



**REPORT OF THE CONSULTATION FORUM  
OF MAIN POLITICAL PARTIES AND NATIONAL  
FORUM TO FORM INTER-PARTY COMMITTEES**

**29<sup>TH</sup> JULY- 1<sup>ST</sup> AUGUST, 2013**

**PARADISE SUITES HOTEL, THE GAMBIA**

## INTRODUCTION

A four-day consultation was convened at the Paradise Suites Hotel, from July 29 to August 1, 2013 under the joint auspices of the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS), the UNDP- Gambia Office and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, for members/representatives of three leading political parties, namely APRC, NRP and UDP, to explore means of increasing the representation and participation of Gambian women in the political dispensation.

The first three days of the consultations brought together 86 participants, comprising of female and male party activists and leaders to exchange views and thoughts on issues relating to the political empowerment of women, and to explore how to advocate for the adoption of:

1. A quota system for women in all elective posts; and
2. Temporal measures for women's active participation and representation in all elective posts.

The first day of the consultation, which was exclusive to the APRC, brought together 28 members. The second day brought together 29 NRP activists/members, while on the third day, 29 members of the UDP convened. The APRC team was all female while the other two parties had an almost equal gender mix and representation from central and branch offices. The fourth day brought together six representatives of each of the three political parties, and personnel of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) to discuss how political parties can collectively work for the realization of active participation and representation of women in all elective posts.



*Group photo – organizers, resource persons and political party representatives*

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE FORUMS**

The intra-party forums were intended to discuss how “to promote the representation of women, advocacy and advance quota systems for women in all elective posts in a bid to strengthen capacities of governance institutions responsible for accountability, justice and participation at all levels.”

The inter-party consultation, on the other hand, afforded party representatives an opportunity “to discuss the establishment of a National Inter-Party Committee for the adoption of temporal measures for women’s active participation and representation in a bid to strengthen capacities of governance institutions responsible for accountability, justice and participation at all levels.”

## **CONSULTATION PROCESS**

The consultations kicked off with welcome remarks by the Executive Director of the ACDHRS, Mrs. Hannah Forster, followed by individual invocation. The proposed agenda for the forum was then reviewed and unanimously adopted.

In her opening remarks, the ACDHRS Executive Director thanked the party representatives for accepting their invitation to be part of this exercise and outlined the reasons for bringing party members of different standing to the forum. She informed that studies have been conducted by her office on the level of representation of Gambian women in the political sphere, and the findings confirm underrepresentation.

Mrs. Forster remarked that though men have been standing up for women and speaking on their behalf, women themselves have to promote their issues more vigorously and more determinedly.

The consultation, she said, offered participants the opportunity to identify the obstacles to increased participation and representation of Gambian women in political activities, particularly at the legislative level. She expressed the hope that the consultations will lead to efforts that will enable the empowering of women to take their rightful place in the national development process and in the elective office. Mrs. Forster observed that the APRC group did not include any male, though men were key decision makers in the political parties. For the other two parties, which had almost equal representation, she commended them for this.

The leader of each of the teams was then given an opportunity to briefly address their colleagues before the presentations and discussion of the factors that inhibited women’s meaningful representation and active participation in Gambian politics and governance. They all expressed appreciation and thanks to the sponsors of the event for convening the forum, and gave unqualified support for the augmentation of the number of female actors in the political stage. They additionally expressed that this is reflected in women’s proportional strength in the country’s population and recognized the crucial role they played in political dispensation as the backbone and the lifeblood of political parties in the country. However, they all questioned whether, in the light of the prevailing socio-cultural obstacles and challenges confronting Gambian women, the quota system at party and national levels would be achieved in the foreseeable future.



***Mrs. Hannah Forster (left) making a statement at the opening of the Consultation***

## **PRESENTATIONS**

To provide a basis for the consultations and stimulate participants' thoughts on the issues to be addressed, two resource persons, Hon. Elizabeth Y. Renner, former Speaker of the National Assembly, and Hon. Ndey Njie, former National Assembly Member, respectively delivered lengthy, incisive and thought-provoking papers.

### **HON. ELIZABETH Y. RENNER'S PRESENTATION**

Hon. Renner's presentation focused on the key issues pertaining to the importance of women's rights, representation and participation and advocacy, and what Gambian political parties can do to advance women's representation and participation in national politics, while Hon. Njie's paper addressed the process of running for elective office in The Gambia, outlining the socio-cultural obstacles and challenges that women faced in this respect, and citing her personal experience in her bid for elective office. She explained what a quota system for female representation and participation in political leadership entailed and made a case for its adoption in the Gambian political terrain, citing the cases of Rwanda and Senegal in support of her advocacy.

In her presentation, Hon. Renner pointed out that women taking a back seat in political leadership was not unique to The Gambia, but was a common global phenomenon until very recently. Even in the developed world, she posited, women were, until recently, denied voting rights and running for elective office. But things have been changing since the latter part of the last century. She noted that, more and more, women's voices are being heard in

very high places, and the idea of a woman Vice-President, Prime Minister or President is no longer 'pie in the sky'.

She also noted that, notwithstanding inroads that have been registered by women globally in the political leadership domain and in various other spheres, since the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action and the elaboration of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the United Nations, MDG 3 in particular, the rate of emancipation and empowerment of Gambian women has been at a snail's pace.

Hon. Renner stated that the political will to recognize and accord women their rightful place in the country's socio-economic transformation process is not lacking in The Gambia as the 1997 Constitution of the Republic of The Gambia provides for women's rights, and the President is a champion of women's causes, according high priority in his development programmes to their empowerment. The ratification of international conventions and protocols on the rights of women such as *The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)* and *The Protocol to The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on The Rights of Women in Africa*, the passing of the *Women's Act, 2010* in the National Assembly and its assent by the President, make The Gambia one of few countries in the world to have such provision in their legislative framework.

In spite of such strong legislative and executive backing, she questioned what was deterring Gambian women from realizing equal representation in the political playing field; what has been done, and what more needs to be done as a nation, by women as a group, and by the various political parties to enable women achieve parity in all spheres of society.

Her presentation, she stated, was "to spearhead actions towards achieving the implementation of the strategic issues of Pillar 3: Participation in The Gambia National Action Plan (GNAP), which was developed for the realization of Article 9 of the United Nations Security Council Resolution, UNSCR 1325 (October 2000) in those areas which affect The Gambia." It was aimed at "provoking thoughts, issues for discussion and debate by participants and interaction that would expose challenges and constraints faced by women, the role women are playing and could further play in the election process, and the role political parties could play to ensure the achievement of the GNAP strategies; and enable the identification of strategies and directions for the way forward for political parties" and "enabling the elaboration of concrete and achievable solutions to the issue of election of women to the legislature."

The key questions that the presentation posed were: Are women truly represented in governance in The Gambia? What is the percentage of women in such positions? How much control do they have over their positions? How much independence do they have in making decisions?

Hon. Renner called for the dispelling of the age-old notion and practice of male superiority, which the male-dominated society has somehow impressed on the psyche of the Gambian populace, especially the rural and illiterate majority, that women are second-class citizens and should play second fiddle to men and never be in the forefront.



The presentation outlined the positive steps and changes that have been effected internationally, regionally and at the national level to boost women's representation in elective positions.

She stated that it would not be fair to say that there has been no progress in the uplifting of Gambian women as leadership in both the First and Second Republic have been sensitive and sympathetic to women's issues. Since the beginning of the 1990s, there has been tremendous effort to address gender equity, especially in the areas of top management. The introduction of the Women in Development (WID) Project, followed by the establishment of the Women's Bureau and Women's Council in 1980, and all the national Gender Policies and Acts that have been enacted, are all evidences of the concern for women's development and participation in nation building.



***Hon. Elizabeth Renner***

The presentation highlighted the numerous constraints Gambian women faced in elevating their status in society and in political leadership. Enumerated among them were the lack of financial and economic power, dominance of men in decision-making positions, low level of education compared to men, cultural and social bias, lack of self-confidence, lack of leadership skills and exposure, in-fighting, and the pull-down syndrome.

Hon. Renner advocated for a change of attitude among women themselves, for them to be supportive of each other, to be ambitious and thick-skinned to ward off social and cultural obstacles aimed at thwarting their political aspirations. She called for gender sensitive laws and appealed to Gambian society to do away with patriarchy. She also called for effectuation of the “special temporary measures” provided in Article 15 of the Women’s Act 2010 to enable women rise to the surface and bridge the existing gulf in the political arena.

She emphasized that a tremendous amount of sensitization was necessary to make Gambians more aware of the “special temporary measures”. An aggressive, continuous, and nationwide sensitization programme to change attitudes and positions held about male-dominance was necessary to give genuine opportunity and support to the right caliber of women to come forward and engage in meaningful political activity. Such a task could be jointly undertaken by the National Council for Civic Education, the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, the Ministry of Local Government, the political parties and all the relevant stakeholders. She cautioned that although at least a 40% representation of women in the National Assembly and other elective positions would be welcome, the caliber of representation should not be compromised for quantity.

Hon. Renner offered some remedies for the unequal gender representation and participation in the political dispensation in The Gambia. She enjoined women to be more involved, and for the political parties to live up to their responsibility and expectations of women in promoting their interests as party members. Women, she argued, must, among other things, be self-critical; be willing to accept their limitations; be more supportive of one another; be ready to ignore the negative elements of the electoral process; be more defiant and confident in pursuing the Gambia National Action Plan for Women’s full participation and representation in the electoral process; be prepared, when necessary, to sacrifice party support for women support; be more willing to take risks and to propel women to get rid of their inferiority complex; act as mentors to young girls and help develop women with low standard of education and/or awareness; make a herculean effort to convince and change the men in the family to adopt a more positive attitude towards the political empowerment of women; unite to form pressure groups to demand and acquire changes to reflect adequate women representations in all decision-making institutions; begin to re-examine their own lives to eradicate violations of their rights; and to formulate strategies for their own small communities starting from their homes.

She urged that female members of the National Assembly, though constituting a very small proportion of legislators, should play a central role in the sensitization of women on their rights, role and responsibilities in ensuring gender equity and parity in political activities. Furthermore, she stated, it is essential that women be aware of and take interest in Government decisions that affect them, take full advantage of them, and not regard them as structures for the ruling party only. Women should stop being content to take the back seat and depending on men to solve their problems for them. They should be proactive and ready to take the initiative to bring about the necessary changes that should affect their political lives.

Hon. Renner highlighted the role political parties should play to bring about increased representation and participation of women in party politics and elective office. Political Parties, she contended, need to review and overhaul their political ideologies deemed detrimental to the achievement of true democratic governance in this country. Political parties, she advised, must, for a start:

- Realize that they are part and parcel of the political will of this country, and that they are all equally bound by both the national laws of this country as well as the international commitments made by The Gambia.
- Include and give women a fair quantitative representation in all their party structures.
- Share proportionately with women the leadership positions in the party structures.
- Propose and push forward a bill for a 30 to 40 percent quota system in favour of women for all elections as a “*special temporary measure*”.
- Sensitize and convert men to support women in their political pursuit.
- Engage the National and Civic Education Authority in awareness sensitization for all party members.
- Eradicate the wrong attitude which generates rejection of all Government machineries because they are seen as partisan institutions and structures rather than national ones.
- Lobby the relevant Government authorities and National Assembly Members and Sub- committees to review and amend those instruments that are defective.
- Ensure that women represent a fair percentage of their candidates nominated to stand in all elections, and guarantee them full party support.

In concluding her presentation, Hon. Renner stated that there may be a need for all political parties to come together and institute a common machinery to address women’s issues pertaining to election participation and representation which would facilitate women’s participation as candidates in elections at all levels in order for them to achieve an increased representation of in elective positions. This could take the form of a National Elections Committee for Women, a mechanism through which securing the 30% representation of women recommended at the international level, also embedded in The Gambia National Gender and Women Empowerment Policy 2010-2020, could be facilitated.

According to Hon. Renner, “the task at hand might be difficult, but it is definitely not insurmountable. The stage has been set globally; the relevant instruments are in place, nationally and internationally. All that is required is the commitment. The onus is now on the respective political parties to act and to act fast.”



## **HON. NDEY NJIE'S PRESENTATION**

Hon. Ndey Njie's presentation was largely an account of her political journey as a woman, outlining the difficulties, constraints and frustrations that she encountered in her bid for elective office as a candidate of the ruling party, the APRC. Her presentation also discussed the advantages of a quota system of gender representation in the legislature of countries citing the case of Rwanda where its adoption has been a success, and neighboring Senegal.

Like Hon. Renner, she prefaced her presentation by making reference to the Women's World Conference held in Beijing in 1995, outlining the various international conventions and protocols that seek to promote participative governance and equal participation of women in the political life of countries through affirmative action.

Her presentation centered on the prevailing socio-cultural barriers to women's participation in political activities and representation in elective office. She narrated her experience in her quest for election into the National Assembly, outlining the indignities suffered and the deprecating efforts of opponents, both male and female, to deny her realization of her goal of becoming a National Assembly member, which she was able to achieve initially, but was unable to maintain subsequently. She advanced reasons why women in The Gambia had an uphill battle in asserting their constitutional rights and ensuring that they are actively involved in governance as equal partners to men who have monopolized leadership and decision-making in the country.



***Hon. Ndey Njie (standing) making her presentation***

On the issue of gender representation and participation based on quota, Hon. Njie explained what the term 'quota' meant and how it was applied in certain countries, more specifically, Rwanda, where its adoption has brought about transformation in the political arena and enhanced the governance process. The main idea behind quota system, she explained, is to recruit women into political positions and to ensure that women are not only a few tokens in political life. Quotas for women entail that they must constitute a certain number or percentage of the members of a body, whether it is a candidate list, a parliamentary assembly, a committee, or a government. The quota system, she underlined, places the burden of recruitment not on the individual woman, but on those who control the recruitment process.

She argued that previous notions of having reserved seats for only one or few women, representing a vague and all embracing category of women, are no longer considered efficient. Today, quota systems are aimed at ensuring that women establish a large minority of 20, 30 to 40%, or even to ensure true gender balance of 50-50. Given the slow nature by which the number of women in politics is growing, there are increased calls for more efficient methods to reach a gender balance in political institutions. Quotas present one such mechanism.

She explained the genesis of the quota system in Rwanda, citing 1997 as the turning point in the political history of the country when the SADC Heads of State and Government committed themselves to ensuring equal representation of men and women in the decision making positions of member states and SADC structures at all levels, and the achievement of at least 30% target of women in political and decision making structures by the year 2015. She noted that Rwanda ranks highest in the world in terms of political participation of women.

Hon. Njie outlined the accomplishments of Rwanda in promoting gender equality and empowerment of women in the spheres of education, policy and decision making which can be attributed to the unique path the nation took in addressing gender issues during the post-conflict reconstruction. Government's recognition of women as key players in the nation building process, commitment to gender equality at the highest level of leadership and women's resilience in hardship and willingness to step up to the challenges, are key elements that played a role in making women equal participants in nation building.

She informed that the process Rwanda adopted to ensure increased involvement of women in all spheres of development included targeting the rural areas' girls at the basic level of education and the rural women to change their mindsets on gender related issues. Its efforts registered resounding success in 2008 when 45 women were elected out of 80 members of parliament, the highest percentage of women MPs in any government in the world. The 2003 Constitution of Rwanda provides for at least 30% of posts in decision making organs to go to women.

In explaining the types of quota that obtained in other countries, Hon. Njie made reference to what happened in Senegal in 2007 where the nomination quota was used by former President Wade to increase the number of women in the National Assembly to an unprecedented level of 40%. She informed the forum that in June 2010, the Senegalese parliament adopted a new law requiring all political parties to introduce absolute parity in electoral lists for all elected representations, at national and local levels. Lists that did not comply with the law were annulled and voided. Although women in Senegal represented 52% of the population, before then, they constitute only 23% of the National Assembly, approximately 10% of the government officials, 13% of the regional council members and 27% of rural council members.

She emphasized that the steps taken in Senegal to stimulate women's participation in political governance, and particularly in government, have come at the price of heavy pressure from women's movements acting nationwide, as well as from political parties. In response to the demands from women and their representatives, political leaders have now instituted more or less binding instruments with the aim of improving women's representation in elective bodies and in the positions of power.



***Cross section of female party representatives of a political party listening to a presentation***

Hon. Njie informed that about 22 African countries have in their constitution or electoral laws, a quota for women's representation in local or national parliaments. In the West African sub-region, only seven countries have adopted a quota system, with Senegal being the only one to have approved a parity law for elective office.

The presentation talked about voluntary quotas, of which there are three categories, which are non-binding decisions taken by political parties to encourage women's participation in the electoral process and in political leadership by reserving a certain percentage of seats for women. Though non-binding, they can contribute considerably to either increasing the number of women in elected office, or at least, to raising party members' awareness of the need to include women.

The three categories include:

1. QUOTA FOR THE POTENTIAL CANDIDATES: This is often for primary elections in the party, with a short list that contains only women to choose from, in order to broaden the pool of potential female candidates.
2. QUOTA FOR CANDIDATE LIST: Here, a fixed number of seats on the lists of candidates, or percentage of the total number of candidates are reserved for women. This quota tends to be more effective in a proportional representation system.
3. QUOTA FOR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES: This system targets the outcome of the elections. A political party can decide that out of the seats they win, a certain number or percentage should be set aside for women.

As a means of redressing the gender imbalance in elective office and in top positions in the governance process in The Gambia, Hon. Njie recommended that:

- A Special Commission be instituted to serve as an oversight body for gender parity. This Commission should be mandated to, amongst other things, scrutinize lists of election candidates to ensure compliance with the requirements for gender parity; work together and make suggestions for eliminating the factors that prevent women from contesting; establish a watchdog system, together with the authorities in charge, to ensure that women's representation in the media and the education system is free from stereotype; establish standards for gender parity and democracy in the way political parties operate, given that gender parity in candidate's lists will be difficult to attain unless the political parties and politicians themselves observe the requirement for gender parity. As is the case in Senegal, where a National Observatory for Women's Rights has been established with representatives of government and civil society, such an outfit could be introduced, under the umbrella of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, to perform a similar function.
- Political parties include elections and voting procedures in their constitution, manifesto and other key party documents, to ensure due recognition and accounting for full and equal participation of women.
- Procedures and guidelines relating to the promotion of equal involvement and participation of women be established.
- An audit and appraisal of the barriers and obstacles to effective participation of women in electoral processes be carried out and the data used to inform further program developments in this regard.

- Benefits of equal involvement and participation of women in electoral processes and voting, including actions to ensure primary factors limiting women's participation, be promoted and adequately addressed, through continued education of party leadership, structures and members.
- The National Assembly monitors the participation of women in political parties and government.
- Structures and processes that are easy to follow by all involved be developed and implemented.
- Women's achievements and experiences be shared nationally to provide a constructive audit on what has worked.
- Gender equality issues in electoral processes and enhance good governance, human rights and accountability be mainstreamed.
- Independent monitoring reports on the involvement and participation of women in electoral processes and voting be provided in order to raise public consciousness and positive actions.

Hon. Njie concluded her presentation by pronouncing that based on the commitments and obligations of African countries, gender parity is not a choice but a human rights issue for men and women which is not negotiable, and is crucial for achieving the MDGs. To make it a reality, there has to be a high-level national leadership and political will and the adoption and effective enforcement of a quota system. It does not concern governments alone, although it requires a strong political will and coordinated public action (reforms, strategies, programs, budgets etc). To be efficient and effective, gender parity requires contribution of the public sector, the private sector and civil society, and calls for awareness and commitment from men and the support of donor agencies, which can easily be achieved through a quota system. She called for Gambian women, as the majority in the population, to remain committed, focused and united to ensure that their rights are not trampled on, and that they gain equal representation and participate equally as partners to men in the political dispensation of the country.

#### **INTRA-PARTY PLENARY DISCUSSIONS**

Following the presentations, participants were invited to make comments and share their thoughts on the issues raised. Generally, the comments and contributions made from the various quarters were similar and centered on the social, cultural and economic barriers and difficulties that women had to contend with in their bid for political emancipation and empowerment.

On the part of APRC, its Constitution provided for the economic empowerment of its women to enable them to be actively involved in politics. It provides for at least 25% representation in the leadership structure. Women take part in the selection of candidates for elective office, but their representation in selection committees depends on the area. At the constituency level, at least five women are in the selection committee. Regarding equal representation, this can only be achieved if it is provided for at national level. Women are given due recognition as they constitute the backbone and lifeblood of the party; they give unflinching support and are always in the forefront in political campaigns and activities throughout the country. It was lamented that, though women have an opportunity to seek elective office, they are afraid to challenge men for such positions, and very sensitive to the



socio-cultural forces at play. For parity to be realized, gender stereotyping must be eliminated.



### ***Intra-party discussions***

The NRP also makes provision for 25% representation of women in its programmes, and will continue to promote their increased participation. Of the 25 member Executive Committee, 16 are female. The party's efforts to uplift women include teaching them English to enable them better interact and communicate in the official language, and skills training to empower them financially. Engaging women at the grassroots level to change the *status quo* is advocated. The use of local languages in the National Assembly should be allowed so that women who have not been privileged to acquire Western education can be voted into the Legislature and have the opportunity to contribute to the formulation of laws and making decisions affecting the lives of Gambian women as is the case in Senegal. A nationwide sensitization on the issue of women's active participation in political activities and representation in elective and leadership positions could help raise the awareness of rural women and men and bring about the desired attitudinal change towards women and their role in society.

With the UDP, women are represented at all levels of the party hierarchy and women have been presented as candidates for elective posts. The problem with female representation at party and national levels is that women themselves do not throw their support behind them; they would rather support male candidates even if the female candidate has all what is required to be voted into office. Highly educated and charismatic women shun the political limelight and are reluctant to engage in party politics to seek elective office. As a result, women representation and participation is lagging.



Quotas are a welcome idea and the party stands ready to put women in the highest positions in its hierarchy if only they are willing to stand up and be counted. They suggest engaging Government to review the Constitutional provisions and the electoral process to ensure a level playing field for all as the level of intimidation scares women aspirants for elective posts.

### **GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

Participants were divided into four groups and given five questions to discuss and provide answers to. Groups deliberated on the following questions:

1. Is there a need for women to participate in politics, if not, why? And if so, what can women contribute to politics? What are the advantages and disadvantages of women in politics (the cultural, social, and economic aspects)?
2. What challenges contribute to the low rates of women's political representation and the issues you may face in taking women's representation and participation in politics to the next level?
3. What is your party already doing to encourage women to participate in politics and what future goals do you have in achieving parity? Is the adoption of quotas a feasible option?
4. Do gender ideologies and stereotypes hold/matter in considering women for political positions?
5. Where do your strengths lie as a political party and what are your weaknesses?

### **GROUP RESPONSES**

On the first question, all groups agreed that there is a need for women to participate actively in politics as they have a significant contribution to make. They listed the following attributes of women and capabilities in support of this endorsement:

- Women are agents of change and partners in development.
- Women constitute more than 56 percent of the Gambian population.
- It is better to be part of anything that involves one, than it being done on one's behalf.
- Women's input is needed in the formulation of laws that govern them.
- Women, by nature, need recognition. Therefore, anything they do, they want to do it to perfection.
- Women are more effective in national development because they are more willing to do things correctly and have interest in peoples' welfare.
- Women are human just like their male counterparts and are equally capable.
- Women have an inherent right to actively participate in politics.
- Women are effective at sensitization.
- Women are influential in mobilizing people for group work and development activities.
- Women are good at entertaining and arousing people's interest.
- Women need and must be empowered.
- Women are better able to deal with general issues concerning them.
- Women are more honest than their male counterparts.

- Women are good at decision making.
- The presence of women contributes to peace and respect.
- Women are deterrents to violence.
- Women have innate leadership skills.
- Women need more exposure and awareness.
- Women are good at facilitating themselves.
- Women close a gap when it comes to voting.
- Women participating in politics allows for their voices to be raised.
- Will give women the opportunity to assume responsible roles in society.
- Will influence gender sensitivity.



***Participants in group discussion***

On the disadvantages of women taking active part in the political process, and being equally represented in the party machinery and in elective office, the following were advanced as inhibiting factors:

- When women are in politics, it causes disharmony in the home between some husbands and wives because some men are distrustful of their wives taking part in politics.
- Women lack economic resources and confidence to effectively campaign on political platforms.
- Religious aspect (myths, misconceptions)
- Stigmatization/discrimination induced by cultural norms and values

- Tarnishing of image
- Fear of failure/inability of growing a thick skin.
- For the ruling party, disadvantages are not posed for woman by the party.

On the question of challenges to the low level of women's political representation and the issues political parties may face in taking women's representation and participation in politics to the next level, the following were elaborated:

- Pull-down syndrome from fellow women.
- Lack of monetary and moral support.
- High illiteracy rate and low level of education among women.
- Lack of encouragement of women by the society to take active part in politics, as women are regarded as irresponsible and are thus not respected.
- Women are not economically empowered.
- Lack of adequate women representatives in the selection committees.
- Traditional norms/values go against women.
- Family issues, such as risk of divorce, and severing of family ties.
- Islamic barriers/prohibitions
- Marital status
- Freedom of association
- Freedom of press

On the questions of what political parties are already doing to encourage women to participate in politics, the future goals they have in achieving parity, and the feasibility of the adoption of quotas, the following were the responses given.

All the three parties attest that they have done and continue to do the following:

- Building the capacity of party militants and supporters through training.
- Mobilizing, sensitizing, and providing political education for women.
- Encouraging and financing the educational development of women in the party to enhance representation.
- Sensitizing female members of the party to take up representation.
- Helping women in their economic drive for projects for self sustainability, such as supporting women in gardening and provision of milling machines and cooking pots for hiring.
- Creating the female youth wing to get youths on board
- Raised a lot of awareness among the women
- Established a policy in our constitution that 25% of women are represented
- Skill development programs like soap making, tie and die, batik
- Sensitization programs country wide
- Creation of women wings at grassroots level
- Encouraging the participation in workshops and seminars
- Creating job opportunities for the party women in a bid to help them become self-reliant.
- For UDP, 50% representation of women is enshrined in its constitution.

The future goals were outlined as:

- Internal/external exposure by sending women to in-country and overseas workshops.
- Providing more chances for women than for men.
- Promoting civic education in line with party.
- Dealing with social taboo on participation of women in politics.
- Encouraging support for women at all levels of the party.
- Giving equal priority/opportunity for both genders.
- Helping to build the confidence of women.
- Furthering women's empowerment.
- Fulfilling promises by building capacities for women.
- Uplifting financial status by equipping women with skills.
- Creating more awareness through workshops and seminars.

On the feasibility of a quota system at party level, these were the positions of the three parties:

- For APRC, fixing a quota for women is not feasible under the current policy. However, it can be realized in the future.
- The UDP party has a positive attitude towards a quota system. It feels there should be legislation to enforce the quota system. What obtains in other places can be replicated here. Consultation with the powers-that-be is necessary for its adoption.
- The NRP says its constitution guarantees a 25% representation/participation of women in all party affairs and is amenable to increasing it to 30%.

On whether gender ideologies and stereotypes hold/matter in considering women for political positions, the following were advanced:

- Cultural/ religious barriers are and will remain inhibitors.
- The UDP does not consider gender ideologies and stereotypes important in selection of women for political office. They consider women as equally capable as men to stand for elections.
- Gender ideologies and stereotypes matter because they exist and hinder political participation of women.

On the strengths and weaknesses of political parties, the following were identified:

The UDP listed its strengths as

- Capacity building
- The party has more women supporters and we know that women are good at campaigning.
- Mass mobilization
- Largest electorates
- Unity/togetherness
- Awareness/education

- Large female membership and women are the best campaigners and the largest number of voters
- Inclusion of women in decision making
- Recognizing each other's potential

The weaknesses identified by the NRP and UDP were:

- Paucity of funds unlike in other countries.
- Lack of access to the media for sensitization purposes.
- Lack of complete control in the implementation of the political activities of the party.
- Lack of influence to change politics/laws.
- Lack of communication.
- Language barriers in the National Constitution
- Intimidation of opposition by incumbent party.

### **INTER-PARTY FORUM**

The Inter-Party forum took place on August 1 bringing together representatives of the three political parties, and officials of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) to discuss the idea of instituting a national inter-party committee to be the vanguard for the promotion of the adoption of temporal measures for women's active participation and representation in all elective posts. APRC had 5 representatives; NRP and UDP each had 5

To set the stage for the dialogue among the different political actors, the two resource persons, former Speaker of the National Assembly and former NAM, gave summarized versions of the presentations they made in the previous three days.

Participants were divided into four groups, composed of representatives of each party and an IEC official, to deliberate on the prospects of the coming into being of a National Inter-party Committee to champion gender equity in political and legislative activity in the country.

Pairs of groups were given the following set of questions to guide their discussion.

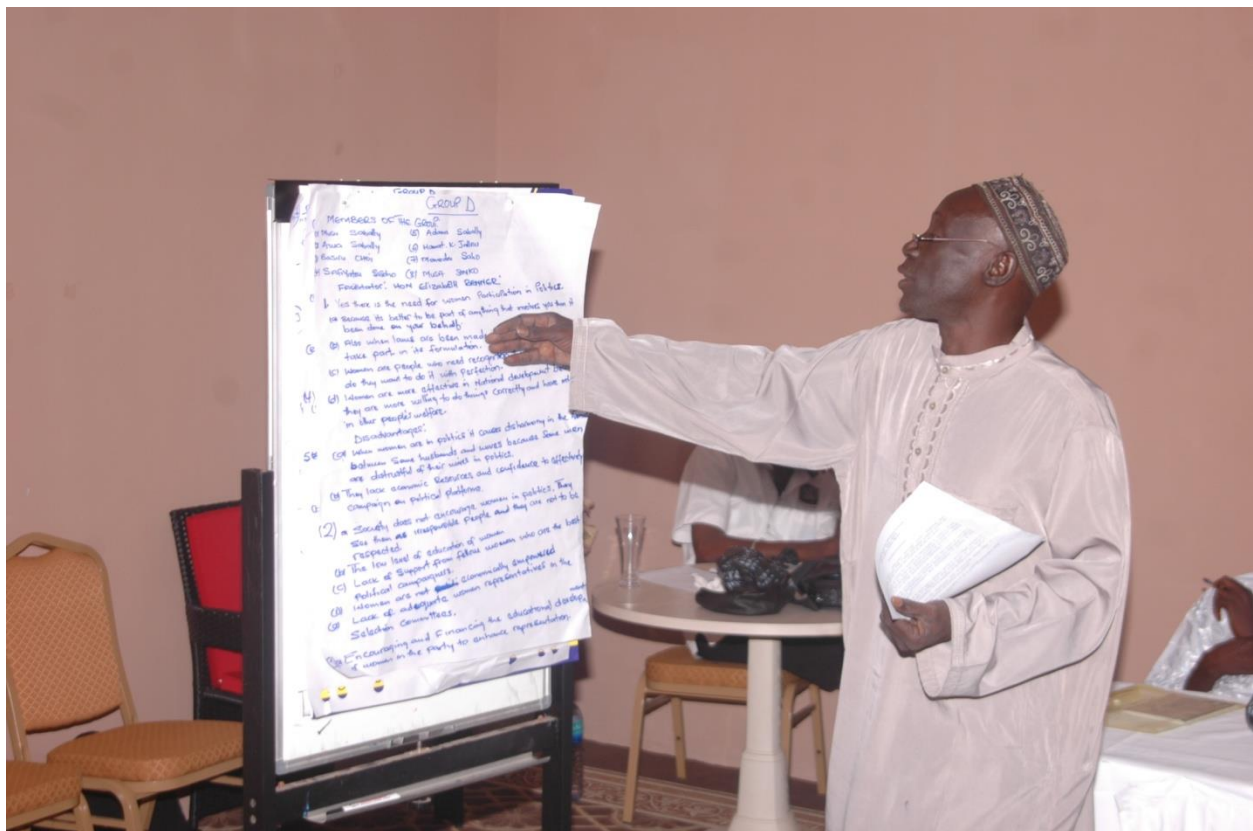
1. Is there a need to establish an Inter-Party Committee? If so, why? If not, why?
2. What other partners can be identified in ensuring the success of the Inter-Party Committee?
3. What will the terms of reference be? Identify objectives, strategies, and activities within a time frame.
4. What challenges do you think you may face as a committee externally in taking women's representation and participation in national development?
5. What can be done as a committee to improve the state of women's representation in politics?
6. We agree that it is feasible to have quotas to enhance the representation and participation of women in national development. In your opinion, how can quotas be best implemented in The Gambia?
7. What sort of skills, values, attitudes are necessary to ensure the success or effectiveness of an Inter-Party Committee?

8. What roles/responsibilities can political parties take on to ensure the success of the Committee?
9. What roles/responsibilities can the Independent Electoral Commission take on to ensure the success of the Committee?

## OUTCOME OF GROUP DISCUSSIONS

All four groups were in agreement that an Inter-Party Committee was necessary, advancing the following reasons for its establishment:

- It will be a neutral body to help bring out the ideas and implement issues/decisions.
- It will help ensure a level playing field.
- It will create the forum for parties to solicit the inclusion of the quota system in the individual parties.
- It will help bring about national unity and understanding.
- It will enhance information sharing among all parties.
- It will enable the taking of a common ground on issues agreed upon.
- It will ensure adaptation of a common approach.
- It will help reap the benefits of diversity of opinions from all political parties.
- It will enable the building of capacity to enhance the political process and good governance.
- It will help reduce harassment of women in the political activities.



***A representative makes a group work presentation***



The disadvantages of or problems that such a body will face were enumerated as:

- Creation of tension instead of unity by airing out grievances and not looking at the way forward.
- Non-implementation of resolutions.
- No feed back or follow up from meetings.
- Some people/parties may have dissenting views and may not feel like joining the committee.
- Major parties may dominate smaller parties and influence most decisions.

However, co-opting other partners for consultations such as, local authorities (chiefs, alkalolu, etc), civil society organizations, security services and local government authorities could ensure the success of the Inter-Party Committee.

The goal of establishing such an entity was to enhance participation of women in decision making and as representatives both at party and national level. Its objectives/activities:

- Sensitization and capacity building and mentoring.
- Help to coordinate individual party sensitization on women participation.
- Committee to periodically review party manifesto and programmes.
- To assess the level of compliance to gender mainstreaming.
- Harmonizing all party manifestos regards to gender mainstreaming.
- Workshops, seminars and training of target groups e.g youth, religious leaders, traditional leaders and schools.
- Trekking countrywide for awareness purposes and proper coordination of regional and national committee.

#### **Time Frame**

- From when the committee is formed to the next election.

#### **Strategies**

- Create a forum for effective dialogue.
- Forming of regional committees to feed the national committee.

On the challenges that the Inter-party Committee is likely to face in taking women's representation and participation in national development to the desired level, the following were enumerated:

#### **External Challenges**

- Religious Leaders may be skeptical.
- Local authorities may not be fully supportive.
- Availability of adequate funding for all activities of the committee.
- The current structure of political parties.
- Language barrier/effective communication.
- Legal reform.
- Lack of willingness to implement activities.
- Breaking cultural barriers.

## Internal Challenges

- Non compliance by some members.
- Failure to agree on strategies for implementation.
- Funding.
- Wrong choice of delegates.
- Some parties do not take these forums and dialogues seriously.

On how the challenges can be prevented, the forums identified the following:

- Dialogue and consultation
- Code of conduct
- High level party representation on committee
- Awareness creation

On what the Inter-party Committee can do to improve women's representation in politics, the following were put forward:

- Sensitization, mentoring.
- Getting parties to sponsor more female candidates.
- Empower women by increasing their capacities through exposure, trainings etc.
- the committee should set realistic goals.

IEC and ACDHRS should be fully involved in the committee's work as honest brokers.



**Another group work presentation**

On how can quotas be best implemented in The Gambia, the following were suggested:

- Women form the greatest percentage of voter population.
- Serve as the best mobilizers.
- Quotas to be constitutional requirement through legislation.
- To implement the quota system, it has to be legislated to get a delegation to the Minister of Women's affairs to request for an amendment to be made on the Women's Act 2010 to include the quota system in article 15.
- Members of the delegation should comprise of strong women from all political parties.
- Women from CBOs.
- Male representatives from political parties who attended the National Forum to form the Inter-Party Committee and the ACDHRS.
- Quota system - 30% initially.

On the types of skills, values, and attitudes that are necessary to ensure the success or effectiveness of an Inter-Party Committee, the following were enumerated:

#### **Skills**

- Education
- Experience
- Management skills
- Advocacy skills
- Sensitization skills

#### **Values**

- Respect each other's opinion
- Commitment
- Credible members as representatives of inter-party Committee
- Confidentiality of trustworthiness of committee members
- Resourcefulness
- Industrious

#### **Attitudes**

- Tolerance
- Accommodating
- Dynamism

On the issue of the roles/responsibilities that political parties can play to ensure the success of the Committee, the following were outlined:

- Encourage continuous political dialogue.
- Avoid political sentiments within the committee.
- Training and capacity building.
- Education, communication and information.
- Promoting the aims and objectives of the committee.
- Accessing financial support for the committee.

- Responding positively to the demands of the committee as they relate to the female members of the parties.

On the roles/responsibilities that the Independent Electoral Commission could/should play to ensure the success of the Committee, the following were suggested:

- It could be the Secretariat.
- It could serve as facilitator for its establishment.
- It could be responsible for logistics.
- It could encourage political dialogue.
- It could maintain trust among political parties.
- It could play the role of adviser and give moral support to the Committee.
- It could provide training and build capacity of and sensitize female aspirants to political positions.
- It could publicize inter-party activities/meetings.

The following names were suggested for the proposed inter-party committee:

- Women in Politics (W.I.P)
- Inter-party Committee
- National Committee for Women in Politics (NaCWIP)

It was agreed that the media had a key role to play to ensure the success of the Committee.

## **THE WAY FORWARD**

To take things forward, it was recommended that an interim committee be formed as soon as the Consultation Report is received and reviewed, to explore the modalities of setting up the proposed Inter-party Committee. The ad hoc body will be composed of 2 representatives (1 male and 1 female) of each of the registered and recognized political parties, 2 officials from the IEC (1 male, 1 female), 1 Civil Society Organization (possibly TANGO) and the ACDHRS.

## ANNEX 1: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS IN INTRA-PARTY CONSULTATIONS

APRC [29. 07. 13]	NRP [30. 07. 13]	UDP [31. 07. 13]
1. Assah DRAMMEH	1. Awa SABALLY	1. Jimbi CEESAY
2. Aja Ndey JATTA	2. Musu SABALLY	2. Wuday CEESAY
3. Aja Demba DAFHEH	3. Kebba BAH	3. Sophie E. KONTEH
4. Isatou JARJU-GIFANGA	4. Habby BAH	4. Mariam B. SECKA
5. Fatou LU	5. Samba D. CEESAY	5. Aminata SANDENG
6. Yassin SABALLY	6. Adama BAH	6. Nyama JOBARTHEH
7. Aja Fatou BAH-KEITA	7. Amie KHAN	7. Fatou K. JAWARA
8. Fatou JALLOW	8. Mariama E. BAH	8. Aminata MARONG
9. Aja Amie JATTA	9. Sainabou JOBE	9. Binta NJIE
10. Aja Fatou DUMBUYA	10. Isatou TOURAY	10. Muhammed L. JANNEH
11. Aja Mberry SOWE	11. Musu BAH	11. Lamin SEY
12. Fatou KEITA	12. Adama SABALLY	12. Adama JALLOW
13. Jainaba JARJUSEY	13. Sarjo SABALLY	13. Kajali FOFANA
14. Aja Isha MANNEH	14. Safietou CISSOKO	14. Fatou B. CEESAY
15. Ngui NJIE	15. Alhagi Babou JOBE	15. Seray Babe SONKO
16. Ajie Ndey DUMBUYA	16. Basiru CHOI	16. Fatou CAMARA
17. Ajie Yama FAAL	17. Kebba Y. DRAMMEH	17. Amie FADERA
18. Ida BOJANG	18. Ebrima BAH	18. Lang MARONG
19. Kumba JENG	19. Samba BALDEH	19. Karfa SONKO
20. Hon. Fatou JAHUMPA-CEESAY	20. Abdou JADAMA	20. Modou DEMBA
21. Aji Mariam CEESAY-SAWANEH	21. Modou SAHO	21. Fakebba COLLEY
22. Awa JARRA	22. Musa SONKO	22. Lamin DARBOR
23. Fatou BOMBO	23. Alagie M. LOBBA	23. Adama BARRO
24. Haddy MARRINAH	24. Bamba CAMARA	24. Femi PETERS
25. Mariama BAH-SAINE	25. Ebrima JALLOW	25. Ebrima SANDENG
26. Agi Awa SILLAH-NJIE	26. Filli SUSSO	26. Kemeseng JAMMEH
27. Isatou NYASSI	27. Sara COLLEY	27. Alh. Dembo BOJANG
28. Jainaba BITTAYE	28. Hamat KHAN	28. Ebraima MANNEH
	29. Sulayman SANNO	29. Lamin DIBBA

**Chair:** Mrs. Hannah FORSTER, ACDHRS Executive Director

**Resource Persons:** Hon. Elizabeth Y. RENNER and Hon. Ndey NJIE

**Rapporteur:** Dr. Burang GOREE-NDIAYE

**Facilitator:** Ms. Fatou Bintou SALLAH

**Coordinator:** Ms. Danielle AGYEMANG

**MoFEA Representative:** Mr. Jerreh SONKO, Accountant

## ANNEX 2: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS IN INTER-PARTY FORUM

### APRC REPRESENTATIVES

1. Hon. Fatoumatta JAHUMPA-CEESAY
2. Aji Amie JATTA
3. Aja Mberry SOWE
4. Aji. Fatou BAH
5. Aji Awa SILLAH

### NRP REPRESENTATIVES

1. Samba BALDEH
2. Musa SONKO
3. Jonsaba JABBI
4. Pateh BALDEH
5. Salla YORK

### UDP REPRESENTATIVES

1. Alh. Dembo BOJANG
2. Kesemeng JAMMEH
3. Ebraima MANNEH
4. Mariam B. SECKA
5. Jimbi CEESAY

### IEC REPRESENTATIVES

1. Pa Makan KHAN
2. Robert Anthony SECKA
3. Samboujang NJIE
4. Sulayman JOOF
5. Isatou JALLOW-NDURE
6. Amie NJIE
7. Neneh H. JALLOW

**Chair:** Mrs. Hannah FORSTER, ACDHRS Executive Director

**Resource Persons:** Hon. Elizabeth Y. RENNER and Hon. Ndey NJIE

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**Coordinator:** Ms. Danielle AGYEMANG

**MoFEA Representative:** Mr. Jerreh SONKO, Accountant

**Rapporteur:** Dr. Burang GOREE-NDIAYE