



# **RESEARCH REPORT ON PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN NATIONAL GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE GAMBIA**



ACDHRS -June 2012

Cover photo: Group photo of participants at the validation workshop of the research findings – May, 2012

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## **ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS**

|         |   |  |
|---------|---|--|
| ACDHRS  | - | African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies                      |
| APGWA   | - | Association for the Promotion of Girls and Women Advancement               |
| APRC    | - | Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction                      |
| CEDAW   | - | Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women |
| CSO     | - | Civil Society Organisation   |
| FGM     | - | Female Genital Mutilation  |
| FLAG    | — | Female Lawyers Association of The Gambia                                   |
| FRELIMO | - | Liberation Front of Mozambique   |
| GAMESCO | - | Gambia Agricultural Economic Socio-Cultural Organisation                   |
| GEWEP   | — | Gender and Women’s Empowerment Policy                                      |
| GMC     | - | Gambia Moral Congress  |
| GPDP    | - | Gambia People's Democratic Party   |
| IEC     | - | Independent Electoral Commission   |
| LGA     | - | Local Government Authority   |
| MoBSE   | - | Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education                                  |
| NADD    | - | National Alliance for Democracy and Development                            |
| NAM     | - | National Assembly Member   |
| NCP     | - | National Convention Party  |
| NDAM    | - | National Democratic Action Movement  |
| NEC     | - | National Executive Committee   |
| NGO     | - | Non Governmental Organization  |
| NPM     | - | New Public Management  |

|       |   |   |
|-------|---|---|
| NRP   | - | National Reconciliation Party                                   |
| NWC   | - | National Women's Council  |
| NWL   | - | National Women's League   |
| PDOIS | - | People's Democratic Organization for Independence and Socialism |
| PPP   | - | People's Progressive Party                                      |
| PPP   | - | Public Private Partnership                                      |
| UDP   | - | United Democratic Party   |
| UNDEF | - | United Nations Democracy Fund                                   |
| UNDP  | - | United Nations Development Programme                            |
| WANEP | - | West Africa Network for Peace Building                          |
| WDC   | - | Ward Development Committee                                      |
| WID   | - | Women in Development  |
| VDC   | - | Village Development Committee                                   |

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS) is pleased that it has been able to carry out this research on the **Promotion of Gender Equality through Participation and Representation of Women in National Governance and Development in The Gambia** and would like to, first and foremost, express its profound appreciation to the Consultant, Mrs. Adelaide Sosseh for being faithful to her Terms of Reference (ToR) in the performance of this task.

A special thank you goes to Mr. Matarr Baldeh, Mr. Modou Nyang, Mr. Mass Ndow, Mr. John Charles Njie and Ms. Adama Cooper-Jah (ACDHRS), who in various ways worked with the Consultant and provided much needed technical support and backstopping during the process.

The African Centre and indeed the Consultant would also wish to express thanks to the leadership of political parties for granting her interviews, particularly Mr. O. J. Jallow (PPP), Hon. Hamat Bah (NRP), Mr. Ebrima Manneh (UDP), Mr. Samba Gajigo (APRC) and Mr. Mohammed Fatty (GMC).

We would like to express special gratitude to Mr. Foday Baldeh of Fulladu Publishers and Mrs. Janet Sallah-Njie (FLAG) for their availability and contributions.

The African Centre appreciates all the participants at the validation workshop whose comments added value to the final report.

Finally, the African Centre would like to acknowledge our partners, especially the British High Commission in The Gambia as well as the Department for International Development (DFID), through Oxfam, for their financial support towards the implementation of the project, which is a sub-project of the 'Raising Her Voice' (RHV) Project which is being implemented in The Gambia by the African Centre.

## **Foreword**

Democracy is about fair representation and participation of all groups in a society. The low representation and participation of a particular group defeats the purpose of one of the most important pillars of democracy being participation and representation.

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment are high on The Gambia government agenda as evident in the signature, ratification and domestication of some regional and international conventions relating to women. At the national front, the adoption of a framework such as 'The Gender and Women's Empowerment Policy 2010-2020' and the Women's Act 2010 all aimed at realizing equality between men and women are worth commendation.

However, despite these advances, there is still room for improvement, more specifically on the participation and representation of women in governance. The publication *Promoting Gender Equality through Participation and Representation of Women in National Governance and Development in the Gambia* is the result of a research commissioned by the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies with support from its partners for an in depth analysis of how gender responsive are political party manifestos and other documents in The Gambia.

The publication, speaks directly to Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa to which The Gambia is a state party. Currently, the National Assembly in The Gambia consists of 53 members - 49 men and 4 women. Of the 4 women, 3 are elected and 1 appointed. Women constitute 7.55% and men 92.45% a clear indication that women are under-represented in the National Assembly.

Of the ten registered political parties in The Gambia, reference to women's empowerment and gender equality are made, but there are no concrete structures in place to promote women's political participation. However, one political party stands out as its Constitution makes provision for the selection of candidates and for the equal participation of women in the affairs of the party.

I hope the publication would not only be found useful in The Gambia, but also across the African continent as a sharing and learning material for the representation and participation of women in national governance.

**Hannah Forster, Executive Director**  
**African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**  
**PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION OF**  
**WOMEN IN NATIONAL GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE GAMBIA PROJECT**

**1. BACKGROUND:**

Women's participation and representation in national governance of The Gambia is limited. The African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS) seeks to redress this situation by implementing the **Promoting Gender Equality through Participation and Representation of Women in National Governance and Development in The Gambia Project**. The Project is geared towards the fulfillment of Article 9 of the Women's Protocol which calls on States Parties to ensure the right of women to participate in the political and decision-making process.

To better understand the reason for women's limited participation in the governance processes, the opportunities they have and the challenges they face the ACDHRS hired the services of a Consultant to conduct a gender analysis of political party manifestos, women's participation and political empowerment in The Gambia. The consultancy took place in the run up to the March 2012 Parliamentary Elections in The Gambia and provided the opportunity for the consultant to ascertain at first hand the theoretical perspectives that were seen to be impacting negatively on women's participation in the national assembly elections.

**2. METHODOLOGY:**

Data was collected from primary and secondary sources through interviews of political leaders and desk reviews of party political manifestos and other documents. The data was analyzed and collated to arrive at conclusions and recommendations made based on the conclusions. A draft report was developed and submitted to the African Centre for their input. The final draft report was validated by stakeholders at a validation workshop held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2012 at the Paradise Suites Hotel. Invaluable and valid comments have been incorporated into the final report.

**3. LIMITATIONS:**

Access to primary and secondary data sources was limited. There was reluctance on the part of the majority of party leaders to make themselves or their party political manifestos available. The study coincided with the run up to the 2012 National Assembly elections and party leaders were too busy with pre-election preparations and were either unwilling or unable to participate in the study. The timing had advantages and disadvantages. It afforded the Consultant the opportunity to observe at first hand, the election processes and the actual experiences of women in the pre-election and election period and on the flip side of the coin it created severe challenges on meeting with key informants and accessing the required documentation. The gaps were covered during the validation workshop.



#### **4. FINDINGS**

From independence in 1965 to date The Gambia has practiced multi-party democracy. Elections are held every five years for the National Assembly except during a two year transition from military rule in 1994-1996 which took the country from the 1<sup>st</sup> Republic from 1970-1994 to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic which started in 1997. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment are high on the national agenda as evident in the passing of legislation and development of policies that promote these agendas. The Gender and women's Empowerment Policy 2010-2020 provides the reference framework for gender mainstreaming and for women's empowerment in relation to its capacity for individual change and to political and social change.

The Women's Act 2010, makes provision for temporary special measures (Section 15) to be adopted by every organ, body, public institution, authority or private enterprise aimed at accelerating "de facto" equality between men and women. Under the temporary measures political parties are called upon to make a concerted and deliberate effort to ensure that as a first step; at least one third of candidates fielded for election would be women. Following this, it is hoped that there will be a gradual upward move to a 50% quota for women at all levels of decision making, as prescribed in the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality. Both Government and private institutions are also obligated to ensure that affirmative action is implemented to ensure that the requisite percentage of women are at the top echelon of employment and decision making level.<sup>1</sup> The special measures shall "not be considered discriminatory" and are to be "discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved".

In spite of this very important legislation, Gambian women are yet to enjoy the benefits of these special measures. They have to compete with men who have a large head start over them in a terrain that they are not familiar with. Generally women have operated in informal and private spaces were expected to "seen and not heard" and the public spaces were very much male dominated. The limited presence of women in the National Assembly is the result of their poor political engagement and their limited presence in political parties leading structures. Women's participation often remains marginal and this is evident in the very low numbers of women in the National Assembly.

Using the five point framework of the UNDP and National Democracy Institute (NDI)'s Empowering Women for Stronger Political Parties, A Good Practices Guide to Promote Women's Political Participation listed below, it is evident that the political parties fall short of meeting the globally agreed targets. These are:

1. Legal framework and governing documents are gender sensitive
2. Measures taken to promote women's participation in decision-making structures of political parties.
3. Women's wing or section established are strategically positioned within the party
4. Targets set for women's participation in party conventions

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<sup>1</sup> Gender Assessment Review of Sectoral Laws, Janet Sallah Njie, Women's Bureau, funded by UNFPA, Dec. 2010

## 5. Gender equality perspective mainstreamed into policy development

The analysis of the legal framework and governing documents of 7 out of the ten registered political parties in The Gambia<sup>2</sup> reveals that only the PDOIS Constitution has a gender equality clause. The provision is for “equal male and female representation in the Central Committee from the seven administrative areas. Hence at each time there must be at least seven female representatives in the Central Committee, one from each region and one in Charge of the Bureau for Women and Child affairs”. While the Constitutions of other parties for example the APRC Constitution commit to “securing gender equality in all spheres of national endeavor and eliminating gender discrimination in all its forms and manifestations by providing equal opportunities for both men and women”, the provisions for women’s representation in the various organs of the party are not based on equal representation but on token numbers allocated to women in these structures. The only position that calls for equal representation of men and women in the organs of the APRC is that of Administrative Secretary which requires that one of the positions (First and Second Administrative Secretaries) must be held by a woman.

The creation of special positions for women on the organs of the party is the main measure that is used by political parties to promote women’s participation in the decision making structures of party. Women are represented on the National Executive Committees (NEC), Coordinating Committees at the central level and the Divisional Executive Committees at the decentralized levels. The level of participation differs from one party to the other. For example the UDP indicate that 35% of the membership of the Organizing Committee, Campaign Committee and Central Committees are women and 40% of the NEC (10 out of 25) are women<sup>3</sup>. The APRC makes provisions for the position of National Women’s Mobilizer, Assistant Women’s Mobilizer and Deputy National Mobilizer Women. The occupiers of these positions are members of the Constituency Executive Committee, the Divisional Executive Committee, the Coordinating Committee and the NEC. By default other women can be represented on these Committees through their Ministerial, National Assembly or other portfolios.

All the political parties have institutionalized women’s wings within their party machineries. The women’s wing is essential in terms of agenda setting and pushing for parity representation. All the political parties acknowledge the important role that the Women’s Wing play in mobilizing membership, fundraising, campaigning for and supporting candidates for elections who are mainly men. Despite this acknowledgement of the supportive role that women play in

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<sup>2</sup> Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC), the ruling party; Gambia Moral Congress (GMC); Gambia People's Democratic Party (GPDP); National Alliance for Democracy and Development (NADD); National Democratic Action Movement (NDAM); National Convention Party (NCP); National Reconciliation Party (NRP); People's Democratic Organization for Independence and Socialism (PDOIS); People's Progressive Party (PPP); United Democratic Party (UDP), source: [www.iecgm/political-party](http://www.iecgm/political-party)

<sup>3</sup> UDP Policy on Women

party politics, this has not been reciprocal as men have not supported women to attain leadership positions within political parties or to stand for elections. The women's wings of political parties have given visibility to women and provided them a platform for participation but has not integrated them into central power structures. It is the only organ within the political party that has a 100% female representation as the only criterion for membership is being a *woman*.

All the parties have set targets for women's participation in political conventions. The APRC makes provision for 5 delegates from the Youth and Women's Wing to attend the Divisional Party Conference. They also have voting rights. The Divisional Conference precedes the National Congress. No targets are set for women's representation at the National Congress but as all the organs of the party including Ministers and all Members of the Party's National Assembly Group are voting delegates. As women are on these structures their participation is assured but not to the same levels as that of men as they are already under-represented in these structures. Gender neutral policies are applied in the selection of party's candidates for elections. For example PDOIS holds primaries to elect the Presidential candidate. The person with the highest number of votes is the Party's Presidential candidate. Candidates for National Assembly elections are selected by the party members in each constituency on consultation with members of the Central Committee. The Central Committee is required to work towards facilitating diversity at this level through gender, regional and ethnic balance.

All the party manifestos commit to mainstreaming gender perspectives into **development concerns**. Human development, poverty alleviation and improving access to basic social services particularly for women are high on their agendas. Reducing illiteracy among women and ensuring their continuing education is seen as tool for attaining these targets. **Social protection issues such as** childcare and parental leave and human rights issues are addressed as well as **physical concerns-** reproductive rights, physical safety and gender-based violence and elimination of harmful traditional practices.

Women comprise more than 50 percent of the pool of those eligible to stand for election and hold political office in The Gambia but that proportion is not reflected in the composition of the National Assembly and other decision-making bodies. While the percentage of women in the National Assembly has grown over the past two decades, the pace of improvement has been slow; parity between men and women in parliament remains a long way off. The reasons for the low representation of women are multivariate. Some of these reasons contained in A Capacity Needs Assessment of Women in Decision Making undertaken by the Women's Bureau in 2008 and reaffirmed in a recent workshop organized by the Female Lawyers Association of The Gambia (FLAG) include:

- The non selection of women candidates for elections by political parties
- Women shying away from presenting themselves as candidates for political leadership because they lack the self confidence and courage (borne out by the few women who contest elections) as they and are unable to withstand the psychological and emotional

stress of abusive and derogatory language used during political campaigns; they are also unable to face the shame of losing and consequently would rather not try than lose; they generally do not have the educational qualifications stipulated in the election laws or they simply cannot afford the actual and opportunity costs of election campaigns.

The outcomes of the 2012 National Assembly Elections attest to all of the above. Women were visibly absent from the process and this has translated to their under-representation in the 2012-2017 legislative body. Only the APRC fielded female candidates. The 3 female APRC candidates represented a slight increase 1 candidate (33%) increase over the previous legislative elections. With only 3 (6.25%) female candidates out of 48 elected positions this is a far cry from the 33% recommended in the Women's Act. All the 3 women were elected (one was returned unopposed for the third time). Only one opposition party the NRP contested for the elections but did not put forward a female candidate. The other opposition parties in The Gambia did not present candidates as they had boycotted the 2012 National Assembly elections on the grounds that the playing field was unlevel.

Because of the boycott 18 independent candidates emerged to contest the elections one of whom was female. The independent female candidate for Banjul Central lost the elections even though she performed quite well despite all the odds stacked against her-lack of backing of a political party and a hostile environment. This has greatly impacted on the diversity of the National Assembly in terms of gender representation and presence of opposition members. The current National Assembly consists of 53 members (48 directly elected seats and 5 appointed members). The distribution by sex is 7.55% women (3 elected and 1 appointed) and 92.45% (49) men. Women candidates are rare in opposition political parties especially at the grassroots level.

Having failed to attain this important target of 33% female representation in the 2012 National Assembly elections it is now contingent upon the political parties to seize the opportunity to increase the participation of women in the upcoming local government elections scheduled to take place in 2013. The Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Decision Making Project (2008) had paved the way for women to successfully stand for elections at the local government level by building their capacity through leadership training. This resulted in 28 female members contesting for the 2008 Local Government Authority (LGA) Elections. Out of 28 female candidates who stood for elections 16 (57%) of them were elected. The increased participation of women in the LGAs notwithstanding this represents only 13.44% female representation as compared to 86.55% males. Even though male councilors greatly outnumber that of females this is a marked improvement on previous years when there were practically no women in LGA administration. Female representation in other governance structures at the decentralized level is abysmally low. There are no female Mayors or Chairpersons of Councils. Under the traditional leadership structures there are no women chiefs and out of the 1873

villages only 4 (0.20%) are headed by women<sup>4</sup>. Women are rare in opposition political parties at the grassroots level, as well as at the level of leading structures

The low participation of women in the governance structures is a cause for concern and many organizations including the Women's Bureau, the ACDHRS and women rights NGOs supported by the UN agencies in The Gambia, the European Commission and OXFAM through the "Raising her voice" have implemented programmes and activities that are designed to increase women's participation in governance. Prior to the 2012 National Assembly elections, FLAG and the West Africa Network for Peace Building (WANEP) to name a few engaged with political parties and women's groups to encourage them to select women candidates and motivated potential women candidates to apply for selection by their parties. This however did not materialize due to the factors indicated in 4.10 above. There is also a bias in favour of men in the way that candidates are selected, as the parties would rather go for safe seats than field candidates on the basis of promoting gender equality.

Democracy is about fair representation of all interest groups in the society and the low representation of women is a violation of their right to participate and have a say in their own development. One of the drivers of governance is the full and active participation of women in the democratization process, not only as supporters and electors but as participants in the decision making process at all levels. The low representation of women in the National Assembly in The Gambia does not reflect legal restrictions – women can vote, support candidates, and run for office. Two main factors can be attributed to the low representation of women- the selection processes that favour male politicians and the socio-cultural factors that militate against their participation.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Despite incremental progress over the past 16 years the 7.55% of women parliamentarians remains well below the internationally agreed target of 30%. Where women constitute half the population in a political system which supports equality and where both women and men are legally eligible for political office, women's participation should be equal to that of men. If this is not the case, it signifies deep flaws within the political system.

Representation is not only a means of ensuring individual participation. It is also the responsibility of the representatives to act on behalf of the constituents, including women, who elected them and reflect their ideas and aspirations. Women's disproportionate absence from the political process would mean that the concerns of half the population cannot be sufficiently attended to or acted upon.

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<sup>4</sup> UNDP Governance and Gender in Development The Gambia Medium Term Plan 2005 – 2005 This study "Capacity Assessment of Women in Decision Making Positions"

Political parties are important structures for policy development and for setting political priorities, and are therefore one of key institutions through which gender equality should be promoted. However, few of the political party manifestos and Constitutions that promote gender equality uphold these pledges in practice, and few women hold the top decision-making positions within their ranks.

Political parties need to move beyond the rhetoric on gender equality to reform their systems, structures, selection procedures and attitudes to make inroads for equal representation of women and men in positions of power and decision making. In addition, political parties should prioritize providing resources to women's wings so that they can fully carry out their mandate.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Political parties:

- **Women's wings should lobby their political parties** to nominate women candidates to run for elections. This is because it is far more difficult to win elections without the backing of a political party, especially at the national level. Women seeking to enter into politics must turn to political parties and garner support from their female colleagues already established in women's wings.
- **Provide timely financial support for women contestants** both in capacity building and during campaigning to address women candidates' relative lack of access to resources due to their low economic status. New candidates need exposure and understanding of the campaign strategy: this initial stage is normally self sponsored and can disadvantage women who are not economically powerful.
- **Reviewing party political manifestos and the internal organization of political parties** so that there are measurable and concrete indicators for increasing women's participation in the decision making processes at the party level and in the electoral processes at all levels.
- **Develop and maintain a database of viable potential female leaders** and provide them with mentors consisting of past and present women politicians to groom the future women political leaders through one to one peer advisory sessions; training the identified female leaders on how to run effective campaigns and building their competencies in campaigning related topics.

### Government

- **Law reforms** are required in relation to Section 105 of the National Constitution to allow local languages to be used in the National Assembly; passing legislation on proportional representation and the Constitutional requirement (section 70) that political candidates should go on leave without pay for 1 year in order to be eligible to contest in an election should be also be amended to enable unsuccessful candidates to return to work immediately after elections.
- **Apply the gender parity principle in all decision making bodies and political party candidate lists:** This can be achieved by applying a quota system for women. This will

require a review of the election act. Consultations on how this will be done will be necessary but the time to ACT is NOW. Lessons can be learnt from Rwanda – a country that is leading in this direction.

- **Level the playing field socially and economically:** Gambian women have less access to resources than men in all aspects of life, including education, and therefore have fewer economic opportunities than their male counterparts. Lack of economic power has major implications for women in terms of accessing electoral positions, especially in relation to expenditure needs during campaigning.
- **Provide potential women candidates with the necessary resources-financial, technical and material-to mount a respectable campaign** by so doing it is expected that they will perform better than they are doing now.
- **Training for all state organs** such as the police, the security apparatus and the media to treat all political parties equally and to ensure their access to the state media without fear of intimidation and guarantee their safety and protection during campaigns.
- **Strengthen capacity of institutions such as the National Council on Civic Education** so that citizen participation is enhanced and based on informed choices.

#### CSOs and NGOs

- **Behaviour change communication** to bring about a change of mind set, attitudinal and behavior change towards women vying for political leadership for all political parties, the media and the State to combat the cultural practices that inhibits the participation of women.
- **Advocacy for law reforms in the following areas:** advocate for legal and constitutional reforms especially those that militate against gender inequality and for implementation of a quota system which can be used as an opportunity to increase the number of women in political offices.
- **Build capacity of political parties** through promotion of the human rights instruments that provide for women's increased participation in politics through training and engagement with the political party leaders on the need to implement the globally and nationally agreed targets.
- **Build strategic alliances:** Religious leaders are an important ally as they can play a lead role in breaking down the myths and stereotypes surrounding women's participation in politics as this has been a major barrier in debarring women from political leadership.

#### Intergovernmental Organisations

- **Funding for NGOs/CSOs and religious groups,** to support women's rights and women's empowerment programming through civic education, adult and non-formal education; constitutional and legislative reform, leadership training and gender training for governance structures at all levels.
- **Support South-South and North-South women's solidarity** in terms of experience sharing and networking on how best to push for more women participation in decision making structures and on what works best in different contexts. Support study tours to Rwanda.



## **STUDY ON PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN NATIONAL GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE GAMBIA PROJECT**

### **1. INTRODUCTION:**

The gender analysis of party manifestos and other political party documentations has been commissioned by the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS) in a bid to implement the **Promoting Gender Equality through Participation and Representation of Women in National Governance and Development in The Gambia Project**.

The Project is geared towards the fulfillment of Article 9 of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Women's Protocol), which calls on State Parties to ensure the right to participation in the political and decision making process. Both the Women's Protocol and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW) have been ratified and domesticated through the enactment of The Gambia Women's Act 2010.

This notwithstanding there are still gaps between legislation and practice and the participation of women in the political processes still falls below expectations. To better understand the position of women in the party political processes, the ACDHRS hired the services of a consultant to conduct a gender analysis of political party manifestos, women's participation and political empowerment in The Gambia. This coincided with the 2012 National Assembly elections and provided the opportunity for the consultant to ascertain at first hand the political process (from selection and nomination of candidates, to the campaign and elections)

### **2 SCOPE OF WORK:**

The Consultant was required to:

1. Carry out a research by way of desk review to analyze the level of women's representation as contained in the Political Party Manifestos and other political party documentation.
2. Make a descriptive analysis of women's participation and political empowerment in The Gambia.
3. Submit a draft report which shall include recommendations as well as strategies to address the said recommendations to the ACDHRS.
4. Submit a newspaper article on the outcomes of the review.
5. Act as a facilitator at the workshop to validate the findings of the research with relevant stakeholders. The outcome of the workshop shall include the development of an action plan for the popularization of the gender quota system by political parties.



6. Submit to the African Centre a final draft of the research findings including a summary (both hard and bound copies (6) and a soft copy in Microsoft Word) within 10 working days following the validation workshop.

### **3. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:**

A major challenge was accessing the primary and secondary sources of data. Apart from two of the parties who responded immediately there was some reluctance on the part of the other parties to make their party political manifestos available. This could partly be attributed to their busy schedules in relation to the high level of political activity during an election period. Most of the key informants were unavailable for this reason. Conducting the study during this period had its advantages and disadvantages. The advantage as described in 1.3 above is that it enabled the consultant to observe at first hand events on the ground in relation to women's experiences in aspiring for and contesting elections as candidates. The disadvantage was that the key informants were too tied up with what was happening and therefore were not readily available for interview. The gaps were filled during the validation workshop.

### **4. METHODOLOGY:**

Data was collected from two sets of data sources. Party leaders formed the main source of primary data. Key informant interviews were conducted with three of the party leaders and other persons who had actively engaged in driving the agenda forward. Secondary data was collected from available documentation such as the Party Political Manifestos obtained from seven of the political parties representing 70% of the total political parties, Party Constitutions, reports and internet sources through desk reviews.

Participant observation was undertaken by way of studying and observing people's behaviors and attitudes during the election period.

The data was analyzed and collated to arrive at conclusions and make recommendations based on the conclusions. A draft report was developed and submitted to the African Centre for their input. The final draft report was validated by stakeholders at a validation workshop held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2012 at the Paradise Suites Hotels. Valid comments and inputs from the workshop have been incorporated into the final report which has been submitted in hard and bound copies (10) and a soft copy in Microsoft Word to the African Centre.

### **5. SITUATION OF GAMBIAN WOMEN IN PARTY POLITICS:**

The Gambia is a patriarchal society which has resulted in gender inequities and inequalities and eventually the exclusion of women in the decision making spheres in the private and public domains. Even though women constitute more than half (51%)<sup>5</sup> of the adult population their

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<sup>5</sup> Census Data 2003, The Gambia Bureau of Statistics

participation in national governance is extremely limited. This is a cause of concern not only in The Gambia but globally as the country is signatory to a number of regional and global commitments that demand increased space and voice of women in decision making bodies at all levels. Concrete evidence of the country's commitment to attaining these globally agreed principles are the National Gender and Women's Empowerment Policy (GEWEP), 2010-2020 and the Women's Act 2010.

The GEWEP is to achieve gender equity and women empowerment as an integral part of the national development agenda. One of the goals of the GEWEP to be addressed under the Gender and Governance thematic area is that by "2020 all decision making institutions and bodies would have achieved at least 30% women representation at all levels." A major challenge that has been identified in attaining this goal is how to ensure that the Constitutional principles contained in the 1997 Constitution (clause 28) that accords equal dignity of the person to both man and women and gives women "the right to equal treatment with men, including equal opportunities in political, economic and social activities" prevails over the other Constitutional provisions that recognize customary laws and practices, that tend to subjugate and abrogate these fundamental rights that women should enjoy (section 32 (5) subsection 2 (a)). One of the proposed strategies to attain this is to advocate for the increased capacity for national women machineries and women in decision making positions at all levels.

The Women's Act 2010 domesticates the CEDAW and the Women's Protocol and provides the legal framework to deal with discrimination in both the public and private domains. It offers a unique opportunity for redress, as it gives women a mechanism which they can use to ensure that their political rights are protected. The Act is a very innovative piece of legislation which as well as containing similar provisions as contained in the 1997 Constitution of The Gambia also creates new provisions aimed at promoting and protecting the rights of women in the Gambia. The provisions that are relevant to women in decision making from the 2010 Women's Act are contained in Section 15. This section makes provision for temporary special measures to be adopted by every organ, body, public institution, authority or private enterprise aimed at accelerating *de facto* equality between men and women.

Under this section a distinction is made between *de facto* and *de jure* discrimination. Considering the social and cultural set up of The Gambia, there may be instances where even though the law does not create or cause any impediment for women, the social and cultural environment may not be conducive for the achievement of equality. Here, Government and all private institutions are called upon to take positive steps to achieve genuine *de facto* equality. This becomes more relevant in the political arena, employment, and decision-making at all levels, where women are not legally barred from participating effectively on an equal footing with men, but may not be able to do so due to cultural bias in favour of men, and stereotypical perception of the role of women.

The Women's Act 2010, calls upon political parties, Government, the private sector and all other agencies, organs and institutions to put in place temporary special measures to ensure genuine *de facto* equality. It is therefore expected that there would be a concerted and deliberate effort on the part of all political parties to ensure that as a first step; at least one third of candidates fielded for election would be women. Following this, it is hoped that there be a gradual upward move to a 50% quota for women at all levels of decision making, as prescribed in the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality. Both Government and private institutions are also obligated to ensure that affirmative action is implemented to ensure that the requisite percentage of women is at the top echelon of employment and decision making.<sup>6</sup> These special measures are not to be considered discriminatory in the "Act or in any other law in force, but shall in no way entail, as a consequence, the maintenance of unequal or separate standards". They should be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved.

This important legislation which is a fulfillment of the government's obligation to promote and respect the rights of women is only one step in the equation. The other side is that women need to know their rights and seek redress when their rights are violated. In most cases the majority of the women because of their illiteracy and lack of access to information are unable to know what these legal instruments contain and even when they do know about it may be constrained by the lack of financial resources to seek redress. The culture of silence also means that they accept their situation silently and are unwilling or are simply unable **"to stand up, speak up and act"**. To address this lacuna the Women's Bureau supported by the United Nations System in The Gambia and several non-state actors have taken it upon themselves to popularize the Women's Act notably the Female Lawyers Association of The Gambia (FLAG), WANEP, APGWA, GAMESCO to name a few. The ACDHRS through the 'Raising Her Voice' project funded supported by Oxfam, UK has funded women's organizations to raise awareness of this important legislation and other women's empowerment activities in the country designed to increase women's participation in the decision making processes.

Other initiatives preceded these efforts. A Capacity Needs Assessment of Women in Decision Making undertaken by the Women's Bureau in 2008 under the Capacity Enhancement of Women in Decision Making Project, funded by the UNDP indicated that for women to participate in politics they need to have the confidence, the resources and the backing of their party and the support of the electorate. The reality however is that women face a number of challenges which constrain them from running for office thus limiting their participation to supporters rather than contenders. These challenges were also reiterated by the party political leaders at the Forum organized by FLAG on Temporary Measures and include the following:

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Gender Assessment Review of Sectoral Laws, Janet Sallah Njie, Women's Bureau, funded by UNFPA, Dec. 2010

- Low literacy levels generally constrain women as they lack the educational qualifications to participate in these processes. The eligibility criterion for proficiency in the English language<sup>7</sup> disqualifies many women aspirants who are not literate in English. Women who have the educational qualifications do not want to participate in politics by running for elected positions.
- Women are unable to mount an election campaign as these are costly in terms of time, energy, financial, material and technical resources. Due to their multiple roles, women do not have the time to participate fully and also due to their poverty they do not have the financial resources to invest in election materials or to pay for technical services.
- Women have to be supported by their parties through the selection and nomination processes and be given the insignia of the party to campaign. Generally political parties choose candidates that are most likely to win the seat and for this reason prefer male to female candidates.
- Women are unable to face the shame of losing and consequently would rather not try than lose. They are also unable to withstand the psychological and emotional stress of abusive and derogatory language used during political campaigns which they perceive as humiliating to themselves and which can also be reflected on their children's future lives.

The Follow-up Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Women in Decision Making Project (2008) also had a component for capacity building for women in leadership, awareness creation and advocacy on the social and economic benefits of women in decision making, strengthening the gender mainstreaming process, enhancing and supporting a well coordinated programme on gender based violence prevention, management and monitoring. Both projects were successfully implemented and a key result of the successful outcomes of the project is the number of women who participated in the Local Government Authority (LGA) Council Elections in 2008. An unprecedented number of females (28) presented their candidature and stood for elections. Out of these 16 (57%) were elected (see table below). Even though male councilors greatly outnumber that of females (103 males compared to 16 females) this is a marked improvement on previous years when there were practically no women in Local Government Administration. The increased participation of women in the Local Government Elections notwithstanding this represents only 13.44% female representation as compared to 86.55% male participation. The situation becomes even more exclusive at the level of the top leadership in the LGAs as there are no female Mayors or Chairpersons of Councils (both positions are electable). The figures diminish even further under the traditional leadership structures as there are no women chiefs and out of the 1873 villages only 4 (0.21%) are headed by women.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> 1997 Constitution of The Gambia, Chapter 7 part , section 89, Qualifications for Membership to the National Assembly

<sup>8</sup> UNDP Governance and Gender in Development The Gambia Medium Term Plan 2005 – 2005 This study "Capacity Assessment of Women in Decision Making Positions"

**Table 1: Number of Elected Council Members by Sex and Local Government Area**

| Local Government Area      | Number of Councillors |        |       |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|--------|-------|
|                            | Male                  | Female | Total |
| Banjul City Council        | 5                     | 4      | 9     |
| Kanifing Municipal Council | 18                    | 4      | 22    |
| Brikama Area Council       | 21                    | 3      | 24    |
| Mansakonko Area Council    | 11                    | 1      | 12    |
| Kerewan Area Council       | 16                    | 0      | 16    |
| Kuntaur Area Council       | 9                     | 1      | 10    |
| Janjanbureh Area Council   | 11                    | 1      | 12    |
| Basse Area Council         | 12                    | 2      | 14    |
| Total                      | 103                   | 16     | 119   |

Source: Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), 2009 and Municipal Councils

**Table 2: Local Government 2008**

| Positions                 | Total # of men and women | Number of women | Number of men |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Governors                 | 5                        | 0               | 5             |
| Deputy Governors          | 5                        | 1               | 4             |
| Chairpersons of councils  | 5                        | 0               | 5             |
| Mayors                    | 2                        | 0               | 2             |
| Chiefs                    | 48                       | 0               | 48            |
| Ward Councilors (elected) | 114                      | 15              | 99            |
| Alkalolu                  | 1873                     | 4               | 1869          |

Source: *Report of Capacity Assessment of Women in Decision Making, UNDP, Women's Bureau, 2008*

At the level of the legislature, up to the time of its dissolution in February 2012 there were only 4 female members out of 53 members. Parliamentary elections were held on 25 January 2007. A total of 103 candidates contested the 2007 elections. Only the APRC fielded candidates in all 48 constituencies. Out of whom only 2 (4.16%) were women. The UDP fielded 29 candidates and its partner, the NRP, put up nine candidates none of whom were female. The outcomes of the elections resulted in the APRC's absolute majority in the National Assembly with 42 seats, the UDP took 4 seats, NADD 1 and an independent candidate 1. Two women were elected and 3 were appointed making a total of 5 women among the 53 members based on the Constitutional provision for the nomination of five members 3 of whom were women. Without this provision the number of females would be even less as only a few successfully vie for

elected positions. One of the appointed women assumed the position of speaker. By the end of the legislative period the female speaker was replaced by a male speaker and a woman assumed the position of deputy speaker. Since the start of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic women have been elected to the prestigious position of (deputy speaker 1997/2001; 2001/2006 and 2011/2012) and speaker (2006/2010).

**Table 3: Distribution of Elected National Assembly Members by Sex 2007/2012 Legislative Session**

| Political Party/Affiliation | Number of Members by Sex |        |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|--------|
|                             | Male                     | Female |
| APRC                        | 40                       | 2      |
| UDP                         | 4                        | 0      |
| NADD                        | 1                        | 0      |
| Independent                 | 1                        | 0      |
| Total                       | 46                       | 2      |

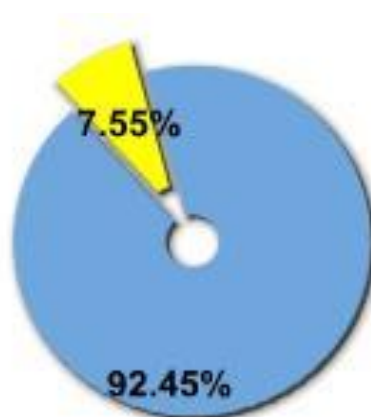
Source: IPU PARLINE Database GAM

**Table 4: Distribution of Elected National Assembly Members by Sex 2007/2012 Legislative Session**

| Political Party/Affiliation | Number of Members by Sex |        |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|--------|
|                             | Male                     | Female |
| APRC                        | 40                       | 3      |
| NRP                         | 1                        | 0      |
| Independent                 | 4                        | 0      |
| Total                       | 45                       | 3      |

Source: Source: IPU PARLINE Database GAM <http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2117.htm>

**Graph 1: Distribution of National Assembly Members by Sex in the 2007/2012 Legislative Period**



5.10 Affirmative action by the President in the appointment of Ministers has resulted in the attainment of the 33% internationally target in the previous Cabinet (2006/2011). Ministerial positions are by appointment and not elections and the President of The Gambia has used the powers vested on him by the 1997 Constitution to appoint women Ministers to the following positions indicated in table 4 below. With 6 Women Ministers out of a total number of 17 in the current Cabinet the proportion of women to men is quiet impressive at 35%<sup>9</sup>. This would not have been the case if the women had to be elected before becoming eligible to be Ministers as there would virtually be no female candidates to choose as this is what obtained in the first Republic. In the first republic (1971-1994) there was only one nominated female minister. The only elected female Member of Parliament who emerged to contest for and win elections from 1982/1992 (two terms) was not selected by her party in the 1992 parliamentary elections even though her seat was a safe one. After her departure from the political arena in 1992, there were no female candidates until the 1996 elections. She served as deputy Minister in the first Republic (elected) and as Minister in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic (nominated). Affirmative action by the Head of State in the first Republic resulted in five nominated Women Parliamentarians.

**Table 5: Women Ministers in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic**

| Ministry  | Period                |
|---|-----------------------|
| Vice president and Minister of Women's Affairs              | 1997 to date          |
| Minister of Education                                       | 1994/1998; 1999/2004  |
| Minister of Basic and Secondary Education                   | 2004 to date          |
| Minister of Higher Education, Research Science & Technology | 31/12/2010 to date    |
| Minister of Health and Social Welfare                       | 1994/1995; 1995/1996; |

<sup>9</sup> The Cabinet as at May 7<sup>th</sup> 2012, <http://www.statehouse.gm/cabinet.html>

|   |  |
|---|--|
|   | 1996-20/03/1997; 1998; 2008;<br>02/11/2011 to date                 |
| Minister of Justice and Attorney General                              | 1994/1995; 1997/1998;<br>1998/2000; 2008                           |
| Minister of Communications, Information and<br>Information Technology | 2005-08<br>03/19/2008 – 02/05/2009                                 |
| Information and Tourism   | 1994/1995  |
| Minister for Tourism and Culture                                      | 1996/2001; 2001/2004;<br>2004/2006; 2006/2010<br>4/02/2010 to date |
| Deputy Minister of Petroleum<br>Minister of Petroleum                 | 2008/2012;<br>2012   |
| Minister of Environment   | February 2012 to date  |
| Minister of Fisheries and Natural Resources                           | 2004/2006  |
| Minister of Youth and Sports  | 1994/1995  |
| Minister for Economy and Finance                                      | 2005   |
| Minister for Industry and Employment                                  | 2005   |

Source: <http://www.statehouse.gm/>; <http://www.guide2womenleaders.com/Gambia.htm>

## 6. POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE GAMBIA AND WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION:

Currently there are ten registered political parties in The Gambia. These are the<sup>10</sup>:

1. Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC), the ruling party;
2. Gambia Moral Congress (GMC);
3. Gambia People's Democratic Party (GPDP);
4. National Alliance for Democracy and Development (NADD);
5. National Democratic Action Movement (NDAM);
6. National Convention Party (NCP);
7. National Reconciliation Party (NRP);
8. People's Democratic Organization for Independence and Socialism (PDOIS);
9. People's Progressive Party (PPP);
10. United Democratic Party (UDP)

The political landscape has changed over time. From Independence in 1965 to April, 1970 the country had a parliamentary democracy with a Prime Minister, and the Queen of England as the Head of State. The country became a Republic in April 1970, with an Executive President as the Head of State, and the Parliament as the Legislative body. The Gambia retained a democratic tradition, holding universal adult suffrage elections every 5 years. These elections were contested by a number of parties, with changes in the number of political parties and their

<sup>10</sup> [www.iecgm/political-party](http://www.iecgm/political-party)



leadership<sup>11</sup>. Women were however visibly absent in the leadership of these parties or as elected representatives of these parties. In both periods 1972-1994 and 1996 to date Women's role in the political leadership arena in The Gambia has been abysmally low as indicated in 5.8 and 5.9 above.

A major milestone in The Gambia's political history was the military coup in 1994 which ushered in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic. In terms of women's participation in elections as elected candidates the second republic has fared slightly better than the first in terms of the numbers of female candidates that have emerged to contest in elections. In the first republic there was only one woman who successfully contested elections under the banner of the ruling PPP in 1982 and became a member of parliament from 1982/87 and again in 1987/92 - the first woman to be elected into The Gambia Parliament. Hitherto women candidates had performed poorly when they contested for elections to the legislature or the local councils simply because they were women. In most instances their aspirations had not gone beyond the selection process. The situation was even worse for the few women from the opposition parties –the National Convention and the National Reconciliation Parties and the PDOIS who braved the hostile climate to stand elections as party candidates. They could not win their seats as the odds stacked against them were enormous.

In the 2002/2006 legislative elections of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic three women from the ruling party successfully stood for elections and won their seats. In the 2007/2011 legislative elections only one out of the three incumbents was selected by the party to run for a 2<sup>nd</sup> term of office and a new female candidate was selected for another constituency. Thus there is no guarantee that being a member of the ruling party and having a safe seat is sufficient for a woman politician to be selected and supported by her party to contest and re-run for elections. Women have not fared better in the 2012 legislative elections. The APRC's final list of candidates for the 2012 National Assembly elections had only 3 women candidates out of 48 candidates representing 6.25% of the total number of candidates. Of the selected candidates 35 retained their candidature and 13 were new candidates. Of the 13 new candidates only 1 (8%) was a woman. This represents a lost opportunity for the party who could have selected more female candidates as they had the advantage of incumbency.

The NRP was the only opposition party that fielded candidates (8) none of whom were female, as six of the opposition parties namely GMC, GPDP, NADD, PPP, PDOIS and UDP decided not to participate until at such a time when the IEC can assure a level playing field. The boycott resulted in the emergence of 20 Independent candidates out of whom 3 withdrew before the date reducing the number to 17. Out of these only 1 was a woman. Thus women were in the minority from the onset as there were only 4 (8.33%) female candidates (3 APRC and 1 Independent) out of the 48 candidates that contested for the elections. Even before the actual

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<sup>11</sup> PPP (from Independence to date); United party (Independence to 1987); National Convention Party (1975 to date); National Liberation Party (1975-1982); Gambia People's Party (1987-1992); People's Democratic Party (1987-1992); PDOIS (1987-date)

voting the outcomes were obvious. It was clear that women would be under-represented in the 2012-2017 National Assembly even if all the five nominated seats were allocated to women by the President. All three APRC women candidates won their seats and one of them was returned unopposed for the third time. The female independent candidate was not elected and the opposition had none. (See annexe 1).

The issue of safe seats continues to militate against women's selection by political parties. Even though political party leaders acknowledge the significant role played by women in elections as supporters and voters they draw the line at selecting them to stand as candidates in the interest of safe seats. In his discourse on the "Old Way No Longer Suffices, It is Now Time to Pave A New Day", Halifa Sallah, Leader of PDOIS<sup>12</sup> spells out the strategies that the opposition will use to increase their presence in the National Assembly. One of these is "to negotiate safe seats with the other opposition parties so that those candidates that are best suited to win the 14 seats will be given priority and support by all parties." This of course immediately excludes the selection of women candidates as they represent a risk which the parties cannot afford in their bid to "create a democratic state under which a multi party democracy would strive". Women candidates in opposition parties are less likely to win seats than their counterparts from the ruling party and in this year with the boycott 20 (41.66%) of the seats occupied by the ruling party are safe as they are unopposed. The argument of safe seats is debatable as party interests over-ride the issue of safe seats when it comes to the selection of women candidates.

Promises made by party political leaders at the workshop organized by FLAG during the Sensitization Workshop for Political Leaders on Women's Political Representation did not materialize<sup>13</sup>. Even the APRC which had the advantage of incumbency did not significantly increase the number of its female candidates. This buttresses the point made by Mrs. Nyimasata Sanneh, first elected woman to The Gambian Parliament (1982) that this will not be easy: "male parliamentarians do not just want to step down and lose their power. Access to parliament is not going to be served on a silver plate. Women have to stand up and claim for their rights". This view was supported by other participants who emphasized the need for women to be supportive of women politicians. Women must show solidarity with each other and avoid pulling other women down especially those who have demonstrated the willingness to aspire for political leadership<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> The Daily News, 22-23 February 2012, 05 Kombo Sillah Drive, Churchills Town, Serekunda, The Gambia

<sup>13</sup> Report on FLAG'S Sensitization of Political Parties on Women's Political Representation, 24<sup>th</sup> August 2011, at the Paradise Suites Hotel, FLAG, with the Inter Party Committee under the aegis of the Independent Electoral Commission and funded by the U.S Department of State, Secretary's Office of the Global Women's Issues Small Grants Initiatives, Women in Action Project

<sup>14</sup> Draft Report of the Validation Workshop on Promoting Gender Equality through Participation and Representation of Women in National Governance and Development in The Gambia, ACDHRS, The Gambia, May 2012

Democracy is about fair representation of all interest groups in the society and the low representation of women is a violation of their right to participate and have a say in their own development. One of the drivers of governance is the full and active participation of women in the democratization process, not only as supporters and electors but as participants in the decision making process at all levels. Gambian women have however stood on the margins of the democratic process for too long. Even though all the political parties have democracy and governance as one of their areas of intervention (see annexe 2) this is not translated into concrete actions in terms of selecting female candidates and supporting their successful candidature. This lack of action on the part of the political parties to increase women's participation in the governance structures runs contrary to the provisions of the 1997 Constitutions and the Women's Act which seek to increase their participation to 30%.

## 7. ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL PARTY MANIFESTOS

The UNDP and National Democracy Institute (NDI)'s "Empowering Women for Stronger Political Parties, A Good Practices Guide to Promote Women's Political Participation" framework is used for the gender analysis of political parties in The Gambia. The framework looks at the following:

1. Legal framework and governing documents are gender sensitive
2. Measures taken to promote women's participation in decision-making structures of political parties.
3. Women's wing or section established are strategically positioned within the party
4. Targets set for women's participation in party conventions
5. Gender equality perspective mainstreamed into policy development

### **Box 1: Definition of the concept of gender mainstreaming**

"Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality".

Source UN (1997)

It is necessary at this juncture to define gender mainstreaming to ensure that there is a clear understanding of this concept and its difference from the Women in Development (WID) and Women's Empowerment Approaches. This clarification is necessary at this stage for most of the Political Manifestos propose the WID approach even though the stated goal is gender equality. The paradigm shift from the WID (1970s-1980s) to the gender and development approach (1990s) is based on the strong evidence that specific interventions for women do not result in gender equity but further marginalize and isolate women from the mainstream of development. Mainstreaming gender into political parties can be an important tool for encouraging women to participate actively in party politics and national development activities at all levels.

**Legal framework and governing documents are gender sensitive:** PDOIS is the only party that has a clear gender equality clause that calls for “equal male and female representation in the Central Committee from the seven administrative areas. Hence at each time there must be at least seven female representatives in the Central Committee, one from each region and one in Charge of the Bureau for Women and Child” and spells out how this is to be realized. All the Party Manifestos have stated their gender equality commitments but do not indicate how this will be achieved. For example GMC’s gender policy<sup>15</sup> is based on non- discrimination and equity and informed by “the fundamental truth that there can be no meaningful development in any society without the effective participation of women”. Its vision is: “a Gambia where every woman can feel safe, secure and empowered; where our mothers, sisters and daughters are assured of a life of dignity and personal security”. The steps to achieving this laudable goal are not detailed. In spite of the claims made by Amie Sillah, an Executive Member of NADD that: “NADD is an alternative. It came to bring about gender equality, social inclusion, social justice and a better Gambia and by Ya Fatou Sonko, another NADD member that NADD is “the only party that can do something for the women;<sup>16</sup> there are no indications on how this will be done.

**Measures taken to promote women’s participation in decision-making structures of political parties:** Creating positions for women on key organs of the political parties such as the National Executive Committee (NEC), the Coordinating Committee and the Central Committees of the Party is the main pathway for promoting women’s participation in decision-making structures of political parties. In the UDP, women constitute 35% of the Organizing Committee, the Campaign Committee and the Central Committee and 40% on the NEC (10 out of total membership of 25). The APRC Constitution makes provision for the Women’s organizer (article 16); Assistant Women’s Mobilizer (article 19) and Deputy National Mobilizer women (article 21). The occupiers of these positions are by virtue of their offices members of the Constituency Executive Committee, the Divisional Executive Committee and the NEC. Article 21d also makes provision for the position of Administrative Secretary of the NEC. There are two administrative secretaries (First and Second) one of whom shall be a woman and the first of whom shall act as Secretary to the NEC. Reserving one of the positions of Administrative Secretary for a woman points to the stereotypical way in which women are still perceived as another position could easily have been used to establish the gender parity principle.

Gender neutral policies are applied in the selection of party’s candidates for elections. For example PDOIS holds primaries to elect the Presidential candidate. The person with the highest number of votes is the Party’s Presidential candidate. Candidates for National Assembly elections are selected by the party members in each constituency on consultation with members of the Central Committee. The Central Committee is required to work towards facilitating diversity at this level through gender, regional and ethnic balance. The NRP was the first and only party so far to sponsor a woman candidate in a by-election. Cognizant of the

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.maifatty.org/about-gmc/womens-league>

<sup>16</sup> Source: Foroyaa Newspaper Burning Issue, Issue No. 18/2006, 9-12 March 2006

enormous challenges that women candidates have to face when contesting for party political elections, the party was determined to field women candidates in the 2012 National Assembly elections. This did not take place however as the challenges were too many. Since its inception in 1996, the UDP has been trying to get professional women into the party to occupy some of the leadership positions in the party. Currently the fourth position in the party's hierarchy that of legal and human rights matters is occupied by a woman. However attempts to attract professional women into the party have not been successful and the numbers are falling due to attrition. When the party started they had a handful of women and now they only have a couple of them<sup>17</sup>.

**Women's wing or section established are strategically positioned within the party:** All the political parties have institutionalized women's wings within their party machineries. The women's wing is essential in terms of agenda setting and pushing for parity representation and all the political parties acknowledge the important role that the women's wing play in mobilizing membership, fundraising, campaigning for and supporting candidates for elections who are mainly men. Despite this acknowledgement of the supportive role that women play in party politics, this has not been reciprocal as men have not supported women to attain leadership positions within political parties or to stand for elections. For example the UDP describes its women's wing as being "in the forefront of party activities – public meetings and rallies, tours and above all committee meetings. They organize their own activities and go on countrywide tours to mobilize support, to create awareness of the activities of the party and to build capacity of the membership". The women's wings of political parties have given visibility to women and provided them a platform for participation but has not integrated them into central power structures. It is the only organ within the political party that has a 100% female representation as the only criterion for membership is being a *woman*'.

**Targets set for women's participation in party conventions:** Targets are set by all political parties for women's participation in political conventions. The APRC makes provision for 5 delegates from the Youth and Women's Wing to attend the Divisional Party Conference. They also have voting rights. The Divisional Conference precedes the National Congress. While no targets are set for women's representation at the National Congress it is assumed that their participation is assured as all the organs of the party that they serve on as well as all Ministers of State and all Members of the Party's National Assembly Group are voting delegates. Designated positions reserve a quota of 1-5 seats for women on the party political organs. These numbers are too small to make any significant difference on women's representation.

**Gender equality perspective mainstreamed into policy development:** All the political parties commit to mainstreaming a gender perspective into **policy development concerns**. Human development, poverty alleviation and improving access to basic social services particularly for women are high on their agendas. Reducing illiteracy among women and ensuring their continuing education is seen as tool for attaining these targets. **Social protection issues** such as

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<sup>17</sup> UDP's Womens Policy

childcare and parental leave, human rights issues are addressed as well as **physical concerns-** reproductive rights, physical safety and gender-based violence and elimination of harmful traditional practices.

### **APRC**

a) The APRC is committed to women's empowerment and gender equality as described in the section on Women and Development in the APRC Manifesto. In pursuance of the parties belief that "no national development programme would be successful without the effective participation and full support of women", the party leader in his capacity as President of the country and head of state has translated this into concrete action by appointing qualified and capable women in positions of authority and decision making from the APRC's first term in office (1996-2002). These include the position of H.E. the first Female Vice President; Female Secretaries of State now Ministers, the first female Accountant and Auditor General; the Secretary General and Head of the Civil Service and Permanent secretaries. This trend has extended to the judiciary, and the legislature with the appointment of the first female Deputy Speaker and Speaker respectively and the first Gambian female judges.

b) In recognition of the critical role of women in development the APRC commits itself to:

- Eliminate all forms discrimination against women and girls
- Reduce illiteracy among the women by providing accessible, relevant and good quality education for all.
- Improve quality and access to the health care services.
- Encourage women's participation in all areas of development and to accord them special opportunities that would enable them participate in decision making positions to the highest levels.

c) Chapter 2 Article 9 J of the APRC Constitution makes the provision that it will "ensure gender equality in all spheres of national endeavour and eliminate gender discrimination in all its forms and manifestation by providing equal opportunities for both and men and women without regard to ethnicity race, creed, ideology, culture, social or economic status towards the building of a just society."

### **UDP**

a) The UDP is committed to the principle of gender equality and the rights and privileges of all citizens. This is consigned in the Constitution of the party as one of the beacons of its policy and has guided the development of the party from formation up to the present time which is always made with the full participation of the women members. Empowerment of women requires their transformation from cheer leaders to decision makers and the UDP commits to increasing participation of women in the decision making process at district, regional and national levels including the policy and implementation levels. Access to political decision making is to be secured at both the local and national levels by ensuring their representation in local councils and national parliament and in executive and management positions.

b) The UDP believes that the starting point of addressing the women's issue is to:

- Attack their poverty status. This is to be done through increasing their access and control to productive resources including land and credit.
- Review legislation and social customs that discriminate against women.
- Review government employment or income enhancing programmes to make them more accessible to women thus reducing existing income disparities between men and women.
- Institute government poverty alleviation programmes to increase earning potential and formal sector employment for women's produce such as vegetable plots.
- Increase the rate of female participation in educational and training programmes, formal sector employment and agricultural extension programmes by ensuring that women have equal access to government resources provided through schooling, services, employment and social security programmes. In order to improve the economic status of women, UDP shall also provide incentives for the informal sector which employs the majority of the female labour force.

#### **PDOIS**

a) The PDOIS party constitution has created a Bureau for women and children affairs. Chapter 12 states that the Bureau:

1. Shall be responsible for promoting gender sensitivity and concern for child development in all areas of party life and the society in general under the general direction and control of the Central Committee
2. Shall conduct research on marriage and family life with a view to formulating policies that would free family members from all forms of negligence, cruelty and exploitation;
3. Shall operate social institutions to counsel adults, youth and children on all social problems;
4. Shall manage services such as nurseries and other institutions which shall offer children full opportunity to develop their abilities to the fullest and promote their intellectual, physical, emotional and behavioral growth;
5. Shall monitor the activities of all social institutions and programmes affecting all sectors of society and legislation that have social implications to men, women, youth and children.

b) PDOIS has the mechanism for updating itself on women affairs with the view to producing the policies and programmes to enhance the participation of women in the administrative life of society. Candidates for elections are selected in transparent manner. PDOIS motivates members to take charge of their destiny regardless of gender. In spite of this however women PDOIS members are constrained from participating in elections by the culture of patronage that is associated with politics in the country. Without being a member of the ruling party one has little access to resources and exposure in the media.



## **NRP**

a) The NRP recognizes the important role played by women in the socio-economic and cultural development and is fully cognizant of the need to increase their participation in the decision making processes if meaningful development is to take place. Women's empowerment is therefore high on the agenda of the party which aims at:

- Improving access for Gambian women to higher education and training and also to pursue a rigorous policy in encouraging and motivating higher enrolment of girls in schools.
- Providing accessible Mother and Child care nationally but especially in the disadvantaged and rural areas for high-risk groups so as to ensure safe motherhood and child survival.
- Strengthening women organizations by networking, organizing seminars and conferences to consider issues of concern to our women.
- Motivating and educating rural and disadvantaged women in income generating activities to uplift their economic conditions and to provide them with supportive infrastructure.
- Eliminating all forms of discrimination against women in the workplace, at home and in the community.

## **PPP**

a) The PPP is committed to “making gender equality a reality and to harness and focus the rich potential of our women folk to the course of national development”. To this end the party pledges to:

- Review, amend and strengthen current legislation on gender equality.
- Review all oppressive traditional practices and customary laws that perpetuate gender discrimination.
- Elaborate gender sensitive policies that will ensure mainstreaming of gender in all aspects of national development.
- Facilitate the promotion of women in all areas of public life not just in politics.
- Take affirmative action and train women to take up decision making positions in society.
- Reinforce the mobilization campaign to enroll more girls in school.
- Create an enabling environment for NGOs/CSOs dealing in gender issues and facilitate linkages networks among these organizations.
- Create an independent Ministry of Women's Affairs with a higher profile and a permanent equality monitoring Council to monitor and enforce compliance with gender equality legislation and best practices.

## **GMC**

a) GMC's gender policy<sup>18</sup> is policy is based on non- discrimination and equity and informed by “the fundamental truth that there can be no meaningful development in any society without

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.maifatty.org/about-gmc/womens-league>



the effective participation of women”. Its vision is: “a Gambia where every woman can feel safe, secure and empowered; where our mothers, sisters and daughters are assured of a life of dignity and personal security”.

b) The Party Constitution mandates that:

- Women must be represented at every level of Party hierarchy.
- No committee established under the Party shall be legitimate unless it is gender balanced.

c) To this end The GMC has established a National Women’s League(NWL). The NWL is administered by an eleven member Executive Committee, including the Party Leader, reflecting its importance at the highest level of leadership. In coordination with the NEC the Women’s League is tasked with the obligation of implementing GMC’s **Equity Agenda**. This includes:

- Establishing and coordinating the activities of regional and district branches throughout the country, and ensuring that women are adequately represented, and enjoy the right to meaningfully participate in decision making processes affecting their lives and the country.
- Putting in place mechanisms to empower women to enjoy the right of enforcing the laws, decisions, policies and initiatives affecting them.
- Verifiable compliance with all domestic laws and policies relating to the welfare of women and international protocols, laws and conventions on the status of women.
- Eradicating all traditional practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) that militate and inhibit against the liberty and prosperity of women, through the provision of enabling legislation.
- Ensuring that every woman must be educated and skilled, and capable of guiding a new generation. Gambian society must accept that women are partners, not obstacles to development.

## **8. INCREASING WOMEN’S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION – LESSONS LEARNT FROM OTHER COUNTRIES**

Over the past few decades, women’s mobilization has been influenced by recommendations from the International community, especially the 1979 CEDAW and the 1995 Beijing Platform. More recently the African response has been reinvigorated by Women’s Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Right and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality acceded to by African Heads of States. These mechanisms have served as a powerful lobbying tool for women in different national contexts, and have contributed to increasing women’s access to parliament. The reporting mechanisms attached to these instruments serve as a coercive push for action and this has yielded remarkable results in a relatively short space of time evident in

the increase in women parliamentarians in many countries worldwide. The main reason for the increase was the implementation of electoral quotas for women<sup>19</sup>.

According to IDEA Global Quota Project (2004) governments and political parties have experimented with different types of quotas, with mixed results to address the uneven political playing field on which women and men compete and to safeguard the presence of women in parliament. Electoral quotas may be constitutionally or legislatively mandated or they may come in the form of political party quotas. They usually set a target or minimum threshold for women, and may apply to the number of women candidates proposed by a party for election, or they may take the form of reserved seats in the legislature. The report gives a comparative analysis of the different types of quotas and emphasizes the need to distinguish between **'quotas for women' and 'gender quotas'**.

Quotas for women can be perceived to be discriminatory by some who are opposed to quota systems including women themselves. To avoid this type of situation, countries in Latin America use a gender neutral approach in the formulation of laws for participation in the electoral process. The law provides for a maximum of 60% or a minimum of 40% representation of either sex. This type of formulation is important for conquering resistance to quotas, especially on the grounds that they are discriminatory. Proponents for the quota system view them as compensation for structural barriers that prevent fair competition and are seen as an efficient way of attaining **'real equality'**, that is, **'equality of results.'** Those against quotas regard them as violating the principles of fairness, competence and individualism and therefore consider quotas to be a form of *discrimination*.

**Enforcement mechanisms**, or sanctions, are also important if the quota systems are to be effective. Inadequate or non-enforcement of many quota laws have rendered them ineffective and merely window dressing, as they are not enforced in practice. The Republic of France is a good example of this type of scenario. The French Constitution was reformed in 1999 to provide provisions favouring equal access of women and men to electoral mandates and elective functions and making political parties responsible for facilitating equal access. This amendment also called the **law on parity** was implemented with dramatic effects in the 2001 local elections by raising the percentage of women councilors from 21 to 47. Lists that did not comply with the parity law were rejected by the electoral authorities. However, the parity law was not effectively applied in the Senate elections of 2002 and was contested under a majority system. Political parties were ambivalent to the applicable penalties and "opted to forfeit a percentage of funding received from the state, rather than ensure equal representation in their selection of candidates"<sup>20</sup>. The financial penalty that was imposed on political parties that did not meet the 50% target of women candidates proved ineffective as political parties opted to forfeit a percentage of funding received from the state, rather than ensure equal representation in their selection of candidates.

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<sup>19</sup> [www.quotaproject.org](http://www.quotaproject.org)

<sup>20</sup> Ditto 1 above

The unprecedented increase in the political representation of women in the African countries indicated in the table below in some instances surpassing the Nordic countries has to do with the expanded use of various forms of quotas. In part, these quotas result from pressure applied by women's movements in African countries, as well as by international women's movements. This is an outcome of changing international norms regarding female representation, as evident in various UN and AU regional conventions and resolutions in relation to women's participation in decision making processes.

**Table 6: Top Twenty Highest Ranking Countries in Terms of Women's Representation, in 2011 & 2003**

| <b>Country</b> | <b>% of Women<br/>2011</b> | <b>Ranking in 2011</b> | <b>% of Women<br/>2003</b> | <b>Ranking in 2003</b> |
|----------------|----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Rwanda         | 56.6%                      | 1                      | 48.8%                      | 1                      |
| Andorra        | 50.2%                      | 2                      | 14.3%                      | 57                     |
| Cuba           | 45.2%                      | 3                      | 36.0%                      | 7                      |
| Sweden         | 44.7%                      | 4                      | 45.3%                      | 2                      |
| Seychelles     | 43.5%                      | 5                      | 29.4%                      | 16                     |
| Finland        | 42.5%                      | 6                      | 37.5%                      | 4                      |
| South Africa   | 42.3%                      | 7                      | 29.8%                      | 15                     |
| Netherlands    | 40.7%                      | 8                      | 36.7%                      | 5                      |
| Nicaragua      | 40.2%                      | 9                      | 20.7%                      | 35                     |
| Iceland        | 39.7%                      | 10                     | 30.2%                      | 13                     |
| Norway         | 39.6%                      | 11                     | 36.4%                      | 6                      |
| Mozambique     | 39.2%                      | 12                     | 30.0%                      | 14                     |
| Denmark        | 39.1%                      | 13                     | 38.0%                      | 3                      |
| Costa Rica     | 38.6%                      | 14                     | 35.1%                      | 9                      |
| Angola         | 38.2%                      | 15                     | 15.5%                      | 54                     |
| Belgium        | 38.0%                      | 16                     | 35.3%                      | 8                      |
| Argentina      | 37.4%                      | 17                     | 30.7%                      | 12                     |
| Spain          | 36.0%                      | 18                     | 28.3%                      | 17                     |
| Tanzania       | 36.0%                      | 18                     | 21.4%                      | 32                     |
| Uganda         | 35.0%                      | 19                     | 24.7%                      | 26                     |
| Nepal          | 33.2%                      | 20                     | 5.9%                       | 101                    |
| Germany        | 32.9%                      | 21                     | 32.2%                      | 11                     |

**Source: Statistical Archive, Women in National Parliaments, [www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif-arc.htm](http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif-arc.htm) 2001/2003**

In Africa, quotas fall into two main categories. One includes reserved seats or executive appointments that are intended to determine the number of seats to be held by women in an election. Women may run for reserved seats in their districts and can be elected either by an electoral college of men and women (Uganda), or by women in each district/province

(Rwanda). Another variant of the reserved seats system is the women-only list in which only women can vie for these seats on a nationwide basis regardless of party affiliation or district. In Tanzania, a reserved seat quota for women is allocated to political parties based on the proportional number of parliamentary seats won in an election. The second category involves measures adopted voluntarily by political parties aimed at influencing the number of women candidates (for example, placing women higher on the party list, alternating women and men). Sometimes the adoption of national legislation or constitutional mandates requires that all parties nominate a certain number of women as electoral candidates. FRELIMO in Mozambique have adopted the voluntary quotas with impressive results.

**Box 2: Rwanda a Case Study:**

After it emerged from its genocide in 1994, Rwanda, embarked on institutional and Constitutional reforms that were designed to ensure that such a situation would never arise again in the country. The new Constitution (adopted in May 2003) had key clauses that promoted gender equality and women's participation at all levels of decision making. The National Assembly is a new, bicameral (Chamber of Deputies and Senate) political institution that is structured to eradicate the different barriers that prevent women from participating in decision making.

Article 9, of the Constitution spells out the fundamental principles of the constitution which includes among others "the equality of all Rwandans, and equality between women and men reflected by ensuring that women hold at least 30% of the positions in decision-making bodies"

Articles 54 stipulates that: the political organizations must at all times reflect, in the recruitment of their followers, the composition of their governing bodies, and all their operations and activities, national unity and the promotion of gender.'

Article 76 spells out the composition of the Chamber of Deputies: It is composed of eighty (80) members, as follows:

1. Fifty-three (53) elected under Article 77 of this Constitution;
2. Twenty-four (24) female members, two per province and the city of Kigali, elected by the District Councils, City Councils, and the Kigali City Council, to which are added the Executive Committees of the women's structures in the provinces, the city of Kigali, the cities, the districts, and the sectors.'

Article 185: Sets up an office within the gender observatory that will monitor respect for quotas at every level.

The quotas were first implemented in the 2003 parliamentary elections and resulted in Rwanda emerging in first place regarding women in national legislatures worldwide, according to the classification by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). With 48.8% of the members of the Parliament women, Rwanda was the country closest to male/female parity in politics. In 2011, Rwanda still at first place has more women 56.3% (45 women out of a total of 80 seats) in the lower senate. Before these elections, 25.7% of the members of the Rwandan legislature were women. Reserving Twenty-four (24) seats (30 %) for women in 12 provinces, including the city of Kigali guaranteed the participation of women at the grassroots or local level. In addition, elections were held in the provincial district, where women accounted for more than two-thirds of voters.

When these far reaching changes were being effected Rwanda had the same challenges as most countries in SSA. These included gender inequalities in relation to access to basic services and resources, and in regard to political participation and decision-making; low education levels and literacy rates (only 47.8% of women are literate, compared to 58.1%); high maternal mortality rates (1,070 per 100,000 births), and infant mortality rates (110 per 1,000 live births); a high fertility rate (approximately 5.8 children per woman); low employment and economic opportunities for women with a concentration of women in agriculture (about 90%) and in the informal sector, resulting in the feminization of poverty and high levels of gender-based violence.

### **Rwanda a Case Study (Continued)**

Rwanda's positive experience is based on the following factors:

- Good governance, which gives rise to the political will to achieve gender equity and equality. The Transition Government (July 1994 and May 2003) had the political will to facilitate the progressive establishment of institutional mechanisms to promote gender equality and to bolster the capacities of women.
- The state's partnership with civil society. CSOs including women's organizations all played a proactive role in influencing the policy and legal changes using different strategies to influence the process such as awareness creation; conducting training, carrying out research to evaluate the indicators of equality and equity, and advocacy and lobbying.
- Training executive and managerial personnel so that they are capable of listening to the population, and persons trained in advocacy based on the results of evidence based studies and research.
- Strengthening the capacity of women through training and other mechanisms.
- Female solidarity and partnerships with men in regard to gender issues and creating a permanent network for sharing experiences of the new style of leadership built on a partnership between women and men.
- Institutionalizing budgets that integrate gender.
- Reviewing laws that enshrine inequalities or any form of discrimination against women.
- Gender mainstreaming in all laws, policies and programmes.
- Putting up a monitoring mechanism to monitor implementation.

## **9 MAXIMISING ON OPPORTUNITIES TO ENHANCE WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS**

The National Assembly of The Gambia is a Unicameral system. The term of the legislature is five years and reasons for interruption of the term are resignation, death, dissolution. There are 48 elective positions and 5 nominated. The position of the speaker is by appointment - elected by the members of the Assembly. Election is held at the start of the first sitting of the newly elected Assembly, before taking the oath. Any member duly presented can be a candidate. The Chief Justice presides over the Assembly during the voting and the Independent Electoral Commission supervises the voting. The Chief Justice announces the results immediately and this cannot be challenged. This has made it easy for women to assume the position of Speaker and Deputy Speaker respectively at various times as there is little or no opposition to their being elected after they have been nominated.

The composition of the National Assembly is provided for in Section 88 of The Constitution. This Section does not take into consideration, provisions relating to Temporary Special Measures in favour of Women, to ensure representation at the highest level of decision making in the country. There is a need to review this provision to ensure that at least one-third of the National Assembly is constituted by women in line with international best practices. Section 100 Of the Constitution provides that legislative power of The Gambia shall be exercised by Bills

passed by the National Assembly and assented to by the President. To ensure compliance with the Women's Act, both the National Assembly and the President must ensure that all proposed Bills comply with its provisions before they are passed or assented to as the case may be. This becomes particularly relevant for the Annual Budget and Appropriation Bill. These must not be adopted or enacted unless there is assurance that adequate resources have been allocated to ensure implementation of all the provisions of the Women's Act, 2010. It has been proven however that legislation is inadequate to get the desired results in terms of women's participation. A bottom-up approach is therefore proposed as the best means of motivating and propelling women to take up the challenge at the national level.

Decentralization as in empowering local communities and localizing the delivery of basic services to citizens is a highly regarded as a tool for good governance worldwide. Its appeal as a public policy agenda lies in the promise it holds for reform and the introduction of a new system of governance that focuses on those sections of the populations that tend to be by-passed in decision making processes such as women and young people. In the Gambia, the constitutional provisions form the basis of government policy and the existing legislative enactments on local government. The Local Government Act (LGA) 2002 establishes a new local government system based on decentralization. This provides the legal framework for the regulation and implementation of the new local government system, the main frame for good local governance, and the enabling environment for poverty alleviation in the Gambia.

Within the framework of decentralization, the 2007 LGA elections heralded in a wind of change. For the first time in the political development of the country, 20 women contested the elections and out of this 16 won their seats. These women are now serving councilors in their various constituencies and this could have been used as a catalyst to bring them to the national level. In building women's leadership capacity it is important to look at what is working for the community and is sustainable and can be built upon. Several initiatives such as the Capacity Needs Assessment of Women in Decision Making; The gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and Women in Decision Making Project (2008) all allude to the gains that can be made by strengthening the gender mainstreaming process and enhancing and supporting a well coordinated programme on gender equality and women's empowerment.

The LGA Act 2002 provides for female representation in Village Development Committees (VDCs) and Ward Development Committees (WDCs) and calls for equal male and female representation on these committees. In addition it requires the actions of the network of key actors involved in local development in the LGAs. These include: the council (mayors/chairpersons, staff and councilors), regional governors, staff of line-ministries, private sector operators, NGOs and community based organizations (CBOs), VDCs and WDCs. It is inclusive in character, and it is in line with the underlying principles of the new public management (NPM) and public private partnership (PPP). It recognizes the critical role CSOs, NGOs and the private for profit sector can play in the process of local democracy and

development. It is imperative that the capacity of all these stakeholders is built through gender awareness and sensitisation training.

The Women's Act 2010 repealed the 1980 National Women's Council (NWC) Act. It however maintains the existence of both the Council and the Bureau, empowering both with wider and more comprehensive mandates. Under the new legislative framework the Women's Council is empowered to carry out a wide range of functions related to Women's Empowerment and the promotion of Gender Equality. Specifically, the Bureau serves as the secretariat to Council and facilitates council meetings and trainings, as well as implement decisions made by Council.

Women Councilors are appointed by the Minister of Women's Affairs after consultation with the Local Authorities. The Council is composed of

Section 58 1:

- a) One representative from each electoral constituency
- b) One female representative from each local government Council
- c) The Executive Director of the Women's Bureau serves as an ex-officio member

2 d-g) The President of The Gambia appoints special nominees from the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE), Agriculture, Health and Social Welfare, the private sector, one representative from each of the two main religious groups, one representative from NGOs and one female legal practitioner from the Attorney General's Chambers.

3) One person is appointed by the President from among the members of the Council to be the Chairperson of the Council and the Council appoints a Vice-Chairperson from the constituencies. The NWC has all the characteristics of the legislative body except that the members are appointed and not elected. They also do not pass laws but influence their development.

An Institutional Assessment of Eight Line Ministries and the National Assembly, undertaken in 2010 by the Women's Bureau indicated that women councilors are highly knowledgeable of their roles and responsibilities and demonstrate a commitment to carrying these out in an effective and efficient manner. They are also enthusiastic and proactive to work for women's empowerment and to uplift the status of the individual woman irrespective of her "political affiliation", location, educational background, ethnicity and so on. In reaching out to these poor, marginalized and excluded women the NWC are faced with a number of challenges not least of which is the lack of transportation to facilitate their mobility. Another challenge is the lack of financial resources to organize community based sensitization, awareness creation and capacity building programmes. This notwithstanding they try within the limits of their capacity to inform, educate and communicate with local communities on gender mainstreaming activities, training and financing opportunities and other social and cultural events.



Generally relationships are good with the LGAs and the government, NGOs and private not for profit organisations in their areas of operation. A few of the NWC complained about resistance from government institutions who believe that they are the technical experts and that the NWC is interfering in their areas of operation. They have been able to overcome such obstacles however and move forward with the agenda and are able to influence processes and decision making. One area in which they have been unable to make in-roads into is to participate in the budget processes of the LGAs. Having had their capacity built in participatory needs assessments and planning the NWCs want to use these skills to influence the budgetary allocations of the LGAs. This aspiration is very much in line with the principles of decentralisation.

This body could easily metamorphose into a nucleus for selecting women candidates for the National Assembly. Taking cue from the Rwandan case study the women councilors from the electoral constituencies can now be elected to the National Assembly. This will require amendments in the National Women's Act but can be studied and after consultations with the key stakeholders the necessary changes can be effected. In addressing the challenges faced by women in the political field in The Gambia creative and innovative ways such as those proposed above need to be explored to address the gender gap in party political participation. Affirmative action has been applied in other countries as a tool for addressing geo-political and social imbalances in the political sector with outstanding results. It is widely accepted and recognized that unless these steps are taken to close the gap many capable and competent women will continue to be excluded from the electoral process at all levels. Affirmative action on a limited scale has enabled women to gain access to parliament through the system of presidential appointments by using the provisions for nominations contained in the 1997 Constitution.

## **10. LESSONS LEARNT**

There are various schools of thought with respect to the proficiency in English criterion. While some people argue that literacy in English should not be a barrier to aspiring women candidates and should not be part of the eligibility criteria to qualify to be a NAM others feel that it a very important factor. A NAM who is only proficient in the national languages no matter what his/her level of knowledge of the development and the human rights agenda will be seriously limited in carrying out his/her work effectively. The work of the NAMs is not confined to The Gambia. In addition to carrying out their legislative and oversight and scrutiny functions at the national level, NAMs are expected to engage with other Parliaments and other bodies outside The Gambia and to translate global compacts into national legislations and policies. This means that they must have the skills to communicate with a wider audience and to use a wide range of communication tools. If these skills are lacking the NAM will of necessity be excluded from these processes resulting in marginalization.

The use of multiple languages in the National Assembly will contribute to its diversity and richness. At the same time the issue of costs must be borne in mind. There are the direct and

indirect costs of translations which could impact on the availability of documents. Time would be another cost associated with a multi-lingual parliament. Valuable time can be lost while the Assembly waits for the translation of important documents. Depending on the issue at hand, this problem can range from slight annoyance to major legislative slowdowns. The other cost is associated with the issue of language rights of the NAMs. These are factors that the proponents of a multi-lingual National Assembly should bear in mind when advocating for legal reforms of the language policy.

Education can play a pivotal role in empowering women to participate at the highest levels of the decision making processes. Formal education should not serve as a barrier to women entering politics but illiteracy will seriously curtail a woman's chances to get to the higher echelons of the decision making processes. Educated women who have the requisite skills will have first hand access to documentation and will be able to participate more confidently and effectively in all parliamentary debates and proceedings. It can also facilitate their access to and participation in regional and global parliamentary bodies. Recognizing the important role that education can play in transforming the lives of women all the political parties have education high on their Manifestos.

Political parties are important arenas for policy development and for setting political priorities, and are therefore one of key institutions through which gender equality should be promoted. However, political parties in The Gambia that promote gender equality in their Manifestos and Constitutions do not in practice implement these pledges and few women hold the top decision-making positions within their ranks. Few political parties actively promote a gender-equality agenda, and few women hold the top decision-making positions in parties. While some of the political parties have implemented reforms to make them more gender-sensitive, in many ways, the study attests to the fact that gender equality in the National Assembly remains an ideal, not yet a reality.

Numbers do matter. Much of the detailed policy work is done in parliamentary committees. The few women in the National Assembly are not enough women to participate effectively in committee work. Women are either left out of policy discussions or they are overloaded with committee work and stretch themselves too thin to dedicate sufficient time to that work.

Potential women candidates particularly those from opposition members face serious constraints in their work: they lack the support of their parties and they face other challenges from the wider society. Opposition parties and independent candidates should be given the freedom to voice their ideas and opinions so that divergent voices are heard. The current situation in The Gambia is not supportive of diversity.

## **11. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Article 28 of the Constitution of The Gambia provides for the right of women to participate in decision making at all levels, including in the political arena. While women form the majority of the population they continue to experience a number of systemic and other obstacles to their fuller political engagement. The political reality in The Gambia is that their formal legal and constitutional rights have not translated into substantial political, social and economic opportunities on par with men.

The social, cultural and economic conditions of women impede their participation in politics. Discrimination, economic dependency, gender-based violence, and other abuses prevent women from enjoying their rights and entering politics or succeeding when they start a political career. The pre-election activities for the 2012/2017 legislative elections have been instructive and underscore that the challenges far outweigh the enablers. This has impacted negatively on women's participation as out of the 76 candidates running for office only 4 were women (3 from the ruling APRC and 1 Independent Candidate) representing only 5.26% of the total number of candidates. This resulted in an uneven balance and a lack of diversity in the National Assembly.

The under-representation of women legislatures is a cause for concern. The few women NAMs are insufficient to effect changes that are important to women as in democratic structures the majority carries the vote as evident in the "those in favour say Aye, the ayes have it" voting. The tiny minority of the women NAMs is constrained by their numbers to effectively participate in the debates, serve on the various select committees and makes them susceptible to all pressures emanating from their work and the wider society.

When women are represented in critical numbers in the National Assembly their perspectives and interests will be taken into account and their concerns given higher priority thus making a meaningful impact on democracy and governance in which all the political parties contribute to but are not actualizing by supporting the empowerment and representation of women. Increasing women's representation and participation in decision-making bodies requires well-developed strategies and information on what works and does not work in different contexts to address the uneven political playing field on which women and men compete and to safeguard the presence of women in parliament.

It is evident that in spite of all the efforts by the National Women's Machinery to empower women under the Capacity Enhancement of Women in Decision Making Project, funded by the UNDP in 2008 and the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Women in Decision Making Project (2009) and the ACDHRS under the 'Raising Her Voice' Project, CSOs such as WANEP under the UNDEF and FLAG to motivate women to come out and participate in elections; and to encourage political parties to create the space for women's participation in democratic party elections; the ground is still unlevel for women and a lot of work needs to be

done at all levels to increase the number of women politicians who contest for and win elections.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Political parties:

- **Women's wings should lobby their political parties** to nominate women candidates to run for elections. This is because it is far more difficult to win elections without the backing of a political party, especially at the national level. Women seeking to enter into politics must turn to political parties and garner support from their female colleagues already established in women's wings.
- **Provide timely financial support for women contestants** both in capacity building and during campaigning to address women candidates' relative lack of access to resources due to their low economic status. New candidates need exposure and understanding of the campaign strategy: this initial stage is normally self sponsored and can disadvantage women who are not economically powerful.
- **Reviewing party political manifestos and the internal organization of political parties** so that there are measurable and concrete indicators for increasing women's participation in the decision making processes at the party level and in the electoral processes at all levels.
- **Develop and maintain a database of viable potential female leaders** and provide them with mentors consisting of past and present women politicians to groom the future women political leaders through one to one peer advisory sessions; training the identified female leaders on how to run effective campaigns and building their competencies in campaigning related topics.

### Government

**Law reforms** are required in relation to Section 105 of the National Constitution to allow local languages to be used in the National Assembly; passing legislation on proportional representation and the Constitutional requirement (section 70) that political candidates should go on leave without pay for 1 year in order to be eligible to contest in an election should be also be amended to enable unsuccessful candidates to return to work immediately after elections. Section 170 of the 1997 Constitution in connection of one year leave of absence without pay is an issue for women candidates. Due to poverty it is difficult to wait for a year without pay. It is recommended that the Constitutional provision should be harmonized with the Elections Decree which is more progressive and democratic. The Elections Decree section 130a recommends a shorter timeframe. It (a) grants the candidate leave of absence with pay for the duration of the Election Campaign up until five days after the declaration of results and (b) guarantees him or her job irrespective of his or her political affiliation.

- **Apply the gender parity principle in all decision making bodies and political party candidate lists:** This can be achieved by applying a quota system for women. This will require a review of the election act. Consultations on how this will be done will be necessary but the time to ACT is NOW. Lessons can be learnt from Rwanda – a country that is leading in this direction.
- **Level the playing field socially and economically:** Gambian women have less access to resources than men in all aspects of life, including education, and therefore have fewer economic opportunities than their male counterparts. Lack of economic power has major implications for women in terms of accessing electoral positions, especially in relation to expenditure needs during campaigning.
- **Provide potential women candidates with the necessary resources-financial, technical and material-to mount a respectable campaign** by so doing it is expected that they will perform better than they are doing now.
- **Training for all state organs** such as the police, the security apparatus and the media to treat all political parties equally and to ensure their access to the state media without fear of intimidation and guarantee their safety and protection during campaigns.
- **Strengthen capacity of the National Council on Civic Education** to enable it build the capacity of the population so that they are able to exercise their citizenship rights, encouraging the relations between citizens and between them and the government, speak with the knowledge, practices and values of democracy, fostering their appreciation for the public and seeking to strengthen the capacity of citizens to transform their environment in the framework of democratic institutions and their legitimacy.

#### CSOs and NGOs

- **Behaviour change communication** to bring about a change of mind set, attitudinal and behavior change towards women vying for political leadership for all political parties, the media and the State to combat the cultural practices that inhibits the participation of women. .
- **Advocacy for law reforms in the following areas:** advocate for legal and constitutional reforms especially those that militate against gender inequality and for implementation of a quota system which can most certainly be used as an opportunity to increase the number of women in political offices.
- **Build capacity of political parties** through promotion of the human rights instruments that provide for women's increased participation in politics through training and engagement with the political party leaders on the need to implement the globally and nationally agreed targets.
- **Build strategic alliances with religious leaders:** Religious leaders are an important ally as they can play a lead role in breaking down the myths and stereotypes surrounding women's participation in politics as this has been a major barrier in debarring women from political leadership.

#### Intergovernmental Organisations

- **Funding for NGOs/CSOs and religious groups, to support women's rights and women's empowerment programming through civic education, adult and non-formal education; constitutional and legislative reform, leadership training and gender training for governance structures at all levels.**
- **Support South-South and North-South women's solidarity** in terms of experience sharing and networking on how best to push for more women participation in decision making structures and on what works best in different contexts. Support study tours to Rwanda.
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**Annexe 1: 29<sup>th</sup> March 2012 National Assembly Elections, The Gambia**

| No | Constituency      | APRC         | NRP         | Independent  | Voter Turn Out | Women Candidates |
|----|-------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|----------------|------------------|
| 1  | Banjul South      | 1450         | -           | 1086         | 41%            |                  |
| 2  | Banjul Central    | 2365         | -           | 1797         | 49%            | Independent      |
| 3  | Banjul North      | Unopposed    | -           | -            | -              |                  |
|    | Total Banjul      | 3815         | -           | 2883         | 45%            |                  |
| 4  | Bakau             | 4306         | -           | 2974         | 46%            |                  |
| 5  | Jeshwang          | 5531         | -           | 4747         | 34%            | APRC             |
| 6  | Serekunda West    | Unopposed    | -           | -            | -              |                  |
| 7  | Serekunda Central | 5974         | -           | 5097         | 26%            |                  |
| 8  | Serekunda East    | Unopposed    |             |              |                |                  |
|    | <b>Total</b>      | <b>15811</b> |             | <b>12818</b> | <b>32%</b>     |                  |
| 9  | Foni Jarrol       | 1422         |             | 869          | 73%            |                  |
| 10 | Foni Bondali      | 1272         |             | 964          | 65%            |                  |
| 11 | Foni Bintang      | Unopposed    |             |              |                |                  |
| 12 | Foni Kansala      | Unopposed    |             |              |                |                  |
| 13 | Foni Brefet       | Unopposed    |             |              |                | APRC             |
| 14 | Kombo East        | Unopposed    |             |              |                |                  |
| 15 | Kombo South       | Unopposed    |             |              |                |                  |
| 16 | Kombo Central     | 11912        |             | 13903        | 48%            |                  |
| 17 | Kombo North       | Unopposed    |             |              |                |                  |
|    | <b>Total</b>      | <b>14686</b> | -           | <b>15736</b> | <b>50%</b>     |                  |
| 18 | Lower Niumi       | 7413         | 2781        | -            | 48%            |                  |
| 19 | Upper Niumi       | Unopposed    |             |              |                |                  |
| 20 | Jokadu            | Unopposed    |             |              |                |                  |
| 21 | Lower Baddibu     | 3612         |             | 2855         | 73%            |                  |
| 22 | Central Baddibu   | Unopposed    |             |              |                |                  |
| 23 | Illiasa           | Unopposed    |             |              |                |                  |
| 24 | Sabcah Sanjal     | 4000         | 3409        |              | 71%            |                  |
|    | <b>Total</b>      | <b>15025</b> | <b>6190</b> | <b>2855</b>  | <b>59%</b>     |                  |
| 25 | Jarra West        | 4213         |             | 3710         | 58%            |                  |
| 26 | Jarra Central     | Unopposed    |             |              |                |                  |

|    |                    |              |              |              |             |            |
|----|--------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|------------|
| 27 | Jarra East         | 2397         |              | 2057         | 61%         |            |
| 28 | Kiang East         | Unopposed    |              |              |             |            |
| 29 | Kiang Central      | 1997         |              | 1313         | 60%         |            |
| 30 | Kiang West         | Unopposed    |              |              |             |            |
|    | <b>Total</b>       | <b>8607</b>  |              | <b>7080</b>  | <b>605</b>  |            |
| 31 | Janjanbureh        | 609          |              | 477          | 63%         |            |
| 32 | Niamina West       | 1359         | 1293         | -            | 76%         |            |
| 33 | Niamina East       | Unopposed    |              |              |             |            |
| 34 | Niamina Dankunku   | 943          | 1194         | -            | 78%         |            |
| 35 | Lower Fulladu West | 3071         | 754          | 4572         | 2111        | 58%        |
| 36 | Upper Fulladu West | Unopposed    |              |              |             |            |
| 37 | Lower Saloum       | 3514         | 1354         | -            | 63%         |            |
| 38 | Upper Saloum       | 3181         | 2844         | 728          | 74%         |            |
| 39 | Niani              | 3517         | -            | 3750         | 60%         |            |
| 40 | Nianija            | 2009         | 978          | -            | 72%         | APRC       |
| 41 | Sami               | Unopposed    |              |              |             |            |
|    | <b>Total</b>       | <b>18203</b> | <b>8416</b>  | <b>9527</b>  | <b>2111</b> | <b>65%</b> |
| 42 | Jimara             | Unopposed    |              |              |             |            |
| 43 | Basse              | 422          | 7045         | -            | 605         |            |
| 44 | Tumana             | Unopposed    |              |              |             |            |
| 45 | Kantora            | Unopposed    |              |              |             |            |
| 46 | Sandu              | Unopposed    |              |              |             |            |
| 47 | Wulli West         | Unopposed    |              |              |             |            |
| 48 | Wulli East         | Unopposed    |              |              |             |            |
|    | <b>Total</b>       | <b>4222</b>  |              | <b>7045</b>  | <b>60%</b>  |            |
|    | <b>Grand Total</b> | <b>80289</b> | <b>14606</b> | <b>57944</b> | <b>2111</b> | <b>50%</b> |

Source: [www.iec.gm/candidates-march-29th-national-assembly-elections](http://www.iec.gm/candidates-march-29th-national-assembly-elections)  
[www.iec.gm/incoming-results-march-29th-national-assembly-elections](http://www.iec.gm/incoming-results-march-29th-national-assembly-elections)

## ANNEXE 2: POLITICAL PARTIES PROPOSED AREAS OF INTERVENTION

| Area of Intervention   | APRC | NADD | NRP | PADP | PPP | UDP |
|--|------|------|-----|------|-----|-----|
| 1. Democracy & Governance  | X    | X    | X   | X    | X   | X   |
| 2. Human rights  | X    |      | X   | X    |     | X   |
| 3. Attitudes   | X    |      |     |      |     |     |
| 4. Women in Development  | X    |      |     |      |     | X   |
| 5. The Private Sector  | X    |      |     |      |     | X   |
| 6. The Public Sector   | X    |      |     |      |     |     |
| 7. Public Enterprises  | X    |      |     |      |     |     |
| 8. Accountability, Transparency and Probity                        | X    |      |     |      |     |     |
| 9. Population and Standard of Living                               | X    |      |     |      |     |     |
| 10. Housing  | X    | X    |     | X    |     |     |
| 11. Health   | X    | X    | X   | X    | X   | X   |
| 12. Education  | X    | X    | XT  | X    | X   | X   |
| 13. Employment and Labour  | X    | X    |     | X    | X   | X   |
| 14. Agriculture and Food Security                                  | X    | X    | X   | X    | X   | X   |
| 15. Financing for Agricultural Ventures/Crop Finance Scheme        | X    | X    |     |      |     | X   |
| 16. Macro-economic Policies  | X    |      | X   |      |     |     |
| 17. Ensuring Economic Prosperity                                   |      | X    |     | X    | X   | X   |
| 18. Taxation and Tax Reform  | X    |      |     |      |     |     |
| 19. Energy for Development/Energy, Mining & Industrial Development | X    | X    |     | X    |     |     |
| 20. Trade and Industry   | X    | X    |     | X    | X   |     |
| 21. Transport  | X    |      | X   | X    |     | X   |
| 22. Tourism  | X    |      | X   | X    | X   | X   |
| 23. Mass Media   | X    |      |     |      |     | X   |
| 24. Foreign Policy   | X    |      |     |      |     |     |
| 25. Youths   | X    |      | X   | X    | X   | X   |
| 26. Sports and Recreation  | X    | X    |     | X    |     | X   |
| 27. Justice System/Judiciary                                       | X    |      |     | X    | X   | X   |



|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 28. Law and Order for Peace                                 | X |   |   |   | X |   |
| 29. Defence and National Security                           | X |   |   | X |   | X |
| 30. Religion and Tolerance                                  | X |   |   |   |   |   |
| 31. Arts and Culture  | X |   |   | X |   | X |
| 32. The Environment   |   |   |   | X | X | X |
| 33. Gender Equality   |   |   | X |   | X |   |
| 34. Devolving Power to Local Communities                    |   |   |   |   | X |   |
| 35. Restoring Pride and Confidence in the Security Services |   |   |   |   | X |   |
| 36. Foreign Policy/African Integration/External Relations   |   | X | X | X |   |   |
| 37. Women, Children, the Disabled and the Aged              |   | X |   |   |   |   |
| 38. Pensions Schemes  |   | X |   |   |   |   |
| 39. Good Nutrition  |   | X |   |   |   |   |
| 40. New Administration                                      |   |   |   | X |   |   |
| 41. Communication   |   |   | X | X |   |   |
| 42. Solidarity  |   |   |   | X |   |   |
| 43. Woman and Family  |   |   |   | X |   |   |
| 44. Constitutional Reform                                   |   |   |   |   | X | X |
| 45. Civil Service   |   |   |   |   |   | X |

### ANNEXE 3: CHECKLIST FOR WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS

Pre-election period

Election period

Post election period

| Candidate recruitment   | Funding & Campaigning  | Campaign Period  | Election Day   | Women Elected   |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| Establish consensus among party leadership to promote women's electoral participation                                     | Provide women with skills to raise early money, campaign and build name recognition<br>Establish or tap into                     | Build women's capacities to campaign and consider twinning or mentoring of first time candidates                           | Ensure women are trained and included as party agents in polling stations        | Undertake gender equality assessment; develop gender action plan within party                                   |
| Consider adoption of voluntary party quotas for women candidates and formalize in recruitment rules                       | Establish or tap into fundraising networks for women candidates, such as Emily's List and Wish List                              | Ensure women's visibility in the electoral campaign and access to the media  | Ensure monitoring includes a gender perspective and ensures the safety of women. | Provide capacity building and strengthen legislative skills of elected women                                    |
| Enforce candidate quota rules i.e. by the election bureau or leadership of the party in line with the electoral timetable | Establish an internal party fund or provide subsidies to women candidates  | Ensure the party manifesto articulates policy on gender equality and disseminate it to voters Mobilize women               | Women trained and included as election monitors                                  | Promote gender sensitive political reforms to institutions, particularly in parliament                          |
| Place women in winnable positions on party lists, or in winnable/safe constituencies                                      | Consider setting a limit on nomination/primary contest expenditure   | Mobilize women to register and to vote; provide gender sensitive voter information to men and women                        |  | Promote the participation of women in policy making of the party; ensure gender mainstreaming in party policies |
| Identify incentives to attract women and encourage them to join the party, such as capacity building or advocacy.         | Consider earmarking a portion of party finances (including from public sources if applicable) for women candidates and training. | Ensure women candidates' safety during campaigning and keep party supporters in line where there is potential for violence |  | Encourage formation of cross-party caucus and support its functioning   |
| Ensure coordination with CSOs and organizations providing support to women candidates                                     | Form partnerships and work with international organizations and CSOs   | Ensure coordination among CSOs and organizations providing support to women candidates                                     |  | Sensitize party members about gender equality and work with men   |
| Form strategic partnerships and gain support from men   |  |  |  |   |

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