

Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) System

This is a kind of Mixed Electoral system that tends to combine features of the majoritarian (ie First Past The Post, Two round systems) and the Proportional Representation systems. It is also referred to as Additional Member System (AMS) or Top Up System.

Under MMP system, a set of the seats are allocated using the First past The Post system whereby the candidates/political parties are voted directly by the electorate in the constituencies and whoever scoops the majority of votes gets the seat. The second set of the seats are allocated using the proportional system to compensate any *disproportionality produced by FPTP allocation*. For example, a party that gets 10 per cent of the vote nationally but has got not seat because none of its candidate got a majority, will be awarded with 10 percent of the second set of seats using the PR system.

In 2002 Lesotho adopted this system. Its legislature has a total of 120 seats. Eighty of the seats are elected directly through the FPTP and 40 are allocated using the PR system basing on the total valid national vote for each contesting party. During the polls held on February 28, 2015 only four parties managed to get seats under the FPTP system and shared the 80 seats. However, the number of parties getting seats increased to 10 when other six parties were compensated from the 40 seats in proportion to their total national valid vote.

Advantages of the MMP

While MMP retains the proportionality benefits of PR systems, it also ensures that elected representatives are linked to geographical districts. MMP, therefore, shares many of the advantages of the PR system which include:

- Inclusiveness
- Reduction in wasted votes
- Accountability of the elected candidates to the electorate as there is geographic representation

Disadvantages of MMP

MMP can create two classes of legislators—one group primarily responsible to a constituency and another without geographical ties and beholden to the party. This may have implications for the cohesiveness of groups of elected party representatives. Other disadvantages are that MMP:

- Can be complicated for average electorate to understand
- Requires boundary delimitation which can give room for gerrymandering
- There is need for by-election to fill a vacancy
- Can result in strategic voting. Eg voters may shun a smaller party just because they fear it may not get a threshold to get a seat under the PR allocation.
- As the candidates on the list would not be directly elected by the electorate, political parties can use them to reward their financiers or diehards.

In the next article we will look at the Parallel System which is another type of a Mixed Electoral System but the decision on allocation of the proportional seats is not based on the votes obtained in the FPTP election.

Feedback and questions:

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