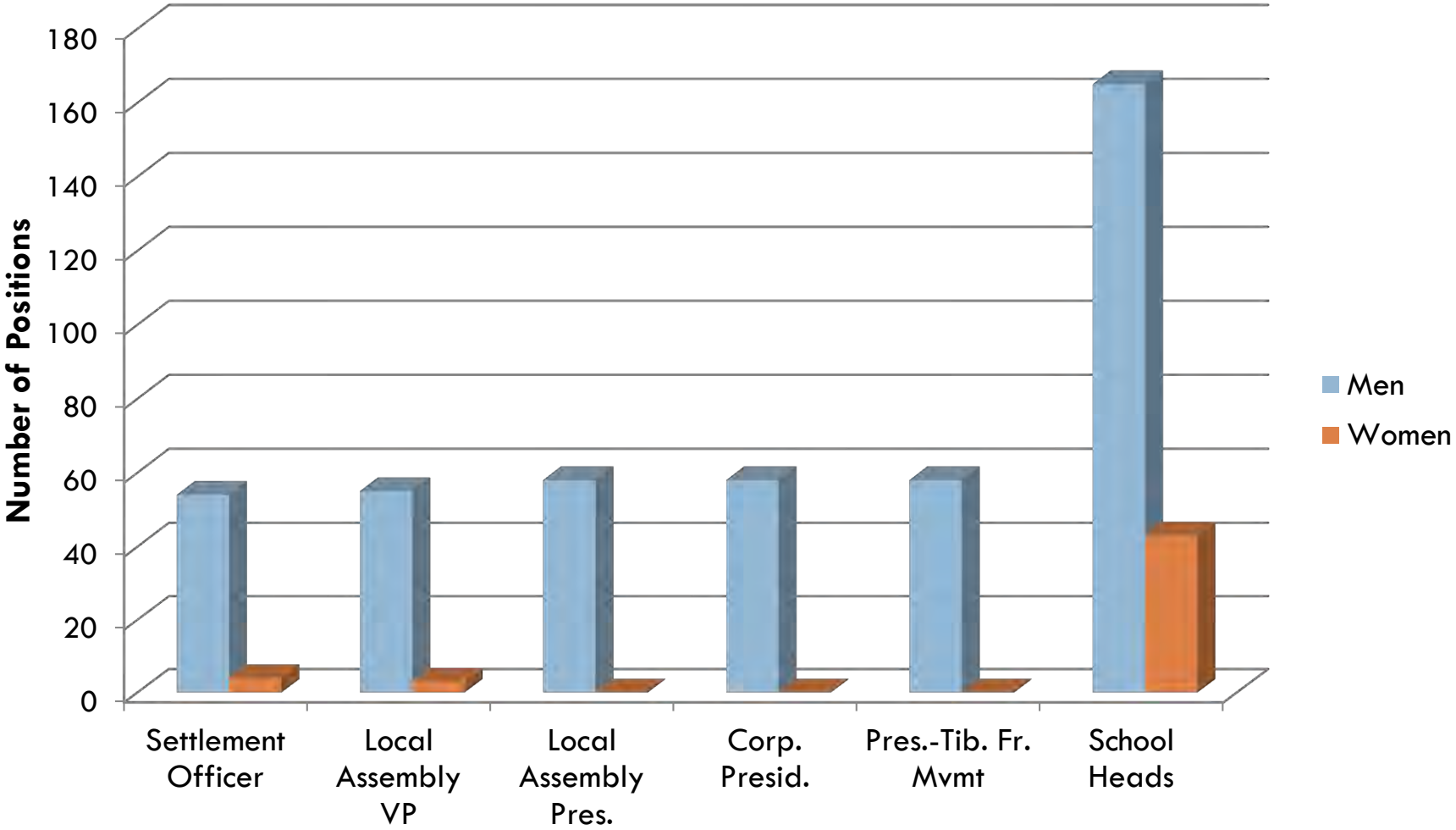
Representatives of H.H. Dalai Lama



Large Gender Disparities throughout CTA Administration (2012)



Gender Disparities in Local Leadership (2009)



Women's Political Representation in Parliament

1960-1964

- No Quota, No Women

1964-1982

- 3 Seats for Women

1982-1990

- Quota Abolished, No Women

1990-present

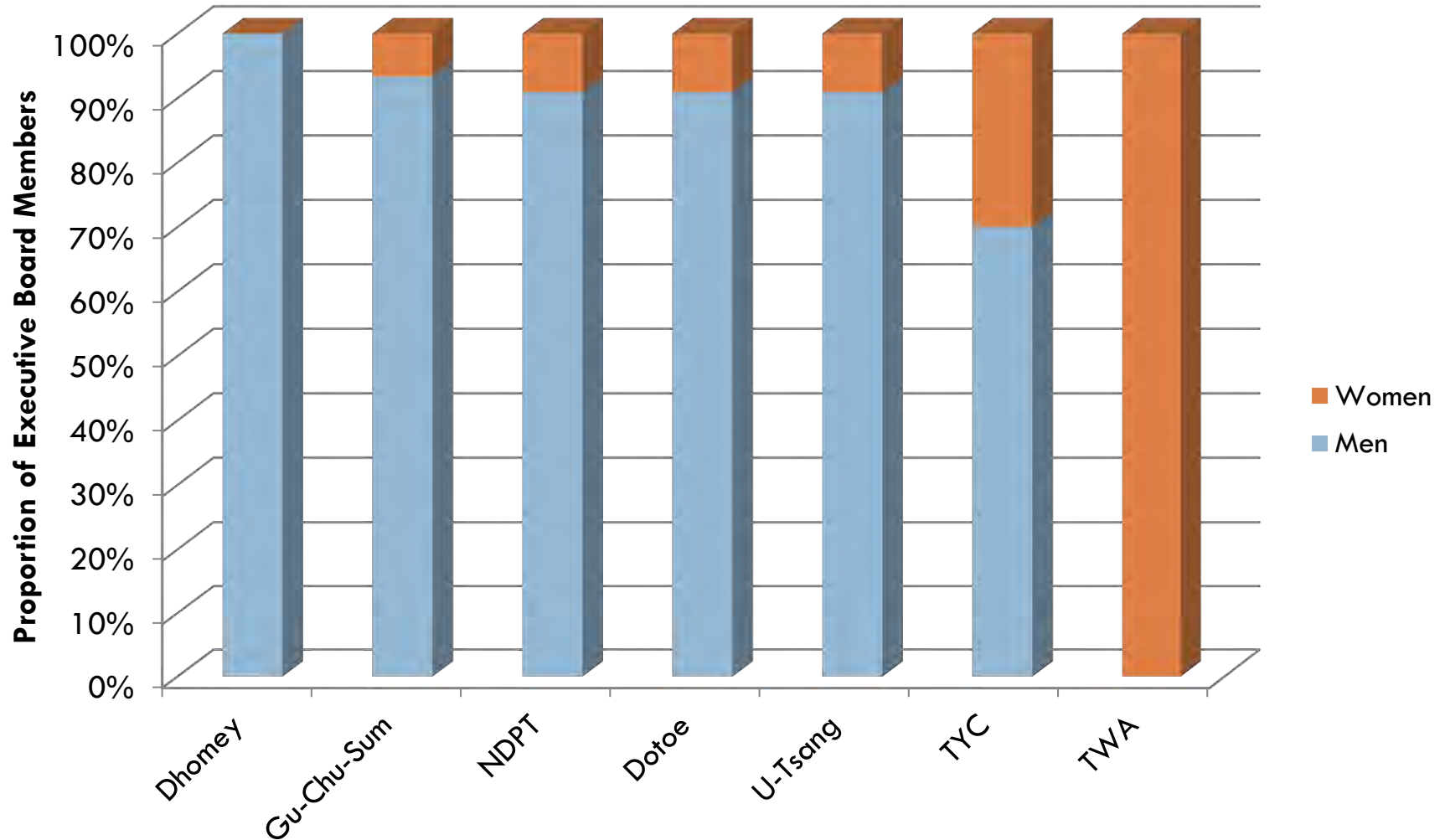
- Quota Reinstated, 6 seats



Major NGOs in Exile

- Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC)
- Tibetan Women's Association (TWA)
- Gu-Chu-Sum Movement
- National Democratic Party of Tibet
- Dhotoe
- Dhoemey
- U-Tsang

Women's Leadership in Tibetan NGOs





WOMEN & CIVIL SOCIETY

The Tibetan Women's Association



Tibetan Women's Association

- 1959: Founded in Tibet
- 1984: Re-established in exile
- Today: 56 chapters and 16,000+ members worldwide
- Only women's organization in exile

- Aims of the Tibetan Women's Association
 - To raise global awareness of the critical situation inside Tibet
 - To promote the social, political, and economic equality of Tibetan women in Tibet & Exile
 - To address the drastic human rights abuses committed against Tibetan women in Tibet and to address other cases of gender-based discrimination in the Tibetan exile communities.
 - To ensure Tibetan women have access to adequate educational information about health care, child care and family planning.
 - To join hands with the women of the world to promote peace and justice for all.

TWA Women's Empowerment Initiatives

- 2003
 - ▣ Status of Tibetan Women in Exile Survey

- 2004
 - ▣ International Tibetan Women Leaders' Conference
 - ▣ Annual Women's Leadership Trainings Begin

- 2007
 - ▣ Country-wide Gender Sensitization Workshop

- 2009
 - ▣ Annual Leadership Training for Nuns Begin

- 2010
 - ▣ Annual Advanced Leadership Training for Women Begin

International Tibetan Women's Leadership Conference
September 3-5, 2004 Venue: Asia Health Resort,
Dharamsala
Organized by: Tibetan Women's Association Sponsored by: TPPRC, New Delhi
HOPE, France



International Tibetan Women's Conference

ENHANCING LEADERSHIP SKILLS



STEPHANIE GOODELL (UVA)



Leadership Training for Nuns

Learning Presentation Skills



Early Morning Yoga



Leadership Training for Tibetan Women in India

- Democracy and human rights education for grassroots women and men



- Leadership skills training for Regional TWA executive members
- Political empowerment training to college women

Empowering Women through Policy

- ❑ Women's Empowerment Policy of the CTA
- ❑ Recommendations for Strengthening Women's Empowerment policy

Women's Empowerment Policy (2008)

Results:

- Adopted in 2008
- Women's Empowerment Desk under Department of Finance
- WEP Symposium in 2010

□ Concerns:

- ▣ No Single Body to Implement
- ▣ No Timeframe for Implementation
- ▣ Reinforcing Gender-Stereotypical Roles

Recommendation for CTA

- Establish a Women's Commission as an independent body
 - Mainstream gender into public programs
 - Address implicit biases based on gender
 - Improve engagement on women's empowerment issues
 - Network with international women's groups to support the political, social and educational empowerment of Tibetan women in exile

Recommendations:

Tasks for the Women's Commission

- Mainstream gender into public programs
 - Economic empowerment
 - Business and entrepreneurship support
 - Financial literacy programs
 - Loans
 - Microfinance for women's businesses
 - Social empowerment
 - Health rights and support, especially for reproductive and sexual health
 - Political empowerment
 - 30% quota for women in every decision-making body
- Address implicit biases based on gender
 - Conduct research on gender-related issues in society
 - Provide Gender Sensitization workshops at all levels of government
 - Provide Leadership Trainings
- Improve engagement in women's empowerment issues
 - Encourage NGO engagement with women's empowerment
 - Promote a policy of zero tolerance for violence



**Thank
You!**