

**ECOWAS COMMISSION
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ECOWAS GENDER AND ELECTION STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF DENMARK
DANIDA | INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION





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Acronyms and Abbreviations

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DEAU	Democracy And Electoral Assistance Unit
ECONEC	ECOWAS Network Of Electoral Commissions
ECOWAS	Economic Community Of West African States
EMBs	Election Management Bodies
ESR	Election Situation Room
FPTP	First Past The Post (Electoral System)
GESF	Gender And Election Strategic Framework
GII	Gender Inequality Index
ILO	International Labour Organization
LTO	Long Term (Election) Observation
M&E	Monitoring And Evaluation
NDI	National Democratic Institute
PR	Proportional Representation (Electoral System)
UDHR	The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

PREFACE



In recognition of the crucial role of women in promoting peace, development and strengthening of democracy in West Africa; aware of the abysmally low numbers of women in the various legislature in the region, which is the lowest in the world due to the myriad of cultural, social, political, economic barriers in the processes and structures to exercise and enjoy their electoral rights; the ECOWAS Member States are desirous to enhance women's political participation and representation in line

with the Mechanism (1999) and the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance and other relevant international conventions and treaties.

Poverty and lack of economic security are often regarded as some of the major barriers to women's political participation. ECOWAS is motivated by the fact that increased political participation and representation of women will continue to promote peace and accelerate economic growth in the region. Women are a significant proportion of the West African populace and thus deserve equal access to economic participation and earning potential, and in political decision making.

Thus, this ECOWAS Gender and Election Strategic Framework (GESF) and Action Plan is to serve as an advocacy tool to mobilize support from all stakeholders including Governments, Election Management Bodies (EMBs), religious and traditional authorities, legislature and civil society in West Africa. To enhance political participation and representation of women in West Africa is a shared vision and responsibility of both women and men.

This framework document focuses on 10 thematic areas which serve as its strategic pillars to interrogate the various issues and challenges underpinning efforts and

strategies aimed at addressing barriers to equal participation and representation of men and women in the political arena in West Africa:

1. Gender and Legal Framework for Elections;
2. Stakeholder Mobilisation and Strategic Partnerships;
3. Pre-Elections Gender and Election Capacity Building;
4. Civic and Voter Education;
5. Gender and Institutional Framework for Elections/Role of ECONEC;
6. ECOWAS Election Observation Missions
7. Funding Gender and Elections;
8. Gender and Electoral Security;
9. The Media, Gender and Elections; and
10. Post Election Capacity Development for Elected Women.

These 10 Pillars have been designed into a 5-year Action Plan (2017 – 2022) after which an impact assessment will be conducted.

The management of the implementation of this strategic framework is a shared one among all stakeholders inter alia, governments, political parties, EMBs, the ECOWAS Gender Directorate, the ECOWAS Electoral Assistance Unit, ECOWAS M&E Unit, the ECONEC/EMBs, gender and election oriented CSOs and the various national legislatures.

I invite ECOWAS Ministers of Women Affairs to take the lead in collaboration with all stakeholders and development partners to commit to the implementation of the ECOWAS Gender and Election Strategic Framework (GESF) and Action Plan for the promotion of women's political participation and representation in West Africa.

H.E. Marcel de Souza

President

ECOWAS Commission

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The development of this *ECOWAS Gender and Election Strategic Framework* would not have been possible without the support of numerous persons and organizations.

Special thanks goes to the various government ministries responsible for gender for coordinating the national Gender and Election workshops. We extend our appreciation to all participants from civil society organizations, election management bodies, representative of security agencies and political parties for their input at these workshops.

Special acknowledgment goes to individuals who contributed immensely at the expert meeting that reviewed the Strategic Framework and Action Plan.

Appreciations also go to the Gender Directorate and the Electoral Assistance Unit of the ECOWAS Commission for initiating, organizing, and coordinating the development of this Framework.

We thank our development partners especially the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) for providing the much-needed support to embark on this initiative.

As we commence the implementation of the strategic document in January 2018, we hope to continue to count on the support of all stakeholders involved including our development partners towards ensuring a successful implementation.

Dr. Fatimata Dia SOW

Commissioner, Social Affairs and Gender

Introduction

Elections have become a central element of the democratic landscape of West Africa and women at all historical junctures have contributed immensely towards peace-building and conflict prevention in the region. They have however continued to be seriously under represented as candidates for public office. Again women make up at least 50% of the electorate and have been systematically and culturally disadvantaged and therefore need to be part of the whole process, not just as voters, but also as development agents. It is only when institutions are democratic and representative of all groups in society, women as well as men, minorities as well as majorities, the dispossessed as well as the affluent, that societies are stable, and then peace and national prosperity are likely to be achieved.

Gender inequality remains a major barrier to human development in West Africa. Addressing gender inequality would contribute to surmounting barriers to peaceful co-existence, human capacity development and economic growth in West Africa. Accelerating development cannot be possible without equally harnessing both female and male human capacity. The identification and acknowledgment of the deficit in women's political participation and representation, and establishing strategies to address these gender inequalities in the electoral process could contribute to a more credible conduct of the activities in a country's electoral cycle. The electoral system in a country is a major function of promoting a fair political representation. The electoral system in Senegal, for instance, has manifested positively on the political representation of women in the country's legislature. However on the whole, West African countries are lagging behind the world in political participation and representation of women. A strategic effort is thereby needed to address this challenge.

The ECOWAS Gender and Election Strategic Framework provides an overview of the political participation and representation situation among women in the region. It provides conceptual framework of gender in the electoral cycle; the barriers that women face in the electoral process in West Africa as candidates, electorates, election administrators, and observers. The media and security agencies during electoral

events need to be more gender sensitive. The framework also provides insight into how political party dynamics as well as the management of elections could be re-engineered to respond to an enhanced participation and representation of women. It also provides direction for the potential role electoral stakeholders should play to enhance women's political participation and representation.

Background

As part of efforts of the ECOWAS Commission to build long-term capacity and advocacy for women's political participation in West Africa, it conducted national workshops in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Nigeria and Togo in collaboration with the various government ministries responsible for gender. This brought together non-government organisations, security agencies, and EMBs among others to assess the barriers that are confronted by women in the electoral process in West Africa. An electoral cycle approach was adopted to identify the various challenges before, during and after an election; and to discuss the prospects for improvement of the situation. These workshops provided a fertile ground for the cross-fertilisation of ideas among the various electoral stakeholders. The barriers discussed have political, economic and socio-cultural dimensions. Proposals adduced at the workshops for surmounting barriers women faced, served as an input for the development of a regional gender and elections strategic framework.

Objectives and Focus

The overall objective of this GESF is to serve as an advocacy document to promote women's political participation and representation in democracy and their role in the electoral processes. The GESF specifically sets out to achieve the following:

- To improve the integration of gender equality perspectives in political parties' governance processes, structures and systems;
- To enhance the role of national electoral stakeholders and
- To support gender dimension in the activities in the electoral process;

International Legal Framework for Women's Political Participation and Representation

West African countries are signatories to a number of key international legal documents and human rights standards relating to non-discrimination and women's rights. These conventions and charters set a basis for this Framework.

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that 'everyone has the right to take part in the government of his/her country'; and that 'the will of the people shall be the basis for the authority of government'. The 1966 International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, in part, express elements relevant to the electoral rights of women as it states in Article 19, (1-2) "Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression. Article 21 states that "the right of peaceful assembly shall be recognized"; and Article 22(1) indicates, "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of association with others".

The 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in Article 7 points out that State Parties shall take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right:

- a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;
- b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government.

The 1981 African Charter on Human and People's Rights spells out in Article 18 that "The State shall ensure the elimination of every discrimination against women and also ensure the protection of the rights of the woman"; and Article 28 posits that "Every individual shall have the duty to respect and consider his fellow beings without discrimination, and to maintain relations aimed at promoting, safeguarding and reinforcing mutual respect and tolerance".

The 1993 ECOWAS Revised Treaty, in Article 63 directs that “Member States undertake to formulate, harmonize, co-ordinate and establish appropriate policies and mechanisms for the enhancement of the economic, social and cultural conditions of women”.

The 2001 ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance Article 2(3) emphasizes that “Member States shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that women have equal rights with men to vote and be voted for in elections, to participate in the formulation of government policies and the implementation thereof and to hold public offices and perform public functions at all levels of governance. Article 15(4) states that the members of electoral Observer/Supervisory Mission shall include women (i.e Long and Short Term Electoral Observer Missions), while Article 40 highlights, “Member States agree that the development and promotion of the welfare of women are essential factors for development, progress and peace in the society.

The 2003 African Charter on the Rights of Women (Maputo Protocol) states in Article 9, that women are equal partners with men at all levels of development and implementation of State policies and development programmes.

The 2007 African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance directs that State Parties shall implement the Charter in accordance with the principle of respect for human rights and democratic norms; and the promotion of a system of government that is representative. It goes on in Article 8, in part, that State Parties shall eliminate all forms of discrimination, especially those based on political opinion, gender, ethnic and religious grounds as well as any other form of intolerance; and shall adopt legislative and administrative measures to guarantee the rights of women. Article 29 specifically recognizes the crucial role of women in development and strengthening of democracy.

Supplementary Act Relating to Equality of Rights between Women and Men for Sustainable Development in the ECOWAS Region (2014)

This Supplementary Act seeks to harness all synergies and strategies for the protection and promotion of women’s rights and to achieve gender equality and equity in West Africa; some pertinent provisions with regards to this Gender and

Election Strategic Framework are:

Article 4 ensures that women have a greater role in public dialogue processes and that the principle of parity between women and men is applied in the composition of government especially with regard to positioning women to contest elective positions such as the Parliament and local decision-making bodies.

Article 12 encourages strategies to ensure equal participation of women and men in all electoral processes, including the administration of elections and voting; equal participation of women and men in the appointment of political representatives; strengthening women's capacity to participate effectively through training, leadership mentoring and awareness creation on gender issues; as well as improve gender mainstreaming in civic education.

Article 27 and 33 stipulate the review of customary norms, including social, economic, cultural and political practices and religious beliefs that legitimize and exacerbate the persistence and tolerance of gender-based violence. It states that women should be engaged in conflict prevention and management, peace building and security.

Article 34 to 36 demands that Member States take measures to ensure the media and organizations associated with them mainstream gender in their policies and procedures; promote equal representation of women in media practice and in media-related decision-making structures; encourage the media to give equal opportunities to women and men in all aspects of media coverage, encourage the media to play a constructive role in the fight against gender stereotypes and gender-based violence as well as to build the capacity and competence of women and girls by ensuring their access to information, communication and information and communication technology.

The State of Women's Political Participation and Representation in West Africa

Political representation of women in West Africa is about the lowest in the world. As at April 2016, West African countries occupy the lower bottom of the ranking of women in about 190 national parliaments in the world.

The table below indicates, as at 1st April 2016 how West African countries fare in relation to the rest of the world.

Representation of Women in Parliaments In ECOWAS Countries (2016)

Country	Global Rank	% Women in Parliament	Electoral System National Assembly
Senegal	6 th	42.7%	Parallel (Segmented) (PR Lists and Majoritarian constituencies)
Cabo Verde	71 st	23.6%	List Proportional Representation
Guineat	78 th	21.9%	Parallel (Segmented) (PR Lists and Majoritarian constituencies)
Togo	103 rd	17.6%	List Proportional Representation
Niger	125 th	14.6%	Parallel (Segmented) (PR Lists and Majoritarian FPTP constituencies)
Guinea-Bissau	131 st	13.7%	List Proportional Representation
Sierra Leone	141 st	12.4%	Plurality (FPTP)
Liberia	149 th	11.0%	Plurality (FPTP)
Ghana	150 th	10.9%	Plurality (FPTP)
Burkina Faso	159 th	9.4%	List Proportional Representation
Gambia	159 th	9.4%	Plurality (FPTP)
Cote d'Ivoire	161 st	9.2%	Plurality (FPTP)
Mali	164 th	8.8%	Two-Round System
Benin	168 th	7.2%	List Proportional Representation
Nigeria	175 th	6.5%	Plurality (FPTP)

There are basically three types of electoral systems in use in West Africa, which are plurality/*majority electoral system* (usually the First Past the Post - FPTP); Proportional Representation (List PR); and the Mixed Electoral System.

Electoral systems are that part of the electoral law and other regulations that determines how parties and candidates are elected to a body as representatives.

First Past the Post is the simplest form of a plurality/majority electoral system. The winning candidate is the one who gains more votes than anyone else, even if this is not an absolute majority. The system uses single-member districts and voters select candidates rather than political parties.

List Proportional Representation (List PR) is where each party or grouping presents a list of candidates for a multi-member electoral district, voters make their selection, and then parties receive seats in proportion to their overall share of the vote.

Mixed Electoral System (also referred to as Parallel system) is a combination of both majoritarian and proportional representation electoral systems. It is a system in which a proportion of the parliament (usually half) is elected from plurality-majority districts, while the remaining members are chosen from PR lists.

It could be observed that regardless of the electoral system or the size of the West African countries, the story is the same. Benin with a population of over 8,791,800 (est. 2009); practising PR has six (6) women in parliament. Nigeria with FPTP system and a population of over 149,229,100 (est. 2009) has only 5 women in its Senate. Apart from Senegal, which occupies the 6th position in the world, the next best performing country in West Africa is Cape Verde, which ranks the 71st and the least ranked country, being Nigeria, which ranks 175th. This makes ECOWAS region among the regions in the world with the least representation of women in the legislature.

A number of West African countries, like Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Mali and Niger have legislated quota for women in the electoral law but there is need for political will for implementation. It should be noted that the high rate of women in Senegal parliament is due to a binding law on political parties to submit a parity list of candidates.

After two years of activism, the Malian National Assembly in November 2015 adopted a historic gender quota bill, which passed with an overwhelming majority of 115 voting in favor, 22 voting against, and three abstentions. Upcoming local and regional elections in Mali will serve as the first application of the quota law.

Niger's quota law on the election of women LOI N 2000-2008 sets a 10% minimum requirement for the election of women (and men) in legislative elections, which was respected in 2004 and 2011. Décret N 2001-056 establishes a placement mandate, requiring that if a party wins three seats in a district, the party must respect the quota (i.e., at least one member of each sex must be elected from that district). The decree also specifically states that the Constitutional Court can be called upon if the final election results do not satisfy the quota's requirements.

In Togo, Article 220 of the 2013 amendments to the electoral law provides for the same provisions but will not apply to the 2013 elections as preparations had started before the amendments were adopted. The list of candidates submitted by any political party, legally constituted group of political parties or independent persons must respect overall gender parity. A candidate deposit of 100,000 CFA is to be paid by men; half the amount (50,000) is to be paid by women.

West African countries that are also considering doing so are Benin, Liberia and Sierra Leone. In these countries too, mobilized national women's movements have prompted the adoption of new electoral laws. Countries in the region that have not yet adopted a legislated quota or meaningful voluntary party quota are countries with plurality majority (first-past-the-post) electoral systems such as Ghana and Nigeria.

On the whole, West Africa countries are yet to use the electoral system fully as a tool for reengineering an enhancement in the representation of women.

Impact of the State of Women's Political Participation and Representation on Democracy and Development

An assessment of economic, political, socio-cultural/religious, as well as electoral dynamics in West Africa provide some enlightenment on the state and impact of women's very low political participation and representation in the region.

1.0 Economic Issues

Socio-economic status plays a role in affording people access to strategic positions of decision-making. *"Without the full participation of women in decision-making processes and debates about policy priorities and options, issues of great importance*

to women will either be neglected, or the way in which they are addressed will be sub-optimal and uninformed by women's perspectives" (Helen Clark, Administrator UNDP, Democracy and Gender Equality Roundtable, 04 May 2011).

The table below provides an indication of disparities between men and women in relation to educational and employment levels in West Africa.

Disparities Between Men and Women in Relation to Educational and Employment Levels in West Africa

	Population with at least some secondary education		Labour force participation rate	
	(% Ages 25 and older)	(% Ages 25 and older)		
	Female	Male	Female	Male
	2005–2014c	2005–2014c	2013	2013
MEDIUM HUMAN DEVELOPMENT				
Cabo Verde	.	..	51.5	83.7
Ghana	45.2	64.7	67.3	71.4
LOW HUMAN DEVELOPMENT				
Nigeria	.	..	48.2	63.7
Gambia	17.4	31.5	72.2	82.9
Togo	16.1	40.3	80.6	81.3
Liberia	15.4	39.3	58.2	64.8
Benin	11.3	27	67.6	78.3
Senegal	7.2	15.4	66	88
Côte d'Ivoire	14	30.1	52.4	81.4
Guinea-Bissau	68.2	78.5
Mali	7.7	15.1	50.8	81.4
Sierra Leone	10	21.7	65.7	69
Guinea	65.6	78.3
Burkina Faso	0.9	3.2	77.1	90
Niger	2.4	7.8	40	89.7

Source: Gender Inequality Index (UNDP 2015)

According to UNDP Gender Inequality Index (2015), the disadvantages facing women and girls are a major source of inequality. Political under-representation of women means they are unable to take part in discussions relating to development priorities and programme implementation that directly affect their lives and that of children.

According to International Alert (2012) unequal gender relations in political participation and representation affects economic recovery especially in post conflict countries. All too often, women and girls are discriminated against in education, political representation, labour market, etc. — with negative repercussions for development of their capabilities and their freedom of choice. According to UNWomen (2010), for every one additional year of education for women of reproductive age, child mortality decreased by 9.5 per cent.

Limited education and illiteracy also implies that women are less informed of their voting rights, do have limited access to information about candidates and issues, and need more effort to understand the political and electoral systems. In many instances, voter education campaigns/initiatives in some countries do not sufficiently take into account low rates of literacy or poorly educated populations who are largely women. According to the UN, two-thirds of the 774 million illiterate people in the world are female.

2.0 Political Issues

Political issues concerning women's political participation and representation in West Africa border on the existing structures and processes with political parties as well as the general legal framework.

Political parties serve as a vehicle for mobilisation of people with similar ideas or aims, some of who get nominated as candidates at elections to national parliament and local government structures. Male domination of politics, political parties and culture of formal political structures constitute a major factor that hinders women's political participation.

Legal framework for setting up and functioning of political parties in West Africa are mute on gender sensitivities. Setting up women's wing within political parties is a common practice, which has been an instrument for mobilising support for

various parties. There are rare instances where women occupy leadership or strategic positions of decision-making in a political party.

In theory, the right to stand for election, to become a candidate and to get elected is based on the right to vote. The number of women candidates put up for elections by political parties in West Africa is abysmally low. For instance in Cabo Verde in the March 2016 Elections, the number of seats at stake: 72 (full renewal); number of candidates: 551 (478 men, 73 women); and the percentage of women candidates: 13.2%.

Political challenges faced by women include:

- The prevalence of the ‘masculine model’ of political life and of elected government bodies;
- Limited party support, for example, financial support for women candidates,
- Limited access to political networks, and the more stringent standards and qualifications applied to women;
- Limited access to well-developed education and training systems for women’s leadership in general, and for orienting young women towards political life; and
- The nature of the electoral system has not been favorable to women candidates.

3.0 Socio-Cultural & Religious Issues

The subordinate status of women vis-à-vis men is a universal phenomenon, though with a difference in the nature and extent of subordination across countries. Gender role ideology does not only create duality of femininity and masculinity, it also places them in hierarchal fashion in which female sex is generally valued less than male sex because of their socially ascribed roles.

Patriarchy is a system of male domination, which shapes women’s relationship in politics. It transforms male and females into men and women and constructs the hierarchy of gender relations where men are privileged (Eisenstein, 1984). Adrienne Rich defines patriarchy as:

“A familial-social, ideological, political system in which men by force, direct pressure or through ritual, tradition, law, and language, customs etiquette, education, and the division of labour, determine what part women shall or shall not play in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male.” (Rich 1977: 57)

In Africa generally, the pattern of personality development seems to be greatly influenced by the culture and societal beliefs, with emphasis on the so-called traditional practice of division of labour in gender terms. Akintan (2002) asserts that women were treated as inferior or less privileged class of people. African women seem to have been resigned to this battered psyche to the extent that majority of their political activities does not progress beyond overt discussions on contemporary political issues. Among the main causes that originate and perpetuate inequality between men and women with regard to political participation is the continuation of a patriarchal gender order that maintains a sexual division of labor, limiting women to the private space and men to the public realm.

In some countries, particularly in West Africa, women also face cultural constraints on their mobility. The mechanisms of sex segregation and *purdah* are used to restrict their mobility. Politics requires women’s exposure to interact with male and female constituents and address public meetings in order to fully enjoy their electoral rights. Restriction on women’s interaction with men has also been a challenge. It is obvious that women have all the attributes required for political leadership but may have been suppressed because of the socialization process.

4.0 Electoral Issues:

4.1 Women’s Challenges as Candidates

Discrimination against women in public and political life is related to the discrimination that women face in other aspects of their lives. Structural and systemic barriers in society, such as deeply entrenched gender roles and negative gender stereotyping, limit women to venture as candidates for election. Women’s participation in political campaigns and public life can be significantly limited by patriarchal culture, where women are not considered socially fit to enter politics. Women’s exercise of their right to political participation is thereby constrained and limited by a political culture

that denies them the opportunity to share power with men and that permeates the behavior of the electorate towards female candidates.

When women go to seek nomination, they are asked of their marital status and if they are single and not married, or without children, they are ridiculed because they are stigmatized as not being in good standing for the position.

Violence against female candidates directly in the community, as well as in the home also acts as a deterrent to women's political participation. It creates a real atmosphere of intimidation and instills a sense of fear in a woman who might otherwise want to go against the status quo. The fear of violence can have the psychological effect on women of restricting their participation even as electorates. CEDAW General Recommendation 19 acknowledges that all forms of violence against women inhibit their political participation.

The crudeness of some electoral campaigns make some families to discourage female members from participation in public life with the intention to protect family honor and dignity, according to some women's rights activists at the ECOWAS Gender and Election workshops. Some husbands are reluctant to allow women into this sphere of life.

In some communities in West Africa, the role of choosing or electing leaders was the preserve of men. This role has found its place in contemporary communities, as traditions are not easily written off. In Mali, NDI has found one of the reasons for the low participation of women in political decision-making lies in the organization of the traditional society. The woman bears the weight of traditions and customs that consider politics the business of men.

4.2 Women's Challenges as Electorate

To fully enjoy one's electoral rights, an electorate is required to prove his/her legibility and to satisfy electoral procedural requirements. Lack of necessary or any documentation for Voter Registration serves as a barrier for women. In many countries, one must have a national identification card in order to register and vote. Large numbers of women lack these cards. The most basic identifying document that is usually necessary to obtain additional forms of identification that must be

presented to register is the birth certificate, which women also often do not have. In some instances, one must provide documentary proof of residence in order to register as a voter; in most instances, women are not in possession of this documentation. These instances of lack of documentation is largely due to women's social isolation and exclusion from life outside the home in many countries; and in some instances, negative intervention by men who play major roles in these women's lives.

During the 2010 Burkina Faso elections, NDI found that the very low voter registration and voter turnout was largely due to the thousands of women who could not meet the documentation requirements in the voter registration process. Many women don't own property or in some cases women own property, but it is not registered under their names. Properties, leases and utilities are registered in the names of men who are considered heads of households. As a result, in most instances, women have no proof of residency.

In countries that predominantly practice Islam, the requirement of photo identification for women poses significant challenges, as this requires the unveiling of women for them to be photographed. Men are generally uncomfortable with their wives, sisters, mothers and daughters being unveiled to be photographed.

4.3 Women as Election Administrators

In West Africa, women historically had very few opportunities to rise to head election management bodies. Rare instances exist where a woman was appointed to head as EMB in Liberia, Mali, Sierra Leone and Togo. In 2015, Ghana also saw its first female head of its EMB. *"It is estimated that companies with three or more women in senior management functions score higher in all dimensions of organizational effectiveness"* (McKinsey, 2014).

There is a growing trend for West African EMBs to set up a Gender Desk, however these outfits do not have adequately trained personnel, programmes or resources to operate. The gender desk, where they exist, are unable to readily provide statistics on women's turn out for registration, voting, their percentage as polling staff and incidents accepting women in the electoral process.

4.4 Women's Assess to State Funding for Election

Availability of resource enhances prospects of electoral ambitions. State funding of political parties and electoral activities tends to level the playing field for the realization of electoral ambitions. In West Africa, according to Democracy and Assistance Unit (DEAU) database on political finance, countries in West Africa that provide state funding are Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger and Togo. In Cape Verde, funding is provided for electoral campaign only. Countries where there is no public funding are the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Nigeria.

In Burkina Faso, parties that do not nominate at least 30% of women are expected to lose half of their public funding. In Cape Verde subsidies are to be awarded to parties or coalitions of parties whose national lists contains at least 25% women candidates. In Togo, 20% of financial assistance from the state are to be allocated to parties and groupings of parties in proportion to the number of women elected during the last elections, while 10% of financial assistance from the state are to be allocated to parties and groupings of parties in proportion to the number of women elected during the last local elections. In Guinea, Mali and Niger there is provision for 10% of state funding allocated to/ shared among parties who have women elected as members of parliament and / or as municipal counselors.

Proposals for Enhancing Women's Participation in Elections in West Africa - Strategic Pillars

The proposals to address the political, electoral and socio-economic barriers faced by women have been formulated into ten strategic pillars for this GESF. These are as follows:

1. **Gender and Legal Framework for Elections:** The legal framework for every election in any country spells out the electoral system for the conduct of elections. Proportional Representation (PR) electoral system is generally considered the most favorable for a fair representation of women and diversity in a society. ECOWAS countries using PR system should adopt a zebra PR list of candidates. A zebra list PR provides both men and women equal opportunity of being elected. Countries that use FPTP electoral system

should adopt a requirement for political parties to have at least 30% of its candidates to be female.

An incentive system should be set up for political parties that respect the minimum 30% gender requirement while sanctions such as rejection of parties that fail to meet this minimum requirement for legislative elections.

- 2. Stakeholder Mobilisation and Strategic Partnerships:** Cultural and traditional practices are very entrenched in the undercurrents of women's political participation and representation in West Africa. One of the barriers that women face in the electoral process is the disapproval by certain traditional authorities of female candidates. Governments/ Ministries of Gender/Women's affairs should mobilize and create a core group of traditional and/or religious authorities to lend their support to the political participation and representation of women. Existing national council of religious bodies and national council of traditional authorities in the various ECOWAS countries should partner efforts or create their own initiatives in this direction. Technical support to women's network should be provided; advocacy of women's network should be strengthened; and their involvement in electoral dispute mediation and resolution enhanced.

Provide prominent support roles for males, and other local communities gatekeepers. Engage more males and sensitize family members especially males to support the political participation of women; identify and mobilize a core group of gender-sensitive male legislators to support the passage and implementation of gender equity bills; recruit and sensitize youth in schools and universities to appreciate the role of women in politics.

- 3. Pre-elections Gender and Election Capacity Building:** Long-term capacity building enhances the quality of women's political engagement and boosts their electability. This initiative should include the young women's mentorship. Political party in the various ECOWAS countries should be encouraged to alternate youth leadership position between female and male. This is in acknowledgment of the fact that almost all youth leaders of all political parties in West Africa are males. This would serve as

an opportunity to identify and nurture young women. Capacity building of women should include training on the use of a variety of information, education and communication (IEC) techniques, thereby improving their ability to use a variety media to highlight women's issues during electoral processes.

4. Civic and Voter Education: Special programmes aimed at sensitising the public on the situation of women need to be developed and funded. This will promote and consolidate the political rights of women. A message on tolerance toward women should be communicated and a national mechanism should be established in all ECOWAS countries for monitoring the participation of women in the electoral process.

5. Gender and Institutional Framework for Elections / Role of ECONEC:

Three different types of EMBs can be found in West Africa: Commissions with representation of political parties (e.g. Burkina Faso, Togo); Commission without political affiliation (e.g. Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Nigeria); and Commissions with supervisory roles (e.g. Mali, Senegal). All EMBs in West Africa, regardless of type, should have a well-resourced Gender Desk to assist in addressing major barriers that women face in the electoral process. There should be an effective gender policy in every EMB. Equitable recruitment of women as polling station officials and as party agents should be encouraged.

All Electoral Commissions regardless of type should be composed, as much as possible, by an equal number of males and females at both national and sub-national levels. Data on the women's participation in electoral process should be published as part of the information declared after every election. It would be adopted at the level of ECONEC that election results in all members EMBs should include the following:

- A. Number of males/females registered;
- B. Number of males and females who were presented (PR) or presented themselves (FPTP) as candidates for all elections at all levels (national or local);

- C. Number of males and females who actually voted in any election;
- D. Number of males and females who got elected in any legislative election;
- E. Challenges women faced in registration and voting processes and possible remedies.

National Bureau of Statistics in the various Member States should collaborate with the EMBs Gender Desks for collation and publishing the statistics.

6. ECOWAS Election Observation Missions / EAU: The Electoral Assistance Unit of ECOWAS Commission should ensure that ECOWAS long-term and short-term election observation missions should provide equal opportunity for males and females. This will enhance the knowledge of women on the electoral process. ECOWAS Commission must also ensure that women are part of the leadership of these missions. ECOWAS Election Observation Reports should provide an assessment of member state's progress in terms of gender and election as well as the elimination of traditional gender roles that restrict women's political participation and representation, in line with ECOWAS Handbook on Long Term (Election) Observation. ECOWAS should sustain the issue of gender in its Election Situation Room (ESR) and encourage other organisations that set up and operate Women's Election Situation Room.

ECOWAS Commission should improve the EAU database of qualified men and women in order to facilitate electronically generated observer list, based on a set of criteria to provide equal opportunity for women to be engaged in election observation missions.

7. Funding Gender and Election: Special funding should be provided for women candidates in countries where there is no public funding of political parties. This will ensure that women candidates have equal access to campaign resources and thereby levelling the electoral playing field. All ECOWAS countries should have public funding laws with specific provision to encourage, at least 30%, of candidates of parties or coalitions to be women. Special provision should be made for independent female

candidates, where needed.

- 8. Gender and Electoral Security:** Elections in West Africa by their nature have been prone to violence. However, election-related violence against women, and women human rights defenders, is a major factor hindering women's participation in politics. In many countries, women are targeted specifically because they are women, as opposed to the election violence that stems from differences in candidates' or parties' positions on issues. Women are thus exposed to gender-specific threats and violence, including gender-based verbal abuse, sexual abuse or rape, intimidation and murder.

To ensure that women are protected from harassment and intimidation, national election security task forces should have specific responsibility towards the protection of women during, before and after an election. Security sector institutions in the region should play a pivotal role in bringing electoral violence against women to light. Capacity building of security personnel on election-related gender-based violence should be enhanced. Awareness creation among populace on tolerance toward female candidates and electorates should be effectively undertaken. Special security protection for female election officials, observers and candidates should be provided by the state, when necessary.

- 9. The Media, Gender and Election:** The media is indispensable in civic and voter education; and propagating competing idea of candidates and political parties. The media in any West African country has yet to provide special focus to the dynamics and barriers that confront women in the effort to enhance their political participation and representation. State media at both national and community level, should allocate, in a non-partisan manner, airtime to cover the campaigns of female candidates. State media should contribute to highlighting and granting visibility to female candidates, which is particularly crucial for countries using the FPTP electoral system. The capacity of the media needs to be enhanced on gender, electoral rights, and gender-sensitive reporting.

10. Post-election Capacity Development for Elected Women: Capacity-building programmes should target elected women in the legislature and other institutions of governance as well as positions of leadership. There is the need to also build the capacity of women once elected to contribute effectively to processes of law making and thereby enhance their chances of re-election. With the capacities of women leaders built, they will be more effective and assertive in their elected positions. These programmes should include interaction with experienced female leaders. Special attention should be paid to content of agenda, timeliness and respect of appropriate approach to accessing the elected women and their leadership. Endeavour to include males in the capacity building of elected legislators to support gender equity bills.

Implementation Plan

This plan provides a list of activities for the period of 5 years (2017 – 2022), which are indicated in an action plan (see **appendix**) and a communication strategy.

GESF Communication Strategy

Activities scheduled to mobilize public support and generate visibility for the ECOWAS GESF are as follow:

1. Publication of the ECOWAS GESF in three (3) languages – English, French and Portuguese;
2. Set up a Transformation Team (*Groupe d'action*) to be composed of eminent persons, for the purpose of facilitating the implementation of the ECOWAS GESF;
3. Official launch in the margins of an ECOWAS regional event or Summit;
4. Press conference in Member states to be organised by the ECOWAS Commission, in collaboration with the various governments;
5. Press conference of development partners;
6. Create an electronic ECOWAS GESF newsletter, social media accounts (Facebook, twitter, etc.) and mailing list for dissemination of activities planned in the strategic framework; and
7. Create a web portal to report the activities, statistics from ECONEC on

women's political participation and representation on a country-by-country basis and its impact in the ECOWAS region.

GESF Monitoring & Evaluation

Activities scheduled to monitor and evaluate the value-addition of ECOWAS GESF are as follow:

1. Country specific progress on the GESF is determined biennially (in 2018 & 2020)
2. An assessment report of the state of women's political participation and representation in West Africa will be produced from country specific progress for a regional assessment report.
3. Final evaluation will be conducted in 2021, which will constitute a final assessment of the GESF and to determine its impact on the women's political participation and representation in the ECOWAS region.
4. The ECOWAS Gender Directorate will manage the M&E of the GESF jointly with ECOWAS M&E Unit, in collaboration with ECOWAS Special Representatives and CSOs.

Estimated Budget

Description	Annual Unit Cost US\$	Number of countries	Number of Years	Totals US\$
1. Human Resources				
1.1 Senior Officials and Experts	100,000	-	5	500,000
1.2 Support Staff	25,000	-	5	125,000
2. Missions to the countries	15,000	15	5	1,125,000
3. Equipment	40,000	-	-	40,000
4. Operation	125,000	-	5	625,000
5. Consultancies	25,000	15	5	1,875,000
6. Training	40,000	15	5	3,000,000
7. Sensitization	50,000	15	5	3,750,000
8. Support Women's CSO	50,000	15	5	3,750,000
9. Support Regional Fora	50,000	5	5	1,250,000
10. Inflation, Contingency	45,000	-	5	225,000
Totals	565,000	15	5	16,265,000

The total budget estimated for the ECOWAS GESF implementation is **Sixteen Million Two Hundred and Sixty-Five Thousand US Dollars (US\$16,265,000)**.

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ECOWAS GENDER AND ELECTION STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK ACTION PLAN 2017-2021

PILLAR 1: Gender & Legal Framework for Election

Objectives	Action	Expected Result	Partners	Time Frame	Output Indicators	Person(s) Responsible
1. To mainstream gender in all legal framework for elections	Develop and advocate a strategy for legal framework reforms at both regional and national level; Publish and disseminate the GESF; Stakeholder training on proposed legal reform; Sensitisation; Mainstreaming	Legal reform initiated, adopted and implemented for 30% - 50% of the total number of candidates presented by political parties at elections at all levels shall be women where a member state uses the FPTP system. Where proportionate representation system is used, the party list should be zebra (alternate male-female or female-male)	ECONEC/ national EMBs, ECOWAS Parliament, Gender ministries, Political Parties, national parliaments, CSOs, Development Partners	2017 - 2021	Number of sensitization activities organised	ECOWAS Gender Directorate
		Electoral legal framework reform, affirmative action/ quota is progressive introduced for elections at all levels.			Number of countries that have adopted the legal framework as prescribed by the GESF	Number of laws initiated, adopted and enforced
		30% - 50% of candidates presented on a party list shall be women who shall have equal opportunity of being elected, where a member state uses PR system (zebra list)			Number of women elected; Number of female candidates presented.	
		Member states using a Mixed system (PR & FPTP) shall have 50% of candidates on the party list to be women positioned to have equal chance of being elected.				

PILLAR 2: Gender and Institutional framework for elections/Role of ECONEC

Objectives	Action	Expected Result	Partners	Time Frame	Output Indicators	Person(s) Responsible
2.1 To enhance the participation of women in the management of the electoral process	Develop a database / Compendium of women qualified to manage the electoral process	Database / Compendium of women qualified to manage the electoral process is implemented in each member state is developed.	ECONEC/EMBs, ECOWAS DEAU, ECOWAS Gender Directorate, CSOs, Political parties	Jan 2017 - May 2019	National Compendium available in each member state.	Gender Ministries
		30% - 50% of all electoral officials and political party agents are female.			Number of females recruited as registration and electoral officials	ECONEC/EMBs & EAU
2.2 Produce gender disaggregated electoral data	Publish and sensitize stakeholders on usage of the database	30% - 50% of all political party agents are female.		June - Dec 2019	Number of female party agents	Political Parties, ECOWAS PAD & Gender Directorate
		Statistics on female and male registered, candidates, voted, and elected is provided by all EMBs			2017	Number of EMBs that publish gender disaggregated electoral turn-out
2.3 To identify and address challenges faced by women in the electoral process	Set up and fully resourcing of EMB Gender units that will develop, implement and monitor specific actions.	Challenges faced by women in registration and voting process are addressed by EMB gender units		2017	Gender Units of EMBs reports on women's access to registration and voting process; Every EMBs to have a gender policy	ECONEC/EMBs, ECOWAS EAU & Gender Directorate

PILLAR 3: Stakeholder Mobilisation and Strategic Partnerships

Objectives	Action	Expected Result	Partners	Time Frame	Output Indicators	Person(s) Responsible
3.1 To reduce the cultural and religious barriers/challenges to women's political participation and representation	Engage influential section of the population through an advocacy with faith-based organisations and traditional authorities in the various ECOWAS countries to partner efforts or create their own initiatives to mobilise male support	Support for equal political participation and representation gained from religious/faith-based organisations traditional leaders and societal gatekeepers Men support women's nominations	National networks of religious bodies National networks of traditional authorities ; family and societal gatekeepers, CSOs2354ET, Development partners	2017	Number of advocacy carried out within religious and traditional networks	CSO, Gender ministries in collaboration with Gender Directorate
3.2 To strengthen platforms of women's NGO networks for peaceful elections	Provide technical support to networks of women's NGOs	Network of women's NGOs are strengthened to support the Gender Agenda	CSOs, Development partners, ECOWAS Gender Directorate, etc.	2017 - 2021	Number of persons who benefited from technical capacity building and have used new capacity acquired Training report	

PILLAR 4: Women's Capacity Building in Politics and Governance

Objectives	Action	Expected Result	Partners	Time Frame	Output Indicators	Person(s) Responsible
4.1 To enhance the technical capacity of women to effectively engage throughout the electoral cycle	Build pre-election capacity on gender and election Train women on information, education and communication (IEC) activities	Leadership opportunity of women within political parties is enhanced; capacities of women in political party in the electoral process are strengthened; Alternation of political parties; to have leadership to be alternated between men and women to build women's capacity for future national elective roles.	Political Parties, Gender Ministries, CSOs	2017 -2021	Number of persons who benefited from mentorship & training; and number of women who have assumed leadership of political parties Training Reports	ECOWAS Gender Directorate & EAU
		Young women mentorship				
		Women's capacities are strengthened in communication technology The quality of engagement of women in political party dynamics is enhanced				

PILLAR 5: Civic and Voter Education

Objectives	Action	Expected Result	Partners	Time Frame	Output Indicators	Person(s) Responsible
5.1 To adopt gender sensitive civic and voter education	Gender sensitivity training	Knowledge and application of gender mainstreaming	ECOWAS Gender Directorate, ECONEC/ EMBs, national bodies responsible for civic and voter education, Civil society	2017 - 2021	Number of trainings organised and persons who benefited	Civil society
	Women specific training on civic and electoral rights	Women's knowledge of the rights and duties in electoral processes is strengthened			Number of trainings organised and persons who benefited	
	Sensitize on women's electoral rights among the populace				Number of public outreach events organised and persons who benefited (men and women)	

PILLAR 6: ECOWAS Election Observation Missions/EAU

Objectives	Action	Expected Result	Partners	Time Frame	Output Indicators	Person(s) Responsible
6.1 To improve the participation of women in ECOWAS election observation (EO)	Gender mainstreaming in election observation; Gender-orientation of EO checklist	50% members of ECOWAS election observation missions are female through electronically generated ECOWAS EAU database	ECOWAS EAU, ECOWAS Gender Directorate, CSOs, Development partners	2018	Percentage of females to males who took part in ECOWAS election observation missions	ECOWAS EAU
6.2 To mainstream gender, and increase the participation of women in domestic election observation		ECOWAS member state's progress in terms of gender and election is assessed		2021	ECOWAS observation mission reporting gender mainstreamed	

PILLAR 7: Funding Gender and Election

Objectives	Action	Expected Result	Partners	Time Frame	Output Indicators	Person(s) Responsible
7.1 To promote female candidature	Advocate and promulgate a law on funding of political parties which takes into consideration participation of women	Funding is made available to female candidates based on assessment of and conditions for application	Gender ministries/ institutions; political parties, ECOWAS Parliament, national parliaments, ECOWAS Court of Justice, ECONEC/EMBs, Justice ministries, Attorney-	2017	Number of public outreach conducted and persons who benefited	ECOWAS Gender Directorate & CSO
	Set up a structure/ mechanism with special funding to support female candidates in countries where there is no public funding of political parties		Gender Ministries Dept., Finance ministries, The Judiciary, Development partners, CSOs, ECOWAS Gender Directorate	2017 - 2021	Functioning funding support structure set up and number of female candidates who benefited	ECOWAS Gender Directorate
	Reduce nomination fees for female candidates		ECONEC	2017 - 2021	Percentage reduction of nomination fees for women candidates	ECONEC/EMBs & EAU

PILLAR 8: Gender, Election Peace and Security

Objectives	Action	Expected Result	Partners	Time Frame	Output Indicators	Person(s) Responsible
8.1 To ensure the safety and security of women throughout the electoral cycle at all levels	Train of security personnel and relevant actors / parties on electoral period Gender-based Violence (GVA) Set up and operationalize Gender Focal Points within the security agencies for synergy of actions	The capacities of security personnel and relevant stakeholders are strengthened Each women's network has a better understanding of the procedures for prevention and management of electoral disputes		2017 - 2021	Number of trainings conducted and persons who benefited Training Reports	ECOWAS Gender Directorate & National Ministry for Interior
8.2 To promote gender and conflict sensitive reporting	Create security consciousness awareness among women; strengthen the technical capacity of women's networks and those in political parties to engage in advocacy, prevention and resolution of electoral disputes	Special protection for female election officials, electorate, observers and candidates Women in political parties are more sensitized on the peace building, prevention and the management of electoral conflicts	Election security taskforces, Interior ministries, Defence ministries, ECONEC/EMBs, International peacekeepers missions, media	2017 - 2021	Number of public outreach events organised and persons who benefited	ECOWAS Gender Directorate & CSO
8.3 To promote political tolerance towards female candidates	Awareness creation among populace on legal provisions on security/violence during election and the need for the protection of women during electoral events.	Violence against women in the electoral process is minimised Women participate in the elections as principal peace and security actors	National civic education bodies, CSOs, political parties	2017 - 2021	Number of public outreach conducted	

PILLAR 9: The Gender, Election and Media

Objectives	Action	Expected Result	Partners	Time Frame	Output Indicators	Person(s) Responsible
9.1 To promote partnership with media to promote female candidates	Awareness creation among populace on tolerance to women candidates	Increased positive visibility of female candidates gained	Media, national authorities responsible for media regulation and monitoring, CSOs,	2017 - 2021	Number of media outreach	ECOWAS Gender Directorate Gender ministries & CSO
	Training of media on the election reporting with gender perspective	Increased participation of and support for female candidates			Number of media training	
9.2 To enhance the knowledge of female candidates in the use of a variety of media channels (to be media savvy)	Training of women in the use of a variety of communication	All elected female trained and the media saviness of women increased			Media reportage and number of followership of female candidates on social media	ECOWAS Gender Directorate & Gender ministries

PILLAR 10: Post Election Women Capacity Development

Objectives	Action	Expected Result	Partners	Time Frame	Output Indicators	Person(s) Responsible
10. 1 To enhance the technical capacity of women to effectively engage in governance	Capacity Building programmes should target elected women	Capacity and quality of engagement of elected female in political institutions enhanced	ECOWAS Gender Directorate, ECOWAS Parliament, International parliamentary networks, political parties	2017 -2021	Number of governance capacity building activities for elected women	ECOWAS Gender Directorate & Gender ministries

Gender and Election Strategic Framework and Action Plan

Adopted by ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government in June 2017

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