

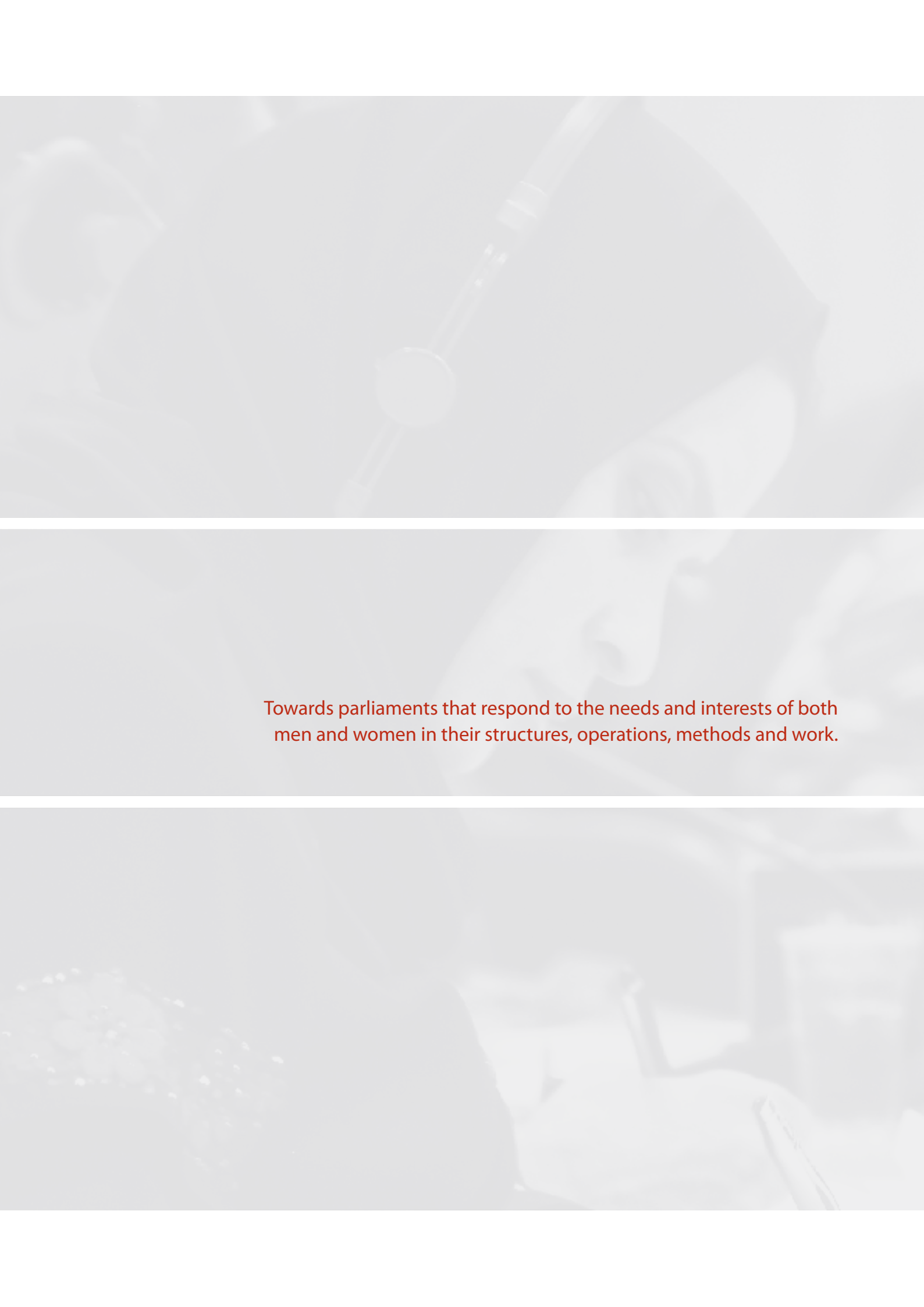


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Gender-Sensitive Parliaments

A Global Review of Good Practice



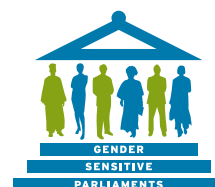


Towards parliaments that respond to the needs and interests of both men and women in their structures, operations, methods and work.

Gender-Sensitive Parliaments

A Global Review of Good Practice

Written by Dr. Sonia Palmieri



Acknowledgements

The Gender-sensitive Parliaments project (www.gender-parliaments.org) set out to examine the gender sensitivity of parliaments around the world. Originally conceptualised by Julie Ballington, former Programme specialist at the IPU's Gender Partnership Programme (GPP), the project's design benefited from the input of a number of gender and parliament specialists and project partners, including Zeina Hilal (Programme Officer, GPP, IPU), Kareen Jabre (Manager GPP, IPU), Karima El Korri (UNDP, Arab Regional Office), Elizabeth Powley and Kristen Sample (International IDEA, Latin American Regional Office). Senator Ruth Nancy, of Canada, also gave valuable insight on drafts of the questionnaires distributed for this research.

Without the time and dedication of hundreds of parliamentarians and parliamentary staff this report would not be so rich with insight. We thank all who responded to the questionnaires for their considered responses and recommendations. We are especially grateful to the numerous parliamentarians interviewed for this study, who spent considerable time reflecting on their parliamentary experiences.

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Foreword

Parliaments mirror our societies. They aspire to represent and respond to everyday reality. By so doing, parliaments are constantly evolving. Modern parliaments are those in which citizens recognize themselves and find answers to their questions and aspirations.

In the 20th century, one of the greatest changes to democracy around the world was women's participation in politics, both as voters and as members of parliament. Today the objective of gender equality has permeated our societies and is now recognized as a central element of development and progress. This goal has already been taken into account by many parliaments, but there is still a long way to go before parliaments become leading actors in the struggle for gender equality.

In 2008 the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) launched a global study of women in parliament, *Equality in Politics: A survey of women and men in parliament*. A clear finding of this survey was that women are overwhelmingly the main drivers of progress in gender equality in parliament, but that parliaments, as institutions, also have responsibilities. This finding begs the question: what are parliaments doing to encourage and foster gender equality? Indeed, what policies inform gender equality efforts? Are the institutional structures of parliaments around the world gender-sensitive? In short, are parliaments gender-sensitive?

The report on *Gender-sensitive Parliaments* seeks to answer these questions. Simply put, a gender-sensitive parliament is one that responds to the needs and interests of both men and women in its structures, operations, methods and work. While this report provides an important assessment of the gender sensitivity of the world's parliaments, it also aims to give parliaments the tools they need to create the mechanisms required to mainstream gender equality concerns throughout their legislative, oversight and administrative work.

Parliamentarians look to the IPU for capacity-building support in this area, which the IPU is committed to providing in a number of ways: strengthened cooperation with other parliamentarians and experts in the field of parliamentary development; new tools to analyse legislation from a gender perspective; further research into areas where questions are still unanswered; and information seminars to share experiences and good practices.

This report consolidates the IPU's long-standing position as a leader in research on women in parliament. The IPU has forged strong partnerships with other organisations to expand its research on the subject. The survey on which this study is based is the result of a global, two-year project, which required collaborative effort. With funding from Irish Aid, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the IPU has worked in partnership with the UNDP Parliamentary Development Initiative in the Arab Region and with International IDEA in Latin America.

I wish to thank parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, project collaborators and all others who gave generously of their time and effort. It is our hope that this Study will make an important contribution to the continuing development of modern democracy and modern parliaments.



Anders B. Johansson
Secretary General

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Overview

In 2008, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) began a collaborative project to examine the gender sensitivity of parliaments around the world, working in partnership with the UNDP Parliamentary Development Initiative in the Arab Region and with International IDEA in Latin America.

The project builds on the IPU's 30 years of research on gender and parliament, and directly follows on from the IPU's 2008 research publication *Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments*. A clear finding of that survey was that women are overwhelmingly the main drivers of change in terms of gender equality in parliament, and that there was scope to lay some of the responsibility for that change with parliaments more broadly.

The project's aim was to investigate the gender sensitivity of parliaments in terms of their operational and institutional culture. A parliament's operational culture is reflected in different ways: the facilities available, sitting times, budget allocations and services. Institutional culture refers to the unwritten rules, norms and mores adopted over time in institutions primarily designed by men.

The project also set out to distil current best practices for mainstreaming gender in policy development and parliamentary work and to examine the mechanisms best suited for that purpose, such as parliamentary committees, caucuses of women parliamentarians or the use of gender budgeting.

Three sets of questionnaires (see Appendix II) were designed in 2008 following consultation with parliamentarians and experts on gender and parliament. Ninety-five responses to the first questionnaire were received from parliamentary authorities in 77 countries. Seventy-one parliamentary party groups from 42 countries completed the second questionnaire, and 123 parliamentarians from 50 countries responded to the third. The responses came in equal numbers from men and women members (see Appendix I).

In addition to the questionnaires, face-to-face interviews were held with men and women parliamentarians from every region of the world, many as part of country case studies prepared between 2008 and 2009. Countries

were selected on the basis of recent innovations and emerging good practices in their respective parliaments. National case studies as well as a regional report were prepared for each region. All of that research is reflected in this report.

The report is divided into eleven chapters, with **Chapter one** serving as an overall introduction and providing definitions of key concepts used throughout the survey.

Promoting women to key positions in parliament

While the numbers of women in parliament are important, it is also vital to have women in positions of parliamentary leadership. Among other things, women in these positions present a positive role model to other women. Throughout the world, however, relatively few women serve as presiding officers of their respective parliaments, and only marginally greater numbers serve as deputy (or vice) presidents or speakers. **Chapter two** of this report looks at women's parliamentary participation worldwide and at various measures adopted to improve it.

Chapter three describes how access to leadership positions most commonly results from rule changes and temporary special measures. Women have also created their own paths to leadership by learning the rules and taking advantage of changing political circumstances. And of course the more women enter parliament, the easier their access to leadership positions becomes.

While the number of women occupying committee chair positions has increased, the committees concerned tend to specialize in the "soft" portfolio areas, such as women's affairs, employment and education. The process of appointing women to committees (both as chairs and as members) is dominated by the political parties, and the mechanisms for promoting women tend to be based on "conventions" rather than explicit rules. Progress on this front will require more transparent methods of matching leadership positions with members' abilities, diverse working experience, and preferences. Affirmative action – giving preference to women where qualifications are equal – could also pave the way for more women leaders.

Pursuing gender equality through legislation and debate

Parliaments need to ensure that the legislation they pass does not discriminate against men or women, but rather actively promotes gender equality. **Chapter four** discusses gender equality laws pursued in various countries, featuring a broad range of anti-discrimination measures. Parliaments that have not passed such laws should do so, and gender equality laws over ten years old should be updated to include gender mainstreaming frameworks. There are, unfortunately, very few examples of “checklists” to verify that legislation has been adequately assessed from a gender perspective. Parliaments should review existing gender-mainstreaming models, modify them to suit their own individual circumstances and provide adequate training for proper implementation.

Laws addressing gender equality also require gender mainstreaming. Who or what body is responsible for reviewing legislation from a gender perspective? Is that body supported by adequate infrastructure, to monitor the implementation of such laws and the gender mainstreaming framework? Some of the parliaments surveyed suggested that legislative impact assessments (which currently accompany each legislative initiative in many countries) include a gender component.

What are the best strategies for promoting gender equality laws? The members surveyed referred to strategies for linking such legislation to the broader discourse on development or financial crisis. Others spoke about the importance of choosing the right moment to introduce such legislation.

Promoting gender equality also requires familiarity with existing parliamentary mechanisms – how to participate effectively in debates, ask questions of ministers or use “call attention” notices, petitions or grievance debates. This can be achieved through induction or orientation training that incorporates a gender perspective, for both new and incumbent parliamentarians. Gender-specific measures, such as gender advisors, (multiple) gender focal points on each committee and gender budgeting, should also be institutionalised.

Dedicated gender mainstreaming infrastructure

Gender equality is not guaranteed simply by the presence of women in parliament. It depends on a parliament’s gender sensitivity and awareness, its policies and infrastructure.

Chapter five looks at how two mechanisms – gender equality committees and women’s parliamentary caucuses – can help a parliament ensure that its output has been properly analysed from a gender perspective. Gender equality committees act as incubators for policy

ideas on gender equality and help to keep gender issues on the parliament’s agenda. Their value lies in their ability to work closely with national women’s machinery, ombudsmen and non-governmental organisations. Some of these committees have influenced policy on a range of issues including education, healthcare and employment, to name a few. Their permanent structure is a particular asset, entitling them to the same resources (budget and staff) as any other committee.

While gender equality committees have a slightly different (advisory) status in some parliaments, affecting their ability to act on the recommendations made, they are generally seen as being equal to other parliamentary committees, and as effective. On the other hand, factors cited as limiting the effectiveness of such committees related to the focus of their inquiries, the number of women in parliament, the capacity of committee chairs and the extent to which they receive support from parliamentary leadership.

Gender equality committees can also support and cooperate with other portfolio committees, encouraging them to consider issues of gender equality relevant to their respective purviews and initiating, supporting and monitoring steps to mainstream gender.

Where parliaments have chosen not to establish a dedicated gender equality committee, these issues are commonly addressed through a social policy or human rights committee. Such ‘multi-portfolio’ committees have the advantage of being able to apply a gender perspective to a broader range of issues but the disadvantage of having less time for specific gender concerns.

Women’s parliamentary caucuses are cross-party coordination groups in which women parliamentarians participate on a voluntary basis. Caucuses have brought women together across party lines and given them a framework within which to engage civil society and private sector partners. Such groups have successfully raised the need to legislate on issues relevant to women and gender equality, and particularly domestic violence, non-discrimination, healthcare and women’s rights. The inclusion of men in women’s caucuses has been beneficial to this outcome. Women’s caucuses have been most effective when their members have deliberately put their parties to one side and made a commitment to the caucus – and also, according to comments from questionnaire respondents, when they have a clear understanding of the caucus’s mission and goals as well as sufficient funding.

Other innovative mechanisms have surfaced to raise the profile of gender equality in parliament, including speakers’ network on gender equality, research think tanks, and internal participatory gender audits. These new initiatives notwithstanding, there is a real concern that parliaments continue to lack access to

data disaggregated by sex, which ultimately provides the basis for all gender mainstreaming efforts. This needs to be redressed by relevant statistical agencies in government so that gender mainstreaming can move from theory to widespread practice.

The contribution of men parliamentarians to gender equality

The idea that men need to participate in parliamentary activities aimed at ensuring gender equality has gained increasing acceptance, among women and men. This acceptance has resulted from changing social attitudes and growing consensus within the electorate that women can no longer be excluded from the political sphere. Indeed, there can be political backlash when women's and gender issues are ignored by the political elite.

Men are therefore increasingly coming on board. As **Chapter six** outlines, they are co-sponsoring, and in some cases even sponsoring, legislative initiatives to ensure non-discrimination against women. Men have also been appointed to chair or to participate in their parliaments' gender equality bodies. A suggestion received among the survey responses was that parliamentary rules be changed to require the presence of men and women on all parliamentary committees – including those relating to gender equality – so that all issues could be considered from a gender perspective (which, by definition, includes the views of men).

A successful initiative to encourage men's participation has been the inclusion of men in public outreach activities, to raise awareness of gender equality issues. Men have participated in celebratory activities for International Women's Day, delegations to the annual Commission on the Status of Women and field visits to sites of obvious and manifest discrimination.

Above all, the chapter underscores the need for men to be aware of and shoulder their responsibilities with respect to gender equality.

Policies and procedures

A common misconception is that gender equality policy means quota laws or a national, government-focused gender agenda. As far as parliaments are concerned, gender policy can be understood as something different: a road map for outlining a parliament's commitment to gender equality, with a clear and detailed set of objectives and processes for achieving it. Under this overarching policy should be a suite of related policies to prevent harassment, distribute resources and allowances equitably – including access to research services, computers and office space – and define expected behaviour in a code of conduct.

Chapter seven looks at the various policies and procedures in place in parliaments. While codes of conduct appear to be relatively common, they do not, as a rule, include references to gender equality. This gap is a significant weakness requiring more attention, not only from parliaments, but from bodies such as the IPU. While parliaments were mostly of the view that resources and allowances are distributed equally, it is telling that women remain under-represented in those positions that attract higher allowances (such as Speaker or committee chair). Plans of action are required to ensure women are not always the last candidates to be considered for promotions. Policies to prevent harassment are very rare, and while grievance mechanisms are in place in some parliaments, it is not clear how independent they are of politics.

Detailed plans of action would also help parliaments identify gaps in their legislation and overall policy objectives. This could involve an initial "gender audit" of what has been done and what remains to be done.

Political parties

Political parties are generally not considered open or transparent organisations. Despite rhetoric about openness to women's participation, parties remain dominated by men. This is an issue as political parties are increasingly the dominant form of political organisation and the mechanism through which women and men can pursue a legislative platform for gender equality.

Chapter eight investigates the influence of parties on parliamentarians wishing to pursue a gender equality legislative agenda, finding that the main avenue for women's participation in a party is through a women's "wing" or "organisation". While beneficial in some respects, such an approach can also leave women ostracized. Some parties work towards gender equality by holding seminars and lectures with gender experts on important topics, and by creating strong links with stakeholders in academia and NGOs. They should also push for amendments to their internal statutes and rules to ensure women's participation both as members and leaders.

Women have encountered barriers to equal participation in the executive, decision-making structures of their parties, either because they are seriously outnumbered by men or because they require resources that women do not readily have at their disposal. Women as well as men are frequently challenged in their ability to initiate legislative proposals not condoned by their parties – facing serious consequences if they do, including expulsion from the party. Some women, in fact, choose to remain silent for the sake of party consensus.

Parties rarely resort to gender mainstreaming as a strategy for pursuing gender equality more comprehensively, often for lack of resources (both financial and human)

or political will. Some parties see no need for gender mainstreaming. Those that do often need to strengthen their monitoring and evaluation efforts, an area in need of far greater support. In addition, parties could adopt overarching gender equality plans with clear mainstreaming strategies, and establish dedicated party committees to oversee their implementation.

Parliamentary culture and infrastructure

Chapter nine presents an entirely new area of research: the gender sensitivity of a parliament's culture and infrastructure. On entering parliament, members are expected to conform to the institution's rules and norms, both written and unwritten. Such rules and norms can make for a parliamentary culture not always comfortable for women. Derogatory and sexist language and incidents of sexual harassment can make women feel like outsiders. And while parliamentary building facilities have been adapted over time to be more accommodating of women (e.g., by providing women's restrooms), some of the women members surveyed reported being discriminated against in the distribution of resources, including office space, computers, staff and research facilities.

By far the greatest challenge highlighted by survey respondents is balancing work and family. According to their responses, members are typically able to spend only limited time with their families. A particular difficulty for women members stems from continuing stereotypes about a woman's role in the home, obliging them to cover work as well as most family responsibilities.

Parliaments could address this challenge by rearranging sitting hours, with no sessions late at night or during school holidays, and by entitling all members to parental leave – not just when children are born but whenever necessary to attend to their needs. Parliaments can also make particular arrangements for women returning to work after maternity leave: allowing proxy votes (so that breastfeeding women need not attend the plenary to vote; providing special rooms for breastfeeding mothers and perhaps most importantly, establishing childcare centres in parliament.

Parliamentary departments

Parliaments need to become more gender-sensitive not only toward their members but also toward the hundreds and thousands of parliamentary staff members. **Chapter ten** investigates the working conditions of parliamentary staff, which were often found to be similar to those of public servants. It is to be remembered, however, that when parliament is sitting the hours worked by staff can be just as long as those worked by parliamentarians. Parliamentarians themselves can have an impact on the workplace culture. The research uncovered examples of women members fighting to relax the dress codes for parliamentary staff members and of parliamentarians sexually harassing staff members. For these reasons and others there is a clear need to continually examine the workplace culture and infrastructure in place for parliamentary staff.

Chapter eleven offers some conclusions and recommendations for action.

Chapter one

Introducing gender-sensitive parliaments

“Gender sensitivity has two aspects to it. One aspect is that women and those who are concerned about women’s issues, struggle for the empowerment of women or for their rightful place under the sun. The other aspect of it is that the society evolves to a level where there is acceptability of women in positions of decision making and positions of importance.” **Woman parliamentarian, India**

In this chapter you will find:

- Definitions of key concepts such as “gender-sensitive parliaments” and “gender mainstreaming”
 - How gender mainstreaming applies to parliamentary work
-

The need for change

Democracy requires constant evaluation and reassessment. In the twentieth century, one of the greatest changes to democracy around the world was the inclusion of increasing numbers of women, both as voters and as members of parliament. Today, women represent just under 20 per cent of all members and have been granted the right to vote in every state but one.

This significant change, however, did not come without consequences. Women entering an unfamiliar environment faced various challenges. They had to learn the ways of parliament – the written as well as unwritten rules – and adapt to them. In some cases, women have been able to change such rules.

In some respects, parliaments are workplaces like any other. They have hours of operation, attendance records, employee allowances in many cases, office space and other resources. Parliaments also have their own institutional culture: members are expected to behave in particular ways, address each other by particular titles and dress in a professional manner.

Parliaments have faced increasing demand to change their culture and infrastructure, as a consequence of

more female members and an ever-growing need, among both men and women, to balance work and family life. The twenty-first century has seen impressive changes in the way men and women share their work and family responsibilities, and parliamentarians are no exception. Parliaments have to reflect this new reality and transform themselves into gender-sensitive institutions.

Box 1.1

Definitions of terms used in this report*

Gender: the social attributes associated with being male and female and the relationships between women, men, girls and boys. These attributes and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialisation. The concept of gender also includes expectations about the characteristics, aptitudes and likely behaviours of both women and men, and when applied to social analysis, reveals socially constructed roles. Sex and gender do not mean the same thing. While sex refers to biological differences, gender refers to social differences, which can be modified since gender identity, roles and relations are determined by society.

Gender mainstreaming: the process of assessing and taking into account the implications for women and men of any planned action – including legislation, policies or programmes – at all levels and in all spheres. The concept is understood as strategies that put gender issues at the centre of broad policy and programme decisions, institutional structures and resource allocation. Mainstreaming gender equality into the work of parliament should contribute to effective implementation and oversight of policies that address the needs and interests of both men and women.

Gender-sensitive parliament: a parliament that responds to the needs and interests of both men and women in its structures, operations, methods and in its work. Gender-sensitive parliaments remove the barriers to women’s full participation and offer a positive example or model to society at large.

Gender-sensitive budgeting: an approach that aims to mainstream gender in economic policy-making and seeks to transform the entire budgetary process. Gender budgeting refers not only to expenditures earmarked for women, but also to an analysis of the entire budget from a gender perspective, including security, health, education, public works, and so on, to ensure that the allocations and resulting impacts respond to the needs of both women and men.

* Definitions taken from UN/OSAGI, UNDP and UNESCO as quoted in UNDP, *Quick Entry Points to Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality in Democratic Governance Clusters*, New York, 2007 and IPU, *Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments*, Geneva, 2008.

A gender-sensitive parliament

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has defined a gender-sensitive parliament as one whose structures, operations, methods and work respond to the needs and interests of both men and women.¹

A gender-sensitive parliament is founded on the principle of gender equality – that is, that both men and women have an equal right to participate in its structures and processes, without discrimination and without recrimination. A gender equality policy provides direction for the setting of priorities and strategic, well targeted interventions to achieve them.

In its report, *Equality in Politics*, the IPU considered a range of changes to foster more gender-sensitive parliamentary environments. These included changes to promote less aggressive parliamentary language and behaviour; more family-friendly sitting hours; the

introduction of childcare facilities and parental leave for members; and gender-sensitive training programmes for all members. The rules of a parliament may be changed to ensure they are accessible to all members, do not exclude, restrict or discriminate against women, and provide for gender-neutral language. More radically, parliaments may change their structures by establishing a dedicated committee on gender equality, or by rotating positions of parliamentary authority between men and women, providing an opportunity for all members to participate.²

Achieving change: introducing gender mainstreaming

Since the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, in Beijing in 1995, gender mainstreaming – or the process of ensuring that policies and practices meet the needs of men and women equitably – has been hailed as a key strategy in the achievement of gender equality. Today, international treaties such as the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) encourage and monitor States parties’ progress in instituting gender mainstreaming practices across all sectors of policy development, implementation and oversight.

Gender mainstreaming allows for the diverse situations of different groups of both men and women to be considered in the policy process. Advocates of gender mainstreaming believe it addresses discrimination more fully and promotes equality more broadly. In 1997, the United Nations defined gender mainstreaming as:

... 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.³

At its core, gender mainstreaming is a process of questioning the assumptions, actors, benefits, processes, policies and outcomes associated with a process or policy. What assumptions have been made about the beneficiaries? Who is targeted? Will all groups be affected equitably? Will all groups benefit equitably? Gender mainstreaming questions an institution’s gender neutrality, particularly if its internal assumptions, working procedures and activities are considered to be perpetuating inequality. The ultimate

1 IPU, 2008, *Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments*, p. 61.

2 IPU, 2008, *Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments*, p. 71. See also, UNDP, *Gender and Parliament*, 2008.

3 United Nations, 1997, *Report of the Economic and Social Council*.

goal of gender mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality, and making institutions more reflective of the needs, aspirations and experiences of all women in society.

Given their pre-eminent role in legislating and overseeing the executive, parliaments are called to implement gender mainstreaming practices. According to the Beijing Platform for Action, governments should report “on a regular basis, to legislative bodies on the progress of efforts, as appropriate, to mainstream gender concerns ...” (paragraph 109). Yet in much of the literature on gender mainstreaming, the role of parliament is not emphasised or considered. Only a few international resolutions point to a need to enhance institutional capacity for gender mainstreaming at the level of the national parliament.

The IPU, in its resolution “Beijing + 10: An evaluation from a parliamentary perspective” (2004) specifically:

Encourages parliaments to play an active and positive role in the promotion of gender equality and to implement measures aimed at ensuring gender equality in representation, by establishing parliamentary committees on gender equality, composed of both men and women, making use of the tools of gender-budgeting analysis, ensuring the gender mainstreaming of all decisions and legislation, and allocating sufficient resources to these activities.⁴

While there are presently no binding requirements for legislatures in this regard, they clearly have a responsibility to respond to the needs and interests of men and women, on an equal footing.

Box 1.2

Gender mainstreaming in parliaments: requirements

Parliaments are well placed to provide a strong role model for government agencies and other organisations in mainstreaming gender through their own institutional processes and practices.

Gender mainstreaming in parliaments first requires all members in senior positions to be well versed in the need for and principles of gender equality, and the means to achieve it, working to ensure that women hold positions of authority within the institution.

Secondly, it requires the existence of dedicated structures and units to oversee the process. Gender can be mainstreamed by a discrete unit, such as a women’s caucus, or a specialised committee on gender equality in which women and men from all political parties may participate. Such bodies can be entrusted with monitoring the progress of gender mainstreaming across parliament, scrutinizing the gender-related aspects of all government reporting and assessing the effectiveness of the performance indicators used to monitor progress. An alternative approach is to share responsibility for gender mainstreaming more equitably across the work of all committees, rather than concentrating it in a single unit. There is also merit in considering the general working framework of parliament and whether its culture and infrastructure are themselves gender-sensitive.

Thirdly, parliaments require knowledge and capacity to implement a gender mainstreaming strategy and their own toolkits for ensuring gender oversight. Gender-sensitive legislation checklists, for example, have been created to:

- identify the groups most likely to be affected by proposed legislation and determine whether it might unintentionally discriminate against men or women, boys or girls;
- consider whether potential differences in the anticipated impact of proposed legislation should be measured, and if so, whether there are sufficient sources of sex-disaggregated data for that purpose;
- analyse budgets from a gender-inclusive perspective; and
- identify additional compliance or administrative costs associated with proposed legislation that might affect different groups.

Parliaments might also consider training their members in the gender dynamics of specific parliamentary practices, such as chairing committees in a gender-responsive way. This could be included in an induction program for new members and senators, or in an ongoing professional development course for all members.

⁴ See also European Parliament resolution on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Development Cooperation, adopted 13 March 2008.

Chapter two

Ensuring women's participation in parliaments

"The problem is that there is a flaw in democracy, it takes a long time. So I think it is the time factor, and it will eventually come through, and there will be an avalanche. This is how I see it."
Woman parliamentarian, India

In this chapter you will find:

- A snapshot of where women are represented in parliaments worldwide;
 - Views on special measures to improve women's electability;
 - Views on challenges faced in getting elected.
-

Reflecting the diversity of national populations, political systems across the globe are also diverse in nature. Presidential regimes exist alongside constitutional monarchies, multi-party States and one-party States. Most, however, have recognised the centrality of parliament to democracy.

Widespread popular participation is not always guaranteed, a timely reminder that democracy everywhere is in a continual state of development. Even where basic principles of free and fair elections and the rule of law are well entrenched, States continue to fine-tune their parliamentary systems to better fulfil the people's right to be represented and have their voices heard.

Global and regional trends

The story of women's participation in this process is also one of continual improvement. As of 2011, after centuries of exclusion, the franchise has been extended to women in most countries of the world. Unfortunately, this almost universal franchise has not always translated into women being present in national legislatures. By August 2011, the world average of women in parliament stood at

19.3 per cent. In 1995, it was 11.3 per cent. While overall trends point to an increase in women's parliamentary representation, the gains are not spread evenly across all countries. Only 44 Chambers in 37 countries (26 lower or unicameral chambers and 18 upper chambers) had reached the 30 percent mark, recognised as the critical mass for change in parliament, while nine in nine countries have no women members at all.

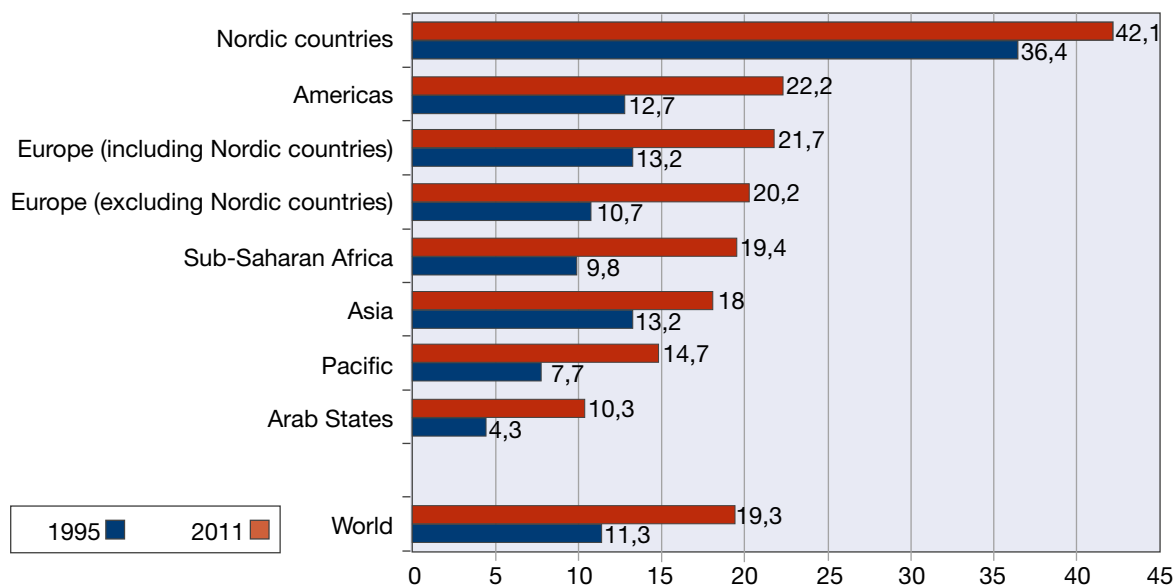
As has been the case for several decades, women in the Nordic countries represent, on average, over 40 per cent of their legislatures. While this level of women's representation is unmatched by any other region, the record for women's representation in a national parliament is no longer held by any of the Nordic countries. Since September 2003 that honour has been held by Rwanda, where women enjoy a parliamentary majority (56.3% in the lower house).

Rwanda is an example of a continuing trend among post-conflict countries, where women have fought to gain and hold seats in their countries' most representative bodies. As a result of reconciliation and constitution-building processes in such countries as South Africa, Mozambique, Tanzania, and TFYR of Macedonia (to name a few), special measures have been enacted to

Figure 2.1

World and Regional Averages of Women in Parliaments, 1995 and 2011

Situation for all chambers of Parliaments combined in December 1995 and August 2011. The percentages do not take into account parliaments for which data is not available.



Source: IPU, www.ipu.org

guarantee women's place in parliament. Partly thanks to those measures, women have held a seat in the parliamentary chamber.

Women in the Americas have also fought loud and hard to ensure their place in parliament, and their efforts have been paying off. That region now ranks second in the world, with women's representation averaging over 22 per cent. In Cuba, Costa Rica and Argentina, women account for more than 35 per cent of their national legislatures.

The proportion of female legislators in the national parliaments of Europe has also increased in recent decades. Women now represent over 20 per cent of that region's legislatures, which is slightly above the world average. Even so this still means that approximately four out of five parliamentarians are men.

The countries of Asia continue to make improvements in the number of women elected to parliament, although not at the same pace as in other regions of the world. As of 2011, women account for 18 per cent of members of the region's legislatures, up from more than 13 per cent in 1995. Women's representation exceeds 25 per cent in just four countries: Nepal, Timor-Leste, Afghanistan and Lao People's Democratic Republic. In more than twice that many countries, however, women represent less than 15 per cent of their legislatures, and in five of those, less than 10 per cent.

In the Arab countries, there are significant contrasts between countries. Women's participation in some parliaments varies from total exclusion (in Saudi Arabia

and Qatar) to more than 20 per cent representation in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).⁵

In the Pacific region, women hold no seats in five of the national parliaments of the region. Where women do hold seats in the Pacific Island States, it is usually no more than two or three. In short, progress in these regions has been gradual though slow.

Factors affecting women's political participation

Political and electoral systems

A country's electoral system is one of the most important determining factors of how many women will make it into the legislature at any given time. Women are elected in greater numbers (on average 6 percentage points higher) in systems of proportional representation than they are in majority electoral systems. Studies have shown that majoritarian systems, where women compete directly with men in their constituencies, tend to limit the number of women elected. Similarly, the "marginal seat syndrome" (fielding women candidates in constituencies where they are less likely to succeed) is a common practice among parties that want to *appear* to embrace gender equality but without disrupting the status quo. Proportional representation systems, in combination with a closed-list system, are far more conducive to the election of women.

⁵ For a full history of women's franchise in the Arab region, see Gihan Abu Zeid, 2010, "Regional study on the mechanisms and measures for gender-sensitive parliaments in the Arab Region", IPU Report, Geneva.

Another important element is the compatibility of electoral systems with quotas. As noted in a study by the European Parliament, quota systems are difficult to apply to single-member electoral districts, such as those in the United Kingdom and France (at the national level).⁶ According to the report, if the trend toward introducing gender quotas increases, so too will the gap between countries using plurality/majority systems and those with proportional representation.

Cultural challenges

At a recent parliamentary conference on women's access to parliaments,⁷ participants identified prevailing cultural attitudes regarding the role of women and men in society as one of the overarching challenges to women's political participation. These affect the nature and forms of women's political participation and impact their levels of success in seeking positions of power. Cultural attitudes affect not only how women are perceived by the electorate, but also by political party leaders and the media. Some participants even noted that women were seen as intruders in the field of politics. Others underscored that the electorate often overlooked the specific and valuable contribution that women could bring to politics. Cultural attitudes also impact on how women see themselves, affecting their confidence and resolve to pursue a political career.

Cultural values continue to be evoked in questioning the legitimacy of women's political participation. The Afghan Election Commission recently debated whether women's participation and mobility in electoral processes is consistent with Islamic principles. The Commission concluded that it is and that men should be supportive of women's political activities.⁸ Women in countries like Yemen, Algeria and Sudan, however, still face challenges in travelling to meet with constituents and voters, because their presence is not entirely accepted.⁹ Similarly, tribal leaders in Timor-Leste have warned that the "wrath of ancestors" could be incurred if the 'right' leader (i.e., a man) is not chosen.¹⁰

The **media** and the stereotypes it perpetrates can also constitute a challenge to those seeking election.

Mainstream media is often prone to cultivating a negative and stereotypical portrayal of women politicians, with a tendency to put them down and not focus on their political achievements.¹¹

Socio-economic challenges

Financing nomination and election campaigns is one of the greatest challenges facing women candidates, in both developing and more established democracies.

"Today, all parties in young democracies in Europe are relying on expensive public polling agencies, highly paid (foreign) spin doctors, expensive posters, mailing, e-campaigns, bought space in the media, free of charge newspapers, public rallies and in many places even on buying of the votes. Parties do have open and hidden rules of financial participation of the candidates competing for the eligible places. The more eligible is the place, the higher is the sum to be paid by the candidate."¹²

Campaigns are increasingly costly and the lack of economic resources is one of the biggest obstacles to winning an electoral race. Though the question of financing concerns both men and women candidates, women face some specific challenges that merit consideration on their own.

There are three phases of a political campaign: deciding to run, winning a party nomination and conducting an electoral campaign. Women face complex challenges at each of these phases. Experience has shown that a number of these challenges could be overcome by implementing comprehensive financing strategies designed to empower women candidates. For example, women often did not have sufficient agency over family resources. Therefore, when deciding to run for election, they would frequently hesitate over investing family resources, asking for credit, or assuming extra expenses for domestic help, and women needed to be empowered in this area.

To win a nomination, women have to build recognition among constituencies, which requires a significant investment of time and money. That is a particular barrier to women as many feel that, in comparison to men, they have less access or control over financial resources and powerful money networks. For similar reasons, women who succeed in winning a nomination

6 European Parliament, 2008. Electoral Gender Quota Systems and their Implementation in Europe, www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/200903/20090310ATT51390/20090310ATT51390EN.pdf

7 Fourth IPU Conference for Members of Parliamentary Committees on the Status of Women and other Committees Dealing with Gender Equality IS PARLIAMENT OPEN TO WOMEN? AN APPRAISAL, September 2009, <http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/gender09.htm>

8 UNDP, 2010, 'Power, Voice and Rights: A turning point for Gender Equality in Asia and the Pacific', Regional Centre for Asia Pacific, Colombo, p. 84.

9 Gihan Abu Zeid, 2010, "Regional study on the mechanisms and measures for gender-sensitive parliaments in the Arab Region", IPU Report, Geneva, p. 1.

10 UNDP, 2010, 'Power, Voice and Rights: A turning point for Gender Equality in Asia and the Pacific', Regional Centre for Asia Pacific, Colombo, p. 84.

11 Results of the Fourth IPU Conference for Members of Parliamentary Committees on the Status of Women and other Committees Dealing with Gender Equality IS PARLIAMENT OPEN TO WOMEN? AN APPRAISAL, September 2009, www.ipu.org/splz-e/gender09.htm

12 Sonja Lokar, 2008, 'Experiences from Central and South Eastern Europe', iKNOW Politics E-Discussion Forum on Financing Women in Politics

Box 2.1

Good practices in campaign finance

- Costa Rica's 1990 Law for the Promotion of Social Equality for Women calls on political parties to increase the number of women candidates, and to set aside funds to train women and promote their participation. The statutes of all political parties now include references to gender equality and the dedication of funds for women's political development. Several have committed a specific percentage of their training budgets to women.
- In Panama, Law 60 of the Electoral Code stipulates that parties use at least 25 per cent of public funds for capacity development, out of which at least 10 per cent should go to women.
- Canada's 1974 Elections Act allows childcare expenses to be included in a candidate's personal expenses, but for the campaign only, not for the initial nomination process.
 - Under Canada's Bill C-24, spending limits were placed on nomination campaigns. The original bill set the limit at 50 per cent of the spending limit for an electoral district, but due to lobbying by the women's caucus the limit was reduced to 20 per cent at the committee stage. Nomination campaigns – which previously ran into the hundreds of thousands of dollars in a "safe" seat – are now limited to between \$10,000 and \$20,000.
- El Salvador's FMLN party [Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional] has created a specific fund for the promotion and training of women in that party. FMLN's women members have also been involved in fundraising from the business and financial sectors to increase the resources for women candidates.

Source: iKNOW Politics E-Discussion Forum on Financing Women in Politics, www.iknowpolitics.org/node/7944

often feel at a disadvantage when conducting their electoral campaign.¹³

Seeking re-election

Are women more or less likely to seek re-election than men? Or about the same? Respondents to the IPU's questionnaire for parliamentarians revealed that more women members (28%) than men (14%) considered women less likely to seek re-election. Most members, however, considered women about as likely to seek re-election as men.

Table 2.1

Likelihood of women seeking re-election

(Number of responses = 106)

	More likely than men	About the same as men	Less likely than men
Women	11%	61%	28%
Men	7%	79%	14%
Average	9%	71%	20%

Source: Questionnaire C, www.gender-parliaments.org

Where members elaborated on their views, they mentioned family commitments and political party "gatekeepers" as possible explanations for women not seeking re-election. Most respondents, however, saw no difference in the ambitions of men and women, nor any real obstacle to women's re-election.

In South Africa, parliamentarians anecdotally reported the cases of women members lasting only one term without seeking re-election, having found it impossible to combine their parliamentary work with raising children. Respondents referred to the negative impact of parliamentary work on family life. In the words of one woman member, "This position swallows you."

"Politics is a really tough world. Everybody is in competition with everybody. This is similar to corporate life, when nominations are made: they will prefer a candidate who has never before said 'No, I can't do this because...' above the one that has done so on different occasions. The more often you make this kind of comment, the worse it will be."

Woman parliamentarian, Belgium

Overcoming barriers

Special measures to elect women parliamentarians: Quotas

It is undeniable that where women are represented in significant numbers in their national parliaments, special measures have been instituted. More than 80 percent of countries whose parliaments boast more than 30 per cent women members benefit from the implementation of some sort of special measure – whether legislated or voluntary. Quotas tend to work best when tailored to a country's electoral system, enforced with sanctions, accompanied by rules on where women should be placed on parliamentary lists, connected to a meaningful definition of participation and combined with steps to generate political and public support.

13 Excerpt from IPU, 2010 "Is Parliament Open to Women: An Appraisal?" pages 34-35, www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/wmn09-e.pdf

Reserved seats have been used prolifically in Africa and to some extent in the Arab region. Over half of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa apply a special measure of some kind, and women's representation in the national parliaments of those countries averages about 33 per cent. Seats have also been reserved for women in some Arab countries such as Jordan.

In Latin America, affirmative action mechanisms have been predominantly implemented through electoral reforms. Parties in a number of Latin American countries are now required by law to include women on their candidate lists for national elections. The success of such quotas, however, has varied and has been closely linked to the existence or not of sanctions for non-compliance.

Box 2.2 Non-compliance sanctions

Belgium's 2002 Gender Quota Act compels parties to put forward an equal number of male and female candidates. Candidates of the same sex may not occupy the top two positions on any list. The penalty for non-compliance is rejection of the list by the public authorities. (Case study, Belgium)

In Portugal, parties that do not have women comprising a third of their lists do not receive their full subsidy entitlement. (Woman parliamentarian, Portugal)

Special measures predominantly take the form of voluntary quotas, which tend to have no sanctions attached and, by definition, no enforceability – their implementation depends entirely on the will of political parties. While particular parties may be considered gender-sensitive, their impact on the overall number of women in parliament may be limited if they do not hold a majority of seats.

Where parties have determined that a proportion of their electoral candidates must be women, the debate

tends to focus on what that proportion should be. Responses from parties in Colombia, France, Germany, Mexico, Nicaragua, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland indicated 50 per cent as the right proportion. In South Africa, the African National Congress has instituted a 50 per cent voluntary quota. In Iceland, some parties have adopted a 40/60 rule, which effectively opens 60 per cent of the positions on a candidate list to women.

Instituting special measures is no easy task, as has long been evident in India. Since 1996, four separate bills to reserve seats for women have been introduced in India's parliament and considered by a parliamentary committee – only to lapse with the dissolution of parliament.¹⁴ Only in 2010 did such a bill pass, and in only one house, the Rajya Sabha. One of the main obstacles has been the broader debate prompted by such legislation with respect to castes in India. The concern has been that reserving seats would facilitate the entry of "elite" women into parliament, rather than candidates reflecting the diversity of all Indian people. Another subject of debate has been whether legislation should seek to "add more seats", as was done in Bangladesh (see below), to avoid perceptions of women being elected "at the expense of men".

How long should quotas be in place?

In Denmark, Mongolia and Bangladesh, quotas had been put in place but later repealed. The effect of these decisions has differed in each country. In Denmark, for example, voluntary party quotas were abandoned in 1996.¹⁵ At that time, women represented 33 per cent of the parliament. Even without the quotas, however, women in Denmark have still managed to increase their proportion of seats, to 38 per cent in 2010. This points to a cultural acceptance of women in the country's political landscape.

In other countries where quotas have been abandoned, societal acceptance of women was unfortunately less well entrenched, and their representation in parliament has declined. In Mongolia, a revision of the electoral law in 2005 introduced a 30 per cent quota for women



14 The Constitution (Eighty-first Amendment) Bill, 1996: introduced in the Lok Sabha on 12 September 1996, it referred to a joint committee which extended the provisions of reservation for women even in those cases where the number of seats was less than three in a State or Union Territory.

The Constitution (Eighty-fourth amendment) Bill 1998: introduced in the Lok Sabha on 14 December 1998.

The Constitution (Eighty-fifth Amendment) Bill 1999: introduced in the Lok Sabha on 23 December 1999.

The Constitution (One Hundred and Eighth Amendment) Bill 2008: introduced in the Rajya Sabha on 6 May 2008, it referred to the Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice for examination and report; passed on 9 March 2010; it currently awaits approval by two-thirds majority of the Lok Sabha.

15 Quota project, www.quotaproject.org/uid/countryview.cfm?country=63, accessed 13 December 2010.



candidates nominated by political parties and coalitions. The provision was repealed, however, in 2007 and not enforced in the 2008 elections; the five seats held by women were reduced to three.¹⁶ A gender equality law now before parliament would reinstate a 30 per cent quota for women, but that provision has proven particularly controversial during debate.¹⁷

A similar story unfolded in Bangladesh, albeit with a more positive ending. In 2001, a provision to reserve 30 of the 300 seats for women in the national parliament expired. While ruling and opposition parties made commitments in their election manifestos to increasing women's representation through direct election, the percentage of women elected in the subsequent election decreased dramatically, from 12.3 per cent to 2 per cent. Following this electoral result, a constitutional amendment increased the number of reserved seats in the national parliament from 30 to 45.¹⁸ Remarkably, 19 of the 64 successful women candidates in 2008 were directly elected by voters, without the assistance of quotas.¹⁹

The debate about quotas regularly involves a discussion about how long quotas should remain in place. As they are often defined, these special measures are intended

to be 'temporary'. It has been suggested in Tanzania, for example, that women in reserved seats should run for directly elected constituency seats after one or two terms.

Legislative challenges to quotas

The adoption of quotas is not an easy task and faces numerous challenges, including legal and constitutional ones. In Indonesia, for example, article 214 of the Electoral Law – requiring political parties to adopt a “zipper system”, with women accounting for one third of their candidates – was ruled to be unconstitutional. In the Constitutional Court's view, this provision gave parties, rather than the voters, the power to determine the outcome of an election.²⁰

In Venezuela, a 30 per cent quota law was adopted for both the Chamber of Deputies and Senate in 1997. The quota applied only to “closed lists”, not to constituency elections, and did not specify where women should be placed on the list. The law was applied to only one election, in 1998, when women's representation increased from 6 per cent to 12 per cent. In 2000 the law was declared unconstitutional, and in the next election women's representation dropped to 9.7 per cent.²¹

In the absence of quotas - other special measures, strategies and initiatives

Where quotas have not been implemented, parliaments and political parties have used other mechanisms to

16 Tumursukh Undarya, 2008, 'Women's efforts vs. politicians' power', www.iknowpolitics.org/en/node/4492, last accessed 26 July 2010.

17 Mongolia: Common Country Assessment, 2009 UNCT Mongolia.

18 CEDAW Committee Report Thirtieth session (12-30 January 2004) Thirty-first session (6-23 July 2004), p. 135.

19 Rounaq Jahan, 2009, Keynote presentation made at the dialogue on 'Women's Political Representation: Lessons from Global Experiences for Bangladesh', Centre for Policy Dialogue, 18 August, Dhaka.

20 UNDP, 2010, 'Power, Voice and Rights: A turning point for Gender Equality in Asia and the Pacific', Regional Centre for Asia Pacific, Colombo, p. 93.

21 www.quotaproject.org/uid/countryview.cfm?country=236.

increase the participation of women. For example, in Timor-Leste, women candidates were offered extra media time in the 2003 elections. In Kazakhstan, the Coalition “Women’s Electoral Initiatives”, comprised of 20 women’s organisations, was established in 1998. In August 1999, the Coalition sent a memorandum to all registered parties calling for them to include women candidates as at least 5 per cent of their party lists for the parliamentary elections. In June 1999, a public foundation, “Women’s Electoral Block”, was set up

to support women candidates. As part of this active involvement of women in the 1999 electoral process, the first women’s party was born: the Political Alliance of Women’s Organisations.²²

Another approach is to build capacity and trigger change starting at the local level. Policies in India, Japan, Lesotho, Namibia and Sierra Leone, are designed to produce a “flow-on” effect, by focusing on the sub-national level (see Box 2.4).

Box 2.3

Overcoming barriers: implementing special measures²³

Financial

- Provide ‘early money’ for nomination campaigns
- Consider provision of public funding
- Implement limits on campaign expenditure
- Provide incentives for political parties to include more women, such as additional media time

Training and capacity building

- Prioritize communication & leadership skills
- Media relations
- Ensure outreach to civil society and NGOs
- Provide training on fundraising and campaign management
- Consider using women to train each other
- Seek cross-party collaboration
- Provide mentorship training

Internal party reform

- Formalize candidate recruitment processes
- Allocate funding for women candidates, or women’s capacity building
- Consider implementing voluntary quotas
- Ensure gender equality accountability mechanisms

Box 2.4

From local to national?

- In India, reserved seats have operated for women in local government elections since 1991, and the policy has successfully identified a number of women leaders.
- In Japan, the 30 per cent target for women in local government committees and councils has been met; the aspiration is to reach 40 per cent by 2020.²⁴
- In Lesotho, 30 per cent of all local election divisions were reserved for women in the 2005 local elections. The all-women constituencies were distributed randomly, and in the end, over 50 per cent of the elected representatives were women (Government of Lesotho 2006; www.quotaproject.org/uid/countryview.cfm?country=133).
- In Namibia, party lists for the election of any local authority council with 10 or fewer members must include at least three women; those with 11 or more members must include at least five (Local Authorities Act, Article 6 [4] [a] [b], www.quotaproject.org/uid/countryview.cfm?country=160).
- In Sierra Leone, five of the 10 representatives on the Ward Development Committees, which are elected at town meetings, must be women.

Source: www.quotaproject.org/uid/countryview.cfm?country=203.

22 www.quotaproject.org/uid/countryview.cfm?country=126

23 Excerpt from IPU, 2010 “Is Parliament Open to Women: An Appraisal?” p. 36. www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/wmn09-e.pdf.

24 Statement by the Minister of State for Gender Equality and Social Affairs of Japan, Kuniko INOBUCHI, Ph.D. at Session One of the East Asia Gender Equality Ministerial Meeting “Progress of Gender Mainstreaming in Each Country and Problems to be Solved”, Tokyo, 30 June – 1 July 2006, p. 2.

Conclusion

This chapter reflects on the gradually increasing presence of women in national parliaments around the world. The fact that women continue to gain ground, however, does not mean that the obstacles to women's parliamentary representation have been dismantled. A range of such obstacles persists: cultural values discouraging the education or economic participation of women, the disadvantages associated with majoritarian electoral systems and the generally high expense required to run an election campaign.

Quotas, when implemented with sufficient resources and political will, have made a difference. Quotas are generally intended as temporary, special measures – temporary in the sense that, once the underlying cultural roadblocks to women's parliamentary presence can be cleared, so too can the quotas. How long these cultural changes may need to take root, however, is unclear, and certainly some parliaments have learned the value of reinstating quotas after prematurely abolishing them. Other measures that have been influential in increasing the proportion of seats held by women include targeted training, campaign financing and positive media attention.

Chapter three

Achieving change through leadership and committee work

"It is not a question of it being easy or difficult. It is a requirement that women participate in the decision-making process. When women participate at the committee level, they have an even deeper understanding of the process and impact. When a draft law has been submitted by a committee, all members are expected to defend the law in front of the government, by speaking up in the plenary." Woman parliamentarian, Viet Nam

In this chapter you will find:

- A snapshot of the positions women hold in their parliament's leadership structure;
 - Discussion of gender balance in committees;
 - Women's presence and absence from committees;
 - Methods of assigning members to committees;
 - Satisfaction levels with committee membership.
-

In pursuing gender equality, two avenues have commonly been taken. The first is promoting women to positions of seniority. Once in Parliament, women need to hold positions of power or authority. While there may be divergent arguments about why women should hold such positions – be it to influence policy direction, present a positive role model to other women, change parliamentary procedures or simply ensure a more representative balance, as an act of justice – social values have evolved to the extent that women's presence in these leadership positions is more readily accepted. Yet, relatively few women in politics reach the higher echelons of their parties or parliamentary hierarchies. Indeed, obstacles persist even for women who do reach the top. This chapter details the experiences of women parliamentarians in climbing the "corporate ladder" and considers some good practices for facilitating their ascension.

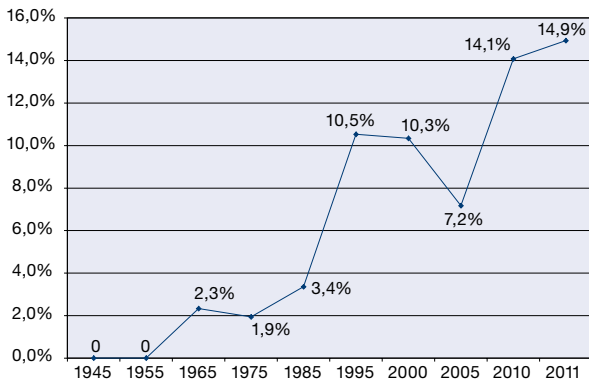
The second avenue for women to pursue gender equality is participation in committee work. Committees are often described as the "backbone" of parliament: they are a vital link between citizens and their representatives and afford parliaments an opportunity to focus on issues more closely than possible in the plenary. Committees are also microcosms of the wider parliamentary population. Their membership is often

reflective of each party's representation in the chamber, and they work under the direction of a leader, commonly known as the committee chair.

In these smaller forums, members investigate the workability of legislation and government policy and make recommendations to the broader parliamentary arena. Through committee inquiries, parliamentarians invite submissions and take oral evidence from the wider public, interested organisations, government officials and stakeholders. As a result of these investigations, members of parliament tend to develop a certain expertise in their respective portfolio areas and can also establish strong ties with relevant stakeholders.

Committees, much like the plenary, are governed by a set of rules which can dictate how a chair is elected, how many members must be present for a meeting to proceed (known as the quorum), what evidence can be heard by the committee and whether it may be published. Committees, again like the plenary, are also governed by unofficial, unwritten rules. Such rules can determine, for example, who becomes a member of a particular committee. As this chapter also shows, these unwritten rules are, by definition, less tangible than the written ones but have an indisputable effect on women's and men's participation in committees.

Figure 3.1
Women Speakers of Parliaments, 1945-2011
 (January of each year, except for 2011 (August))



The Speaker (or President) is the principal office holder of a parliament. He or she is a chamber's highest representative or spokesperson and presides over its business. The method of selecting the Speaker differs from one country to another. In the majority of countries, the Speaker is elected; in a few others, the position is appointed.

Research carried out by the IPU shows that in August 2011, women hold just over 14 per cent of the most senior position in parliament: that of Speaker. Interestingly, women reportedly hold approximately 22 per cent of Deputy Speaker positions. This higher representation is attributable to a number of factors. First, there are always more deputy speaker than speaker positions. Where there are multiple deputy speaker positions, parliaments can divide them between men and women. Second, and as explained below, the position of Speaker often requires substantial political experience, which, relative to men, women often do not have.

Pathways to leadership

The research suggests women are becoming leaders through various pathways. Most effective among these are temporary special measures and rule changes. In Iraq, for example, 25 per cent of all positions, including leadership positions, have been reserved for women. In Mexico's Senate, in an effort to expand the presence of women in decision-making venues, a reform to the chamber's internal rules was recently approved. The law, which was published on 4 June 2010 and took effect on 1 September 2010, contains two articles referring to the importance of equitable participation in both the Senate Leadership Board and commission presidencies. Although the rule does not establish mandatory measures, it calls for parliamentary groups to include gender equity among their criteria for distributing leadership positions (Case study, Mexico).

Other mechanisms have been forged by women themselves, either by serving the requisite time

period, having the relevant experience or learning the parliament's rules. All leaders, irrespective of gender, need to demonstrate their capabilities before they can be accepted as credible and legitimate authority bearers. An essential component of this process is **knowledge of the rules**. As a Namibian parliamentary leader notes, learning the rules proves not only to the plenary, but to the individuals themselves, that they can take on the responsibilities of the position.

Box 3.1

Testimonial: The importance of knowing the rules

[My nomination as Deputy Speaker] had to go to the Bureau of the party to be vetted to see if I qualified according to the party. They were unanimous that I did qualify.

Even some women were saying to me, when I consulted some of them who were in leadership positions, "We don't think it's necessary, it's your first time coming into parliament, maybe you should wait." Some of the men called me in and said that they felt it was not fair and the person who was there should retain his position. That in itself actually made me more determined.

I told them: (1) I don't get intimidated; (2) I don't compromise my principles; and (3) I am going to challenge the status quo. I knew that in order for me to get in there, there was one important thing: I would have to know the rules of the house. And that would be my weapon. I had to make sure that I set an example that women can be equal leaders just like men, and that women can be strong leaders.

Nobody told me the next day I had to preside. I went to the tabling office and there was one gentleman who said, "Here are the rules", adding "By the way do you know that tomorrow you have to preside?" I said "Fine, give me the rules and tell me what the procedures are." That whole night I stood in front of the mirror, practising. I studied the rules by heart.

The next day I was called to preside. I could see many smiling because they thought, "She is going to fail". I went up there with a smile, I sat and presided and everything went smoothly because I knew the rules. When I sat back down, the man sitting next to me asked me "How did you know how to do that?" I just responded "Women are born leaders".

Woman parliamentarian, Namibia

Changing political circumstances also provide opportunities for women to become leaders. In 2004, Michelle Ryan and Alex Haslam coined the phrase "the glass cliff" to explain their idea that women often take on positions of leadership in times where there is a high risk of "political failure" – electoral loss, for example. These high-risk situations may arise from a lack of

resources and support, or because the organisation (in this case a political party) is in crisis. The idea of the glass cliff was reflected in interviews with parliamentarians and in some of the case studies.

“We did have a female president of the party. She was appointed two years ago. You could say that she obtained the presidency when the party was in trouble ... You will have read about all this in the newspapers ... The glass cliff. She was given the opportunity to become the first female prime minister at a moment in time in which the party lost credibility.”

Woman parliamentarian, Belgium

When parties for which [women] ran as candidates suffer from weakened leadership structures, fragmentation and loss of legitimacy, they need new leaders to regain their legitimacy. And in this case most were women. **Bolivia case study**

When women constitute substantial numbers in a parliament, the “eligibility pool” of “qualified and experienced talent” also increases and women become more viable candidates for leadership positions. Thus, in Belgium where women account for far more than 30 per cent of parliamentarians, while not required by any rule, women still hold 14 per cent of leadership positions in the House of Representatives’ Bureau, and 25 per cent of those in the Senate (Case study, Belgium).

Not surprisingly, women leaders are seen as strong role models, particularly by other women. Their experience, however, is not without some level of difficulty: they

can be subject to more challenges and opposition, and sometimes command less respect, as explained by women parliamentarians themselves:

“The Deputy Speaker is a woman and has been a role model for women. When we go there for the first time, we have a seminar for new women members given by the Deputy Speaker on how parliamentary standing orders work, etc.” **Woman parliamentarian, Tanzania**

“Female leaders are more contested and opposed, and this applies to women in both senior and junior positions.” **Woman parliamentarian, Sweden**

Women as committee chairs

The chair of a parliamentary committee is generally responsible for presiding over its business and conduct. Knowledge of the standing orders or internal rules applicable to committees is useful, and it is therefore common to appoint chairs that have served at least one parliamentary term. The chair may have some influence as to the subject matters inquired into by a committee, although some will take on board the views and wishes of all members.

According to the IPU’s survey of parliamentary authorities, women constitute approximately 21 per cent of committee chairs of the parliaments that responded. As in the case of deputy speakers, women hold slightly more of the deputy chair positions (22.5%) and more again of the rapporteur positions.



6th Meeting of Women Speakers of Parliaments (2010, Bern)

Committees chaired by women

Research has consistently shown that women members of parliament predominantly lead committees that deal with women's/gender issues as well as such social welfare issues as family, employment and education. These have been classified as "soft" portfolio areas, in contrast to the "hard" areas of foreign affairs, defence, trade, security and economy, which tend to be led by men.

Responses to the questionnaire survey from parliamentary authorities confirmed this trend – women are most commonly chairs of committees on women's/gender issues or social policy (education, health and to a lesser extent the environment). On the other hand, women have not been completely absent as chairs of economy or foreign affairs committees and frequently, it should be noted, preside over justice and human rights committees.

Examining developments by region, women in Latin America have begun to chair committees outside the "social affairs cluster", including those on constitutional affairs, national defence and general legislation (Argentina), domestic policy (Chile) and

foreign affairs (Mexico and Peru). In Africa, diversity is commonly associated with higher numbers of women in parliament. In Rwanda's lower house, where women hold 56 per cent of the seats, women chair both the budget and the security committees. In Asia, it was suggested that having women chair committees outside the usual "soft" portfolio areas would require greater numbers of women with experience in diverse policy areas. In interviews, the issue of merit was a common theme of remarks on the advancement of women as parliamentary chairs in the region.

"In Pakistan, the chairperson of the Defence Committee is a woman, so is the chairperson of the Finance Committee and, the chairperson of the Information Committee. These are some of the toughest portfolios. Of course Social Welfare is headed by a woman as is Women's Development."
Women parliamentarian, Pakistan

"I was the first woman parliamentary chairman for the Committee on Home Affairs which is considered a traditionally male area. After that I became chairman of the Defence Committee, and dealt with the armed forces. And they weren't used to dealing with a woman, but they weren't opposed ... they just had to get out of

Table 3.1

Committees chaired by women (Number of responses = 89)

Social Affairs/Family/Culture	42
Legislative, justice, human rights	29
Women's/Gender Equality	28
Economics/Finance/Budget/Public Accounts	20
Education	20
Foreign Affairs/Defence	18
Health	18
Environment	15
Agricultural Affairs/Fisheries/Forestry/Rural affairs	14
Home Affairs	8
Government and Administration	7
Trade/Industry	7
Procedure/Rules/Petitions	6
Relations between House and Senate/Library/Publications/	6
Public Works	5
Transport/Infrastructure/Reconstruction	5
Immigration	4
Electoral Reforms and Political Parties	3
Privileges/Complaints	2
Tourism	2
Appointments	1

Source: Questionnaire A, www.gender-parliaments.org

a mindset that they were dealing with somebody from a different gender and that as far as I was concerned, I wanted to know things on substantive issues. And in fact, one of the things that I did that took people by surprise, I took the army fitness test. I mean, they had kittens when I first suggested it, but they sort of warmed up to the idea and they let me do it and I passed the test.”

Woman parliamentarian, Singapore

A number of factors determine the selection of a committee chair. In some parliaments, special measures or informal “policies” have been instituted to ensure that women serve in the position. In Rwanda, for example, a constitutional mandate requiring that women hold no less than 30 per cent of leadership posts is respected across the parliament. This is in part attributable to the high number of women in the country’s parliament, but there is also an unofficial policy of gender balance in the allocation of leadership and committee responsibilities: where there is a male committee chair, for instance, there is usually a female deputy chair, and vice-versa. This pattern is evident in two of the four Senate standing committees and 10 of the 12 Chamber of Deputies standing committees.

According to questionnaire responses, such measures are most commonly found in the parliaments of the Americas and Africa. In Mexico, legislation for the Chamber of Deputies to set quotas for distributing commission presidencies proportionately between men and women was not successful; it nonetheless remains an impressive testament to heightened awareness of the need for such measures in Latin America.

Special measures are least common in Asia, Europe and the Pacific, and entirely absent in the Nordic countries. Most parliaments, in fact, reported no such measures (formal or informal).

Table 3.2
Special measures instituted by parliament (formally or informally) to ensure women serve as chairpersons or deputy chairpersons of parliamentary committees and/or in the bureau
 (N=number of responses)

Region	Yes %	No %
Africa (N= 13)	31	69
Americas (N= 12)	33	67
Arab countries (N= 11)	18	82
Asia (N= 12)	9	91
Europe (N= 37)	14	86
Nordic countries (N= 4)	-	100
Pacific (N= 2)	-	100
Total (N= 91)	18	82

Source: Questionnaire A, www.gender-parliaments.org

Where mechanisms exist to promote the appointment of women as parliamentary committee chairs, most could be described as conventions rather than explicit rules.

“I must also state that in terms of leadership, we have seen that there is no discrimination of any kind. Whenever there are elections for committees, actually the Speaker comes out to tell the members of parliament that there must be deliberate affirmative action, to an extent that if the chairperson is a man, the vice chairperson should be a woman and where the chairperson is a woman, the vice chairperson of committees must be a man. And to me, that has clearly shown that the issues of gender are taking center stage in the Zambian parliament.”

Woman parliamentarian, Zambia

Members often choose committees on which to serve on the basis of their experience before entering parliament. With a certain level of experience on a given committee, and some “runs on the board” as a member of the committee, a member may eventually come to chair it. This brings up the issue of committee membership.

Box 3.2

Selected responses: Conventions to promote women in leadership positions

Since the adoption of Law No. 24.012 on women’s quota, an equitable distribution of decision making positions has been respected, though not necessarily very strictly, as currently the President of the House is a man and the three vice-presidents are women.
[Argentina, Questionnaire C]

A practice that has become virtually an unwritten rule is that both sexes are represented in the Bureau of the Senate. The same is true for the posts of Committee Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons.
[Burundi, Questionnaire C]

No specific rule has been established. However, the policy that has been followed by the leadership of the Senate for years now is to have both sexes represented in important posts. The fact that two out of eight Vice-Presidents are women, and for the first time since the Fifth Republic was established (1958) one of the six Standing Committees is presided over by a woman, attests to this.
[France, Questionnaire C]

The Rule of Procedure of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia which mentioned that in the process of composing its leadership, every committee has to consider women representatives.
[Indonesia, Questionnaire C]

There is a standing policy that appointment of chairpersons of Committees should reflect the gender and political composition of Parliament. A certain percentage of committees are, therefore, reserved to be chaired by female members.
[Zimbabwe, Questionnaire C]

Women's presence (and absence) on committees

In 1998, political scientist Lena Wängnerud devised a reproduction/production axis by which to analyse parliamentary committees, divided into four sub-groups: social welfare (health and welfare, social insurance, labour market, education); culture/justice (cultural affairs, justice, civil law, constitution); basic functions (foreign affairs, defence, agriculture, housing) and economy/technology (finance, taxation, industry and trade, transportation).

In her study of gender patterns in the Swedish Parliament between 1971 and 1996, Wängnerud concluded that women parliamentarians were over-represented on committees specialising in social welfare and culture, leaving men, as a consequence, over-represented on committees specialising in basic functions and economy/technology. The gender pattern was particularly strong in the social welfare committees, where women's representation was high, and in the economy/technology committees, where men were highly represented.

This analysis has been typical of women's representation on parliamentary committees worldwide. As of 2010, women clearly continue to gravitate toward the

social affairs, women's affairs, health and education committees of parliament.

Table 3.3 reports responses from parliamentary authorities on the gender distribution of committee membership and reveals some interesting trends. In accordance with their numerical dominance in parliament, men represent the majority of committee members in all portfolio areas, except women's affairs and gender equality. Women, on the other hand, sit in substantial numbers on committees dealing with social issues – e.g. the family, youth and the disabled – (40%), education (30%) and health (35%). This finding was common across all regions. Women are not altogether absent from other committees, of course, and appear to constitute between 16 and 20 per cent of the remaining portfolio committees.

There are some interesting regional differences. Not unexpectedly, women in the Nordic countries make up no less than 26 per cent of any committee, accounting for 62 per cent of health committees, 60 per cent of social affairs committees and 56 per cent of gender equality committees. Nordic women are relatively less represented on agriculture and fisheries committees, fields where Sub-Saharan African and Latin American women tend to be better represented. This may speak to the importance women in these latter regions place

Table 3.3
Membership of parliamentary committees

	By gender (%)		By region (% women)					
	Men	Women	Americas	Arab Countries	Asia	Europe	Nordic Countries	Africa
FAMILY / CHILDREN/ YOUTH / ELDERLY/ DISABLED	60	40	54	25	31	38	60	49
WOMEN'S AFFAIRS/ GENDER EQUALITY	43	57	54	29	37	58	56	76
EDUCATION	70	30	33	21	20	30	55	36
TRADE / INDUSTRY	82	17	17	3	13	16	33	26
FOREIGN AFFAIRS (including foreign aid)	80	20	27	10	18	20	42	16
HEALTH	65	35	35	19	33	32	62	45
PUBLIC WORKS/ TERRITORIAL PLANNING	84	16	22	10	7	14	46	19
AGRICULTURE / FOOD/ FORESTRY/FISHING	81	17	25	7	10	14	26	26
HOME AFFAIRS	84	16	26	13	11	13	43	23
FINANCE/BUDGET	81	19	19	8	13	18	32	24
IMMIGRATION (including integration and refugees)	84	16	17	13	9	16	47	21

Source: Questionnaire A, www.gender-parliaments.org

Table 3.4

Australian House of Representatives, joint and Senate committees without women, 1987 to 2007

	1987-1990	1990-1993	1993-1996	1996-1998	1998-2001	2001-2004	2004-2007
	♀ House: 6.1% ♀ Senate: 22.4%	♀ House: 6.8% ♀ Senate: 23.7%	♀ House: 8.8% ♀ Senate: 21.1%	♀ House: 15.5% ♀ Senate: 30.3%	♀ House: 22.3% ♀ Senate: 28.9%	♀ House: 25.3% ♀ Senate: 30.3%	♀ House: 24.7% ♀ Senate: 35.5%
H	Aboriginal Affairs Finance & Public Administration	Aboriginal Affairs Finance & Public Administration	Banking, Finance & Public Administration Library	Library Members' Interests	House	Industry & Resources	Members' Interests
O	Industry, Science & Technology	Industry, Science & Technology	Privileges Publications Selection				
U	Legal & Constitutional Affairs	Long Term Strategies Members' Interests Publications Selection	Televising of the House of Representatives Transport, Communication & Infrastructure				
S	Members' Interests Privileges Procedure Publications Selection	Members' Interests Publications Selection Transport, Communications & Infrastructure					
E	Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Corporations Legislation National Crime Authority Public Works	Public Works	Corporations & Securities Public Works	Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Public Works	Australian Security Intelligence Organisation	ASIO, ASIS & DSD	
J	Appropriations & Staffing Privileges Employment, Education & Training Finance and Public Administration Industry, Science, Technology & Infrastructure Publications Certain Aspects of the Airline Pilots' Dispute Animal Welfare	Appropriations & Staffing Finance and Public Administration Animal welfare (Select) Subscription TV Broadcasting Services (Select)	Finance & Public Administration Industry, Science, Technology, Communications & Infrastructure	Appropriations & Staffing Scrutiny of Bills		Finance & Public Administration (Legislation)	Finance & Public Administration (Legislation) Scrutiny of Bills

Sources: Work of the Session, Department of the House of Representatives, 1987 to 2007, Journals of the Senate, 1987 to 2007

on agriculture and fishing compared with women in Nordic countries. Women in Latin America are also better represented on foreign affairs committees than women in other regions.

Women have, over time, come to sit at an increasingly diverse range of committee tables, which is obviously attributable to the increasing numbers of women represented in parliament (as evident in Table 3.4 showing the decreasing number of Australian parliamentary committees without women). Wängnerud (2005) explains it as an institutional phenomenon, noting the changes adopted by the leadership of different parties, as also clearly reflected in the findings of this research.

The allocation of committee memberships

In some parliaments, individual members choose their committee membership; in others, parties have a stronger role to play. A member from Andorra responded that these decisions were made by consensus, bearing in mind the personal interests and previous background of each member. In India, the Parliamentary Group Leader asks each member to indicate three committee preferences, and on the basis of each member's choices, and those of other members, decides the committee membership for all members of the group. A similar process unfolds in Denmark, where parliamentary group leaders hold meetings with each member to seek their preferences. The objective of the parliamentary group leader is to "fulfil as many wishes as possible and [align these] with what's best for the party in terms of influence and strategy" (Denmark, Questionnaire B).

Committee membership may mirror the distribution of parties in the chamber, and there may be negotiations among party blocs. The response of a German parliamentary group noted that negotiations occur at the beginning of each legislative period (Germany, Questionnaire B).

In most parliaments, there is a party process which is then "ratified" by the plenary, where a vote may or may not be required. Indeed, in Yemen a member noted that committee portfolios are allocated following "internal elections" (i.e., after the party has held a ballot on who should be appointed to the various committees). Thus, political parties can have a very strong role to play in the allocation of committee membership.

"My party has a sort of internal quota. We make sure that women are represented in all the groups, committees and delegations. I think this has become part of our culture now. It is an assumption and we always have to make sure that it is still accepted and respected but so far it is a rule, I would say.
Woman parliamentarian, Switzerland

"The list of commission members is approved by the full Congress, based on a proposal from

the president and the members of the Leadership Council, who prepare the list based on proposals from parliamentary groups. Article 34 of the Congressional Rules governing that process states that the makeup must respect the principles of plurality, proportionality and expertise on the topic, and that no member of parliament can belong to more than five commissions or fewer than one." **Case study, Peru**

Individual members (irrespective of sex) most commonly indicated party leadership as the most influential factor in the allocation of committee membership, followed by self-nomination. Speakers were seen as less influential.

Table 3.5
Factors determining the committee/s in which members serve (N=number of responses)

	Women	Men	Overall score
Speaker of parliament/bureau (N = 77)	2.69	2.3	2.49
Parliamentary/party group leadership (N = 78)	3.24	3.19	3.21
Self nomination (N = 70)	3.0	2.97	3.0

Source: Questionnaire C, www.gender-parliaments.org
Note: Score calculated on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 represents "None", 2 "Not very much", 3 "A fair amount", and 4 "A great deal".

Other factors mentioned by members included the interests of constituencies, the member's previous experience, the influence of interest groups and associations, and specific parliamentary mechanisms, such as the Business Committee in Lesotho, and the parliamentary "secretariat" in Zambia. There was also the view that women's presence on a range of parliamentary committees could be attributed to the changing nature of society and women's increasing participation in different sectors of economic and social life. Education was believed to be a key driver of this change, particularly insofar as it has afforded women the opportunity to learn skills in areas previously dominated by men, such as engineering and science.

Policy specialisations

Many members linked committee membership with previous experience or interest in specific areas of policy. A review of the areas in which members considered themselves "very active" reveals a continuing difference between men and women. In the IPU's 2008 study, *Equality in Politics*, women and men members identified themselves as being active in different policy areas. Men indicated foreign affairs, economy and trade, education and constitutional affairs; women indicated women's

issues, gender equality, social, community and family-related matters.²⁴

This trend has not changed since 2008. Women members continue to consider themselves very active in the area of gender equality and women’s affairs – areas in which men indicate they are “not at all active”. The men surveyed also indicated slightly more activity than women in the areas of infrastructure, internal or home affairs and national security – although it is interesting that the score on national security was not particularly high.

Importantly, the link between committee membership and expertise works both ways. Not only is it important to members to join committees in areas where they have previous experience, but it is also clear that members gain expertise in a given area by virtue of their committee membership. That is, being a member of a committee allows members the opportunity to learn more about a subject area, create strong networks with the relevant stakeholders and thus place themselves in a stronger position to contribute to policy development.

Women indicated slightly less satisfaction with their “choice” of committees, suggesting a wish to be on other committees, including those with the “hard” portfolios whose doors may not always be open to them. The question is why? The research suggests three possible reasons.

Table 3.7
Satisfaction with committee membership

(Total responses: 106)

Do you hold committee portfolios of your primary choice?		
	No (%)	Yes (%)
Women members	33	67
Men members	18	82
Total	25.5	74.5

Source: Questionnaire C, www.gender-parliaments.org

First, women’s dissatisfaction may stem from being **considered “newcomers”** in the committee “hierarchy”.

“Newcomers do not have a totally free choice in opting for this or that committee. They have to respect rules of seniority within the party caucus: the more experienced representatives get their first choice. This might explain the distribution of men/women. There is a certain delay because the more experienced parliamentarians are mostly men, and they tend to opt for specific committees. Female newcomers as such may not enter the committee of their first choice.”
Man parliamentarian, Belgium

Table 3.6
Activity in policy areas (N = responses)

Policy area	Women	Men	Average
Women’s affairs (N= 102)	4.55	3.08	3.87
Gender equality (N=99)	4.52	3.31	3.92
Family-related matters (N=92)	4.47	3.47	3.94
Health care (N=96)	4.37	3.6	4.0
Education (N=97)	4.34	4.0	4.17
Environment (N=91)	3.93	3.63	3.75
Labour (N=98)	3.58	3.68	3.65
Foreign affairs (N=95)	3.52	3.58	3.56
Justice (N=93)	3.45	3.53	3.51
Economy (N=97)	3.31	3.88	3.63
Infrastructure (N=92)	3.25	4.06	3.68
Finance (N=93)	3.24	3.72	3.49
Internal or home affairs (N=92)	2.95	4.02	3.56
National security and defence (N=90)	2.72	3.10	2.96

Source: www.gender-parliaments.org, Questionnaire C

Note: Score is an aggregate of responses coded from Very active [5] to Not at all active [1].

25 IPU, 2008, *Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments*, p. 44.

The “hard” portfolio areas, such as foreign affairs or economy, might be seen as being at the top of the committee hierarchy. It takes both time and experience to get on such committees, for both male and female newcomers. But the number of female newcomers has grown in recent decades, often resulting in more men than women sitting on the committee of their first choice.

Secondly, being nominated to a certain committee **can involve processes/negotiations** that women do not always feel comfortable engaging in (or able to engage in). Women have a historically weak position from which to negotiate committee membership in parliament. This is not simply because women are still the newcomers, but because in many cases, they lack the institutional legitimacy to negotiate themselves into desired positions. The more weight women carry in their parties and congressional party caucuses, the greater capacity they have to negotiate, have their own voices and gain the public recognition that makes it difficult for colleagues to ignore their proposals or initiatives. To reach that point, however, they must go through a learning process that often lasts several legislative terms.

“We do not get involved in anything associated with politics, the arrangements, the political negotiations. This is because [men] do not discuss those issues with us. They talk about other issues with women, but not about political issues.”

Woman parliamentarian, Chile

“[Men] have pigeonholed women into social and family issues; they cannot imagine that

women could be involved in economic, budget and transportation issues. This seems illogical to them because they want to pigeonhole women in domestic affairs... party decisions put people where the machista system leads them, not to where they would like or want to be.”

Woman parliamentarian, Colombia

Thirdly, women are occupying committee seats otherwise **left vacant by men**. The prospect of men volunteering for gender equality committees is certainly to be hoped for, but more often than not men have other first preferences. As one Belgian (male) parliamentarian put it:

“I think it is quite normal that a lawyer will sit in a commission on Justice, a GP will be active in a commission on health. This, however, cannot be taken to imply that women have to be active in the commission on family life, for example. Men should be active just the same. It is just as well their responsibility. I don’t think they should have to be seduced to do it. They have their own capacity and background.

Man parliamentarian, Belgium

In Costa Rica, dissatisfaction with committee membership has led some members to pursue change through the courts (see Case Study 3.1). The courts’ decisions (often in favour of women claimants) are not always enforced, but the mere taking of legal action has highlighted the importance of gender balance on parliamentary committees and the difficulties involved in achieving it.



Case Study 3.1

Turning to the courts to ensure gender balance in parliamentary committees in Costa Rica

In 2003, several female deputies and one male deputy sought an injunction from the Constitutional Chamber (Case No. 02-004595-0007-CO), claiming that “the way in which the President of the Legislative Assembly arranged the makeup of the Standing Committees violated the right to equality in Art. 33 of the Constitution and provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the American Convention on Human Rights, by not naming women in a number proportional to the overall composition of the Legislative Assembly; in the case of the Social Affairs Committee, the president did not designate a proportional number of men.” The chamber accepted the deputies’ case (Resolution No. 2003-04819) and ordered the State “to pay the costs and damages caused by the acts that serve as the basis for this declaration.” This decision has not been enforced, and the court did not set a deadline for carrying it out.

In another case in 2003, the same deputies presented another request for an injunction before the Constitutional Court (Case No. 02-004595-0007-CO), stating that despite their efforts and the court’s earlier ruling, it should require that the Legislative Board comply with the provisions of Resolution No. 2003-04819. On that occasion, however, in Resolution No. 2003-09020, the chamber ruled the deputies’ request invalid, because “the questioned act ceased to have an effect when the first legislature (sic) ended, so it is not possible to retroactively apply the reparations ordered by the chamber for cases in which they are possible, because as noted, the actions have already ceased.” The second resolution, however, ends with the following warning: “Nevertheless, it is important to note that the case naturally constitutes a precedent, which, as such, is generally binding under the terms of Article 13 of the Constitutional Jurisdiction Law.”

Two similar requests for injunctions were filed in 2009, all by individual female deputies. The first was presented by an independent deputy (Case 12229-09) for having been excluded from participating in a Special Standing Committee on Appointments, despite an initial agreement to include her. She was replaced by a male deputy and assigned to another committee (Special Standing Committee on Tourism). Among her arguments, the deputy claimed that the President of the Legislative Assembly “violated her right to equality, safeguarded in the Convention on All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the America Convention on Human Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” In that case, the Fourth Chamber declared the case partly founded, Article 33 of the Constitution having been violated, and ordered the President of the Legislative Assembly, or the person holding that position, to take steps to guarantee, insofar as possible, the participation of female deputies in special standing committees.

The second and third cases were presented by two female deputies, one independent and the other from a party with several representatives in Parliament (Case No. 09-8913-0007-CO and Case No. 09-008758-0007-CO, respectively). These deputies complained that they had not been included in special committees. The court ordered the president of the legislature to guarantee the women deputies the right to participate in those committees.

The need to turn to the judiciary’s Constitutional Court in cases of unequal, disadvantageous participation for female deputies in the formation of parliamentary committees is evidence of discriminatory practices. Legislative authorities respond that there are too few women in the legislature to allow both sexes to be represented in committees equitably or in proportion to their numbers in the legislature. In any event, since the 2009 court case, it has been clear that it is the legislative leadership’s duty to comply with the Constitutional Court’s ruling, although it applied only to the makeup of the legislature’s Executive Board and the standing committees, not to other structures.

Case study, Costa Rica

Highlights and challenges of committee work

The only woman on any parliamentary committee faces considerable challenges in having her voice heard. Women reported being “drowned out” when raising gender equality concerns in committees. They also highlighted the need to pursue other issues if they are

to be considered credible players in politics by their male colleagues.

“The bulk of the members, especially the men, are not focused on that direction so if you have only one woman on the committee and you have nine men and they are all saying this or that, she gets drowned [out].” **Woman parliamentarian, Uganda**

“I now am on two commissions: Commission on Security and Defence, and also Commission on Economics and Finance. I think, it’s very difficult because all the legislation has no gender perspective. And it’s hard being the only woman.”
Woman parliamentarian, Timor-Leste

Another concern related to the number of women in parliaments. When asked whether they thought the

number was sufficient to allow women’s input into committees, 36 per cent of members thought it was, 55 per cent said “no”, and another 9 per cent were “not sure”. As elaborated in their comments below, for many members, it is a matter of “quality” over “quantity”. While their numbers may not always be high, the quality of women’s input is more commonly judged on the basis of the interventions they make, their arguments and their votes.

Box 3.3

Selected responses: Quality and quantity

Whether the contribution of women is taken into consideration or not in committee work does not depend so much on the number of women present as on their arguments and the quality of their input. That does not mean I think that women are sufficiently represented in parliament, not if we look at the percentage of women in the overall population. [Andorra, Questionnaire C]

No, they are not present in sufficient numbers but yes, their contributions are taken on board depending on how solid their arguments are, rather than on how many women are present. [France, Questionnaire C]

I believe that quality matters more than quantity. The Senate comprises many competent women parliamentarians who are renowned for their efficient contributions in their capacity as members of the different parliamentary committees [Jordan, Questionnaire C]

It’s very difficult to make a decision when you are one you will be overpowered by vote, because sometimes in a committee there will be one or two women sitting and because we have got very few women in parliament our voices won’t be heard [Zimbabwe, Questionnaire C]

Conclusion

While numbers of women in parliament are important, it is also vital to have women in positions of parliamentary leadership. Among other things, women in these positions present a positive role model for other women. There are relatively few women presiding officers in the parliaments of the world, although there are marginally more deputy (or vice) presidents and speakers.

This chapter found that women’s path to leadership most commonly passes through rule changes and temporary special measures, such as those adopted in Iraq, where positions of power are reserved for women in proportion to their representation in parliament (25%). Women have forged paths for themselves by becoming familiar with the rules of parliament and

taking advantage of changing political circumstances. Of course, when women constitute significant numbers in parliament, it is easier for them to find a place in the leadership ranks.

While women are increasingly occupying committee chair positions, they tend to chair (and sit on) committees on the “soft” portfolio areas, such as women’s affairs, law and justice, employment and education. The process of appointing women to committees (as chairs or as members) is dominated by the political parties, and the mechanisms for promoting women tend to be “conventions” rather than explicit rules. Change here would require a more transparent method tailored to members’ abilities, diverse working experience and preferences. Affirmative action – giving preference to women over men where qualifications are equal –, would also improve the acceptability of women leaders.

Chapter four

Pursuing gender equality through legislation and debate

“So if we have 22 per cent [women in parliament], our participation [rate] is perhaps more at 40 per cent. The questions that are raised in the parliament are largely by women. It’s almost 50-50 if not more. And the largest number of questions raised in the parliament has been by women. Even the call attention notices, we have raised pertinent call attention notices. And legislation. Private Members days, nominated by women, including women from the opposition. So [women are] coming up with a lot of legislation.” **Woman parliamentarian, Pakistan**

In this chapter you will find:

- Examples of gender equality legislation
 - A “primer” on how to mainstream gender equality in legislation
 - A review of the mechanisms parliaments use to mainstream gender
 - A review of gender mainstreaming in national budgets
-

Parliament has a fundamental role to play in ensuring that legislation does not discriminate against men or women and that it promotes gender equality. This chapter looks at parliamentary mechanisms and frameworks for addressing gender equality concerns. In some countries, these processes have been prescribed in gender equality laws, which seem to have proliferated over the past decade. Other parliaments address gender equality concerns through their “mainstream” parliamentary processes, such as debates on legislation, motions and questions. These are also being used to ensure parliament plays an oversight role on gender equality.

Chapter 5 will look at dedicated gender mainstreaming infrastructure, such as committees on gender equality and women’s caucuses, and the extent to which these bodies have been able to implement gender mainstreaming strategies to ensure equality.

Gender equality laws: a recent trend

By 2011, 187 countries had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).²⁶ In line with that ratification process, and with constant encouragement from the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, there has been a corresponding trend in the introduction of gender equality legislation.

Gender equality laws often cover the areas of women’s health, education, employment, family and marriage, the prevention of trafficking in women and children and domestic violence.

²⁶ http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-8&chapter=4&lang=en

Encouragingly, more countries are now in the process of drafting gender equality laws, including Armenia (*Draft law on Women and Men's Rights*), Indonesia (*Act Concerning Gender Equality and Equity*), and Thailand (*Promotion of Opportunity and Gender Equality Act*).

new policy. In Peru, it has been more difficult to legislate responsibility for monitoring gender mainstreaming, although the Law of Equal Opportunities between Men and Women does give parliamentarians some guidance on how they can advance gender equality concerns.

Box 4.1

Gender Equality Laws in Spain and Georgia

In Spain, the *Equality Law of 2007* focuses on the right to work, the right to political participation and the right to accede to and pursue a career in the public sector. In these spheres the law establishes mandatory and positive actions and policies, such as Strategic Equal Opportunities Plans, the creation of an Inter-ministerial Commission on Equality, the inclusion of gender impact reports in every law or national plan, as well as regular reports on the effectiveness of the law. In other spheres, it focuses more specifically on the promotion of women, in terms, for example, of effective equality for women and men in all aspects of the media and the presence of women on corporate governing boards.

Georgia's *Gender Equality Law of 2010* provides for the establishment of national women's machinery, the enhancement of women's security, equality in the labour market and the strengthening of women's political participation. The law also introduces gender-responsive planning and budgeting on the part of the government. The Gender Equality Law builds on the State Concept for Gender Equality, adopted in 2006, and has been in development since 2008. UNIFEM, UNDP and UNFPA provided technical expertise in the drafting process, and women's organisations were consulted. The draft law was presented to deputies for consideration in the fall of 2009 by Ms. Rusudan Kervalishvili, Vice-Speaker of the parliament and Chair of the Advisory Council on Gender Equality Issues.

Box 4.2

A mandate for gender mainstreaming: Viet Nam's Law on Gender Equality, 2006

Article 22: To examine the incorporation of gender equality

1. The National Assembly committee responsible for gender issues shall be responsible for coordinating with Ethnic Minority Council and other committees to examine the incorporation of gender equality issues in draft laws, draft ordinances and draft resolutions before submitting them to the National Assembly and the National Assembly's Standing Committee for review and adoption.
2. Matters to be examined with respect to **the incorporation** of gender equality issues shall include:
 - a. The identification of gender issues in the project and draft law document;
 - b. The reflection of gender equality principles in draft laws;
 - c. Compliance with the procedure and sequence for assessing the incorporation of gender equality issues in drafting legislation;
 - d. The feasibility of ensuring gender equality through draft legislation.

"The Gender Equality Law and the Law on Normative Documents state that the Social Affairs Committee has responsibility to verify that laws have been gender mainstreamed. But it is not currently feasible to look at all legislation, so the Committee is just looking at the legislation that is doable. For example, we are currently looking at the Labour Code. We have a Vice Chair who is now responsible for gender mainstreaming, and he has two other people supporting him. At the moment, we are looking at first principles, what must be verified by the Social Affairs Committee from a gender perspective. We also encourage women from the women's caucus who are on other committees to look at legislation in that portfolio from a gender perspective. This is our first term under this legislation, and we expect that with more numbers, more time, and greater experience, we will do better in the next term."

Woman parliamentarian, Viet Nam

Legislative mandates for gender mainstreaming

Some gender equality laws have included specific provisions for ensuring that gender equality is mainstreamed into other legislation. For example, the *Gender Equality Law of 2006*, in Viet Nam, defines a review mechanism for the Committee on Social Affairs. The Committee is charged with "verifying" that in preparing a draft law, the relevant line government department (or agency) has taken into account "principles of gender equality". Similarly, the *Gender Mainstreaming Act of 2007*, in Belgium, ensures among other things that strategic gender equality objectives are set for each

Case Study 4.1 Gender Mainstreaming Act in Belgium

Belgium's *Gender Mainstreaming Act of 2007* provides the legal basis for a compulsory identification of government funds earmarked for the promotion of gender equality and therefore lays the foundations for gender-sensitive budgeting. It also imposes a "gender test" for every new policy measure. Furthermore, it compels the federal government to define strategic objectives with respect to gender equality at the beginning of the legislature for every policy area falling under its remit. The act also provides for follow-up and evaluation of these actions. Ministers are required to define gender indicators, for use in measuring the achievement of strategic objectives, and to submit annual reports on the actions, measures and projects carried out in pursuit of these strategic objectives. Potential bottlenecks and remedies are to be included in interim evaluations. Also, overall progress has to be measured in terms of the relative societal positions of men and women at the beginning and end of the legislature.

Case study, Belgium

A key finding is that it is not sufficient for gender equality laws to simply note the importance of – or need for – steps to mainstream gender equality. Legislation must also address such questions as:

- Who or what body is responsible for reviewing legislation from a gender perspective?
- Is that body supported by adequate infrastructure and resources, such as a committee with commensurate powers to monitor a law's implementation, and more particularly, its gender mainstreaming framework?

- What tools does the body require to do its work?

How to mainstream gender equality in legislation

There are very few examples of how to strategically assess a piece of legislation from a gender perspective. In 2003, the Cambodia-Canada Legislative Support Project provided parliamentarians with a clear checklist of what to look for when applying gender equality principles to legislation. This template is interesting and useful, and parliaments could consider adapting it to their own circumstances and provide adequate training so that legislation does not discriminate against women or men.

Strategies for introducing and passing gender equality legislation

While the passage of gender-related legislation is not always easy, the parliamentarians surveyed for this study identified a range of facilitating factors. By far the most important was support from the ruling party (with an average score of 3.65, essentially denoting "a great deal" of influence). As for all legislation, women and men wishing to pursue a "gender agenda" need to negotiate with their party colleagues – well in advance – to ensure broad support for their proposals (see chapter eight for more on the role of parties).

A second instrumental factor is support from women members (with an average score of 3.5) – a factor considered slightly more important than the overall number of women in parliament (scoring 3.32). Women respondents, more than men, considered support from the Speaker and the international community to be important. Both men and women, however, agreed on the need for support from civil society and interest groups in order to pass gender-related legislation. Factors considered less important included support from the business community and member constituencies.

Case Study 4.2 Gender impact assessments in Peru

In both the last legislative term (2001-2006) and the current term, draft legislation has been introduced to modify the Rules of Congress in Peru to require that any legislation introduced be evaluated in light of its impact on gender equality, in addition to the cost-benefit analysis currently required. So far, however, no such provision has been approved to mainstream gender in legislation on all issues. The *Law of Equal Opportunities between Men and Women, 2007* provides a national, regional and local regulatory framework and specifies the role of the State in this area. It establishes guidelines (in Art. 6) calling for Congress: to guarantee, in approving legislation, the right to equality between women and men at all levels, in accordance with international treaties on gender equality, social inclusion and equal opportunity; and to monitor enforcement of norms and policies that guarantee equal opportunity and gender equality. It also establishes that every year, on International Women's Day (8 March), the President of the Council of Ministers must report to the full Congress on progress in implementing the law.

Case study, Peru

Box 4.3

The Five Steps of Gender-Based Analysis of Legislation in Cambodia

Step 1: Purpose, Scope and Operation of Proposed Legislation

- In assessing a bill's purpose, scope and application, can you identify the groups most likely to be affected? Are there specific gender implications? Will women be one of the groups identified?
- When considering a bill's purpose, scope and operation is your analysis influenced by your gender? Your background may influence your perspective and prevent you from asking questions and hearing answers. Care must be taken to ensure that legislation does not reinforce stereotypes or systemic discrimination against women or men;

Step 2: Measuring the Impact of Proposed Legislation

- Has the impact of proposed legislation on different parts of the community been considered? In other words, who will be affected?
- Will there be significant gender differences in the legislation's impact? To what extent will women be specifically affected?
- Article 31 of the Constitution states that "Every Khmer citizen shall be equal before the law regardless of sex...". Does the proposed legislation comply with Article 31?
- Has the bill been drafted in clear, plain language?

Step 4: Questions Regarding Administration, Costs, Regulations and Public Education

- Will women be involved in administering the law?
- Are there gender concerns with regard to the bill's implementation and compliance costs?
- How will the public be educated about the law? Given the high illiteracy rate among women in Cambodia, what methods will be used to disseminate it?
- Will gender-specific concerns be reviewed in monitoring the legislation?

Step 5: Self-Assessment – The Last Step in Your Analysis

- Have you addressed gender issues throughout the analysis?
- Have all of the bill's gender implications been identified ?
- What official and community information was used in your gender analysis?
- Have you continued to ask the "gender question" at every stage of your analysis?

Source: Cambodia-Canada Legislative Support Project, February 2003, "The Key Steps of Gender Analysis of Legislation"

Table 4.1

Factors affecting the adoption of gender-related legislation (N= number of responses)

	By gender			By region				
	Women	Men	Average	AM	AR	AS	EU	SSA
Ruling party support (N=99)	3.71	3.58	3.65	3.38	4.0	3.83	3.57	3.9
Opposition party support (N=87)	3.07	2.88	2.98	2.89	3.0	3.2	2.79	3.25
Speaker (President) of parliament (N=93)	3.26	2.5	2.88	2.8	3.0	2.84	2.54	3.47
The number of female parliamentarians (N=102)	3.38	3.23	3.32	3.24	3.33	3.38	3.03	3.75
Support of male parliamentarians (N=105)	3.27	3.26	3.28	3.2	3.64	3.15	2.96	3.61
Support of female parliamentarians (N=106)	3.49	3.54	3.5	3.6	3.61	3.42	3.22	3.71
Support of your constituency (N=92)	2.7	2.7	2.71	2.89	2.54	2.53	2.3	3.25
Support of civil society groups or interest groups (N=102)	3.28	3.15	3.22	3.1	3.18	3.23	3.14	3.55
Support of the business community (N=92)	2.72	2.43	2.58	2.55	2.77	2.3	2.36	3.0
Support of the international community (N=97)	3.21	2.84	3.01	3.03	3.16	3.27	2.6	3.27

Source: Questionnaire C, www.gender-parliaments.org

Note: Score calculated on the basis that 1 represents "None", 2 "Not very much", 3 "Fair amount" and 4 "Great deal"

In the interviews, members identified some effective strategies for pursuing gender-related legislation. One said such legislation needed to be linked to broader economic and social development. Another said a “scandal” or “crisis” was needed to motivate gender-related legislation. And a third, speaking for women parliamentarians in Argentina, cited **timing and the means of introducing** gender-related legislation for a vote as influencing the likelihood of its approval (women having decided in one instance to skip debate on an initiative, and place their measures at the bottom of the agenda for debate).

“You need to balance, because you don’t want society and voters to visualize that you’re on women-oriented issues, and they say, OK, we gave you a chance but you’re supposed to serve us both. Now if you’re taking only the women’s agenda, you’re not servicing the youth and the males and society in general so you need to balance things, and addressing the women’s issues and the discrimination that women are facing, you need to put it in a framework of development issues, that it’s part of the stabilisation of society, it’s part of fairness.”
Woman parliamentarian, Kuwait

“Yes, I do think [there is an obstacle] because there is never an urgency to which you can connect it. Within politics there is a certain natural law that we prefer to be occupied with the insanity of the day (‘waan van de dag’). In reality you often need a lever to change this. We needed the financial crisis to reform the financial system... It is a pity, but this is how it works. But in terms of gender equality? When you talk about equal pay... I think it will be hard to find such an urgency or incident. If the discussion on equal pay is true, then it is a tremendous scandal. But you need more than a scandal. You need something that allows the discussion to explode. If you have such a trigger, than you will have heaps of initiatives and proposals on it.”
Man parliamentarian, Belgium

“Sometimes, we say keep your mouth shut [...] and we make [members] stay in their seats, because otherwise you lose the quorum. So sometimes it is better that there’s not much fuss, that the bill comes up, there’s a vote, and people talk as little as possible.”
Woman parliamentarian, Argentina

Raising gender equality issues in parliamentary debate

Parliaments, as representative bodies, are by definition established to hear a diverse range of voices. Most are governed by rules and procedures aiming, at their core, to ensure these voices can be heard. Sitting days are structured so that members have time to participate in plenary debates, introduce legislation (including their own bills), ask questions of ministers, call attention to matters they find important or urgent, air public grievances and table petitions. The ability

to mainstream gender equality often depends on familiarity with such mechanisms. The interviews elicited a range of interesting strategies, used by men and women parliamentarians, and success stories in the use of parliamentary mechanisms. These included “open debates” on relevant issues (such as “adjournment debates”, or debates on “call attention notices”), or the parliament’s question and answer (interpellation) sessions. On rare occasions, members have initiated (private) bills themselves.

Survey respondents also provided good examples of how they have worked through their parliaments’ legislative processes to promote gender equality: introducing their own legislation, supporting and/or amending bills introduced by others (and in one case, opposing such a bill) and asking questions of government ministers.

Box 4.4 Selected responses: Working through the legislative process

Anti-discrimination laws were voted following a parliamentary proposal of which I was a co-author.
[Belgium, Questionnaire C]

I drafted and promoted initiatives for gender equality; I am the author of a bill for the protection of women’s rights.
[Chili, Questionnaire C]

I have recently :
 - asked a written question to the Government on parity in departmental and regional councils;
 - co-signed a bill relating to parity among deputy-mayors.
[France, Questionnaire C]

I was member of the committee tasked with drafting the permanent Constitution of Iraq – the chapter on rights and obligations (in the previous Council of Representatives). We have managed through lobby efforts and perseverance to elaborate many constitutional articles that secure gender equality in rights and freedoms (consecrating civil, political, economic, health, social, and cultural rights for both sexes).
[Iraq, Questionnaire C]

I have strongly supported the law granting women political rights in Kuwait [and] I have tabled a draft law authorizing mixed education in universities.
[Kuwait, Questionnaire C]

I spoke on the motion on gender based violence and women’s economic empowerment motion in parliament.
[Namibia, Questionnaire C]

I have raised issues, questions and motions during my time in Parliament and have spoken until one male member gave me a note "Don't you have something else to talk about except gender equality."

[Namibia, Questionnaire C]

I objected to the proposed number of days of leave for breastfeeding mothers foreseen in the draft labour bill which was insufficient in my opinion.

[Rwanda, Questionnaire C]

Initiated motions on gender equality (e.g. Ethical Code for members of House of Representatives)

[Thailand, Questionnaire C]

budget from a gender perspective. Above all, it requires resources and political will.

In some parliaments (e.g., Sweden's), gender budgeting initiatives have been driven by a parliamentary committee; in others, by collaboration between parliament and governmental and/or non-governmental organisations, (as in South Africa).

It is interesting to note that gender budgeting processes are often initiated but not continued long-term. The Women's Budget Initiative of South Africa ran for five years, but due to a lack of resources was discontinued. In Rwanda, a lack of sex-disaggregated data – among other things – has hampered the country's strong political will to subject budgets to such gender-perspective analysis.

Gender budgeting works best when institutionalised. In Sweden, for example, it has long been established practice to produce a budget bill "Appendix", showing the distribution of economic resources between men and women. These Appendices have become high-profile and much-anticipated documents.

Gender mainstreaming budgets

The aim of gender budgeting is to bring a gender perspective to economic policy-making. It involves earmarking expenditures for women, but also – and for some, more importantly – analysing the entire

Table 4.2

Gender mainstreaming mechanisms in parliament (N= responses)

	Regional differences						Nordic countries (N= 3)	Pacific (N= 2)	Average
	Americas (N= 11)	Arab States (N= 7)	Asia (N= 11)	Europe (N= 32)	Africa (N= 12)				
Gender-sensitive budgeting	0.18	0.14	0.18	0.06	0.50	0.66	0	0.19	

Source: Questionnaire A, www.gender-parliaments.org

Note: In the scoring, 1 represents "Yes" and 0 represents "No"

Case Study 4.3

Women's Budget Initiative in South Africa (1995 to 2000)

South Africa's Women's Budget Initiative (WBI) operated between 1995 and 2000. It was a collaborative project of national parliamentarians and non-governmental organisations, including two civil society partners: the Institute for a Democratic South Africa (IDASA) and the Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE). Between 1996 and 2000, a women's budget was prepared annually.

Within its first three years the WBI produced three books, which between them analysed all sectoral budget allocations from a gender perspective. Within two years of the Initiative's birth, a parallel exercise was introduced within government, led by the Department of Finance.

The WBI also developed a popular tool to reach larger numbers of people: *Money Matters: Women and the Government Budget*, a 1998 publication designed as a tool for disseminating information to women as well as lobbying for better financial resource allocation. The WBI came to an end as a result of declining resources allocations for the evaluation and development of budgets from a gender perspective.

Case study, South Africa

Case Study 4.4

Even when will is strong: Challenges for gender budgeting in Rwanda

Beginning as early as 2003, the Government of Rwanda received support from DFID for gender-responsive budgeting. These efforts were hampered by coordination problems at the ministry level and a lack of sex-disaggregated data, among other challenges. Rwanda's Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (EDPRS, 2005) considered gender a "cross-cutting" issue, but critics claim otherwise: far from being integrated across all sectors, they complained, gender was nowhere to be found in the process. Efforts at developing gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) in intervening years have been sporadic.

The process is being led by the Ministry of Finance with support from UNIFEM and other donors. In 2008, the Ministry of Finance published *Gender Budgeting Guidelines* to provide guidance to budgeting agencies and stakeholders. Efforts to develop GRB are being included as part of a larger aid effectiveness agenda. In 2010, four line ministries – Infrastructure, Agriculture, Education, and Health – were selected to pilot gender budgeting principles in the development of ministry budgets. At the time of this writing, the impact of GRB in these pilot ministries had not been reviewed.

In Rwanda, the parliament does not draft budgets. Its role is to review, offer amendments to and ultimately approve the budgets tabled in parliament. Theoretically, in its government oversight capacity, parliament could request budgets based on GRB principles, and then review budgets from a gender perspective. As the chair of the parliament's Budget Committee noted, "women have pushed for this," but as he also conceded, no such process is yet in place. As of mid-2010, the issue was "still under discussion with the Ministry of Finance", but there were high expectations for the four pilot ministries. Several members of parliament, including the chair of the Budget Committee, have raised concerns in connection with GRB about ongoing capacity problems at both the ministerial and parliamentary levels. Parliament's internal 2009 participatory gender audit confirmed this as a gap. The Forum of Rwandan Women Parliamentarians (FFRP) has offered training for members on gender budgeting processes, but focused more on broad principles than technical capacity. Several members described their understanding of GRB as "limited" or "cursory."

Case study, Rwanda

Case Study 4.5

The Swedish Parliament's gender budgeting

In the Swedish Parliament, gender-sensitive budgeting means that the Committee on Finance, which prepares the adoption of the central government budget, takes gender equality into consideration. One aspect of the process has been that every year since 1988 a separate appendix has been attached to the budget bill showing the distribution of economic resources between the sexes (Appendix to the Budget Statement: Distribution of Economic Resources between Women and Men). In recent years, the Ministry of Finance and the Government's Division for Gender Equality have worked together to raise the document's profile.

The Appendix shows how gender inequalities between women and men are expressed in economic terms, but it also shows how welfare systems help to close the gender gap. In analysing the relative economic situation of women and men, it examines the distribution of household work, gainful employment, studies, the distribution of earnings, capital income and social insurance benefits. Finally, it examines disposable income, combining the various types of after-tax income. Each year, the Appendix has a new theme. The 2005 budget bill, for example, describes how for a typical household parental leave and part-time work attributable to the presence of young children affected the income and pension entitlement of women and men differently. It concluded that in financial terms, parenthood is more costly to women than to men. In the typical case shown, loss of income over a ten-year period was SEK 304,000 (approx. 30,000 euros) for the mother and SEK 10,000 (approx. 1,000 euros) for the father. The difference, mainly attributable to more part-time work among women, would also be reflected in their future pensions.

The theme of the 2010 budget bill was economic equality between women and men, with an analysis of the effects of the financial crisis on women and men, in terms of their respective employment rates, occupational segregation (the gender-segregated labour market in Sweden), income and wages (the gender pay gap), etc. The use of parental leave and the effect of government policies were also examined. For the portion of the bill to be referred to parliament's Labour Market Committee, an appendix was added on women in top positions.

Case study, Sweden

Case Study 4.6 Gender budgeting in Spain

A law passed in Spain, in 2003, specifies how the gender impact of legislation is to be assessed. It requires the following: *“The drafting process of a bill will begin in the appropriate ministry; it shall include a memorandum, reports on the adequacy of the bill, a report on the gender impact of the bill and an economic memorandum.”* Article 19 of the Equality Law extends this same obligation to every national plan of economic, social, cultural and artistic relevance. Royal Decree 1083/2009, of 3 June, regulating the Memorandum of Evaluation of Normative Impact, includes gender impact among the items to be evaluated.

For the third time since the 2003 legislation was passed, the 2011 Budget Law included a gender impact assessment. The 2011 report was written following the guidelines for information-gathering presented by a joint working group of representatives from the Economy and Taxation Ministry and the Equality Ministry. The report studies the gender impact of different budget items to a greater extent than previous reports, especially in the current context of austerity and structural reform.

“Good practice would be that equality policies not be the first item eliminated in case of crisis. I sincerely regret that paternity leave has not been initiated due to its 400 million euro cost. Yes, it is money, everything is money, but we can analyse everything. I think it is good practice not to treat this as an accessory, but rather as an essential, because it is essential to bear in mind that the world is made up of men and women (...) They have to have the same right to strive for personal autonomy, a professional life.”

Case study, Spain

Responses to the survey from parliamentary authorities suggest that, overall, parliaments have yet to adopt mechanisms which would allow for a systematic analysis of budgets from a gender perspective. Very few parliaments reported having adopted gender budgeting, as indicated by the scores being closer to “0” (representing a “No”) than to “1” (“Yes”) in most regions. Such initiatives appear to be more common in the parliaments of Sub-Saharan Africa, although even there it has proven difficult to ensure continuous funding (see, for example, the Women’s Budget Initiative in South Africa). As one Namibian parliamentarian pointed out, there is a clear need for more training:

“All members of the Public Accounts Committee had training on gender budgeting, on the importance of gender budgeting and it was very interesting. [When] you listen to their debate now, [it is clear] they also started to understand what we are talking about. We now have new strategy plans for the next five years.” **Woman parliamentarian, Namibia**

Implementing gender budgeting in parliament: lessons learned

Parliamentarians have to be empowered to independently analyse the budget. In addition to information provided by the government, parliamentarians need to have independent access to information, preferably through a parliament’s own research service. This can be complemented with analysis by independent think tanks, private sector economists and academics.

Central to the analysis of information is the collection of data disaggregated by sex. Data collated by government agencies should be so disaggregated, distinguishing between men and women, boys and girls. Agencies should also be collating sex-specific information. Without such data, a parliament’s ability to analyse budgets is seriously hampered.

Parliaments also have to attract staff with gender budgeting expertise, which means adequate remuneration (no less than that paid to staff in government departments). Keeping staff skills up to date is also important; training seminars and professional networks with civil society organisations, statistical departments, universities, etc. are good ways to do so.

Adequate parliamentary infrastructure is also required. Among the reasons for the success of gender budgeting in the Swedish *Riksdag* is the fact that the Committee on Finance has been empowered – through established rules and adequate timetables – to analyse and discuss each expenditure item with interested stakeholders.

Finally, parliamentarians and parliamentary staff need the right tools with which to analyse a budget from a gender perspective. In South Africa, the publication *Money Matters: Women and the Government Budget* was lauded as a popular tool reaching a large audience. A publication by the Rwandan Ministry of Finance, *Gender Budgeting Guidelines*, which was also well received, provides guidance to budgeting agencies and stakeholders alike.

Conclusion

Parliaments need to ensure the legislation they pass does not discriminate against men or women, and instead actively promotes gender equality. It is true that a number of countries have pursued gender equality

laws tending to cover a broad range of measures aimed at non-discrimination. Where such laws have not yet been passed by parliament, they should be. Where gender equality laws are now over ten years old, they should be updated to include frameworks for gender mainstreaming. There are, unfortunately, very few examples of “checklists” for verifying that legislation has been adequately assessed from a gender perspective. Parliaments could review the model provided for the Cambodian National Assembly, modify it to suit their own individual circumstances, and provide adequate training on its implementation.

Gender equality laws, however, also need to address the question of gender mainstreaming. Who or what body is responsible for reviewing legislation from a gender perspective? Is that body supported by adequate infrastructure, such as a committee with commensurate powers to monitor implementation of the law, and more

particularly, the gender mainstreaming framework? Some parliaments were of the view that legislative impact assessments (which currently accompany each legislative initiative) could include a gender component.

Some of the parliamentarians referred to strategies to facilitate the passage of gender-related legislation, such as linking it to a broader discourse on development.

Greater familiarity with existing parliamentary mechanisms – such as participating in debates, asking questions of ministers, using “call attention” notices, petitions or grievance debates – should also be facilitated, for instance through induction or orientation training that includes a gender perspective, for both new and incumbent parliamentarians. However, gender-specific measures, including gender budgeting, would gain in being institutionalised.

Chapter five

Setting up dedicated gender mainstreaming infrastructure

"[The main obstacles to gender mainstreaming in parliament are] lack of information and willingness, and the attitude that it's still regarded as a "women's" issue. The fact is that ... there is a lack of strong mechanisms to monitor, evaluate."

Woman parliamentarian, Namibia

In this chapter you will find:

- How parliaments are institutionalising gender mainstreaming;
 - The role of parliamentary bodies such as committees and caucuses in gender mainstreaming;
 - Challenges faced in gender mainstreaming and good practices in overcoming them.
-

The previous chapter began an examination of strategies parliaments have put in place to ensure that legislation promotes and establishes the necessary legal frameworks for gender equality. This chapter looks at the mechanisms parliaments have established to ensure gender equality is systematically addressed, including committees on gender equality and women's parliamentary caucuses. These are what are meant by "dedicated gender mainstreaming infrastructure". A range of more creative, less formal mechanisms have also been established. This chapter presents lessons learned from such mechanisms across the world.

The gender mainstreaming work of parliamentary committees

National machineries need mechanisms to hold governments accountable for mainstreaming gender and the advancement of women. The Beijing Platform for Action notes that governments should report "on a regular basis, to legislative bodies on the progress of efforts, as appropriate, to mainstream gender concerns ..." (paragraph 109).

In 1998, a report on national machineries for gender equality noted the need for more specific recommendations regarding this issue, particularly mechanisms such as disaggregated statistics, performance indicators, expert

scrutiny and regular public reporting.²⁷ Transparency was identified as a key element in the process of accountability.

More specifically, experts at the meeting recommended that parliaments play a role in ensuring accountability for government activity to promote gender equality. It was suggested that parliaments should set up a standing committee to monitor progress with gender mainstreaming and scrutinize gender-related aspects of all government activity, as well as the effectiveness of the performance indicators used to monitor progress.

In 2006, the IPU held its inaugural seminar for members of parliamentary bodies dealing with gender equality. The ensuing report noted that while a number of parliaments had chosen to implement gender mainstreaming strategies through a dedicated body (such as a committee), others were doing so by ensuring that gender issues were being addressed across the entire committee structure.²⁸

27 Report of the Expert Group Meeting on National Machineries for Gender Equality, held 31 August to 4 September 1998, Santiago, Chile.

28 IPU, 2007, The Role of Parliamentary Committees in Mainstreaming Gender and Promoting the Status of Women. Since then, the IPU has held a meeting annually to consider topics such as women and work (2007), violence against women (2008) and the openness of parliament (2009).

Dedicated gender equality committees

Gender equality committees can play an influential role in mainstreaming a gender perspective throughout parliamentary work. By serving as an incubator for policy ideas related to gender equality, or as a focal point for women's interest groups in lobbying parliament, these committees help keep gender equality issues on the agenda for all parliamentarians.

Dedicated gender equality committees have made significant progress in gender mainstreaming by:

- debating the content of legislation and ensuring that gender considerations are taken into account;
- creating a network of gender focal points across other committees of the legislature;
- working in partnership with national women's machinery, civil society, NGOs, the private sector and the media to ensure follow-up parliamentary action, review and oversight;
- holding public hearings and consulting with policy communities to determine the effects of policies, programmes and legislation on women and men, girls and boys;
- holding governments, and particularly ministers, to account for their actions;
- institutionalising gender-sensitive budgeting by raising gender issues during budget debates and

developing partnerships with the budget or public accounts committees; and

- ensuring the implementation of CEDAW obligations, especially in relation to State party reporting.

Dedicated specialised gender equality committees have been established in more than 30 countries. (For more information see: IPU database on specialised parliamentary committees www.ipu.org/parline-e/instanceadvanced.asp).

They have a range of powers, including:

- scrutinising draft legislation (including petitions) concerning gender equality, women's affairs or social affairs;
- monitoring the implementation of enacted laws, or their compliance with international standards;
- requesting written or oral briefings from government departments relating to their portfolios;
- requesting written or oral briefings from ministers;
- conducting study tours, site inspections or field trips;
- calling for submissions from stakeholders, including individuals, non-governmental organisations and the private sector;
- creating formal relationships and liaising with relevant government machinery on gender equality;

Box 5.1

The functions of a gender equality committee: The case of India

The Committee on the Empowerment of Women is given the authority to:

1. Consider reports from the National Commission for Women and report on the measures that should be taken by the Union Government for improving the status/condition of women in respect of matters within the purview of the Union Government, including the Administrations of the Union Territories;
2. Examine the measures taken by the Union Government to secure for women equality, status and dignity in all matters;
3. Examine the measures taken by the Union Government for comprehensive education and adequate representation of women in legislative bodies/services and other fields;
4. Report on the work of welfare programmes for women;
5. Report on the action taken by the Union Government and Administrations of the Union Territories on the measures proposed by the Committee; and
6. Examine such other matters as the Committee may see fit or as are specifically referred to it by the Speaker of the House or the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha.

Subjects considered in 2010 included: women in paramilitary forces; working conditions of anganwadi workers; NREGA and the empowerment of women in rural areas; honour killings and other acts of violence against women; women/child victims of sexual abuse and trafficking and their rehabilitation; the rights of disabled women; the work of the National Commission for Women and State Commissions for Women; social security schemes for women working in organized/unorganized sector; and the empowerment of mothers of differently-abled children.

Source: Website of the committee, 164.100.47.134/committee/committee_informations.aspx

- issuing documents or preparing reports, including recommendations for government action;
- investigating complaints on matters related to gender equality and recommending penalties as appropriate; and
- examining budgets and public accounts from a gender perspective; conducting gender audits.

Box 5.2

Keeping the community informed: The gender equality committee of Cyprus

The House Standing Committee on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women deals specifically with gender equality issues. The Committee's field of competence covers those of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order and the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance. Its mandate includes the examination of draft legislation and budgets and the discussion of relevant issues at the Committee's own instigation. The Committee also supervises compliance with relevant national and international standards and makes relevant recommendations to the government through the House, except in cases where any such recommendation might cause an increase in public expenditure (due to a Constitutional restriction). The Committee cannot examine individual complaints per se, but should it receive a (written) complaint, it may transmit it to the appropriate authorities or hold its own discussions on the matter, asking questions of the relevant minister and/or ministry. The Committee works in close cooperation with the Commissioner for Administration (Ombudsman), who keeps the Committee regularly informed of her decisions. Dissemination of information may take the form of press releases or statements to the press by the chair or individual members. In this context, the Committee may also participate through its chair or members in public discussions in the press or on radio and television regarding issues of wider interest.

[Cyprus, Questionnaire A]

Box 5.3

Ensuring a gender perspective in legislation: The gender equality committee of Croatia

The Gender Equality Committee is one of 30 committees monitoring the implementation and promotion of gender equality principles in the legislation of the Republic of Croatia.

The Committee also:

- promotes the signature of international documents on gender equality and monitors their application;
- participates in the drafting, implementation and analysis of the implementation of the National Gender Equality Policy in the Republic of Croatia;
- cooperates and establishes measures and activities to improve gender equality;
- proposes packages of measures to eliminate discrimination between the sexes;
- promotes equal gender representation on the composition of parliamentary working bodies and delegations;
- participates in the drafting of documents on the integration activities of the Republic of Croatia through the amendment and adaptation of legislation and executive measures to achieve gender equality according to the standards applied in the legislation and programmes of the European Union;
- prepares draft legislation and other regulations on gender equality; and
- undertakes efforts to introduce gender equality principles in education, health-care, public information, social policy, employment, free enterprise, decision-making processes, family relations, etc.

[Croatia, Questionnaire A]

Box 5.4

The European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

The Committee is responsible for:

- the definition, promotion and protection of women's rights in the Union and related Community measures;
- the promotion of women's rights in third countries;
- equal opportunities policy, including equality between men and women with regard to labour market opportunities and treatment at work;
- the removal of all forms of discrimination based on sex;
- the implementation and further development of gender mainstreaming in all policy sectors;
- the follow-up and implementation of international agreements and conventions pertaining to the rights of women;
- information policy on women.

Source: www.europarl.europa.eu/activities/committees/homeCom.do?body=FEMM&language=EN

Case Study 5.1

The importance of keeping the same people on board in Peru

In the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 legislative sessions, the Women and Development Commission was headed by the same woman legislator – an exceptional case, as the presidency and other leadership positions usually rotate annually. Also in these sessions, the same parliamentary service team worked with the Commission, allowing the development of significant expertise and a good understanding of the issues, mainly gained through field visits. This has been described as one of the Commission's main strengths. Another is the strong commitment of women parliamentarians on the Commission, as reflected in the number of laws approved: six in the 2008-2009 legislative session and five in the preceding session.

Case study, Peru

Tenure and structure

Generally, a strength of dedicated gender equality committees is that they are permanent. Parliaments have chosen to dedicate resources to the issue of gender equality rather than appoint a "select" or ad hoc committee to work on an "as needed" basis. For example, in Pakistan, an annual budget is allocated to ensure the smooth functioning of the Senate committee. All secretarial assistance is provided to the members of the committee by officers/staff of the Senate. In a number of developing countries, additional resources have been allocated by non-governmental and international organisations to the work of gender equality committees.

As shown in two case studies prepared for this project, gender equality committees in the parliaments of Belgium and Bolivia have different powers and responsibilities than other committees. Both are primarily advisory committees, and neither is empowered to act or follow up on the recommendations it makes to other committees/bodies.

Case Study 5.2

Different committee powers: Gender equality committees in Belgium and Bolivia

In **Belgium**, both the House of Representatives and the Senate have committees on gender and equality issues: the House of Representatives Committee on Social Emancipation and the Senate Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. Both of these committees are advisory in nature, which means they have no right to initiate decision-making. They can only formulate advice, which then must be accepted by a "full-fledged" parliamentary committee, depending on the policy field involved.

Some members suggested that such a division of responsibility indicates lower priority for gender and equality issues. The division of responsibility between committees added to the frustration.

"Dès que vous faites du travail sérieux, ça va de toute façon passer dans une autre commission après. Et donc faire deux fois le travail, ça n'a pas de sens. (...) Ça c'est juste du gaspillage d'énergie. Donc il y a quand-même, je vais dire, une frustration par rapport à ça. En se disant qu'il faut à chaque fois redonner une légitimité à nos propositions. Que ce soit sur le plan finance-économie, affaires sociales, ou institutionnel, ou relations extérieurs."

On the other hand, the committee's subordinate status can also create opportunities. *"That is the idea of gender mainstreaming. I think the advisory function is not bad. It is not easy for the other committees to invalidate advice formulated by the committee. Our proposals on maternity leave, violence against women, etc. have been voted within the respective committees of social affairs, justice, ... without any real amendments."*

Case study, Belgium

In **Bolivia**, one of the main constraints is that gender issues are handled by a committee rather than a commission, and therefore get little attention. According to internal rules, each type of body performs specific, complementary tasks. Commissions are permanent working groups for coordination and consultation. Committees are operational and investigative bodies. The main tasks of a commission include promoting legislative action and oversight of policies in the sector or area concerned, informing the full chamber of draft legislation under consideration and reporting on the legislation. Commissions also hold public hearings to listen to civil society's demands and proposals for legislation. As part of the commissions, committees engage in research and coordinate operational activities.

Case study, Bolivia

How effective is the committee on gender equality?

Slightly more than 55 per cent of the parliamentarians surveyed by the IPU considered gender equality committees (where they existed) “fairly effective”, with a further 12 per cent considering them “very effective”. There were regional variations, mostly attributable to the fact that gender equality committees are more common in the Nordic countries and less common in the Arab States. Respondents said gender equality committees could be more effective if they refined their focus, set specific goals for action and took advantage of parliamentary procedure to put gender issues on the agenda of committees and the full parliament. Other factors affecting these committees’ effectiveness included the number of women in parliament, the capacity of the chair and the extent to which support was forthcoming from parliamentary leadership.

Box 5.5

Selected responses: Effectiveness of gender equality committee

The Committee on gender equality is effective if the President is able to manage the Committee, if it is supported by the President of the Senate and if it is supported by international partners and donors. [Cambodia, Questionnaire C]

The Committee on Women’s Empowerment is always headed by a senior woman member of the parliament. The suggestions and recommendations are well received by all the ministries. [India, Questionnaire C]

In spite of the important work done by the committee, which was instrumental in passing significant laws such as the law on women’s right to a life free of violence and amending the general gender equality law, it does not participate in discussions on all the reforms that are related to gender, in part because the Bureau rotates the task of legal reform between it and another committee that deals mainly with laws and sometimes it doesn’t ask the opinion of this Committee or that one doesn’t request a rotation. [Mexico, Questionnaire C]

There is less frustration when we don’t have unrealistic expectations. We recognize that huge strides have been made and our fellow men MPs support them. [Mexico, Questionnaire C]

Depending on the committee composition. Nevertheless, women are actively involved in the work. [Slovenia, Questionnaire C]

How is the gender equality committee perceived in parliament relative to other committees?

Members were asked to comment on the standing of their gender equality committees (where they existed) compared to others in parliament – rating it as better, equal in value or less valuable. Almost 60 per cent considered their parliament’s gender equality committees equal to other committees. The rest were divided: 20 per cent considered them less valuable; another 20 per cent considered more valuable than others. Members in Spain considered their equality committee equal in standing to other committees. Some members traced their committee’s importance not to the issues it canvasses but to the democratic significance of the bills it debates. Others said it had been derided as a “minor committee”:

“It has been sometimes ridiculed... the anti-women or anti-equality movement, that it is somehow the movement that spreads rumours about the false complaints... and that it aims to ridicule what we do... and it is echoed in society. But the work we do, like everything related to equality and to the struggle to achieve a real equality, still has many roadblocks. There are many people that are not willing to change their minds”. **Woman parliamentarian, Spain**

Two parliaments in Latin America (in Mexico and Costa Rica) reported that fewer bills were referred to their gender equality committees for analysis than to other committees.

Case Study 5.3

Not treated equally: The Equity and Gender Committee in Mexico and the Equality Committee in Costa Rica

During the **Mexican** Parliament’s 60th legislature, commissions in the lower house reported on a total of 3,102 initiatives; 36 of those bills (1.16 percent) were submitted to the Equity and Gender Committee for study, report and observation. In 20 of the 36 cases, the Equity and Gender Committee was the sole reporting committee, and in the others the committee could only issue an opinion. Of the 36 initiatives considered by the committee, only two completed the legislative process, were published in the official gazette and became law.

Two women Senators remarked on the lack of support and respect attributed to the committee’s work:

“Some male legislators think that while they attend to important matters, women should handle issues related to gender, which they do not consider as important as issues like economics, security, etc.”

“Although they do not acknowledge it, because it would be politically incorrect, male legislators do not consider the Equity and Gender Committee as important as the other committees ... Parliament is a reflection of the community; it is a cultural issue.” [Case study, Mexico]

The **Costa Rican** Parliament’s Equality Committee has studied a total of 48 bills since 2002, including those reported on by the Assembly’s Technical Services Unit. On average, according to parliamentary statistics produced by the Parliamentary Analysis Unit, the Permanent Women’s Committee is among the committees that have held the fewest meetings and studied the fewest pieces of legislation in parliament. [Case study, Costa Rica]

Multi-portfolio committees

Some parliaments have opted for the creation of multi-portfolio committees that include gender equality and women’s rights issues. In these committees, gender equality might be an additional subject matter, to be covered by a committee with a large remit of other matters (see table 5.1).

Table 5.1
Parliamentary bodies dealing with gender equality and other portfolio areas

Committee portfolio	Countries
Social affairs	Andorra, Burundi, Estonia, Iceland, Indonesia, Netherlands, Tunisia, Viet Nam
Family, women and children	Argentina, Chad, Chile
Constitutional affairs	Argentina
Human rights	Armenia, Bolivia, Hungary, Lebanon, Lithuania, Portugal, Slovenia, Switzerland, Ukraine
Education, Culture, Social Development	Belarus, Jordan, Uruguay
Health and welfare	Japan, Singapore

Source: Questionnaire A, www.gender-parliaments.org

This study has uncovered a tendency to review gender equality through human rights committees, as practiced in the parliaments of Armenia, Bolivia, Hungary, Lithuania, Portugal, Slovenia, Switzerland and the Ukraine for instance.



Box 5.6

Addressing gender equality as a human right in Slovenia

As the working body concerned, the Committee for Petitions, Human Rights and Equal Opportunities has discussed draft laws relating to equal opportunities, as well as annual reports on the work of the Advocate of the Principle of Equal Opportunities. It has discussed other documents concerning equal opportunities for women and men, such as a resolution on the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, 2005 -2013. The Committee has also participated in the Council of Europe’s campaign “Parliaments United in Combating Domestic Violence against Women”.
Slovenia, Questionnaire A

The preference for multi-portfolio committees, rather than a dedicated gender equality committee, may also be attributed to the emphasis a parliament wishes to place on the role of women in society. In the Arab countries, for example, debates about personal status laws, family laws or matters of interest to women, such as divorce or early marriage, are commonly championed by children and women’s affairs committees.

The lack of exclusivity in addressing gender equality can have both positive and negative implications. A clear advantage to the multi-portfolio committee

is the ability of its members to apply gender mainstreaming methods to a broader range of issues. However, it is also the case that the greater the number of issues to be considered, the less time a committee can dedicate to specific gender-related concerns. In this context, it is not surprising that committees dedicated to gender equality have clear agendas on a very wide range of issues, pertaining to both men and women.

Mainstreaming methods

A variety of gender mainstreaming methods is applied across the globe. Most important are the relationships established between committees and the women's national machinery bodies. In South Korea, for example, a number of women's machinery bodies and research institutes have established good working relationships with Korean parliamentarians, resulting in the development of effective gender policy and legislation. In addition, the Committee on Gender Equality in that country conducts an annual audit of the relevant ministry. Similarly, in India, the Committee on the Empowerment of Women may assess the organisation and functioning of the National Commission for Women. A good practice followed in Pakistan is for the Committee's reports to be sent to the relevant ministry for action (implementation and reporting).

The key to success for these committees is in the formalisation of relationships among:

- national women's structures and the parliament;
- the parliament, ombudspersons and the judiciary; and
- other parliamentary committees and their "policy communities" (e.g. civil society and NGOs).

Gender equality committees can also give support to and cooperate with other portfolio committees, encouraging them to consider issues of gender equality in connection with their subject matter. In this case, the gender equality committee plays the role of initiating, supporting and monitoring what other portfolio committees do to mainstream gender.

Committees working with women's caucuses

The relationship between women's or gender committees and women's caucuses was also raised in the research. While there is great potential for these bodies to work in a complementary manner, tensions can also arise. Peru is a case in point. According to the chairwoman of the Women's Committee, it would be desirable to link the work of the women's caucus – *Mesa de Mujeres Parlamentarias Peruanas* (MMPP) – with that of the Women's Committee. She believes

that the current operation of both bodies gives the impression of having "split the Women's Committee". On the other hand, Timor-Leste provides a good example of a committee and a caucus working well together.

"I believe that both groups should come together and go hand-in-hand. [...] Perhaps it would be better for the Committee to be able to involve all women parliamentarians."

Woman parliamentarian, Peru

"The specialised committee on gender issues works together [with the caucus] and sometimes we combine our activities. Like sensitising the public on domestic violence. We ran a series of competitions: in rural areas, for children, for young people, women, and teachers. Children drew pictures, and we asked young people to write one paragraph on domestic violence (why it's bad...). The women wrote poems on domestic violence and the teachers had to write one and a half pages on how to teach the people about domestic violence. And then we gave prizes."

Woman parliamentarian, Timor-Leste

Mainstreaming gender equality across all committees

While some parliaments have chosen to focus their attention on gender equality in one committee, others have chosen to mainstream gender equality through all committees, thereby widening the responsibility across parliament.

In the Swedish Parliament, each committee is responsible for handling gender equality issues within its areas of responsibility. For instance, issues concerning boys' and girls' access to cultural activities are handled by the Committee on Cultural Affairs; issues concerning women's and men's access to and use of parental leave benefits are handled by the Committee on Social Insurance, and so forth. However, the Committee on the Labour Market has a special responsibility for gender equality issues, preparing matters relating to equality between women and men when these matters do not fall to any other committee.

In the Rwandan Senate, gender issues fall primarily under the purview of the Social Affairs, Human Rights and Petitions Committee. Men and women sit on all four standing committees in the Senate, however, and some of the country's senators cited efforts to mainstream gender equality more broadly. All committees, for instance, are supposed to consider the gender implications of legislation and business referred to them. One female senator explained that since 2003, "gender issues get taken more seriously. They [male Senators] used to laugh when we would talk about women, but now it is regularly on the agenda, and there are fewer jokes."

Likewise, in the Rwandan Chamber of Deputies, the committee with responsibility for gender issues is the Gender and Family Promotion Committee. Its primary mandate is to review the bills specific to women and children that are referred to it, but members of the committee are often called upon to review legislation referred to other committees, as well. As a member of the Gender and Family Promotion Committee explained, "A land reform bill doesn't come before our committee; it comes before the Agriculture Committee. But of course there are significant gender issues in agriculture and land ownership. There are women on the Agriculture Committee who try to speak up, but sometimes they are too busy, and we [the Gender and Family Promotion Committee] try to help." Ideally, this work would be mainstreamed and a gender analysis of bills would take place in all committees, but often, the expertise or sense of responsibility for gender issues doesn't exist outside the Gender and Family Promotion Committee. "Just because there are women on every committee doesn't mean they are all gender-sensitive," cautioned one activist.

In both Sweden and Rwanda, there is a sense that the great strides made on gender equality must not be lost. Given the numbers of women in the parliaments of both countries (45% in Sweden and 56% in Rwanda), to ignore gender equality concerns would be tantamount to a loss of national pride. The number of women involved, however, is never a guarantee of gender equality. It is more a question of the gender-sensitivity and gender-awareness of a parliament and its policies .

Women's parliamentary caucuses

As mentioned earlier, women's caucuses or parliamentary groups represent another mechanism used to monitor the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming, by both governments and legislatures. They can bring women together across party lines and can also engage other partners, including civil society and the private sector. Caucuses commonly provide a forum in which women exchange knowledge and skills and hold roundtable

Case Study 5.4

A strong role model: The Forum of Rwandan Women Parliamentarians

In 1996, women parliamentarians formed the multi-party and multi-ethnic Forum of Women Parliamentarians [*Forum des Femmes Rwandaises Parlementaires*] (FFRP). The FFRP is formally recognized by the parliament and is provided with an office. All female parliamentarians from both houses of parliament are members of this caucus, which has become a model of cross-party cooperation. Members of the FFRP work together across party lines on issues of common importance to women. Its mandate is to ensure gender-sensitivity in the Parliament, in legislation and in government oversight.

In the first years of its existence, the FFRP conducted advocacy on behalf of Rwandan women and built up the capacity of its members. Sometimes disparaged as an "NGO within parliament", because of its strong advocacy, it is in fact a formal parliamentary body. The caucus gives women a framework within which to identify legal issues affecting women and an organisational link with foreign donors, for the funding of training workshops, expert technical advice and administrative assistance. In recent years, the FFRP has increasingly focused on legislative priorities and on strengthening constituent service.

The FFRP coordinates closely with both the Gender and Family Promotion Committee and women's civil society networks. It meets with women's groups to sensitize and advise the public about legal issues and provides training for parliamentarians on gender analysis skills, including gender budgeting. The FFRP also independently reviews legislation with an eye toward gender sensitivity. Strong relationships (and indeed, overlapping membership) with the Gender and Family Promotion Committee allows the FFRP to play an advisory role with regard to legislation.

Since its formation, the FFRP has grown to be a prominent institution within parliament and a leading voice in the national women's movement. As women's numbers in parliament have grown and the caucus has matured, the FFRP's ability to influence legislation has increased. Its strength was one of the factors that contributed to the success of legislation to combat gender-based violence, for instance.

The FFRP has a highly consultative and collaborative relationship with civil society organisations. In fact, many women parliamentarians worked in and led NGOs and community-based organisations before entering parliament. The close nature of this relationship has allowed the FFRP to access data and information about the needs of its women constituents and to rely on civil society to conduct advocacy campaigns in support of the FFRP's legislative agenda, such as a recent bill on gender-based violence.

Case study, Rwanda



discussions, inviting input from experts from overseas and learning from their experiences.

“So from the beginning – it must have been my third or fourth week in the parliament – we started this movement for the caucus. And the Speaker came

on board, and then my other colleagues who have a gender perspective came on board, and then we started working on lobbying, talking to other women, talking to other parties, and through this, we created the caucus which enabled to give women a larger role than the numbers.” **Woman parliamentarian, Pakistan**

Case Study 5.5

Inclusivity: The key to the Bolivian women’s caucus

During the 1993-1997 legislative term, Bolivia’s six elected congresswomen decided to form a group to bring parliamentary women together across party lines to leverage their efforts, promote a greater presence for women in parliament and work together for greater gender equality. In 1997, the Union of Parliamentary Women of Bolivia [*Unión de Mujeres Parlamentarias de Bolivia*] (UMPABOL) was formed as a result of two chamber resolutions, one in the Senate and one in the lower house. Since then, UMPABOL has served as a forum for jointly addressing the demand for gender mainstreaming in legislative work across both chambers. One of its most interesting characteristics is that it includes both titular legislators and substitutes. Because of this, during the legislative term under study, it has been highly valued by women serving as substitute legislators.

Another significant characteristic of UMPABOL is that it was conceived as a venue for multi-party coordination, with a horizontal structure that did not reflect the balance of power among parties. Some of the female legislators interviewed considered this the best form of organisation. Others considered it unnecessary for women from the majority parties to hold the presidency of this multi-party forum. Women deputies were also of the view that the structure needed to reflect “the balance of power”.

Case study, Bolivia

Case Study 5.6

A mandate for gender mainstreaming: The women's caucus in the Argentine Senate

The establishment of a Women's Caucus in the Senate was approved on 9 April 2008. According to its establishing resolution, the Women's Caucus can include all female senators, and its objectives are to "advise, consult, oversee and monitor laws, policies and government actions related to equal rights and opportunities and the treatment of men and women." As a special commission it has a one-year term, which may be extended.

The Women's Caucus does not have its own budget and does not report on draft legislation. Its responsibilities are limited to "presenting reports to the committees that are addressing draft legislation of interest to the Caucus and to request, through a formal communiqué, the promotion of specific draft legislation" (Art. 2, Internal Rules of the Women's Caucus).

Its powers include the following:

- incorporating a gender dimension into the preparation and approval of draft legislation;
- monitoring public policies directly or indirectly related to women and girls, to guarantee equal treatment and access to resources;
- promoting affirmative action to guarantee equal opportunity and treatment and full enjoyment of rights enshrined in the Constitution and international human rights treaties; and
- coordinating with parliaments in MERCOSUR countries to move toward the harmonisation of legislation among member and associate countries.

In its legislative work, the Women's Caucus formally promoted two pieces of draft legislation in 2008: the elimination of sexist language in public administration, and the declaration of 2009 as national year of non-violence against women and fighting domestic violence. Although the Senate approved both bills, neither was passed by the Chamber of Deputies.

Case study, Argentina

Formality and structure of caucuses

The formality and structure of women's caucuses varies somewhat. The structure of some caucuses is formal, with permanent membership and clear objectives. Others are more informal (for example, with no meeting rules), with meetings only as needed and no clear agenda. The women's parliamentary groups of Viet Nam and Laos, for example, were established formally

by resolutions of their respective national assemblies. Both groups meet during sessions of their assemblies, and their resolutions spell out membership and leadership structures. They are also both supported by parliamentary staff (although the caucus is an additional duty for them), and are allocated small budgets by the assemblies.

Case Study 5.7

Focussing on structure: The case of Peru

The Peruvian parliamentary women's caucus (*Mesa de Mujeres Parlamentarias Peruanas*) was established in 2006 as an initiative of inter-party dialogue and consensus building. The caucus's organisational structure includes a general assembly, which is the highest decision-making body and includes all women in Congress. A mid-level coordinating committee consists of one female delegate from each political party represented in Congress. Its decisions are made by simple majority, and its main responsibilities include proposing the annual activities plan and seeking sources of funding for caucus activities. The structure also includes a president, who serves a one-year term. The president is elected by secret, universal ballot by all caucus members; her main function is to represent the caucus and its positions and to convene and chair meetings of the coordinating committee and plenary assemblies.

As of 2010, four presidents had been elected, each from a different party – there being a political agreement to rotate the position each year among representatives of different political organisations. The caucus remains an informal venue, however, and is not part of the organic structure of Congress. Congress has nonetheless offered it some basic assistance, providing an office in the Legislative Palace and assigning a parliamentary technical staff member to support its work. Beyond that, however, there is no budget allocation for the caucus, which has had to depend on international cooperation to fund its activities and meet its goals. This makes the caucus's progress and continuity, despite a lack of stable funding, even more noteworthy.

During its first year of existence, the caucus focused on creating enough institutional structure to allow it to function over the medium and long term.

Case study, Peru

The women's caucus operating in Pakistan was also formally established by a national assembly resolution, but is defined as an "informal" group. Its budget comes from voluntary fees paid by each of its members, as stipulated in its rules. Indeed, the group's treasurer said

women were very happy to contribute to the running of this caucus, given the success of its activities.

Since its inception in 2008, the activities of the Pakistani women's caucus have included:

- contributions to an ongoing process of police reform, by inspecting women's police stations and reporting on its findings, with recommendations to increase the salary of women police officers and make transport and adequate housing facilities more readily available to them;
- cooperation with a delegation of the Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women on the forthcoming Country Report of Pakistan to CEDAW;
- an effort to raise awareness about acid burn victims, including a visit to such a victim in a Karachi hospital, and a special briefing with medical experts and leading NGOs. Caucus members dedicated funds to the establishment of burn units in their respective district hospitals;
- championing for the issue of women's registration, by organising briefings with the National Database Authority, the Election Commission of Pakistan and the Aurat Foundation; and
- visits to camps for internally displaced persons, providing medicine, hygiene kits and food for children.

As the example of Pakistan shows, informal caucuses have also been able to bring women together when issues of significance arise. While formal caucuses can obviously provide more structure and research capacity to women parliamentarians, especially if they are supported by secretariat staff, it is rare for such staff to be fully dedicated to a women's parliamentary caucus. Dedicated budgets are also rare for women's caucuses; where they exist, they are not sufficient for the funding of desired activities.

“At least in past years, it made no sense to establish an institutional Women's Caucus or gender caucus. [...] The informal caucus that we have set up (in the Chamber of Deputies) still functions, but if we had formally established it as an institution, we would have destroyed it, because then issues arise that are more a matter of form and political infighting”

Woman parliamentarian, Argentina

No, there is no women's caucus in the Senate. Informally yes, contacts among small groups go smoothly, and it is the case that we would call each other if we would like to add issues to the agenda, like for instance, MDG 5 concerning maternal mortality in developing countries. But it has not been structured, it is not formal.

Woman parliamentarian, Cambodia

“No. There is no formal cross-party group. I think that ... what we have managed to do with some women is build a relationship of trust insofar as we are fighting the same battles, promoting women's rights in countries that cooperate with us, and very committed to women's rights in Belgium. We are waging the same war to make gender mainstreaming work. And as a result, there is a certain implicit recognition when these things get onto the agenda. (...) But it is not formal.”

Woman parliamentarian, Belgium

Work plans and issues championed by caucuses

Women's caucuses have succeeded in raising and discussing issues relevant to women and gender equality. Laws on domestic violence and gender equality have often been instigated by such groups. They have also been able to look at mainstream legislation and ensure that women are not discriminated against. A women's caucus in Laos, for example, enabled women to choose their own retirement age, which had previously been set lower than men's. A strategy commonly used by caucuses to achieve such results has been to identify women who can most convincingly represent the caucus's views and arguments in parliament. These groups also forge strong personal relationships among women across parties, particularly while participating in study tours, delegations or workshops.

Where caucuses exist, survey respondents reported success in using them to influence activities on a range of issues, but most particularly violence against women (with an average score of 3.24, denoting “fairly effective”), non-discrimination (2.91), healthcare (2.96) and children's rights (3.17) (see table 5.2).

Perhaps reflecting a tendency to be more critical than men, some women rated their caucuses as “not at all” effective in certain areas.

In terms of regional differences, the issues considered most important can vary from one region to the next. Sub-Saharan African respondents, for instance, said the women's caucuses in their parliaments had been most effective at gaining support across party lines for issues such as violence against women and inheritance rights. Caucuses were reported to be less effective at gaining political support on issues such as reproductive rights and prostitution, perhaps owing to their more controversial nature.

“There are issues, like the issue of violence, for instance, where we agree as a women's caucus... Issues that are not controversial we don't have problems with, no matter what party the person is from who brought up that issue, we all partake in a debate finding a way forward. If we think we should push in a private members' bill we do that, if we think we must use the executive arm of government and lobby the ministry,

Table 5.2**Effectiveness of caucuses in gaining political support across party lines** (N= responses)

	By sex			By region				
	Women	Men	Average	AM	AR	AS	EU	SSA
Violence against women (N=71)	3.24	3.29	3.24	3.28	3.5	2.55	3.22	3.21
Non discrimination/equal opportunities (N=69)	2.75	3.1	2.91	2.72	3.57	2.22	3.0	3.0
Equal pay (N=65)	2.76	2.82	2.78	2.45	3.66	2.25	2.33	3.17
Inheritance rights (N=65)	2.5	2.62	2.55	2.0	2.83	2.25	1.87	3.11
Citizenship/status law (N=62)	2.73	3.03	2.86	2.45	3.57	2.0	2.42	3.25
Healthcare (N=63)	2.87	3.11	2.96	2.86	3.85	2.44	2.14	2.93
Reproductive rights (N=61)	2.76	3.0	2.85	2.69	3.5	2.37	2.12	2.66
Prostitution/trafficking (N=63)	2.6	2.76	2.66	2.37	2.6	2.33	2.75	2.75
Children's rights (N=64)	3.08	3.33	3.17	3.08	3.57	2.55	3.25	3.26

Source: Questionnaire C, www.gender-parliaments.org

Note: In the scoring, 0 represents "Don't know", 1 "Not at all", 2 "Somewhat", 3 "Fairly" and 4 "Very"

we do that. We even go to the extent of lobbying the president of the country as the women's parliamentary caucus. So we are united on certain issues."

Woman parliamentarian, Zambia

"We have a women's caucus, an all-party caucus, the Uganda Women Parliamentarians Association (UWOPA). We also use that. For instance, we were able to remove taxes on sanitary towels for the whole country. I was in the chair of UWOPA and I took advantage of being there and moved it and then I told the minister that if he did not reduce those taxes we

would tell his constituents that the girls were spending more money just because they are girls whereas he was their minister."

Woman parliamentarian, Uganda

"What I now say, we will never know... But the law on parity ... If it were the opposite, men would not have achieved it that easily. I think that women have reached a consensus across parties much faster. I think men would have found it much harder to admit that a man from another party was right on that matter."

Man parliamentarian, Belgium

Case Study 5.8

The strategic plan of the women's caucus in Peru: The importance of a good road map

The women's caucus in Peru developed its strategic plan for 2006-2011 with support from international cooperation agencies. It establishes the caucus's mission, vision and three key strategic objectives. The objectives formed the basis of an operating plan for 2006-2007, with five thematic work areas. This led to the adoption of a Legislative Gender Agenda of priorities for that session, as shown below:

Objectives 2006 -2011

- Highlight the role of women, with gender mainstreaming and respect for inter- and multi-cultural aspects;
- Promote and encourage active participation by women as agents of change;
- Solidify the Peruvian Parliamentary Women's Caucus nationally and internationally.

Operating Plan 2006-2007 – Thematic Areas

- Gender, democracy and political participation;
- Gender and poverty: exclusion /discrimination vs. social inclusion;
- Monitoring of compliance with international commitments on women's issues;

- Gender mainstreaming in public policies; national, regional and local plans; state practices; and legal norms;
- Civil society participation in gender mainstreaming.

Legislative Agenda, 2006

- Equal Opportunity Law;
- Electoral system reform;
- Sexual & Reproductive Health Law;
- Elimination of all forms of discrimination;
- Reforms for inclusive, equitable education;
- Criminal Code reforms to eliminate violence against women and children;
- Measures for women's economic integration;
- Gender mainstreaming in national, regional and local budgets;
- Review of the Civic Participation and Oversight Law;
- Law on Living Original Languages;
- Modifications to Integral Health Insurance for women's health care;
- Modifications to penitentiary system to improve conditions for female prisoners and their children;
- Norms to help young women and men enter the labour market;
- Inclusion of gender variables in national statistics;
- Monitoring of Truth Commission recommendations on women.

Case study, Peru

Men's participation in women's parliamentary caucuses

A consistent theme of this report has been the need to recognise men's contribution to the goal of gender equality. Some parliamentarians commented on the difficulties faced in having the women's caucus recognised as an important mechanism of parliament. An Iraqi woman parliamentarian, for example, made this statement: "I am member of the Iraqi women parliamentarians' bloc. Our most important challenge is that men parliamentarians do not realize the importance of this female bloc. But if we persevere, I expect things to improve." A Bolivian woman parliamentarian said the following: "[...] Many things could be done in the Union of Parliamentary Women of Bolivia (UMPABOL), because there is a chamber resolution from the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate; it is recognized. But in the Chamber of Deputies, the men see it as a small, isolated thing, something for women, so women can come to agreement."

A key to this challenge has been the inclusion of men in women's caucuses, and interestingly, 60 per cent of the survey respondents said men were taking part in them and their meetings. This was reflected across most regions (with the exception of the response from a Scandinavian parliament, where men were not allowed to participate in the women's caucus). When the Parliamentary Group for Women's Rights was created in Ecuador, in 2008, men comprised 46 per cent of its membership. In Rwanda, several male parliamentarians have asked and been allowed to join the FFRP in recent years, and have taken advantage of some of the training

and support offered to members. The FFRP's appeal to these male parliamentarians demonstrates the extent to which it has avoided marginalisation, and indeed become a prominent institution within parliament. Likewise, in Timor-Leste, where the women's group has a strong reputation, men have been included as observers.

Box 5.7

Selected responses: Men's participation in caucuses of women parliamentarians

Any man or woman parliamentarian can be part of the group. [Andorra, Questionnaire C]

Yes, men can join this group of women parliamentarians so they can better understand the obstacles that prevent women from acceding to decision-making spheres and they can support us. [Cambodia, Questionnaire C]

I don't know if they can join, but they can support motions brought by women in the Congress [Colombia, Questionnaire C]

I believe that men can definitely become involved in these struggles, which must be inclusive rather than confrontational in order to achieve our demands that benefit society as a whole and vulnerable groups in particular. [Costa Rica, Questionnaire C]

Men must contribute to and be involved in all efforts aimed at promoting women's role. [Jordan, Questionnaire C]

Men come as facilitators only. [Malawi, Questionnaire C]

The Forum of Rwandan Women Parliamentarians has men members who are called "partner members". [Rwanda, Questionnaire C]

Men can attend seminars organised by the women's caucus [Syria, Questionnaire C]

We are now trying to involve men as ex-officio members so that we can use them as instruments to see the cause of women and their fellow man. [Zimbabwe, Questionnaire C].

Successes and challenges faced by caucuses

Caucuses have clearly provided women parliamentarians opportunities to meet, discuss policy issues, and perhaps more importantly, create bonds of friendship across partisan divides. These caucuses have had considerable success in organising outreach activities and in capacity building. In Namibia, for example, workshops have been held to train women in leadership, speech writing, and gender budgeting. Where women's caucuses have contributed to the development of legislation on gender issues, they have received assistance and support from women's groups outside parliament. Women parliamentarians have found they need to engage non-governmental organisations and research institutes by holding roundtable discussions with them to identify the key gender issues associated with particular legislation. Where women's caucuses have been most effective, however, this has been where they have deliberately put their party to one side, and made a commitment to the caucus.

Box 5.8

The importance of solidarity among women

"I never had a problem working with less women, but now there are more women, we work well together, unlike when people say that women don't work well together, or are competitive, that's not true. There is very good support among each other." **Woman parliamentarian, Portugal**

"Our objective is that all the women sit together, we put our political parties behind us, and try to have one commitment, to discuss and implement our objectives. [I don't want to boast, but] it's true that the women's caucus in Timor Leste is very strong. When we pushed, in the past, for a resolution for gender budgeting, the government was very concerned to follow that up. While we have party whips [in the parliament], the women will not allow a party whip to move against the women's objectives. It is not a written rule of the caucus, but we try to minimise the party, to ensure gender-sensitive policy." **Woman parliamentarian, Timor-Leste**

"The other beauty of it is the four of us are friends; three of us have been activists for years, and we know each other. So it becomes easy to distribute work. We don't need to form an official caucus, because we know each other and we've been dealing with each other for years. If you get frustrated, you just get up and go to your friend, because you're not visiting a colleague, you're visiting a friend and airing out some of the frustration. From different districts, and we have diversity of interests - international relations, education, finance, economy, politics, various interests - and we stick together. It doesn't have to become a caucus but they know if we're going into a committee we'll get the votes of each other. It's known by the other MPs: any committee we'll be running, or voting, the vote will go to one of our colleagues, the others will see. So there is an undeclared caucus and we felt there is no need to do declare it because we didn't want them to say that they don't know anything except women's issues and at the same time our friendship is solidifying this whole process." **Woman parliamentarian, Kuwait**

"We tried to get women from all the different parties to work on the same topic at the same time and to start what we call a motion, a suggestion, to the government and if every party is involved we usually look to women to do that ... There was a women's magazine. It is not a feminist magazine but a traditional women's magazine that started a petition and this was a wonderful instrument for us to say: "You see, thousands of persons have signed this petition and we really have to do something." So we very often work together with NGOs or other outside organisations. This time it was a women's magazine. Then, when we start working on those initiatives, we try to get specialist experts from outside to come in and of course we try to influence the choice of people who come in and, once the proposals are within parliament and are being debated, then we ask NGOs to write letters to the parliamentarians or even go and talk to them to make sure that they support some issue." **Woman parliamentarian, Switzerland**

Of course, cross-party women’s caucuses confront a variety of challenges in making their work effective. Caucuses must compete with other parliamentary duties for parliamentarians’ time and attention. Like other committees, the women’s caucus may struggle with a lack of resources, including support staff. In South Africa, for example, the Multi-party Women’s Caucus has never been well attended. It has been criticised for its emphasis on organising “events” such as Women’s Day and the campaign “Sixteen Days of No Violence against Women”, or for only becoming active in times of “crisis”, with reference to the Caster Semenya incident. Some women parliamentarians said the caucus could do more. Others said they didn’t have time for it – indeed, one saw the exercise as a waste of time. The caucus was also seen as another layer of “bureaucracy” rather than a forum for women’s empowerment.

Caucuses can be hindered in their effectiveness by the predominance of party politics. Differences of political opinion can sometimes lead to difficulties in finding a compromise solution to problems – even where those problems are widely identified as being of concern to women. Women in the Australian Federal Parliament have often found it extremely difficult to leave partisan politics aside and work together on gender issues. For that reason, the Australian Parliament has never had a cross-party women’s caucus. Unpublished research conducted in the 1990s found that women parliamentarians preferred informal get-togethers, such as morning teas or lunches, rather than a formalised caucus, to meet with women from other political parties.²⁹ This was attributed to the fundamentally opposing views of women from different parties. A rare exception was in 2006 when a coalition of women from all parties in the Senate introduced a bill to shift authority for the approval of abortion drug RU486 from the ministerial level to the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

Comments from questionnaire respondents suggest that a clear understanding of a caucus’s mission and goals, as well as sufficient funding, can increase its effectiveness.

“There is a cross party women’s caucus, but it doesn’t really work. The government is always wanting to find someone from their side to control, to lead. Even a Minister to lead the caucus. [It hasn’t held any consultations or debates] yet [because] it is still too early and it is still not that effective. [It will consider issues like] child abuse and child rights; 30 per cent quotas. I think we all agree that we need that.”

Woman parliamentarian, Malaysia

“Although all the parties were represented on all the commissions, it is proportional to their representation

29 Di Zetlin, 1995, “Women Members of Federal Parliament: A comparative analysis over two decades”, Australian Research Council Grant, University of Queensland.

in the chamber. So even though the president of the Equity and Gender Commission is a colleague from the PRD – a historically leftist party – the majority of women on it were from the right. As a result, there was no possibility of advancing important gender issues.”

Woman parliamentarian, Mexico

Box 5.9

Selected responses: Challenges faced by parliamentary caucuses of women parliamentarians

Occasionally the main problem is the high overload of work for parliamentarians.

[Latvia, Questionnaire C]

The caucus lacks funds. [Lesotho, Questionnaire C]

Toeing party lines that may not be gender-sensitive.

[Malawi, Questionnaire C]

The caucus is more concerned with political than social matters. [Morocco, Questionnaire C]

The major challenge of the caucus is lack of funding and time for meetings because it is not a standing committee of parliament. Its functions are not stipulated clearly.

[Namibia, Questionnaire C]

No meeting day allocated to the committee. No budget. The chairperson is too busy because she is already a chairperson of another committee. No support staff allocated to the caucus.

[Namibia, Questionnaire C]

The multitude of work we - the few women legislators in parliament - have to address and it’s not easy to coordinate the agendas of both Houses.

[Uruguay, Questionnaire C]

Meetings are only held during election time or when some member has an “agenda”. There have been no annual general meetings, no regular organised meetings, etc. Other than programs initiated by parliamentary secretariat on certain occasions, eg International Women’s Day, there are no specific programs deliberately drawn by the executive.

[Zambia, Questionnaire C]

Innovative parliamentary initiatives for gender mainstreaming

Various additional initiatives have been developed by parliaments to mainstream gender, including networks of parliamentary leaders (Sweden), internal gender audits (Rwanda), and research centres (Mexico and Costa Rica).

In Sweden, the Speaker's Network for Gender Equality was started by a woman Speaker when she invited seven women parliamentarians from each political party to a meeting. Since then, the network has examined underlying conditions and assumptions in the Riksdag's work and raised awareness on gender equality through seminars and lectures, and by networking with similar bodies in other parliaments (see Case Study 5.9).

The internal participatory gender audit conducted in the Rwandan Senate provides an analysis of the state of gender mainstreaming, and more specifically, where capacity gaps exist and how they can be filled (see Case Study 5.12). The audit was conducted over an eight-day period by means of interviews, the review of documents and a staff and parliamentarians survey. The results of the survey focused on three key areas: paper, people and process. The audit found that:

- the Senate had no formal gender policy or gender strategy;
- human resource policies were generally considered gender-sensitive (particularly with respect to recruitment, training and maternity leave);
- human resource practices were also gender-sensitive, although women were not well represented at the management level;
- "capacity issues" more than commitment were the major challenge in applying gender equality to the work of parliament;
- while the parliamentarians and staff surveyed reported a high degree of familiarity with common gender mainstreaming terms and concepts, relatively few knew how to conduct gender analysis;
- the financial resources and infrastructure dedicated to the promotion of gender equality were insufficient;
- there was an ongoing need to provide training and capacity building to staff as well as members.

Research links have also proved a vital source of information and support for gender mainstreaming efforts. In Mexico, the Research Centre for Women's Advancement and Gender Equality aims to support legislative work from a gender and human rights perspective and provide specialised technical support and analysis on gender equality. Similarly, in Costa Rica, the Technical Unit on Gender Equality and Equity aims to promote gender mainstreaming in all legislative functions of the Legislative Assembly. Interestingly, the German Bundestag has established formal links with the dedicated unit on gender equality at the Humboldt University of Berlin.

Case Study 5.9 The Swedish Speaker's Network for Gender Equality among parliamentarians

Background and achievements

The Speaker's Network for Gender Equality among parliamentarians was established in 1995 by Speaker Birgitta Dahl. In the early spring of 1995, she invited seven female parliamentarians, one from each of the parties in parliament, to meet and discuss how joining forces could be the best use of new and positive representation of women in parliament.

Many ideas have emerged from the conversations held in that group, resulting, for instance, in the establishment of a parliamentary network on gender equality and the arrangement of parliamentary breakfast meetings and seminars on the importance of gender equality in democratic societies.

The Speaker's Network has more recently been renamed the Speaker's Reference Group on Gender Equality Issues and is composed of seven members from each party, currently all women.

Recent activities

During the parliamentary year 2009-2010, the Speaker's Reference Group organised four breakfast meetings on various topics, including presentations on: "the effects of the economic crisis on women and men", "Men and masculinity", "The Monarchy and its power from a gender perspective", and "Legal Reforms on Prostitution in Germany and Sweden".

During the parliamentary years 2008-2009 and 2009-2010, the Speaker's Reference Group also arranged open seminars on gender equality at Almedalen, a political summit for politicians, lobbyists, newsmakers and the public that attracts thousands of visitors every year. In 2009-2010, a seminar on "Gender equality and generations" attracted more than 100 visitors. Its panel – representatives of political party youth federations, women's federations and junior and senior members of parliament – discussed issues of politics, gender, generational change and the challenges of reconciling political and professional work with family responsibilities. The audience was invited to take part in various interactive parts of the programme.

The Speaker's Reference Group also interacts extensively with international counterparts. In May 2010, the Reference Group visited the FEMM Committee (Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality) of the European Parliament, to receive updates on its work to promote gender equality.

The Swedish parliament also has a network for female parliamentarians, “Q-sam”, which meets once a year to discuss issues of common concern. Its male counterpart, the Men’s Parliamentary Network, is concerned primarily with specific political issues, such as trafficking. “Krikon”, established in 1992, is an informal network of female committee secretaries that meets twice a year.

Case study, Sweden

Case Study 5.10 Costa Rica’s Technical Unit on Gender Equality and Equity

In 2009, the Legislative Assembly created the Technical Unit on Gender Equality and Equity [*Unidad Técnica para la Igualdad y Equidad de Género*] (UTIEG), which falls under the office of the Assembly’s Executive Director. It was created to comply with requirements established as part of the Assembly’s institutional planning.

The UTIEG’s overall objective is “to promote, plan, propose, coordinate, guide, strengthen and monitor gender mainstreaming in all functions of the Legislative Assembly, in compliance with the State’s commitments to gender equity and equality.” More specifically, the UTIEG’s aims to:

- form a technical unit on gender, with a functional, modern organisational structure to mainstream gender in all Legislative Assembly processes;
- coordinate and promote gender training and awareness-raising for technical, administrative and legislative staff, providing practical tools for mainstreaming gender in legislative work;
- promote and coordinate action for institutional planning that requires gender mainstreaming;
- provide expert advice on gender to all technical-administrative legislative entities in mainstreaming gender in the legislative process; and
- create strategies for communication and coordination with civil society and organisations that facilitate public participation in gender mainstreaming in the various processes of the Legislative Assembly.

The UTIEG is currently applying for additional resources from international cooperation agencies to hire experts to help design Legislative Assembly policy on gender. With that assistance, and support from INAMU, the unit has organized commemorative activities for events such as International Women’s Day, the anniversary of women’s suffrage and events about violence against women.

Case study, Costa Rica

Case Study 5.11 The Research Centre for Women’s Advancement and Gender Equality in Mexico

During the 59th legislature, the Research Centre for Women’s Advancement and Gender Equity [*Centro de Estudios para el Adelanto de las Mujeres y la Equidad de Género*] (CEAMEG) was established in Mexico as another research centre at the service of Congress. Its mission is to: *Support legislative work from a gender and human rights perspective, by providing specialized technical support and analytical information services that help ensure equality between women and men and promote the advancement of women within the framework of the Mexican State’s democratic processes.*

The Centre’s website indicates the following objective: to provide deputies, commissions and committees with technical support and analytical information services related to the advancement of women and gender equality in an objective, impartial and timely manner.

Since its establishment in August 2005, CEAMEG’s actions have focused on three key research areas:

- Gender mainstreaming in public budgets
- Women’s political participation
- Progress in legislative harmonisation

According to a quantitative report on its activities through the 60th legislature, CEAMEG provided 428 information services to parliamentarians, including 65 reports on legislation, 35 research papers and 49 analyses. Eighteen of the services involved the integration of information systems, three involved the developing of indicators, nine consisted of training and advisory services, and 98 consisted of materials and reports.

In a survey of 15 legislators, CEAMEG’s work was rated good to very good.

Case study, Mexico

Women’s parliaments have been used in South Africa and Mexico as a means of bringing together different stakeholders to consider gender equality concerns. In South Africa, the initiative began in 2004 and is hosted in conjunction with the celebration of South African Women’s Day, on 9 August. The initiative brings together each year civil society participants from each of the nine provinces, members of parliament and representatives of government, women’s structures, non-governmental organisations, community based organisations and the oversight institutions specified in chapter 9 of the South African Constitution, including



Case Study 5.12

Rwanda: Internal Participatory Gender Audit

An internal participatory gender audit of Rwanda's Senate was facilitated by UNDP and DFID and conducted between 6 and 24 August 2009. The audit aimed to facilitate organisational and individual learning on how to integrate gender equality concerns in the work of parliament, and provide important data on the status of existing gender mainstreaming efforts. The audit was carried out by six team members through interviews, a document review and a staff survey. The documents reviewed included the internal rules and regulations of the Senate, the Strategic Plan for 2006-2010, the Action Plans for 2008-2009 and 2009-2010, the Manual of Human Resource Management, staff lists and training plans. The staff survey was completed by 22 staff members. The findings of the audit were presented at an internal workshop to engage all staff members in designing a gender action plan.

The results of the audit were categorized into three areas: paper, people and process. With respect to paper, it was found that the Senate had no formal gender policy or gender strategy, although human resource policies were generally considered gender-sensitive (particularly with respect to recruitment, training and maternity leave). In relation to people, the audit found that human resource practices were gender-sensitive, although women were not well represented at the management level. It was in the area of process that gaps were mostly identified. Data confirmed members' assertions that "capacity issues" more than commitment were at the heart of remaining challenges in applying gender equality to the work of parliament. Though the members and staff surveyed reported a high degree of familiarity with common gender mainstreaming terms and concepts, relatively few indicated that they knew how to conduct gender analysis. Additionally, the audit found that there were insufficient financial resources and infrastructure dedicated to the promotion of gender equality. For example, the audit found that while the Committee on Gender provides "an entry point" for gender mainstreaming, the Committee was "not yet operational". While an individual designated as "gender focal point" attends various external meetings, the audit found no system for feeding that information back to the wider staff. The audit data highlighted the need to provide training and capacity building to staff as well as members.

A number of valuable lessons were learned in the process of doing this participatory audit, not least of which was the need for the Senate leadership to in fact take the lead in developing a gender action plan. The audit will enable parliament to plan accurately and effectively to fill capacity gaps with regard to gender mainstreaming and facilitate an institution-wide response. This may relieve some of the pressure from individual women parliamentarians and the FFRP to conduct all gender business in parliament.

Participatory Gender Audit Report within Parliament (Senate) 06-24/08/2009

the Commission on Gender Equality and the Human Rights Commission. In Mexico, the Women's Parliament operated between 1998 and 2005, consisting of federal and local women senators and deputies and Mexican women interested in equity and equal opportunity. The main purpose of this initiative was to review legislation and annual budgets to include a gender perspective. While both of these women's parliaments found it difficult to have a lasting effect on legislation, they were highly successful at raising awareness on gender equality issues.

Other gender-mainstreaming mechanisms in parliament

Gender mainstreaming in parliaments does not happen automatically. Indeed, parliaments are beginning to embrace a number of mechanisms for promoting the consideration of gender equality across all areas of parliamentary work. These mechanisms can include the use of gender advisors and focal points, regular relationships with women's groups, sex disaggregated data, and gender equality training. However, as the table below shows, these mechanisms have by no means been universally adopted. Public hearings with and submissions from women's groups represented the most commonly cited mechanism, followed by liaison with national women's machinery. However, parliamentary authorities noted the absence of gender focal points in their parliaments and a lack of the sex-

disaggregated data needed to mainstream gender into all policy areas, casting doubt on the effectiveness of these efforts.

It is interesting that in Sub-Saharan Africa, training on gender equality and work with national women's machinery were the mechanisms mentioned most frequently by respondents. Latin American respondents indicated that gender advisors and specialists were used as frequently as other mechanisms in their region, and far more frequently than in other regions. Other examples of good practice were found in Canada, where training is delivered by experts where needed most, namely in the relevant gender committee, the parliamentary library's research staff and the Parliamentary Budget Office; and in the Republic of Korea, where publications on gender equality are published regularly and distributed widely.

Box 5.10 Selected responses: Building capacity

The gender-based analysis training created by Status of Women Canada was delivered to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, staff at the Library of Parliament's research branch, and the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer. [Canada, Questionnaire A]

Table 5.3
Gender-mainstreaming mechanisms in parliament (N= responses)

	Regional differences					Average
	AM	AR	AS	EU	SSA	
Hearings with women's groups (N=82)	0.54	0.55	0.72	0.55	0.41	0.53
Submissions from women's groups (N=80)	0.54	0.55	0.72	0.50	0.41	0.52
Liaison with national women's machinery (N=78)	0.54	0.66	0.36	0.45	0.63	0.47
Training on gender equality (N=77)	0.54	0.44	0.45	0.2	0.63	0.37
Gender advisors/specialists (N=76)	0.54	0.28	0.18	0.18	0.40	0.27
Gender focal points (N=77)	0.36	0.37	0.18	0.26	0.25	0.27
Sex disaggregated data in legislative work (N=73)	0.36	0.28	0.27	0.30	0.11	0.27

Source: Questionnaire A, www.gender-parliaments.org

Note: Score calculated on a scale where 1 represents "Yes" and 0 represents "No"

A newsletter on gender-sensitive legislation is published three times a year, and distributed to all parliamentarians and senior officers of administrative governments related gender issues. A book on gender-sensitive legislation is published every four years, and is distributed to new parliamentarians, related officers and related legal scholars.

[Republic of Korea, Questionnaire A]

challenge identified was the never-ending character of gender equality work. Continuity in monitoring and regular follow-up and evaluation are needed to assess and advance the work. It is also important for prominent figures with influence and high positions in parliament to express support for and help channel resources to work in this area. A gender equality plan of action with clear objectives and targets would help give direction to such efforts; training would help parliaments identify and fill gaps in the process.

Questionnaire respondents also pointed in their comments to a variety of obstacles that hinder more effective gender mainstreaming. These obstacles can include the absence of key mechanisms, such as gender committees, but also the lack of a clear consensus on what gender mainstreaming looks like in practice or what concept of gender equality should be pursued. Another

Asked about the frequency of gender mainstreaming in various aspects of parliamentary work, respondents gave their highest scores to “debates in your party caucus”. At the other extreme, “cross-party caucuses” scored lowest. These responses suggest that party discipline plays an important role in keeping the debate on gender “behind closed doors”, rather than open, among all members.

Table 5.4

Frequency of mainstreaming efforts in parliament (N= responses)

	Women	Men	Average
In policy sessions/debates in your party caucus (N= 105)	3.88	3.58	3.74
In parliamentary committee debates (N=110)	3.74	3.48	3.61
In plenary debates in parliament (N= 102)	3.66	3.18	3.44
In parliamentary hearings (N=89)	3.58	3.19	3.40
In cross-party caucuses (N=79)	3.27	3.22	3.27

Source: Questionnaire C, www.gender-parliaments.org

Note: Score calculated on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 represents “Never”, 2 “Rarely”, 3 “Occasionally”, 4 “Regularly” and 5 “All the time”

Conclusion

As discussed in this chapter, the presence of women in parliament is not enough in itself to ensure progress toward gender equality. It is more a question of a parliament’s gender sensitivity and awareness, as reflected in its policies and infrastructure.

Two mechanisms that can help parliaments ensure that their outputs have been analysed from a gender perspective are gender equality committees and women’s parliamentary caucuses. Gender equality committees act as incubators for policy ideas and help to keep gender issues on the parliament’s agenda. Their advantage lies in their ability to work closely with national women’s machinery, equality ombudsmen and non-governmental organisations, and in their permanent character and resources (budget and staff), like any other committee in parliament. Such committees have successfully influenced policy on a range of issues, including education, healthcare,

and employment, to name a few. In some parliaments, however, gender equality committees have been given a slightly different (advisory) status, limiting their ability to pursue action on the recommendations they make.

More generally, however, gender equality committees are seen as being equal to other parliamentary committees, and as effective. Factors seen as potentially limiting their effectiveness related to the focus of their inquiries, the number of women in parliament, the capacity of the committee chair and the extent to which they receive support from parliamentary leadership.

Gender equality committees can also give support to and cooperate with other portfolio committees, encouraging them to consider issues of gender equality in dealing with their respective subject matters. In this regard, gender equality committees can play the role of initiating, supporting and monitoring what other portfolio committees do to mainstream gender. What

these bodies need, however, is an independent process for monitoring and supporting their work.

Where parliaments have chosen not to establish dedicated gender equality committees, such issues are commonly addressed through a women's affairs, social policy or human rights committee. Such "multi-portfolio" committees can apply a gender perspective to a broader range of issues but obviously have less time for specific gender concerns.

Women's parliamentary caucuses, on the other hand, are cross-party coordination groups in which women parliamentarians participate on a voluntary basis. Caucuses have brought women together across party lines and given them a framework for engaging with civil society and private sector partners. Such groups have successfully advocated legislation on women's and gender equality issues, including domestic violence, non-discrimination, healthcare and women's rights. The inclusion of men in women's caucuses has been beneficial to this outcome. Women's caucuses have been most effective where their members have deliberately

put party to one side, and made a commitment to the caucus. As suggested by the questionnaire responses, a clear understanding of a caucus's mission and goals, as well as sufficient funding, can also increase its effectiveness.

Other mechanisms have surfaced to raise the profile of gender equality in parliament, including the Swedish Speaker's Network on Gender Equality, research think tanks in Mexico and Costa Rica, and Rwanda's internal participatory gender audit. These new initiatives notwithstanding, a real concern is that parliaments continue to lack access to sex-disaggregated data, which is ultimately the basis for all gender mainstreaming efforts. This needs to be redressed by relevant statistical agencies in government so that gender mainstreaming can move from theory to widespread practice. In addition, continuity in monitoring and regular follow-up and evaluation are needed to assess and advance the work. A gender equality plan of action with clear objectives and targets would help give direction to such efforts; training would help parliaments identify and fill gaps in the process.

Chapter six

Sharing responsibility for gender equality: the role of men

“We have one of the most sensitive men who is a doctor and he has been working on cooperation issues. Recently, he came with us to New York to the meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women so that he could appreciate what the bigger battle is and he came back and said straightaway that he was going to ask for the maternity room immediately. So that exposure in New York opened his eyes for him to see that things were quite bad. We look out for a few of these colleagues and put them in the front line so that they can work with us.”

Woman parliamentarian, Uganda

In this chapter you will find:

- Why it is important to have men on board;
 - Strategies to encourage men to champion issues of gender equality;
 - Challenges faced by women in encouraging the participation of men;
 - What men are doing to promote gender equality.
-

There has been a strategic shift in emphasis over the past decade from women’s issues to those concerning gender equality, in which the focus has moved from women exclusively to both men *and* women and mutually beneficial social and economic development. Gender mainstreaming, as a strategy for achieving gender equality, does not work without support from men. Changing social values and the increasing gender awareness of younger men have resulted in stronger partnerships between men and women on gender equality. While some men require no prompting at all, women parliamentarians are also using a mix of persistence and public activities to encourage men to participate in changing social attitudes on gender roles and stereotypes.

This chapter looks at these and also the changing conditions that have encouraged men to become part of the gender equality project.

Changing social values

While societies may differ across the globe, social values have tended to evolve universally. An important indicator of this change is the general acceptance of women’s place in the public sphere, something unheard of at the beginning of the 20th century. Whatever the reason for

this change – and there are many, including the role of feminist movements, globalisation and the changing structure of state economies – women’s participation in politics has been a positive and welcome outcome.

Both women and men referred to changing social values as a primary reason for men’s increased involvement in raising gender equality issues. Interestingly, some parliamentarians said the electorate no longer tolerated women’s absence from the political sphere. Indeed, it was regarded in some parliaments as “politically correct not to oppose gender initiatives” (Woman parliamentarian, Chile).

“Among the men parliamentarians, even if with some of our colleagues it starts with sympathetic support, it’s turning into belief in these issues, more than just being sympathetic. It’s a belief that this is how it should be. When it comes to employment of women, this is also taking its toll and supporting a higher rate of employment of women in all sorts of jobs. There are all sorts of traditional jobs that are particularly thought to be suitable for women, and we’re moving from that, not only teachers in girls’ schools, nursing, etc., but now women are moving into all [sectors]... We have women who are CEOs of some big firms and companies.”

Man parliamentarian, Jordan

“I think that, in principle, men are more careful now. I think they are as chauvinistic as always, but there is something: in public, they are careful. They choose words well. If they tell a joke with a double entendre, they look around to see if there’s a woman nearby” **Woman parliamentarian, Argentina**

“Well actually, the thing is, even though my party is conservative, when we talk about some women-related issues, or sexual discrimination, male MPs are reluctant to voice their opposition. /... A good example was the anti-trafficking bill. Deep inside, many male MPs would not agree with the bill, but if they say no, then that means that they are FOR prostitution, so they had no choice but to say yes, and vote for the bill.” **Woman parliamentarian, Republic of Korea**

“In my party we are 50 per cent women so why not meet with the men? We had a feminist group that was advocating in society for equal pay and also women who were heads of boards, etc. and they nominated some parliamentarians who were the best parliamentarians, who are advocating for women’s rights. They nominated two men and one of them is in our party. So there is a real awareness that if we want to progress we have to work together.” **Woman parliamentarian, Netherlands**

Another factor has been the **increasing participation of young men**, who are less likely to hold traditional views of women’s participation in the public sphere. Women parliamentarians often noted the supportive attitude of young parliamentarians toward gender equality initiatives.

“Some men do [collaborate with women on gender issues], especially the younger men. They are much more responsive to gender issues. For example, in my own party, there are a few state chairmen who support the 30 per cent quota. You have to make sure that the membership[/] leadership] will agree with them. ...Having men on board does mean that they can help in persuading other men too.” **Women parliamentarian, Malaysia**

“Among men you sometimes hear, informally, that women [because of their personal choice on how to combine their professional and private life] are not taking politics seriously enough when they ‘leave parliament early to attend to school meetings, etc.’. The younger parliamentarians –men as well – however, are more open to such choices. The parliamentary function has its limitations it is felt nowadays. There is a life outside politics. The cleavage between young men and women is narrower than the one across generations...” **Women parliamentarian, Belgium**

“I do fear that a lot of men would be less understanding of their wives’ hectic schedules... [but] I do see some changes when it comes to the younger generation. I can

assume that some men really ‘stand by their woman’ so to say. But more so with the new generation than the older one.” **Man parliamentarian, Belgium**

Strategies to involve men

The interviews with parliamentarians uncovered a number of strategies for encouraging men to address gender equality issues. Men, as they noted themselves, are often supportive of legislative initiatives by women. Men have also introduced or co-sponsored gender equality legislation on their own.

In Rwanda, for example, the Forum of Women Parliamentarians (FFRP) deliberately couched the debate on gender-based violence in terms of it being a social (rather than a specifically women’s) problem, impeding development. As one female parliamentarian noted during the debate, “I would like to ask my fellow MPs not to take this law as if it is a women’s thing, even though in many cases women are the ones suffering from gender-based violence. But this law will protect the whole Rwandan society.” In this way, the FFRP was able to obtain male co-sponsors for the bill, an effective strategy that contributed to its ultimate passage.

Box 6.1

Working with men in the development of the Gender-based Violence Act in Rwanda

The process that led to the adoption of the *Act on the Prevention, Protection and Punishment of all Gender-Based Violence* (2009) in Rwanda is a key example of the importance of involving men in the fight against gender-based violence. Women parliamentarians, who initiated the draft bill, succeeded in involving their male colleagues in the development of the legislation at every step of the process. Men and women parliamentarians were also involved in extensive public consultation and dialogue not limited to women constituents. This markedly participatory process helped them to identify the problem of gender-based violence in society, to raise awareness and to change attitudes among men and women about the issue.

Moreover, the law was drafted with the help of men and women consultants and in close consultation with women and men parliamentarians. The introduction of the law in Parliament by four women and four men sponsors further contributed to ensuring that gender-based violence was addressed not only as a women’s issue, but as a social problem that impedes development.

Source: IPU - Priority actions for parliaments to take action on violence against women

Men shouldering their gender equality responsibilities

In many instances men have taken an additional step by **chairing or participating in gender equality bodies** within parliament, and thus taking responsibility for the gender equality agenda. As to examples, men have chaired the Belgian Commission on Gender Equality and Viet Nam's Sub-Committee on gender, under the National Assembly's Committee on Social Affairs.

In Spain, the participation of men on the Gender Equality Committee is explained by the link between

committee memberships and the respective size of each parliamentary group. Men on this committee are members of the smaller parties that have no women in their parliamentary group but which are still entitled to membership of the committee. As one woman parliamentarian from Spain explained:

“The Committee is basically female. In big groups there are women and men, but I will tell you that the proposals are almost always defended by women. But in the parliamentary groups where there are no women, the spokespersons are men who take part willingly, effectively and wonderfully.”

Box 6.2

Testimonial: Men taking the lead

Mr. José Mendes Bota, a member of the Portuguese Parliament, is President of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men within the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and Rapporteur for the parliamentary dimension of the Campaign to Combat Violence against Women.

“I feel guilty. Though I have never abused a woman, neither psychologically nor physically, or even economically, I did nothing for many years in my life to combat violence against women. I now feel an urge to take action because it is a serious attack on human rights; because it is something that I do not want for my daughter, something I do not want for any relative of mine of the other gender; it is something that I never wanted for my mother. So why don't we take action? Because we are not sensitized, and we are not sensitized because we have a heritage, a society that is a patriarchal society. This dates far back, to thousands of years ago. That was a time when women were treated as inferior beings. Men were treated as the patriarchs, the leaders of the family, the ones who were entitled to everything, including the right to mistreat their women and wives.../...

Many people in the world think that this type of behaviour is normal, part of a traditional society. It is against this conception of society that efforts and protest have to be raised. That is why something has to be done, why campaigns like the one launched by the Council of Europe on combating violence against women are necessary. The campaign was carried out between November 2006 and June 2008. I have to admit that I regret that it has ended. It was a success, but there such a lot to do that we must not stop. We have to keep active and even increase our activities.

There is still a lot of sensitisation work to do. Everywhere I have been, when mentioning the title of that campaign, which is about combating violence against women, there was always a man or some men asking: “why against women? There are also men who are victims of violence at home. There are also men who are oppressed, even psychologically. Why is that only in favour of women?” And we have to explain that the campaign focuses on women because 90 per cent of victims are women, and 90 per cent of the aggressors are men. So the problem is really that the victims are mainly women and that the perpetrators are mainly men. That is why one of the aims of this campaign was to sensitize men, bring men to this campaign, because men are still the holders of power in all spheres of life.../...

We know that the majority of men are not aggressors or criminals, that they live by good codes of ethics and moral. We know that. And because we know they do not want their daughters or their sisters to be aggressed, we have to sensitize men, we have to sensitize the people that have the power in their hands to change the laws, to change the conduct in politics, in assemblies, parliaments, government, the workplace and society at large.../...

I would like to stress that as parliamentarians, we have the right to change the laws, and we must change them. But our task is also to monitor the application of the laws. We have to create in our parliaments subcommittees, working groups, mechanisms that bring together a lot of parliamentarians from different parties. We need to go to the outside world and see how the law is applied. We have to ascertain whether the judges know exactly what they are doing, because sometimes the decisions of the judges are not acceptable under these principles. We have to go and visit police stations, to see whether policemen really know what their task is, if they can differentiate between violence against women and a common crime, whether they treat these victims separately, differently because this is a special problem in society.

Excerpts from The Parliamentary Dimension of the Council of Europe “Stop Domestic Violence against Women” Campaign, Mr. J. Mendes Bota, A Parliamentary Response to Violence against Women, IPU 2009, www.ipu.org/english/surveys.htm#vaw09.



Including men in gender committees is not always easy, as demonstrated in Peru, where male parliamentarians serving on the gender equality commission for two legislative sessions attracted commentary from colleagues. As one representative put it, “If they see a man sitting there, people start to tease, [but] I think we need to get past that. Men must be invited to participate and listen, because they can help develop proposals and offer good ideas. [...] Unfortunately, prejudice is an obstacle to development in Peru. [...] We should improve the Rules of Congress and require that there be men and women on all the commissions. It would be a way of inviting men to serve on the Women’s Commission. If we have a gender percentage in Congress, why not on the commissions?” (**Peru Case study**)

“The standing committee on gender is chaired by men and we purposely did that to give them the responsibility. So it is just like the public accounts committee, it is chaired in both houses by the opposition, so there should be transparency.”

Woman parliamentarian, Namibia

“The Women’s Committee - this is interesting - they told us, ‘you are four women and we will vote for the four to be on the Women’s Committee because this is unfair, you have had this for the whole 30 years run by men’. We have let three men join this committee, so we are seven. We review everything with the government. Everything that has to do with women or education, health and social work, we can put any rules, any problems, we can call the minister and discuss with them and negotiate with them.” **Woman parliamentarian, Kuwait**

Women have also invited men to participate in **public activities and outreach**, including public consultations or hearings or celebratory activities for International Women’s Day. The idea is that men will learn from such first-hand experience and from talking directly with those who face discrimination. Their subsequent support has almost always been assured.

“Every International Women’s Day (and National Women’s Days), we have activities according to themes we have chosen. For example, we’ve chosen domestic violence [in the past]. We invited all the men to prepare themselves, like for a debate, and participate in these events. And all of them participated. There are some who don’t participate, but our strategy is to take them outside [the parliament] ... [for example], in the past, we brought three men who didn’t have great gender sensitivity to the Philippines for a study tour. When they went back to Timor-Leste, they were very strong in speaking out about gender issues! Sometimes [men] feel they don’t know enough about gender issues. They must have [more information] about gender issues.” **Woman parliamentarian, Timor-Leste**

“We visited the areas where women were trafficked by trucks, and it was very painful for the male colleagues to experience it first hand. I arranged meetings with women [victims of such traffic] and they were prepared. They actually told the MPs their stories first hand. It was very painful and I think it made the men more compassionate. I learned from that and I saw that it was a very good strategy for men parliamentarians to visualize, to have that direct contact and interaction

with women. I think that changed so much and the impact that it had on men, specifically in our house; it was tremendous.” **Woman parliamentarian, Namibia**

Ultimately, men need to live up to their responsibilities with respect to gender equality. Arguments to persuade men in this endeavour are often premised on an eventual positive outcome for society as a whole. Some women have employed different arguments to keep the pressure on men. In Peru, for example, when faced with the attitude that *“the laws already exist and we can’t keep viewing women as victims”*, women parliamentarians have invoked the media as a “pressure tactic”.

“We tell them, if you don’t approve this, we will tell the media that these congressmen, these members of commissions, don’t want to approve the bills and are against women and against children. [...] We look for pressure tactics – healthy ones, of course – to achieve this goal.”

Woman parliamentarian, Peru

“We have to think about how to win them over because there are some issues that they pay attention to, like the Law against Trafficking of Persons. They supported the initiative and realized that it was really in everyone’s best interests. I think they should be included; our issues should become their issues, just like the issues of democracy, inclusion and development are for the whole country rather than just for women.”

Woman parliamentarian, Bolivia

“I expect to see more MPs participate more on gender issues in the National Assembly. At the parliament, when we address issues relating to the elderly, we receive support from men, but if we call for their active participation on gender issues, it does not come so easily. When a gender issue is addressed by women, it gives the impression of not being strong enough. We need men to be involved to make a stronger impact. I have identified some men to collaborate with us in addressing these issues: some ministers and some members of committees. In the Social Affairs Committee’s activities, I invite men to attend so that we can seek their support and opinions. I also invite ministers to attend committee meetings for their perspectives and feedback. For the first few meetings, men were quiet. But after a few meetings, they began to give their opinions, for example on the law for the adoption of children, the law on legal normative documents, and the law on public servants.”

Woman parliamentarian, Viet Nam

“I have to say that I have been supported by some male colleagues in discussions, and on issues. There is the support and recognition but it is not yet out in the open so much - more in our informal discussions - but they do recognise women must be there.”

Woman parliamentarian, Egypt

In their own voice: men’s contribution to gender equality

For the most part, male respondents to the IPU’s questionnaire described their efforts toward achieving gender equality in terms of supporting – and speaking on – bills presented in that area. In some cases, however, they also cited work to promote greater women’s participation on parliamentary boards or committees, or question the government on gender equality matters. A male parliamentarian in Mauritania mentioned his lobbying efforts for ministerial action in pursuit of gender equality outcomes.

I do not only participate in the debate on these issues but I also lobby the relevant ministers.

Man parliamentarian, Mauritania

Box 6.3

Selected responses: Men’s contribution

During the course of debates I have advocated the need to ensure that the rights of citizens, particularly women and youth, are not infringed. I have often called for sufficient representation of women in leadership positions such as State Boards.
[Trinidad and Tobago, Questionnaire C]

I have supported a bill or motions on gender equality, etc, in the Senate and in my constituency.
[Rwanda, Questionnaire C]

We are the authors of the bill on shared custody and the bill requiring notaries to establish conditions for the transfer of ownership of assets by one of the spouses.
[Colombia, Questionnaire C]

For example, I sponsored a bill in support of gender equality among other things.
[Costa Rica, Questionnaire C]

Anti-discrimination laws were passed following a motion of which I am co-author.
[Belgium, Questionnaire C]

First of all, I voted for the law on equal rights and opportunities (Law 648), and afterwards brought an administrative motion for the establishment of a gender technical team, which provides technical advice on drafting national laws that have a gender perspective with a view to complying with the international treaties to which Nicaragua has subscribed.
[Nicaragua, Questionnaire C]

Being a new member of parliament, when opportunities arise, I never fail to participate and marshal agreements in favour of gender issues. Equality in education and employment opportunities are my favourite subjects on which I have expressed views.

[India, Questionnaire C]

I participated in the general debate relating and affecting women's issues and strongly advocated 33 per cent representation for women.

[India, Questionnaire C]

I was in support of the marriage equality act.

[Namibia, Questionnaire C]

Conclusion

Among parliamentarians of both sexes it is increasingly accepted that men need to participate in parliamentary activities aimed at gender equality. This acceptance comes as a result of changing social attitudes: voters understand that women can no longer be excluded from the political sphere. Indeed, political elites choosing to ignore women's and gender issues can face political backlash.

Men are therefore increasingly coming on board. They are co-sponsoring legislative initiatives with women to ensure non-discrimination – and some are even sponsoring such initiatives themselves. They have been appointed to chair or participate in their parliaments' gender equality bodies. It was suggested that changes be made to the rules of the parliament to require male and female membership of all parliamentary committees – including those on gender equality – to ensure a gender perspective (which, by definition, includes the views of men) on all issues addressed by parliament.

A successful initiative in encouraging men's participation has been the inclusion of men in public outreach activities, to raise awareness of gender equality issues. Men have participated in celebratory activities for International Women's Day, have joined delegations to the annual Commission on the Status of Women, and have been included on field visits to sites of obvious and manifest discrimination.

Ultimately, men need to be made aware of their responsibilities with respect to gender equality. After all, entrenching gender equality principles is increasingly mandated by legislation, and States are thereby obligated to ensure that men and women promote and achieve gender equality together.

Chapter seven

Addressing Gender Equality: Policies and Procedures

"The parliament has not yet taken up such a pioneering role. If you were in control of the decision-making organs of the Senate, then you could draft a plan in order to take up such a pioneering role ..." **Woman parliamentarian, Belgium**

In this chapter you will find:

- A review of reported gender equality policies and procedures in parliaments;
 - An analysis of parliamentary communication policies that have taken gender equality into account;
 - Activities run by parliaments to promote gender equality
-

Introduction

Ensuring gender equality requires political commitment. An explicit display of that commitment is a policy. Policies are more than grand visions for the future – they entail an operational strategic plan. Developing a good policy requires consultation with stakeholders to ensure that it contains measurable targets and indicators and that it can deliver on its objectives. Policies ensure that organisations “walk the talk” on issues of importance.

A variety of policies can be used to ensure that gender equality is well entrenched in a parliament’s institutional practices. This study has uncovered a common misconception that laws and targets aimed at simply increasing the number of women in parliament constitute a “gender equality policy”. A gender equality policy can be understood instead as a road map that outlines a parliament’s commitment to gender equality and details a clear set of objectives and processes to achieve it. Under this overarching policy, there should be a suite of related policies on the prevention of harassment, the equitable distribution of resources and allowances – including access to research

services, computers and office space – and on expected behaviour, expressed in a code of conduct.

This chapter considers the question of gender equality policies for parliament. It will also look at policies and guidelines that can be adopted to prevent harassment (of any kind) and ensure that resources and allowances are distributed equitably and that media outreach statements, or other any other statement, appropriately use gender-neutral language.

The gender equality framework of parliaments

Gender equality policies exist across a number of parliaments. With the exception of policies on equal access to resources, there are few differences between regions in the frequency of such policies. Relatively few of the responding parliaments from Sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, noted the existence of a policy on equal access to resources (20%), compared with the Arab countries (70%), Asia (58%), the Americas (41%) and Europe (36%).

Table 7.1**Prevalence of gender equality policies and procedures** (N= responses)

	Yes (%)	No (%)
Code of conduct or ethics (N=86)	52	48
Equal access to resources, such as financial benefits, allowances, office space and computers (N=89)	43	57
Gender equality policy (N=86)	38	62
Policy or grievance procedure that deals with gender equality-related matters or harassment (N=75)	27	73
Sexual harassment and/or violence (N=80)	19	81

Source: Questionnaire A, www.gender-parliaments.org

Gender equality policies

Slightly less than 40 per cent of the parliaments surveyed reported that they had implemented a gender equality policy. While that figure appears encouraging, in a number of cases parliamentary authorities equated a gender equality policy with clauses in their national constitutions providing for the equality of *all* citizens. Other parliamentary authorities noted that, while they themselves had not adopted a policy, their government *had* done so, in the form of a National Gender Policy or Gender Agenda (as in Argentina, Costa Rica, Croatia, Finland and Malaysia). In Costa Rica, for example, the government recently implemented a National Policy for Gender Equality and Equity. The Legislative Assembly, which must comply with the Policy's objectives and guidelines, responded by establishing a Technical Unit for Gender Equality and Equity. One of its primary tasks has been to create a policy that explicitly outlines affirmative action, or equitable measures for both sexes, in areas such as access to resources (financial advantages, subsidies, work space and computers). Certain parliaments noted that gender equality was "taken for granted", implying no perceived need for a specific policy to achieve it. This is typical of a common misunderstanding about what a gender equality policy is and how it relates to parliament.

The parliamentary authorities of Germany, Rwanda and the Ukraine, on the other hand, noted positive developments towards the adoption of gender equality policies for their parliaments. In Germany, there is a process for regularly monitoring a gender equality plan, and the Rwandan parliament has just concluded its first "gender audit".

Codes of conduct

Codes of conduct were the most frequently cited policy instrument among the parliaments surveyed (52%). The parliamentary authorities of Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Belarus, Canada, Chad, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Lesotho, Lithuania, Mexico, Monaco, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Rwanda, Singapore, the Ukraine and Uruguay all noted some kind of code of conduct for parliamentarians. In some cases, it may take the form of guidelines (see for example Denmark and France), while in others, elements of the code are enforceable by law (as in the Australian Senate). In all cases but one (see Lithuania below), these reported codes of conduct make no reference to gender equality.

Box 7.1

Selected responses: Codes of conducts

In summer 2010 the first report on gender equality (Erster Gleichstellungsbericht der Bundesregierung) will be presented to parliament. For this purpose an interdisciplinary expert commission analyses successes and challenges of gender equality policy. The report will not only collect data, but also identify the need for action and possible ways forward. [Germany, Questionnaire A]

There is a national policy on gender equality that all Rwandans are bound to respect in the same manner. Parliament recently undertook a gender audit to gauge the feasibility of putting in place a gender equality policy in parliament. [Rwanda, Questionnaire A]

By the Order of the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada, a Chairman's Advisor on Gender issues was appointed. In fact, the policy has not been shaped yet, but a step towards its formation has been taken. [Ukraine, Questionnaire A]

There are constitutional provisions, rules of the Senate and statutory provisions which regulate the conduct of senators and which cover the types of matters which might otherwise be included in a code of conduct. Unlike standard codes of conduct, however, most of these provisions are enforceable and carry significant sanctions. [Australia, Questionnaire A]

The Organisational Statement provides guidelines for good behaviour. [Denmark, Questionnaire A]

There is no specific code per se, but rules exist in various legal texts. [France, Questionnaire A]

The Code of Conduct for State Politicians regulates the basic principles and requirements in respect of the conduct of State politicians in public life and also the measures ensuring the control of the conduct of politicians and liability for violating the provisions of the Code. The Code states, "In public life, a State politician shall adhere to the following principles of conduct: justice – shall equally serve all the people irrespective of their nationality, race, gender, language, origin, social status, education, religious beliefs, political views, age or any other differences. Code adopted 19 September 2006. [Lithuania, Questionnaire A]

It is a serious weakness of these policy documents that they include no reference to gender equality. It essentially means that parliaments lack a gender equality "road map", particularly as to expectations about members' behaviour and conduct. This points to a need for more research and action.

Policies on equal access to resources

While 43 per cent of parliamentary authorities responded that a policy on the equal distribution of resources had been implemented, in most cases "equal distribution" was achieved not so much because of the existence of a specific (gender-related) policy, but because all parliamentarians – irrespective of sex – received the same benefits. It should be noted that inequalities in access to resources can result from the inequitable distribution of positions of power, which attract higher allowances and more resources. A specific gender-related policy could address that potential inequality.

A few parliaments, however, noted some good practices with respect to resources. Two (Finland and Hungary) mentioned equal access to resources as a principle covered in their parliaments' gender equality plans.

Harassment policies and grievance procedures

Sexual harassment policies are the least common form of gender policy implemented in parliament, with less than 20 per cent of responding parliaments claiming they had one. Grievance procedures are equally sparse, although it is interesting that a variety of mechanisms have been implemented across the parliaments where such procedures do exist. Some parliaments use internal bodies to consider complaints, such as the Honour Council and Conduct Committee of Indonesia, and the Administrative Affairs Committee of Jordan. In Kuwait and Malaysia, the Speaker is responsible for considering and adjudicating on matters of this kind. Ideally, grievance mechanisms should be completely independent of the political process.

There can also be some difficulty in prosecuting cases of sexual harassment such as in Costa Rica (see Case Study 7.1) where the question of parliamentary immunity was raised. Parliamentary immunity exempts members of parliament from prosecution, usually for words uttered or actions taken in parliament. Parliamentarians in Costa Rica have introduced a bill to ensure that elected officials would not be immune from prosecution in cases of harassment, and indeed, would be subject to sanctions if found guilty of harassment charges.

Box 7.2

Selected responses: Equal access to resources

The parliament has a policy on equal access to resources. This policy is governed by law No.22/PR/1999 on the identification and setting of parliamentary allowances and privileges. [Chad, Questionnaire A]

[Equal access to resources] has been taken into account in the new gender equality plan of the parliament, which [was] adopted in October 2009. [Finland, Questionnaire A]

Part of the "Equal opportunities plan". [Hungary, Questionnaire A]

Box 7.3

Selected responses: Sexual harassment policies and procedures

The Senate Policy on the Prevention and Resolution of Harassment in the Workplace applies to the conduct of all persons in the Senate workplace, including Senators, their staffs, employees of the Senate Administration, contractors and their staffs, and volunteers.

[Canada, Questionnaire A]

Resolution No. 1424 of 2007, "by which shall be adopted preventive and corrective measures and sanctions in cases of sexual harassment, establishes an internal procedure within the Honourable House of Representatives and sets up mediation committees for the resolution of such conflicts."

[Colombia, Questionnaire A]

The House has established an honour council that verifies alleged violation perpetrated by MPs. The Committee on Conduct has authorities to summon the MPs concerned to give explanations and exercise his/her right of reply to any alleged violation. Meanwhile the personnel division takes care of parliamentary staff matters.

[Indonesia, Questionnaire A]

For parliamentarians, the standing Administrative Affairs Committee considers the complaints referred to the Senate.

[Jordan, Questionnaire A]

For parliamentarians, this takes place through the Speaker who has the right and the freedom to take action against the parliamentarian.

[Kuwait, Questionnaire A]

For a Member of Parliament, they can bring the subject during the debate in the parliament to the attention of the Speaker and House.

[Malaysia, Questionnaire A]

Complaints are made to the responsible entity, in this case the Bureau of the Senate, which takes it up, investigates the matter and coordinates with the judicial departments in order to make a determination.

[Mexico, Questionnaire A]

In the Peruvian Congress, no cases of sexual harassment have been presented, but if any are, they could be submitted via the Ethics Committee for the case of parliamentarians.

[Peru, Questionnaire A]

Case Study 7.1

Harassment cases in Costa Rica and the question of parliamentary immunity

While there have been cases of harassment in Costa Rica, few formal complaints have been filed. The most notable occurred in 2006, when a female staff member accused a male deputy of sexual harassment and sued him, the Legislative Assembly and the State. The complainant first sought redress within the Legislative Assembly and then turned to the courts. That occurred in 2007, amid a national debate over whether it was advisable or possible to strip accused deputies of parliamentary immunity so they could be sued. In March 2007, the Supreme Court ruled that the case could continue without stripping the deputy of his immunity.

In March 2010, in sentence No. 972, the case was thrown out by the Second Labour Court of the Guadalupe Circuit for a lack of direct proof of the acts of harassment described in the lawsuit.

A countersuit filed by the deputy against the woman, who was his former adviser, sought damages for the moral harm caused by this public accusation of harassment. This too was thrown out, although the case remains in court.

In March 2007 two female deputies from different parties introduced a bill to reform the Law against Sexual Harassment in the Workplace and Teaching (Law No. 16.566), to correct certain aspects of the norm, including extending it to elected officials (such as deputies, council members, presidents and vice presidents).

The reform is meant to ensure that anyone elected to public office can be convicted in a sexual harassment case, whereas such cases currently go unpunished. The additional chapter proposed to address this problem defines procedures in the workplace, indicating guiding principles, how the complaint should be filed, the makeup of the investigative commission, the parties, the evidence, legal advice and emotional support for victims, and preventive measures and injunctions. The bill also establishes sanctions for elected officials.

Case Study, Costa Rica

Communication policies

Parliaments are making good efforts in the way they present themselves to the public and the media. The use of gender-sensitive language was reported by almost 57 per cent of responding parliaments. Terms such as "the rights of man" are being replaced with "human

rights” (see Burundi below) and in France, gender-specific terms have been adopted, such as “Madam Minister”.

Parliamentary authorities commonly reported the use of gender-sensitive language in press releases (almost 56%) and parliamentary websites (almost 54%). Websites in particular are being used to showcase the activities of parliaments on gender equality (see Burundi below) or to provide separate lists of women members and relevant details about related events. In Mexico, the website includes links to gender-related publications, such as “Gender and Freedom of Expression” (2009). In 2007, the Greek Parliament’s Foundation on Parliament and Democracy published a book to commemorate women’s participation in political life, entitled *50 Years of Women’s Voting*, (Greece, Questionnaire A). The parliament of Montenegro highlighted the initiative

of using gender-sensitive language in all official correspondence [Montenegro, Questionnaire A].

Table 7.2
Gender equality requirements in parliament’s media strategy (N= responses)

	Yes (%)	No (%)
Language (use of gender-sensitive language) (N= 76)	56.6	43.4
Press releases (N= 79)	55.7	44.3
The parliamentary website (N= 80)	53.8	46.3

Source: Questionnaire A, www.gender-parliaments.org

Box 7.4

Selected responses: Gender-sensitive communication

The Chamber of Deputies promotes the internal communications strategy on gender equality through the parliament’s newsletter (media).
[Bolivia, Questionnaire A]

The Senate website promotes all action taken by the parliament, including in the area of gender equality. The terminology used tries to favour gender equality.
[Burundi, Questionnaire A]

- Website: in extenso publication of the proceedings and reports of the women’s rights and equal opportunity committee and special sections on the history of women in politics.
 - Press releases: e.g. statements by the President of the Senate making a case for the need to strengthen the role of women in politics, by the President of the women’s rights committee on issues related to women’s rights and gender equality.
 - Language: e.g. the title of “Madam Minister”, which was unheard of 15 years ago.
- [France, Questionnaire A]

Various forms of admission for media persons and renewal of passes issued to them have been designed in gender-sensitive language. The Press Advisory Committee (PAC) has adequate representation of women. A senior woman journalist was nominated as the Chairperson of the PAC for two terms during 2007 and 2008. Bills and parliamentary debate related to women’s issues are available on the Parliament of India website. Separate lists of women members of parliament are available.
[India, Questionnaire A]

The Senate’s administrative structure includes a media department that ensures continuous communication between the house and society in all its formal and informal institutions according to a media strategy that ensures gender equality.
[Jordan, Questionnaire A]

On the parliament’s website, there is information on the topic, e.g. The Senate of the Republic invites you to the launch of the book entitled Gender and freedom of expression (28 October 2009).
[Mexico, Questionnaire A]

On the official website of the National Assembly of Viet Nam and the Female Members of Parliament Group, news and reports regarding gender equality are easily found. In addition, figures, facts and recommendations to promote gender equality are also published.
[Viet Nam, Questionnaire A]

Improving the gender sensitivity of policies and procedures

Overall, the survey responses suggest that while parliaments most frequently participate in symbolic activities, such as the celebration of International Women's Day, and hold debates or seminars on gender

equality themes, they have less frequently established formal mechanisms, such as gender action plans, working groups or media and outreach strategies to promote gender equality. Where gender action plans have been developed and implemented (such as in Sweden, see Case Study 7.2), gender equality principles are well entrenched in the parliamentary culture.

Table 7.3

Prevalence of activities run by parliaments to promote gender equality (N= responses)

	Women	Men	Overall score
Celebrated International Women's Day, 8 th March (N= 104)	0.78	0.84	0.81
Debates, meetings and seminars (N=99)	0.74	0.76	0.75
Disseminated information on gender issues (N=99)	0.65	0.62	0.64
Equipped its library with relevant and timely information on gender issues (N=86)	0.63	0.58	0.60
Disseminated information on gender mainstreaming (N=94)	0.58	0.50	0.55
Training on gender equality for parliamentarians (N=99)	0.51	0.32	0.41
Training on gender equality for parliamentary staff (N=96)	0.45	0.34	0.39
Adopted a gender action plan or working group (N=94)	0.34	0.32	0.35
Provided access to sex-disaggregated data (N=89)	0.41	0.28	0.34
Developed a media strategy or outreach strategy (N=89)	0.27	0.20	0.25

Source: Questionnaire C, www.gender-parliaments.org

Note: Score calculated on a scale where 1 represents "Yes", and 0 represents "No".

Case Study 7.2

Action Plan for Gender Equality in Sweden

In 2007, the Riksdag Board decided on an action plan for gender equality work in the Swedish Parliament through 2010, indicating the activities planned for each parliamentary year for parliament as an institution. Here are some items from that action plan:

- Relevant research, mainly on the subject of gender equality in parliament, should be monitored;
- A "kit" containing information on these issues is to be available. There is considerable interest from outside;
- Better statistics on equality are to be compiled and published on the website. This will give an overview of the subject historically. What tasks do men have, and what tasks do women have? Are there more men in leading positions?
- A smaller survey is to be carried out with members who have left parliament. Have things changed over the years?
- A little later, when the new parliament has established itself, interviews will be conducted again, in greater depth.

- Seminars are planned for themes with a broad appeal, such as what is known as gender budgeting;
- In connection with Sweden's EU Presidency, an EU-conference was planned for the second half of 2009. There is a network of parliamentary committees in the EU dealing with gender equality issues;

The Secretary General of the Swedish Parliament is the most senior official responsible for carrying out the plan. Operational responsibility rests with two officials, who deal with this area in conjunction with their work in the Committee on the Labour Market.

Case study, Sweden

Induction and gender training

Relatively few of the parliaments surveyed reported that they were training their members and staff in the broader "mainstream" mechanisms of parliament or in gender equality more specifically. This poses a serious challenge to men as well as women members interested in furthering the gender-mainstreaming project. Some members described being overwhelmed by the training provided when they first entered parliament, and then lost and confused (particularly women members) when such training petered out later in their terms. It appears that gender-related concerns are rarely covered in the course of formal induction training and, significantly, there is often no budget allocated for gender training, with some exceptions such as Namibia where the National Council offered training on gender equality and gender budgeting to parliamentarians and staff members.

"You come in here an ordinary person. If you are a lawyer you have an advantage... Unless whips are on the ball, newcomers could find themselves drifting" **Woman parliamentarian, South Africa**

"Sometimes when members come to the plenary, I realize that they have not looked at the impact on women, how is it going to affect the women?... I think that we would benefit from continuous training for the members, both men and women, to look out for those things ... and to keep them alert." **Woman parliamentarian, Uganda**

"For the first week, the training that we got was from our Deputy Speaker, who is also a woman and has a long experience in the parliament. I think this is her sixth term. So the first thing was to tell us about the procedures, how to behave, especially for women." **Woman parliamentarian, Tanzania**



Parliamentarians noted the use of informal mentoring networks, friendships created among members within their parties and partnerships forged around issues of mutual interest. Women's caucuses have been particularly instrumental in the development of such networking

(see box 7.5), and donor organisations have also been very supportive (see chapter five for more information on women's caucuses). Successful training was reported in particular when done in partnership with national women's machineries and international organisations.

Box 7.5

Selected responses: Training on gender equality

It is the parliamentary groups that deal with the matter informally. [Andorra, Questionnaire C]

Informal, between friends within parties - depends (in my case) on individual initiative. [Croatia, Questionnaire C]

Such activities are usually conducted by partners, such as the United Nations Development Program. [Mauritania, Questionnaire C]

There is no formal induction programme for newly elected parliamentarians but the Forum of Women Parliamentarians conducts specific training sessions for its members in large numbers, who are women MPs, on how to better play their role of women MPs in terms of voting on gender-sensitive laws and gender budgeting to oversee government action. [Rwanda, Questionnaire C]

There are no mentoring programmes that are being implemented for members of parliament except for those in the women's caucuses, where we are even starting with department. Capacity building in the context of parliamentary business. [Zimbabwe, Questionnaire C]

Conclusion

There is a common misconception that a gender equality policy is the same thing as a quota law, or indeed, a national (government-focused) gender agenda. With respect to parliaments, a gender policy can be understood instead as a road map that outlines a parliament's commitment to gender equality and details a clear set of objectives and processes to achieve it. Under this overarching policy, there should be a suite of related policies on the prevention of harassment, the equitable distribution of resources and allowances – including access to research services, computers and office space – and on expected behaviour, expressed in a code of conduct.

While codes of conduct appear to be relatively common, they do not, as a rule, include references to gender equality. This gap is a significant weakness that

requires more attention, not only from parliaments but from organisations such as the IPU. While parliaments were mostly of the view that resources and allowances are distributed equally, it is telling that women remain under-represented in positions benefitting from higher allowances (such as Speaker or committee chair). Plans of action are required to ensure women are not always the last candidates to be considered for promotions. Policies to prevent harassment are very rare, and while grievance mechanisms are in place in some parliaments, it is not clear that they are independent of the political process.

Detailed plans of action would also help parliaments identify gaps in their legislation and overall policy objectives. This could involve an initial "gender audit" of what has been done and what remains to be done, as is currently being conducted in Rwanda.

Chapter eight

Influencing gender policy: the role of political parties

“The big challenge, more than the parliament – I think in parliament you can still fight because you have a legal space – is within parties. It’s where the separation begins, because women may not be given enough seats to fight on, or you know, maybe, a lot of women ended up being used. Other times, they’re just abandoned. So the party is where we need to make changes.” **Woman parliamentarian, Pakistan**

In this chapter you will find:

- Mechanisms used by parties to encourage women’s activity in their ranks;
 - The decision-making apparatus in political parties;
 - The role of party discipline in advancing (or obstructing) gender equality policy;
 - Challenges for parties in gender mainstreaming.
-

Political parties: the dominant organising structure of politics

Political parties have become the main channel through which modern politics is organized and structured. Parties provide funds, mobilise voters, produce and advocate for party platforms, and transmit an image that may have broad public recognition. Candidates who affiliate with a party benefit from an apparatus experienced in campaigning, and in many cases, in winning. A party’s ultimate objective is to win a sufficient number of seats in parliament to influence legislative policy. Where their numbers in parliament are insufficient for that purpose, many have formed coalitions with other parties. This adds a significantly different dynamic to policy development, because it often involves negotiation and compromise.

Political parties have traditionally been formed on the basis of an expressed ideology or vision that members adhere to and defend publicly. The values and principles informing that ideology can either be contested internally in national conferences or publicly in parliament.

Party configurations can vary widely, with one dominant party in parliament or many. Parties may operate on both

local and national levels. They may be highly centralised or completely decentralised. Organisationally, some parties have local branches, parliamentary caucuses and a national executive. Elements of a party may meet regularly (more than once a week) or less frequently.

Despite such differences, political parties are fundamentally similar when it comes to gender equality: they are seen as less transparent than parliaments in the sense of having institutionalised rules fair to all. And yet parties are increasingly the dominant form of political organisation. If men and women are to engage in politics equally, they need to be taken equally seriously by political parties.

This chapter describes some of the challenges posed by the dominance of political parties in modern politics in pursuing an agenda of gender equality. It looks at women’s place in political parties but focuses mainly on the role of parties in influencing gender policy. It also looks at the organs and bodies devoted to policy development and the role of party discipline in enabling (or hindering) the ability of individual parliamentarians to address gender issues. And it examines good practice examples of parties conscious of the challenges of gender equality and making positive attempts to address them.

Encouraging women’s activity in parties

Political parties are not immune to the international push towards gender equality. A majority of the parties responding to the IPU survey said they had implemented some form of mechanism to ensure women’s participation in their ranks. Indeed, 71 per cent cited an “official policy on gender equality”.

The most common mechanism for facilitating women’s participation in political parties is the creation of a women’s association or wing within a party. A number of parties noted the existence of women’s and youth associations within their structures. The case of the European Party of Cyprus is illustrative. That party’s leadership is composed of an Executive Committee (with seven members, none of whom are women), a Political Office (with 64 members, including five women), a Youth Executive Committee (with seven members, including one woman), and a Women’s Association, whose Executive Committee is composed of 10 women. The real driving force behind the development of policy is the party’s Executive Committee. Usually the procedure for the development of policy is as follows: the Executive Committee, which consists of the three members of the parliamentary group, the president of the party’s youth organisation and three other officials, meet to discuss potential policy proposals. The youth and women’s organisations have the opportunity to give their comments or suggestions for the policy proposals discussed. The policy proposals are usually then presented to the political office for comments or suggestions and eventually for approval. Decisions for policy proposals are usually reached by consensus, but in the absence of general consensus, voting takes place with a show of hands. [Cyprus, Questionnaire B]

“In my party we have what is called the women’s wing and the directorate of the women’s wing, which deals directly with women from the grassroots.... The major organ of the party is the Central Committee, and we have the National Executive Committee and all of these are represented by women. The Central Committee is the highest decision-making organ of the party and has about eight women members out of

27... Now, as women are becoming more proactive, they are coming up well sensitized, so we find that most women are joining parties because they know that parties are the main route, their main way of getting into parliament or wherever, or even to the councils.”

Woman parliamentarian, Tanzania

Many political parties in the Arab region (in countries where political parties exist) have their own women’s committees that devise special programs for women, incorporate women’s issues in party platforms or form women’s groups to handle women’s issues. In Morocco for example, *l’Organisation de la Femme Istiqlalienne* [Organisation of Istiqlali Women] is affiliated with the Independence (Istiqlal) Party, the *Union d’Action Feminine* [Union of Women’s Action], the Democratic Socialist Party, and the National Body of Itihadi Women (Al-Ittihad al-Ishtiraki). The Party of Progress and Socialism and the Labour Party each has its own national women’s committee.

The parties themselves claimed to have mechanisms and policies to ensure gender equality, but individual parliamentarians were not as sure. Some said their parties did not have such practices, but there were also positive responses citing good practice examples, including lectures and seminars by gender experts on relevant topics (such as gender and politics or entrepreneurialism), and the creation of strong stakeholder networks with academia and non-governmental organisations. In Georgia, for example, a “gender expert group” has been created among parliamentarians, academics and civil society to consider concrete legislation from a gender perspective.

Challenges to women’s transparent participation in political parties have been attributed to “traditional values”, which see women as “vulnerable, less intelligent and irresponsible” [Indonesia, Questionnaire B]. The traditional party image of the “perfect candidate” is rarely that of a woman.

“One of the problems is the way that our political parties are organized and structured. Our political parties are very much like the boards of directors of corporations...There is a small clique in the search

Table 8.1
Pursuing gender equality within political parties (N= responses)

	Yes (%)	No (%)
Mechanisms to ensure women’s participation in its policy-making processes (N=61)	59	41
Processes for consultation (formal and informal) with women during the legislative process (N=63)	63.5	36.5
Official party policies on gender equality (N=62)	71	29

Source: Questionnaire B, www.gender-parliaments.org

Box 8.1

Selected responses: Initiatives to promote gender equality

Our team, working with equality and gender issues, has a vast network of contacts within the NGO community, just as they maintain good contacts within the EU system of inter-parliamentary groups. We have proposed several initiatives to improve gender equality – among others, that a quarter of the year-long maternity leave should be converted into paternity leave (or second maternity leave if two women have children); that 40 per cent of board members in companies should be women (today it's less than 20%), and that better conditions should be provided for day care, cheaper day care etc. [Denmark, Questionnaire C]

Our parliamentary group aims to apply a gender perspective to all policies. Therefore, the working group may use the expertise of the internal desk officers or include external experts e.g. in hearings. There is also a discussion about offering the staff gender training, especially for gender impact assessments, as part of personnel development. Our group is developing a gender equality plan. The concept includes also training and capacity building for women. The concept was ordered in February 2009; it has to be confirmed in 2010. [Germany, Questionnaire C]

There is a special gender equality plan within the party which the gender equality committee, with the help of a gender equality representative, has the role of implementing. This plan has to be implemented in the party as a whole. [Iceland, Questionnaire C]

committee who are all white and who say: 'Wouldn't it be nice if we could find someone to replace Jim, who is leaving, who is like us?' So the political parties say: 'Our former candidate is no longer running, wouldn't it be nice to find someone who looks like us, who goes to our church, who plays golf at our course and who shares our values and looks like us and doesn't have a different religion to ours?' That kind of systemic, entrenched, very deep value is one of the things that make it impossible, no matter how hard [someone] works, licking stamps, handing out envelopes, doing the legwork, trying to get inside a party, the person is still rejected because they don't look like the cliques that run the parties... They say: 'We really want someone like us.'"

Man parliamentarian, Canada

"The political party structures are still male-dominated. Where there are women, the women do not hold positions where they can make decisions within the party, and that is a point of concern. So when it comes to adoption, the male-dominated structures will definitely perpetuate male hegemony. Within the party system the patriarchal system continues to prevail and flourish."

Woman parliamentarian, Zambia

Women party leaders

Very few parties responding to the questionnaire cited cases of women holding senior positions. Some parties are making efforts to redress the severe imbalance between men and women in their leadership ranks. In the Philippines, the recently enacted Magna Carta on Women (Republic Act No. 9710, 2009) seeks women's representation of at least 40 per cent in the membership

and leadership positions of political parties, encouraging the integration of women into their internal policy-making structures and appointive and electoral nominating processes. Similarly, the party statutes of Mexico's National Action Party (PAN) encourage equality between men and woman and call for 40 per cent of the decision-making positions on the party's National Executive Committee to be held by women. More than 30 per cent of PAN's legislative seats have been held by women in the last two legislatures, with a slight increase from one legislature to the next (Case Study Mexico). Afghanistan's Progressive Party has adopted a special gender equality plan, implemented by a gender equality committee (Afghanistan, Questionnaire B).

The comparative absence of women in political parties perpetuates the problem of there being no strong role models to encourage other women to participate in these decision-making structures. There have been examples of women using positions of leadership to encourage other women in their parties, but women can also face repercussions for promoting women over men.

"There is a women's council, and the women's vice-president organizes meetings with women party members. But the women's vice-president - and she is also quite a young woman - also does a sort of networking: 'If you know someone who may be interested, let us know and we will approach them from a party perspective.' They do not have to be party members to be approached, but they have to be identified by party members, and the party member who identifies this person will check out the person's political philosophy to make sure they are aligned with the party, obviously, and then approaches are made and people are encouraged to come into the party in any role they want." **Man parliamentarian, New Zealand**

For the party, it depends on whether you are elected to the positions. It's not dependent on whether you are a man or a woman. I was on the committee that decides on the candidates to the party for the last two or three terms. So we had the right to recommend, interview in the selection process. And in 2008 we selected a woman candidate in my parliamentary constituency. We replaced a former candidate who is a man. And that man became so angry, and he openly retaliated ... But it cost me, and has had an effect on me; they feel I am responsible for insisting on this woman as a candidate. So in the last State election, I was thrown out of the State Committee. There are serious repercussions if there is no policy of affirmative action for women.

Woman parliamentarian, Malaysia

This is also important because individuals in leadership positions can contribute to a party's broader decision-making processes, becoming the drivers as well as supporters of party policy.

"I have become part of the decision-making process... I feel that the more involved you are in the decision-making process, the more informed you become, and the greater the impact you can have."

Woman parliamentarian, Viet Nam

"When you enter parliament, things are less concrete. And sometimes this becomes frustrating. You become somewhat of a 'voter machine', you have to obey to party discipline. To be honest, I have never – this may be a bit pretentious – I have never been just a parliamentarian. I have always been a parliamentarian in combination with a mandate of vice-president or president of the party. Then you are responsible for the definition of party lines; otherwise I would become quite frustrated. I couldn't do it otherwise."

Man parliamentarian, Belgium

Influencing gender policy: the structure and discipline of political parties

Many parties have elaborated and formalised structures and processes for developing and approving policies. There can be an internal committee or working group system through which policy ideas (including draft legislation, parliamentary questions or motions) are discussed and debated. Committees or working groups may commission market research or polling on such ideas, or conduct their own inquiries. In their more developed form, such ideas may then be presented to a party's executive committee for comment. Expert views may then be sought within the party or from representatives of associations, such as youth associations, prior to a vote in the party plenary to approve such ideas. In some parties, the final vote represents an explicit commitment to defend the policy, even though some party members may disagree with it. This is often referred to as "party discipline".

Women parliamentarians noted serious difficulties in working within such decision-making structures. In the Republic of Korea, the predominance of men reportedly makes the "supreme decision-making body" an intimidating environment for women. In Tanzania, parliamentarians are required to lobby and interact with large numbers of delegates to the National Executive Committee, often requiring travel around the country, a cost and time commitment that is prohibitive for some women.

"We have two channels [for decision making]. First of all, we have the MPs caucus, and this is where we talk about the basics for major policies and bills, and second we have a supreme decision-making body within our Grand National Party. But we have a predominance of men, so it is really difficult for women to express our opinions strongly. And within the supreme decision-making body there are only one or two female MPs, so ... our voice is not that strong. But compared to the past, we have seen big progress."

Woman parliamentarian, Republic of Korea

"The highest policy-making body is the National Executive Committee. We also have women who are represented there, but the process of getting into the National Executive Committee is extremely difficult. And that is where a lot of finances are actually spent because you need to convince all the delegates from all parts of the country that you are capable. And you will see that there are very few women who manage that, unless people like you just as a person. But you need to do certain things, and you need to lobby in all the places in the country. The problem is that the economic status of the lowest policy-making organs cannot allow them to reach the highest policy-making organ. Where do they get transport? Where do they get air time? Where do they get access to the National Executive Committee? If, for instance, you are talking about a branch in a remote area, they



have to take their concern to the wider officials. And the wider officials must push it at whatever time they are going to meet with the people coming from the constituency level. And mobility is a problem, because they need to be mobile. So, for this issue to reach the National Executive Committee, it could even be in distorted form or it could have outlived its usefulness, or been overtaken by events.”

Woman parliamentarian, Zambia

The role of party discipline

A majority of respondents to the IPU questionnaire (72%) described party discipline as “fairly strictly” or “strictly” enforced in their party. Only two per cent answered

“not at all” to this question. There was, however, an interesting difference between men and women. While similar proportions considered party discipline to be “strictly” enforced (30%), fewer women than men characterized enforcement as “fairly strict”, while more women than men characterized it as “not very strict”. This suggests that women may feel less constrained by party discipline than men.

The survey responses also indicate that parliamentarians feel free to pursue agendas other than those determined by their party/group “always” (43.4%) or “sometimes” (33%). Perhaps as a testament to the strength of party discipline, a significant proportion (22.6%) were not of this view. Again, women were more optimistic about what they could do outside the decisions of their party:

Figure 8.1

Party discipline and parliamentary groups (Number of responses = 98)

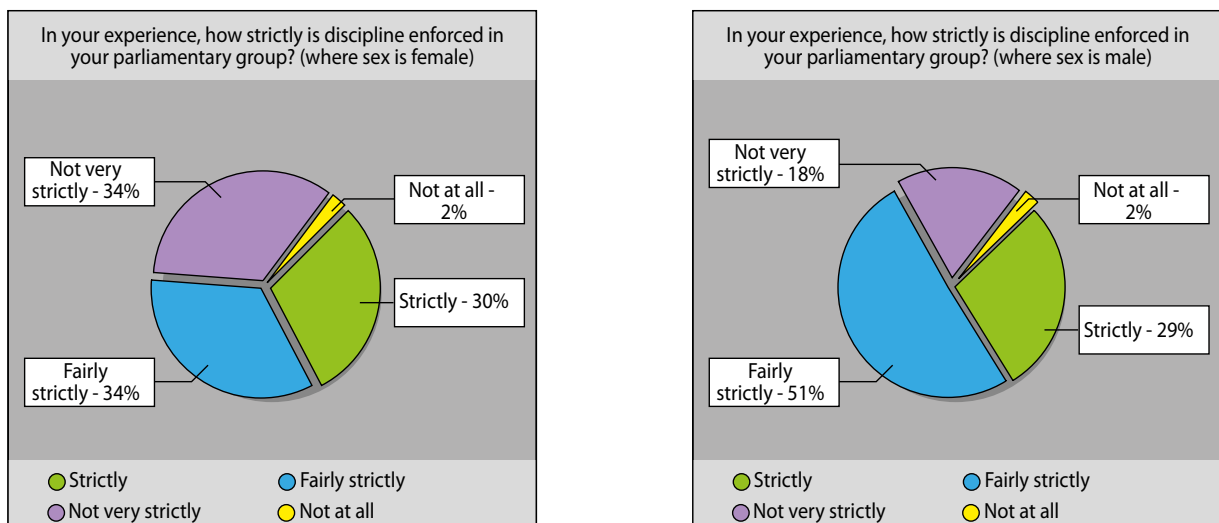
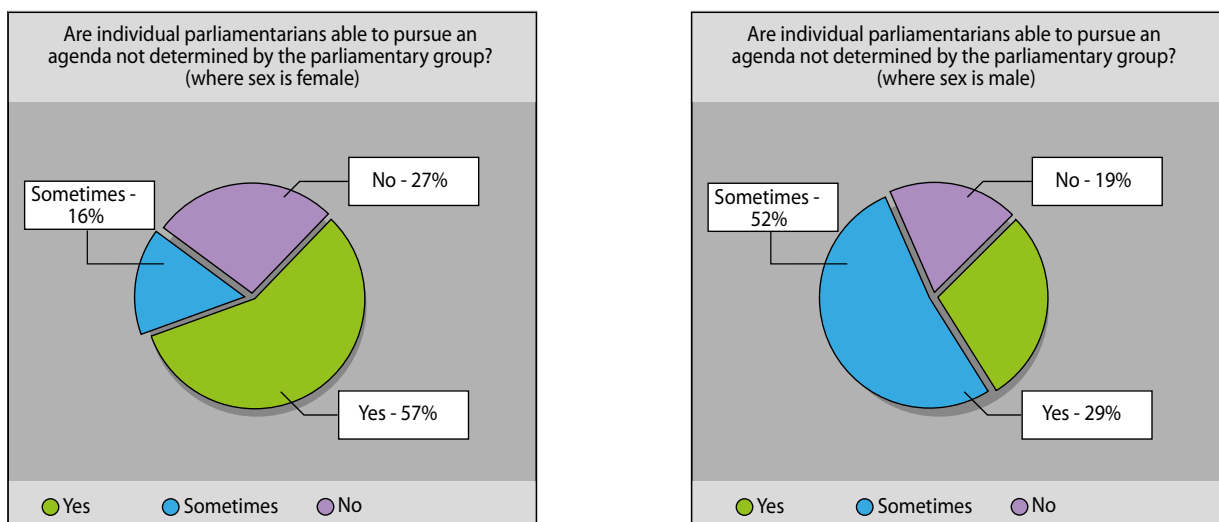


Figure 8.2

Party discipline and parliamentarians (Number of responses = 105)



57 per cent of women, compared with 29 per cent of men, considered it possible to pursue their own agendas.

Parliamentarians often expressed the view that the pursuit of a legislative agenda was more likely to be successful if the party was “on board”. As one Namibian parliamentarian remarked: “the party will let you know beforehand not to address a certain issue.”

“No private member’s bill would be allowed to be put into the ballot by a party member that hadn’t gone through the whole caucus process. Theoretically, a party member could just put it in the ballot without going through that process, but they would be severely disciplined, even if it was completely in line with party policy and social democracy philosophy, but that is not how it is done.”

Man parliamentarian, New Zealand

“There is a lot of room for debate, and your own initiatives ... unless they are really opposite to the party policy. But even then, it would not be possible to sanction this. It would cause problems. If we are talking about voting within the plenary, as they say: ‘Everybody has to toe the same way’. But there is a certain consensus that everybody should adhere to the party line. There is always an internal debate that precedes the act of voting. We then reach an agreement. Then there is the expectation that you adhere to these agreements. There is the expectation that if you disagree on personal grounds that you signal this to the party beforehand. But it has to be spelled out within the internal debates, otherwise you cannot function as a parliamentary group. In order to do politics within an assembly as part of the ruling coalition you need to have a certain level of consent within the party; otherwise you cannot be part of the majority.”

Woman parliamentarian, Belgium

Disciplinary sanctions

The disciplinary tactics used by parties against members not adhering to party decisions were described in some of the responses. At one extreme, the sanctions mentioned by a Colombian parliamentarian included suspension or expulsion from the party and forfeiture of the right to vote. A parliamentarian in Lesotho referred to a “disciplinary committee within [the] party structure”. A Spanish parliamentarian mentioned economic sanctions against members who abstain from votes without justification, or who vote at odds with party positions.

A woman parliamentarian from Uganda elaborated further: “They threaten to campaign against you in the next election so that you will not get back to parliament, then they say you won’t get to attend any international conferences... , you won’t be in any of the parliamentary teams going out; that will be your punishment. Or they can suspend you from the party.” (Woman parliamentarian, Uganda)

In Bolivia, parliamentarians referred to “a need to remain silent for the sake of consensus”, even when excluded from the decision process, for fear of being punished for dissenting from caucus decisions. “I said I would speak, and that meant breaking the caucus consensus [...] Since then, my relationship with my party caucus has been lukewarm or cold”. (Bolivia Case Study)

Political parties, like all institutions, need to evolve. Commenting on this point, one parliamentarian from Trinidad and Tobago suggested that parties continuing to mute divergent contributions from their members would not survive the changing political context:

“In the 21st Century all political parties, including the one to which I belong, need to promote new and dynamic philosophies. Parties must change and must change the way in which they demand discipline and adherence to party rules and strategies. Methods of enforcing discipline must also be subject to change. In today’s parliament the conscience vote is becoming more prevalent. Parties must find ways of balancing the need to vote on personal beliefs whilst toeing the party line. [Trinidad and Tobago, Questionnaire C].”

Gender mainstreaming by political parties

While political parties may gradually be addressing gender equality within their ranks and structures (albeit with varying degrees of success), for the most part, parties have not implemented gender mainstreaming strategies. Parties have not begun a comprehensive investigation of their processes and outputs to address any differential impact they may have on men and women.

Parties mentioned an interesting range of challenges to the introduction of gender mainstreaming practices: from a lack of political will or support from party or government leadership, to the perception that a party’s mainstream processes are already gender-sensitive and non-discriminatory, and thus that gender mainstreaming practices are unnecessary.

“There are checks and balances all the way along, and, considering the nature and the makeup of the party, it really is a party of equality in terms of beliefs and philosophies. You would never get a bill through or any policy through that was racist in nature, or sexist in nature, or even talked about inequality overtly or covertly. There are just too many processes in there and too many people who look at these things.... There is no official mechanism where you tick off, gender: yes, racial: yes. But the process is there in place, and especially being a social democratic party, we make sure that everything is done well and right and tick all those boxes.”

Man parliamentarian, New Zealand

“Gender mainstreaming isn’t done deliberately, but it is there. I mean, some of the groups are chaired by a woman. I think two of them are, and in the groups there are spokespersons who are women, because our party is 50:50, so there must be women in every group [...] Every party has their own think tank and we have a very well-established think tank, and the head is a woman. The chair of our party in parliament is a woman, and the leader of the whole party is a woman.”

Woman parliamentarian, Netherlands

On the other hand, parties more practiced in gender mainstreaming strategies described their efforts (and associated challenges) in keeping gender equality issues visible. Parties also indicated an awareness of the difficulty of resourcing gender mainstreaming efforts, of sharing responsibility for those efforts among all party members (not just the women’s wing) and of ensuring adequate staff skill levels and training for the analysis of processes and outputs from a gender perspective.

Box 8.2

Selected responses: Challenges to gender mainstreaming

Above all, it is a question of awareness and sensitisation of society as a whole and of political leaders. Tradition still plays an important role and the need to incorporate the gender dimension isn’t always perceived as a necessity. Otherwise, there aren’t any major difficulties.

[Andorra, Questionnaire B]

The stage is set to mainstream gender into parliament’s work. Concrete mechanisms have to be set up to carry this process through.

[Colombia, Questionnaire B]

Due to the very small number of the members of our parliamentary group, the large workload we have and the limited available resources of the party, it is very difficult to thoroughly examine every planned action or policy to detect any possible implications it may have on women and men separately. The responsibility usually lies with the Party’s Women’s Organisation to bring any possible negative implications of any planned policy or action on women to the attention of the parliamentary group.

[Cyprus, Questionnaire B]

Strengthening of the capacity on gender of representatives of parliament... is required to support gender mainstreaming at all levels of authorities.

[Georgia, Questionnaire B]

On one hand the main challenge is to include systematically a gender perspective into all policies. Even a high percentage of female parliamentarians as well as staffers are no guarantee of gender-sensitive work. On the other hand, there is a challenge to keep gender policy visible.

Creation of monitoring networks for the mainstreaming process.

[Greece, Questionnaire B]

The main challenge is to be less [complacent], to think that we have done it, once and for all. This is a question of power, and you can never rest.

[Sweden, Questionnaire B]

Lack of sufficient political will and understanding of the importance of these issues among some MPs; dominance of certain attitudes and stereotypes, which complicate the adoption of necessary laws aimed at ensuring equal rights and opportunities for men and women. 2. Lack of awareness on gender issues among legislators.

[Ukraine, Questionnaire B]

Case Study 8.1

Which party is the most gender-sensitive? Using quotas to avoid a “gender backlash” in Sweden

In Sweden, all the political parties have adopted special measures to increase the number of women in elected bodies at all levels of government, ranging from non-mandatory general goals and recommendations to voluntary party quotas. Most of these measures were introduced gradually – usually by targeting internal party boards and committees first and then the electoral lists – and strengthened over time. Voluntary party quotas were introduced when the share of women parliamentarians already exceeded 30 per cent and thus were not the cause of the large number of women in Swedish politics. Such “high echelon quotas” serve instead to protect the already high level of representation against possible backlash. All parties in Sweden, however, compete to be perceived by voters as the most gender-equal party, the “best student in class” – or at least not “worse” than their rivals. Today, most party leaders describe themselves as feminists, and since 1994 the slogan “every other seat for a woman” has become firmly rooted in Swedish politics. This policy reflects a real desire – not just window-dressing – to alternate women and men on party lists for elections to powerful political positions.

Case study, Sweden

Conclusion

Political parties are generally not considered open and transparent organisations. Despite the rhetoric of being open to women's participation, parties remain dominated by men. This is an issue because political parties are increasingly the dominant form of political organisation and the mechanism through which women and men can pursue a legislative platform for gender equality.

The main avenue for women's participation within parties is through a "women's wing" or "organisation". While beneficial in some ways, this strategy can also leave women ostracized. Parties are nonetheless working to foster gender equality policy-making through seminars and lectures by gender experts on important topics and the creation of strong links with stakeholders in academia and non-governmental organisations. Parties should push for amendments to their internal statutes and rules to ensure women's representation in their memberships and leadership positions.

Women have encountered barriers to equal participation in the executive, decision-making structures of their parties, either because they are seriously outnumbered by men, or because they require resources not readily at the disposal of some women. Moreover, both women and men are frequently challenged in their ability to initiate legislative proposals not agreed to by their parties, facing serious consequences if they do, including expulsion from the party. Some women have in fact resorted to remaining "silent" for the sake of party consensus.

It appears that parties rarely adopt gender mainstreaming as a comprehensive strategy for pursuing gender equality, often for a lack of resources (both financial and human) or political will. Some parties see no need for gender mainstreaming. Others *do* see such a need, and the concern there is about monitoring and evaluation of their gender mainstreaming work. The need for monitoring networks is an area requiring far more strength and support. In addition, parties could adopt overarching gender equality plans with clear mainstreaming strategies, and establish dedicated party committees to oversee their implementation.

Chapter nine

Parliament as a place of work: culture and infrastructure

“We have to make the voices of women heard in favour of more flexible, more humane timetables that allow us to raise our children and to have a personal life. And men have to participate in the private sphere as well, so that they can understand that meetings must start at two, so they can finish at five.” **Woman parliamentarian, Spain**

In this chapter you will find:

- Perceptions of parliament as a place of work, and of parliamentary culture;
 - A look at parliamentary infrastructure;
 - Challenges related to balancing work and family;
 - The prevalence of family-friendly infrastructure.
-

A typical sitting day?

Parliamentary sitting days are rarely described as typical. Their one typical feature is that they are always filled with meetings. Parliamentarians divide their time between the chamber, committee (or meeting) rooms and their offices (if they have one). They meet with other members of their party or of their committees, or of specialised caucus/groups, and with constituents and lobbyists. In the chamber, they follow debates on bills and motions, ask questions and vote.

While this job description (if it can be called that) appears gender-neutral, the research suggests otherwise. It appears that particular aspects of the parliamentary routine and infrastructure affect men and women members in different ways. As this chapter will show, parliaments still need to address the gender challenges posed by parliamentary culture and infrastructure as a core institutional objective.

Parliamentary culture

On entering parliament, members are expected to conform to the institution’s rules and norms, both written and unwritten. These rules and norms are at the heart of a parliament’s culture. They create the space

in which members feel comfortable (or otherwise) in doing their jobs. Navigating them can be challenging, particularly when members first enter this environment.

“The first time I entered parliament was one of those scary moments in life. It was not that I thought I would fail and, insha’allah, I did not fail, but ... now the challenge increases because we want to strengthen the role of women in parliament, to give a positive image to the voters that voting for a woman is a positive thing, and to ensure that more women enter parliament. Because at any time – and this becomes a big burden on the four of us – any underperformance from us will have a negative impact on women in the future, who might be much more capable than we, and they will lose their chance.”

Woman parliamentarian, Kuwait

“[There was an] informal practice whereby newcomers to the parliament were expected to ‘sit down and listen’ for a year or two. [But] this has changed over the years. Newcomers are increasingly judged at election time, and are offered little time to adapt to parliamentary institutions/rules. Competition among parliamentarians (and especially newcomers) has increased. There is now competition with co-parliamentarians and regional party members for your seat.”

Man parliamentarian, Belgium

When asked about the culture of their parliaments, members tended to score it slightly better than “average”, men more so than women. Other indicators of parliamentary culture used in this study included perceptions as to a “gentleman’s club” atmosphere in parliament, the prevalence of “unwritten rules” or codes of conduct, the language used in both formal and informal settings, and the incidence of disparaging or condescending remarks, or those bordering on harassment.

Table 9.1
Parliamentary culture (N= responses)

	Women	Men	Average
Parliamentary culture (N=89)	3.19	3.51	3.39
Language/discourse in informal settings in parliament (N=100)	3.48	3.78	3.67
Language / discourse in the plenary (N=105)	3.56	3.88	3.75
Rules and practices of parliament (standing orders) (N=105)	3.66	3.98	3.85
Dress codes for members (if applicable) (N=81)	3.80	3.69	3.77

Source: Questionnaire C, www.gender-parliaments.org

Note: Score calculated on a scale where 5 represents “excellent”, 4 “good”, 3 “average”, 2 “below average” and 1 “poor”.

Table 9.2
Difficulties faced in fulfilling parliamentary mandates (culture) (N= responses)

	Women	Men	Average score
A “gentlemen’s club” dominates in parliament (N=97)	2.95	1.34	2.13
DemEANing verbal remarks based on sex (N=105)	2.08	1.63	1.84
“Unwritten rules” and norms have negatively affected your work (N=104)	1.63	1.32	1.46
Disparaging or harassing remarks because of your sex (N=110)	1.62	1.07	1.32
Sexual harassment of women members (N=105)	1.57	1.1	1.32
Sexual harassment of male members (N=103)	1.17	1.05	1.11

Source: Questionnaire C, www.gender-parliaments.org

Note: Score calculated on a scale where 1 represents “Never”, 2 “rarely”, 3 “occasionally”, 4 “regularly”, and 5 “all the time”.

Women members tended more frequently than men to see their parliaments as dominated by a “gentlemen’s club” atmosphere, giving this indicator an average score of 2.95 (denoting “occasionally”), compared with 1.34 (almost “never”) in the case of men). This speaks to an idea widely prevalent in the literature: that parliaments are “**masculine institutions**” where “male voices” and “masculinist practices” have historically predominated. This idea was exemplified in the remarks of a Bolivian woman member: “[...] There are two of us [in the departmental party caucus] and we cannot take our turn, because men are the majority, and they know how to do it. They have always sidelined the women.”³⁰ In Yemen, women reported being too intimidated to join parliamentary blocs and groups, with their late Qat night sessions.

Interviews also reflected the view that women feel uncomfortable in the parliamentary environment, as though they were outsiders to this culture.

“Masculine codes are used in conversation, and women must pretend to understand them. This is a man’s world.”

Woman parliamentarian, Uruguay

“We always feel more insecure. So to participate in a commission or a session, we all prepare thoroughly. In general, male legislators have that way of asking for the floor and participating. They don’t even think about what they are going to say; they start thinking when they ask for the floor. They never feel they might be wrong. Women always ask each other, a colleague or another congresswomen they trust, “What did you think?” to see if what we said was good, if we represent the views we claim to represent, what was missing. ... Our male colleagues don’t usually do that. I don’t know if they just don’t express it, but no, it doesn’t happen.”

Woman parliamentarian, Argentina

“I think it’s easier for men, already because they have a deep voice. When you take the floor ... It is clear that when you take the floor, we all tend to speak lower to appear more serious. If not, it doesn’t seem very serious, someone who’s trying to put across a message with a high-pitched voice; that’s a bit absurd. So I would say that women are already at a disadvantage through the very pitch of their voice. The second thing I would say is that there is a series of registers that we cannot use. An angry woman, a hysterical woman ... A man who gets angry has guts and can affirm himself, etc. So women clearly have a smaller, more restricted space within which they can express themselves. So it is a bit more difficult.”

Woman parliamentarian, Belgium

³⁰ Case study, Bolivia.

Masculine cultures seem to be less dominant in parliaments with more substantial numbers of women. In Rwanda, for example, women members generally report being treated with respect and good will by their male colleagues. In Sweden, when members spoke about “negative treatment” and the use of tactics to marginalize and belittle others to achieve power and influence, they did not attribute such behaviour exclusively to men. They saw such techniques as “gender-neutral”, deployed by and against men as well as women.³¹

“I don’t think it was too masculine, and this is because we already had a large number of females in parliament, not only as parliamentarians but also as staff. I mean the head clerk she is also a woman. So the environment was okay. But of course when you enter parliament everything is new, but I did not have the feeling that this was a place where I didn’t feel comfortable, or that it was male-dominated. That was really not the case. The Vice-Chair of my party was also a woman, so there were more women, also, in important positions. And then in the first period, because when a new parliament is entering you need a new president of the house as well, and for my party there was a woman standing for this, and she was elected by the whole parliament, so now we have a woman president.”

Woman parliamentarian, Netherlands

“It depends on what you mean. There are plenty of examples of me being less respected because I am a woman, but to define it as offensive. No. In my view, there is a fairly tolerant and humane atmosphere (in parliament).”

Woman parliamentarian, Sweden

Women were also more inclined than men to note the existence of “**unwritten rules**”, giving this indicator a score of 1.63, compared with 1.32 in the case of men. Overall, however, this difficulty was seen as arising infrequently. A South Korean parliamentarian referred to unwritten rules that he said discriminated against women.

While a parliament’s “unwritten rules” were sometimes seen as impeding a member’s work, its standard rules and practices, as defined in standing orders for example, were not. Neither men nor women respondents considered them an obstruction to their parliamentary mandate. As one respondent put it: “The legislature has provided for appropriate rules. It is in the areas of application, mentality and education that more work has to be done.” (Belgium, Questionnaire C)

Box 9.1 Selected responses: The Speaker as arbiter

Parliamentarians have to obey certain unofficial rules on how to behave, dress and speak. They can be reprimanded by the Speaker if they act against these unofficial rules.

[Finland, Questionnaire A]

There are no explicit parliamentary rules to ensure non-discrimination, but there is a long-standing practice of parliamentary democracy to fight against any kind of discrimination. According to § 7 of the Rules of Procedure of the German Bundestag, the President shall uphold the dignity and rights of the Bundestag, further its work, conduct its debates fairly and impartially, and maintain order in the Bundestag. Thus his duties also include the maintenance of parliamentary order during sittings. In cases of discrimination he may warn speakers, direct them to discontinue speaking and even exclude them from plenary sittings and committee meetings for up to 30 sitting days.

[Germany, Questionnaire A]

Respondents also noted the role of the Speaker (or President) in serving as an “arbiter” of behaviour and debate in parliament, and in interpreting the rules (be they written or not) on decorum and conduct.

Language also affects parliamentary culture in both formal and informal settings. The language used in formal settings was not necessarily seen as impeding parliamentary performance, with men slightly more inclined toward this view (with a score of 3.88) than women (3.56).

The language used, however, is a potentially alienating feature of parliamentary life for women, given the confrontational approach often taken in the chamber. In some instances, such mock belligerence can cross the line into actual or perceived verbal abuse, including demeaning allusions to women’s concerns, or women parliamentarians themselves, and sexist or exclusively masculine references in debate. According to the IPU survey “Politics: Women’s Insight”, language can be seen as indicative of male bias that is offensive to many. Responding to that survey, a woman parliamentarian from Burkina Faso remarked:

I am truly convinced that women politicians pay a high price for their participation in political life. They are the targets of various kinds of attack, even below the belt. This is because they often constitute the conscience of “politickers”. It is a good thing they often end up developing thick skins.

31 Case study, Sweden.

A woman parliamentarian from the Maldives put it this way:

I have been able to cope with the difficulties and also deal with issues as I encounter them, through various means. An assertive response to harassing remarks usually deters men from repeating the behaviour. (Source: Equality in Politics - 2008, IPU)

During the interviews, members described how language in plenary and committee meetings, including constant use of the masculine form or pronoun, can effectively negate the contributions of women members. Some parliaments have made considerable efforts to change how they refer to members and to certain leadership positions. In South Africa, for example, the term “chairman” has been replaced by “chairperson”. In Spain, the language used in the Standing Orders of Congress was revised during its last session from an inclusive and non-sexist point of view. It was also decided that in any future constitutional amendments, the name of Congress (which in Spanish includes the word “of Deputies”, in masculine form) will be shortened to the more gender-neutral “Congress”.³²

“For those of us who are sensitive to gender, language in rules, letters and notifications that refers to ‘Mr. Deputy’ (Señor Diputado) is intolerable. The ‘señores diputados’ can take a seat, the ‘señores diputados’ can speak, the ‘señores diputados’ are invited to stand for the raising of the flag. I don’t know if everyone feels the way I do about it, but it’s really ... not a lack of respect, it’s something more, something deeper, a sense of rejection. I automatically respond, ‘And not the women?’ Because we’re not really ‘señores diputados’. In that way, too, language makes women invisible [...] in a symbolic sense and in everyday life.”

Woman parliamentarian, Argentina

“In the 2006-2010 legislature, several deputies took the initiative to propose the use of inclusive language in legislative texts but it was not allowed by the Administrative Office of the Legislative Assembly or the Department of Philology of the Legislative Assembly.”

Woman parliamentarian, Costa Rica

“Even in their speech, as they spoke, in the beginning they found it very [annoying] when I said that they would always speak about ‘him, him, him’, and I would say ‘or her’. But I didn’t stop. So later on, they would start saying ‘he’, but then they would look at me and say ‘or she’, and they got used to being more inclusive.”

Woman parliamentarian, Namibia

Parliamentary language was seen as particularly problematic in informal settings. Members reported the use of “unparliamentary”, sexist language, and women were more inclined than men (with scores

of 1.62 and 1.07, respectively) to say they had faced disparaging or harassing remarks based on their sex. Demeaning verbal remarks were also more commonly reported by women (2.08) than men (1.63). In Mexico, the use of sexist language inspired an alliance of women parliamentarians to react. Over time, thanks to the concerted efforts of this alliance of women, sexist language on the floor of Congress now draws criticism from male as well as female members, and the media.³³

One of the most difficult areas for women parliamentarians to address is language and sexist jokes. Their responses tend to be individual. Some “let it go,” to avoid fighting with members of their caucuses, so as not to be shunned, while others decide to “force others to respect them,” running the risk of isolation. One female deputy said, “we have learned that, in these cases (sexist jokes), it is better to go with the flow. It’s like a slogan: don’t fight it. If you fight, you lose. [She also refers to a useful pragmatism that sometimes allows women to take advantage of a weakness to get ahead.] There’s one thing you have to accept: because men are the majority, they are going to have the power. That is clear, and we have to look at men as a ladder. There is no alternative.”

Woman parliamentarian, Bolivia

“A lot of phrases with double meaning were used [when I first entered parliament]. For example, when they wanted to ask for a clarification, in Malay you say you want to ‘give way’. But they didn’t say that. They said they wanted ‘to enter’. There were a lot of sexual remarks. We reacted very strongly. And now, I think they are much more careful.”

Woman parliamentarian, Malaysia

“There is of course a tendency by some male colleagues to be very condescending towards women, especially in the reserved seats; but whenever they’ve done that, they’ve gotten a very, very strong voice of resistance from the women. So it’s not easy anymore to say anything to women in parliament. And there have been one or two instances where some derogatory comments came from male colleagues on the floor of the house, and they had to stand up and apologise.”

Woman parliamentarian, Pakistan

“I have seen that some people have been the victims of negative treatment, almost like in school. Statements by some people are not really taken seriously, and individuals in senior positions may belittle and bully them. Sometimes I have noticed that members start talking when a woman has the floor. But, after a while, I have noticed that they also talk when a man has the floor. It is always difficult to know what the reason is for this behaviour, and I have seen it affect both men and women.”

Woman parliamentarian, Sweden

³² Case Study, Spain.

³³ Case study, Mexico.



Perceptions differed sharply as to the incidence of **sexual harassment**. According to most of the members surveyed, men were “never” sexually harassed. Among the women respondents, however, 13 per cent said men *were* harassed (albeit “rarely”). Harassment of women, on the other hand, was more commonly reported by women (1.57) than men (1.32). (See chapter 7 for more information on harassment policies in parliament and grievance mechanisms for enforcing them.)

Dress codes tended not to be reported as an issue requiring improvements to gender equality standards. Both men and women respondents considered their parliaments’ dress code a “good” standard that did not, for the most part, discriminate against men or women. Importantly, this general level of satisfaction with dress codes can be attributed to the efforts of numerous women who have tirelessly made a stand on dress codes (see the example of the Republic of Korea in Box 9.2). In Belgium, it is interesting to note that a younger generation of women parliamentarians has confronted a new frontier on dress codes, begging the question: how adaptable are parliaments to new trends in fashion?

Box 9.2

Selected responses: Dress codes

No dress code has been laid down for either the members or the presiding officers of the parliament. The members are dressed either in traditional or western dresses in a manner befitting their status as parliamentarians.

[India, Questionnaire A]

There is a dress code but it has nothing to do with non-discrimination, but rather with sensitivities towards religious persons. The general atmosphere is of non-discrimination.

[Israel, Questionnaire A]

Until 1996, women MPs couldn't wear pants; skirts only. This problem has disappeared because of a brave woman.

[Republic of Korea, Questionnaire A]

Case Study 9.1: Are new trends in fashion acceptable in parliament?

For women, attention to formal dress, which includes avoiding sexy clothes, is important if they are to be taken seriously and judged by what they do, not how they look, as illustrated by an interesting incident. In the summer of 2010, a newly elected young woman senator, a surprise winner in her election, was publicly reminded by a senior male colleague that giving interviews “in shorts” was not “the done thing” – and a message he posted on Facebook to this effect got picked up by the national press. In reaction, several senior women senators remarked that women should be allowed to wear what they thought best, and that men should refrain commenting on the subject, especially in public. At the formal opening of the new legislature, the young woman in question wore a classical dress and received widespread attention in the press, raising a number of interesting issues. One is that young women, often portrayed as “babes”, can attract more press attention – and thus a more prominent public platform – than the men of their generation. On the flip side, however, they then must prove they are more than just “babes”. Several respondents mentioned that women have to work harder than their male colleagues “to make up for being a woman”.

Case study, Belgium

Particular challenges to young women

The research uncovered some particular challenges for younger women, which did not appear to hold true for younger men. Specifically, young women reportedly have more difficulty in commanding the respect of their peers and in being accepted as legitimate political players.

“I think ultimately it comes down to treating people with respect. I don’t think you can get away with it if you pretend you are something that you are not, so I always say that I don’t have all the experience in the world but I have a good heart and a bit of courage and I am going to listen to you and I’m going to work with you. So I think, and don’t get me wrong, I made mistakes along the way – that there is a lot to be said for having humility, and I think that is quite key, particularly when you are working with people who may be sensitive to that. But generally I think it doesn’t matter what your age is or what your gender is; if you are a hard worker and you treat people with respect, then you will get respect back.” **Woman parliamentarian, New Zealand**

“Do you know which is the largest majority party in the world? It’s the over- 40 male party.”
Woman parliamentarian, Croatia

Parliamentary infrastructure

The space in which parliamentarians work is very specific to their jobs. A parliament, at least in theory, is a building where people meet and express the views of those they represent. In addition to a plenary debating hall, parliament buildings generally house such facilities as committee meeting rooms for both public and private meetings, press rooms for contact with the media, member offices and a library with research staff. Importantly for this study, the way in which these facilities and resources are made available to members is an indicator of gender sensitivity.

Table 9.3
Parliamentary infrastructure (N=responses)

	Women	Men	Average
Infrastructure of parliament (restrooms, amenities) (N=107)	3.56	4.03	3.82
Access to resources e.g. staff, computers, research facilities (N=98)	3.42	4.00	3.69

Source: Questionnaire C, www.gender-parliaments.org

Note: Score calculated on a scale where 5 represents “excellent”, 4 “good”, 3 “average”, 2 “below average” and 1 “poor”.

While falling short of “excellent” (a score of 5), the restrooms and other amenities provided in their parliaments met with satisfaction from most parliamentarians (men and women both). The timing of women’s presence in certain parliaments, however, may have been a factor in this rating. As evident in the experiences related by parliamentarians from the Netherlands and Egypt, changes were needed to parliamentary infrastructure in those countries to accommodate the entry of new women members.

“Finding any information about certain procedures [is difficult]; you get the documentation but you don’t have specific meeting [rooms], or areas where to meet. There was a very small meeting room for women, which I found very inadequate. You have to ask your male colleagues, people you meet, and then you find your own way, sort of. When I say, ‘we need this, we need that’, they respond, ‘what do you need, you’ve received all your rights?’ The way the culture has interpreted it this is not a place for women and never has been a place for women.” **Woman parliamentarian, Egypt**

“When I entered parliament, there were almost no toilet facilities for women. A couple of years ago, there was a massive infrastructural change, in that women’s facilities were created. This is an indicator.” **Woman parliamentarian, Belgium**

Table 9.4
Difficulties faced in fulfilling parliamentary mandates (infrastructure) (N= responses)

	Women	Men	Average score
Lack of resources or information to support my work (N= 102)	2.48	1.94	2.19
Lack of access to sex-disaggregated data and information (N= 101)	2.33	1.68	2.00
Gender discrimination in foreign travel / conferences (N= 104)	2.04	1.26	1.64
Gender discrimination in the allocation of allowances to parliamentarians (N= 108)	1.53	1.10	1.29
Gender discrimination in the allocation of parliamentary resources (office space, computers, staffing , security) (N= 108)	1.46	1.17	1.30

Source: Questionnaire C, www.gender-parliaments.org

Note: Score calculated on a scale where 1 represents “Never”, 2 “rarely”, 3 “occasionally”, 4 “regularly”, and 5 “all the time”.

Women were more inclined than men to refer to gender discrimination in the allocation of parliamentary resources, such as office space, computers, staffing (if provided by their parliaments), allowances, or foreign travel for conferences or to take part in parliamentary delegations.

Respondents from the parliaments of Sub-Saharan Africa were particularly inclined to see inadequate resources as a barrier to their work. Inadequate numbers of support staff or funds for committee work, as well as scarce research facilities, all impede parliamentarians' work. Most respondents also identified a lack of access to sex-disaggregated data as a common or at least occasional problem.

“When the women’s caucus wanted an office space we could not be allocated one, but when men from the Select Committee on the Constitution wanted an office they were allocated one.”

Woman parliamentarian, Zimbabwe

Some parliaments ensure that resources are equally distributed to all parliamentarians, without favouritism. In some cases, this is done by a government agency, outside the influence of parliament. In countries like Tunisia, Jordan, Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates and Oman, equal access for all parliamentarians to financial benefits, allowances, office space and computers is governed by an administrative policy (Arab regional report).

Women and men respondents commented quite differently on the allocation of foreign travel opportunities. Overall, men tended not to see gender discrimination in this area, while women did, albeit rarely. That said, efforts are clearly needed in some parliaments to ensure the attendance of at least one woman at important conferences, and to deal with some interesting side effects.

“Imagine that in Jordan you told my grandfather that a woman would be leaving her husband and children at home and going as a representative of Jordan in the parliamentary session, he would not have believed it! [laughs] And she is going not just with a group of women, she’s going with a mixed group of men and women! The change is fantastic.”

Man parliamentarian, Jordan

Rules such as those established by the IPU (see box 9.3) clearly make it more difficult for parliaments to ignore gender balance when considering the composition of their delegations.



Box 9.3

Making women count at the IPU

The IPU was one of the first international organisations to adopt affirmative action measures within its own structure, to ensure stronger participation by women. Those measures resulted mainly from a three-year consultative process initiated by the IPU’s Gender Partnership Group, itself composed of two men and two women from the IPU Executive Committee. Eventually, a series of measures (effectively amounting to quotas and targets) were included in the IPU Statutes and Rules. They apply to the organisation’s three main bodies: the Executive Committee, the Governing Council and the Assembly.

A straightforward quota system was introduced for elections to the Executive Committee: 20 per cent of its elected members must be women (article 23.2 of the Statutes).

For the Governing Council, a gender-neutral target was adopted. If strictly applied, it ensures that neither sex accounts for less than 30 per cent of its membership (each delegation of three members is called on to include both men and women). The voting rights of delegations not meeting this target are reduced by a third (Rule 1.2 of the Governing Council).

A similar gender-neutral target was adopted for the Assembly: the voting rights and officially registered numbers of delegations attending IPU Assemblies without representatives of both sexes, three times in a row, are reduced (Articles 10.3 and 15.2(c) of the Statutes).

Balancing work and family

Like any other place of work, parliaments need to adapt to the needs of their workforce. In particular, increasing numbers of young parliamentarians starting families will generate a need for parliaments to consider the introduction of childcare facilities and flexible working hours, so that parents can balance work and family more easily.

The greatest gender equality challenge highlighted by respondents was the extent to which both men and women parliamentarians are able to balance work and family obligations. An unfortunate side effect of a parliament's peculiar and hectic work schedules is that members have less time to spend with their families. While difficult for men, it was widely agreed, this situation is doubly so for women members.

Box 9.4

Testimonials: Balancing work and family

"Parliamentary life is a life, when we meet all the conditions, that requires us to be very present in and outside parliament. Networks are formed outside. Parliamentary work is not fuelled within parliament; it is fuelled by the life we lead around it. It is where we seek out injustices, revolt, demands, implications. And yes, we have to make a clear decision regarding our private life. We have to dose it, work on it and try to find a good balance. In any case, we have to be clear about it from the start and say: that's it, I've made the choice; I'm a woman. And as a woman, I will certainly be asked to take on more family responsibilities. I am often asked how I manage having a child and all. Well the answer is quite simple: do you ask men the same question? No, so don't ask me, okay. I organize myself, that's all. You have to be tougher. But it's true that even when we say that, even if we are very careful, you still end up shouldering between 10 and 15 per cent of the responsibilities".

Woman parliamentarian, Belgium

"A prerequisite for parliamentary work is that you are single and childless. If I had not been able to devote all my time to my work, as I do now, it would have been very disadvantageous." **Woman parliamentarian, Sweden**

"It is hard to be a member of parliament and at the same time have family responsibilities. But I am lucky, because I have very special family circumstances, with grown-up children. Working as a member of parliament is fundamentally incompatible with a normal family life, in my view." **Man parliamentarian, Sweden**

"I think that whether you are a male or a female you just have the one lesson, you have got to have a supportive partner." **Woman parliamentarian, New Zealand**

"[Work/life] balance?! So every Monday morning, I make sure that I walk my daughter to school. If I don't walk her we go down to a cafe and I drop her off at school, and I try to pick her up on Monday, if I can, because her mother works as well. I try to spend as much quality time as I can with my children, and it does mean that there are some party events that I say no to. And there are some who say, 'where's your dedication?' And I say, 'well, you know, my dedication is to my family as well as my party and my country', and I think you have to have that balance. I think if you lost that balance you would be a less successful parliamentarian as well as a less successful parent, but really it is not a 9-to-5 job when you are home every night; it is a difficult one. I love my children dearly and I miss them a lot, and I try to call them every night, and just setting up Skype so that I can actually talk to them and see them. And I think it is easier for my generation than it was for previous generations, when phone calls were very expensive or unavailable, or you were away for even longer periods of time."

Man parliamentarian, New Zealand

"No, personally, but women, yes. Personally no because I'm single, so I don't have the same degree of responsibilities as a working mother, for example. But I do know that for many women, both as parliamentarians or as other working women, it is quite difficult. Traditional Asian society still does expect a mother to bear the majority of responsibility for family life. So if you want to be a high flying career woman, you've got to put in the hours." **Woman parliamentarian, Singapore**

"Compared to other young female MPs, my children are not that young, so that I don't have to worry about my children all the time, so I'm quite ok with that. But it's a big issue for women MPs. We are seeing changes in ordinary households, and men are taking greater responsibility compared to the past, but not in parliament."

Woman parliamentarian, Republic of Korea

"Perhaps I'm single because I'm so much into politics and all that! But for other women, some of them get a lot of support from their family, I know. The husbands, some of them are very good husbands who take the time because they're from a political background. In Pakistan, the family works like a corporate. So your father, one member of the family, is doing this, the other is doing that, there's a lot of division of labour."

Woman parliamentarian, Pakistan

“What woman with a partner and children would agree (to be parliamentary member)? She would need support. Maybe when we men have the opportunity, we do not question whether we have this support or not, we take it for granted. And women must take into consideration whether they have this support or not. I find parliamentary women extraordinarily brave, because they take the opportunity to develop their vocation, their profession (...). From an organisational point of view women have to organise their lives much more than men do, in equal conditions.” **Man parliamentarian, Spain**

“My husband had to agree to stay home when I had to be away. It was a big step for a man to take in our society. Very few men do that because it is still considered that men are the breadwinners. But when women give up their careers, nobody says ‘oh, she is really great because she does this for the husband’. But for a man to do that, oh ... a lot of my friends will praise him and say ‘you really have a good husband’.” **Woman parliamentarian, Malaysia**

In Asia, some of the women parliamentarians interviewed were quick to point out that while family life can be a great challenge for women in politics, they themselves had not experienced it. In these cases, the women concerned were either single (in some cases, deliberately so), or had children past the age of requiring at-home attention. Where children are involved, women parliamentarians have had to “negotiate” roles with their husbands.

While it is now well accepted that Rwandan women have a role to play in public life, there is an expectation that they will continue to combine their roles as parliamentarians

with their other roles as wives, mothers, daughters-in-law, and even students. Many women parliamentarians study at night – which also speaks to the perception that they have “catching up” to do to be as qualified as their male colleagues. According to the Rwandan women surveyed, neither society nor the gender roles established within it have changed in their country, despite the leadership roles assumed by women in government. While they are largely accepted in their new public roles, they are still expected to maintain their traditional private roles and responsibilities in the family. The biggest challenge for women, noted by both male and female parliamentarians, is the travel

Table 9.5

Accommodating parliamentarians with family (or caring) responsibilities (N= responses)

	Yes (%)	No (%)
Sittings aligned with school calendar (N=82)	39.0	61.0
Special arrangements for breastfeeding mothers* (N=83)	27.7	68.7
Longer stays in districts (N=65)	23.1	76.9
Night sittings discontinued* (N=83)	21.7	77.1
Childcare facilities provided in parliament* (N=86)	20.9	77.9
Flexible working hours (N=75)	18.7	81.3
Travel allowances for family members provided for commuting between district and parliament* (N=81)	16.0	82.7
Financial assistance to parliamentarians for childcare* (N=82)	8.5	90.2
Family room* (N=81)	6.2	91.4
Proxy voting for parliamentarians who are absent because of childcare responsibilities* (N=85)	5.9	92.9

Source: Questionnaire A, www.gender-parliaments.org

Note: *Figures do not total 100 because some countries said the measures had been “adopted, but not yet implemented”.

Table 9.6

Parliamentarians’ views on gender-sensitive infrastructure (N= responses)

	Women	Men	Average
Sitting hours of parliament (N=100)	3.52	3.67	3.63
Maternity/paternity leave provisions (N=95)	3.45	3.81	3.67
Provision of induction training (N=81)	2.92	3.24	3.13
Childcare facilities (N=86)	2.21	2.46	2.37

Source: Questionnaire C, www.gender-parliaments.org

Note: Score calculated on a scale where 5 represents “excellent”, 4 “good”, 3 “average”, 2 “below average” and 1 “poor”.

associated with their positions. Parliamentarians must make at least one provincial visit every three months and one district visit every month. Depending on the region, this often requires overnight stays, something some husbands are reportedly uncomfortable with. One (man) parliamentarian described the problem as follows: “when we are conducting on-site visits, and a child gets sick at home, the husband [of a female parliamentarian] will call her and she will have to go running home.” (Case study, Rwanda)

Working hours

Parliaments are beginning to make family-friendly changes, but slowly. Parliamentarians tended to regard their parliaments’ sitting hours as slightly above “average” (scored as 3.52 by women and 3.67 by men), but in fact, parliaments have not always taken steps to make their hours more family-friendly. Fewer than 40 per cent of the parliaments surveyed align sitting schedules with the school calendar, for example. A little more than 20 per cent allow their members to spend more time in their districts, to be closer to their families. A similar percentage have discontinued night sittings in favour of more “flexible” hours. The parliament of Poland reported frequent calls for the discontinuation of night sittings. No formal provision prevents them, and the country’s parliament does sit late to consider particularly important measures, such as the budget debate.

By way of positive developments, the parliament of Denmark, for example, does not allow voting after

7:00 p.m. on sitting days. In Sweden, evening votes are avoided as much as possible; no votes are usually held on Fridays or Mondays, so that members can spend more time in their districts (Sweden, Questionnaire A). Similarly, Karen Ross’s study of the South African Parliament notes women’s influence in changing the routine of voting at midnight, because they had families to attend to (see South Africa case study, p. 13).

In Spain, on the initiative of the Speaker of the Congress, a fixed sitting time for plenary meetings has been established for the 2008-2012 sitting period. Plenary sessions take place on Tuesday afternoons – ending at 9:00 p.m. – and Wednesday and Thursday mornings. Members of the Congress and parliamentary staff consider this an improvement: in previous terms, plenary meetings took place on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons, with no set ending time. It was common for plenary sessions to last until 11:00 p.m. As one woman parliamentarian noted, “*It was nonsense to be debating a bill at 10:30 p.m., when nobody was listening to you.*”

Smaller parliaments also allow greater flexibility for their members. Switzerland’s Parliament has adopted a proposal to align sittings with school holidays and to end sessions well in advance of the Christmas holiday.

Leave of absence for parents

While the members of some parliaments do not benefit from maternity or paternity leave, those that

Box 9.5

Testimonials: Working hours

“It is impossible to reconcile work and family life, impossible, impossible. Here you know when you enter, but not when you leave”. **Woman parliamentarian, Spain**

“[...] you have to understand that the parliament is a place of political pressure and at times of social and political tension, where there are no schedules, no dates and no days. To attempt to be guided by criteria on labour welfare in a centre as political as parliament is simply out of place. It is not the place to discuss these issues.” **Man parliamentarian, Bolivia**

We wanted to change the culture of working hours but could not. We had to show that we could do everything the same. To work such an exhausting schedule and continue in the same roles, for which reason we had to make adjustments within families and to take better advantage of time spent with children so that we could fulfil our duties and change the idea that ‘or if they can’t they have to resign’ **Woman parliamentarian, Colombia**

So, it’s kind of difficult, but we manage [...]: we get up at four in the morning and by eight everything is ready and we can then go to work.” **Woman parliamentarian, Bolivia**

“The increase of women has also resulted in other changes: as few as possible late evening meetings, a better fit between school holidays and parliamentary recess. These changes, I definitely attribute them to women; I remember, at the beginning of the 1990s, when I heard somebody say for the first time ‘no, we are not really going to continue [the meeting] are we?’. A man would never have said ‘I have to go home, I have to take care of the children’. If a man would have said something similar, this would not have been accepted; it would have been ridiculed. Slowly, however, this has increasingly become acceptable. Also for parliamentarians, a certain acknowledgment of the need for a workable combination of professional life and family life has found root.” **Man parliamentarian, Belgium**

“The Chamber of Deputies is not designed to balance work and family life in a way that benefits men and women equally. As in other places, the chamber should have strict organisation of legislative recesses – what they are going to do, what they have to do, what is the recess schedule – as well as vacations, when you can go away peacefully with your family [instead of feeling like] you’re escaping from work, with people constantly calling to ask where the deputy is and what he or she thinks about some issue. That is one example of how the chamber is not designed for work and family life, which would allow men and women – not just women any more – who are legislators to cover that aspect of their life, like anyone else.” **Woman parliamentarian, Mexico**

“I would find it denigrating towards women if we were to say that we have to give up on all nightly meetings. For this would mean that these women have to be timely at home for their husband. No, parliament is difficult for all forms of combined living.” **Man parliamentarian, Belgium**

“We have also not succeeded in cutting down the working hours. It was too structured in the old way. Committees meet in the mornings, the plenary sits in the afternoons. Sometimes we stay late, and I am sometimes responsible for that because we need to finish some business and leave late and so on. So we have not made a breakthrough on the issue of operating on a better timetable to take into account the gender aspects of our parliament. ... You know, one of the reasons we sit for long hours is that, although we have the committees, everybody thinks like an individual, and they all want to talk about their road and their hospital. So the other changes would be internal. We really need to organize the rules of debate so that, if we have a committee report, maybe we will have six people reporting, not 50. Because you find they are all saying the same thing, but they all want to be heard in their constituencies. So that we would spend less time doing that and create friendlier working hours. Because many times, like at 4.30 p.m., I notice that many of the ladies are dashing out to pick up the kids, take them home and then come back to the house. So many of the changes needed are internal.” **Woman parliamentarian, Uganda**

do often enjoy the same conditions as prescribed for all government officials, under national law. In all countries offering it, paternity leave is much shorter than maternity leave. Very few parliaments offer “parental leave”, the sex-specific form of leave being preferred. Israel is one of the exceptions to that tendency: “either the mother or the father is entitled to take 12 weeks of fully paid leave after the birth of a child.” The Knesset noted plans to prolong this entitlement.

In some parliaments, a conscious decision has been made not to extend maternity/paternity leave provisions that apply to other citizens. The parliaments of Greece, New Zealand and Tunisia all distinguish between parliamentarians and civil servants in relation to parental leave. In those countries, and a number of others, leave must be sought from the Speaker (or President). In some cases, parliamentarians need to negotiate such leave entitlements with their respective parties.

“Last year we faced a real drama. Female members of the parliament who were pregnant were at risk of losing their seats when they took maternity leave, because an amendment was introduced which stated that a parliamentarian would lose his or her seat if he or she did not attend a certain number of sessions. Since women are largely invisible in these positions, the issue of pregnant women was not addressed. Obviously, we raised a fuss. As we won a majority of votes, we can at least be mothers and continue to hold a seat. It was a tough battle.”

Woman parliamentarian, Colombia

“I had two pregnancies during legislative sessions. I was pregnant when the session started, I had the baby and I didn’t take leave, because I had just started in the legislature. I felt I had to return 18 days after having had a Caesarean, because I understood that was my obligation as a representative.”

Woman parliamentarian, Peru

Table 9.7

Parental leave conditions for parliamentarians (N= responses)

	No special provisions exist (%)	The provisions are the same as those prescribed by national law (%)	The parliament has adopted its own policies (%)	Total (%)
Maternity leave (N=85)	25.9	62.4	11.8	100
Paternity leave (N=80)	48.8	45.0	6.2	100
Parental leave (if different) (N=69)	59.4	39.1	1.4	100

Source: Questionnaire A, www.gender-parliaments.org

Rather than creating a parliament-specific policy on parental leave, most parliaments allow their members leave for unspecified periods of time, such as in India. There is no rule in the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Council of States which provides for maternity/paternity leave for Members of parliament. However, rule 214 relating to leave of absence from meetings of the Council of States provides that:

(1) A member wishing to obtain permission of the Council for remaining absent from meetings thereof under clause (4) of article 101 of the Constitution shall make an application in writing to the Chairman, stating the period for which he may be permitted to be absent from the meetings of the Council.

(2) After the receipt of an application under sub-rule (1) of this rule the Chairman shall, as soon as may be, read out the application to the Council and ask: "Is it the pleasure of the Council that permission be granted to such and such a member for remaining absent from all meetings of the Council for such and such a period?" If no one dissents, the Chairman shall say: "Permission to remain absent is granted." But if any dissentient voice is heard, the Chairman shall take the sense of the Council and thereupon declare the determination of the Council.

(3) No discussion shall take place on any question before the Council under this rule.

(4) The Secretary-General shall, as soon as may be, after a decision has been signified by the Council, communicate it to the member [India, Questionnaire A].

Substituting for parliamentarians on parental leave

For the most part, there is no consistent policy on how to temporarily replace a parliamentarian on parental leave. In Armenia, Australia and France, for example, members on parental leave are not replaced, there being no perceived "vacancy". In Afghanistan and Israel, it is preferred that other parliamentary colleagues fill in for members on leave. The question is more easily resolved in parliaments with alternate as well as titular members.

Some parliaments have no specific mechanisms in place at all. In Portugal, Article 5 of the Statute of Members (Law No. 7/93 of March 1993) allows temporary substitution on "important grounds" – which include "taking maternity or paternity leave". The Statute also provides that temporary substitution does not result in loss of income. In various parliaments, including those of Colombia, Denmark, Estonia, Iceland and the Netherlands, the substitute is the next person on the electoral list.

Another mechanism allowed for by parliaments is a member's suspension from parliament. In Estonia, a member of the Riigikogu may submit an application to

the Board for suspension of his or her mandate based on "the need to raise a child under three years of age" (Estonia, Questionnaire A).

Decisions to replace or not replace parliamentarians during maternity/paternity leave is a difficult question for most parliaments. The principle of temporarily replacing a person for the duration of (entitled) leave has worked well for many paid positions, but its application to the world of competitive politics is not quite as straightforward. Parliamentarians fight for their positions, and it is not easy to simply transfer their responsibilities to others. Secondly, while someone may be "second on the list", that person has presumably found other employment and may not be readily available to take the position. Clearly, how parliaments should treat maternity and paternity leave is a matter for continuing debate.

Some of the parliaments surveyed had as yet seen no need for maternity (or paternity) leave provisions, the average age of their members being relatively high. As one parliament responded, "In any case, to date no woman senator has given birth during the present mandate (of the Senate)" [France, Questionnaire A] The issue is not considered urgent in Spain, either, but a constitutional problem nonetheless arises in that country in connection with maternity leave. According to the Spanish Constitution, a parliamentarian's vote is personal and may not be delegated. As one male parliamentarian noted: "When twelve parliamentarians are suddenly pregnant, somebody will have to think about it. What will we do then?" Another woman stated, "Somehow you are part of a working situation where it is inadvisable to be of childbearing age".

Case Study 9.2 Requesting a substitute in Costa Rica

During the 2006-2010 session of Costa Rica's legislature, Deputy Leda Zamora asked the country's Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) to authorize "the temporary appointment of a substitute deputy to take my place on an interim basis while I am temporarily absent for four months on maternity leave".

Deputy Zamora's concern was that her temporary absence from the Assembly would put her party at a disadvantage, because electoral law did not provide for temporary replacement by substitute deputies – even in cases of maternity leave: "I specifically request that for the remaining maternity leave corresponding to my case, the TSE calls to replace me, for that reason and on a temporary basis, with the candidate for deputy who was next on the party list for ACCIÓN CIUDADANA in the legislative elections of 2006, so as to constitute (or reconstitute) in due form the structural quorum of the collegiate body known as the Legislative Assembly."

The TSE rejected this petition five days after it was filed (11 April 2008), arguing that it did not have the legal power to interpret the law eliminating substitute deputies: “(...) *An interpretation of the sort requested ... would assume ignoring and circumventing the will of the constituent, which was set out clearly and unequivocally at the time. For these reasons, we reject the request for interpretation as it is presented. Finally, it should be clarified that this Tribunal does not believe there is any violation of Ms. Leda María Zamora Chaves’s fundamental rights from an electoral standpoint, because her rights to maternity leave and to exercise her functions as a deputy are in no way affected by the non-designation of a substitute to the position from which she is stepping down temporarily.*”

Case Study, Costa Rica

Proxy voting

Rather than replacing parliamentarians on maternity leave, a very small number of parliaments (only 5 per cent of those surveyed) have instituted proxy voting. Its use in the Australian House of Representatives is specifically (and only) intended for women who are breastfeeding (see box below).

Case Study 9.3 Proxy voting in the Australian House of Representatives

In 2008, a newly elected Labour government was keen to demonstrate its commitment to parental needs in parliament. In its first week of sittings, it moved a resolution to allow special provisions for nursing mothers. In cases where a woman is breastfeeding her small infant when a vote is called, she may now ask her (government or opposition) whip to vote on her behalf (by proxy). This issue had previously been considered by the House of Representatives Procedure Committee, which tabled a report on *Options for Nursing Mothers*. In October 2008, the first such proxy vote was recorded for an opposition member during consideration of a bill in the House.

Case study, Australia

Special arrangements for breastfeeding mothers

In almost 30 per cent of the parliaments surveyed, special arrangements have been made for breastfeeding mothers. The details of these arrangements vary across parliaments, and while some parliaments have instituted quite progressive arrangements, others are struggling to deal with women returning to work after childbirth.

The Peruvian Congress took an initial step to make congresswomen’s lives easier in March 2009, by setting up a room near the main chamber of Congress with the necessary facilities, including support staff, for women to nurse their newborn babies during plenary sessions. For congressional employees, such facilities have been installed in each building housing parliamentary offices, in compliance with Supreme Decree 009-2006-MIMDES, issued by the Ministry of Women in 2006. Under that decree, every public institution employing at least 20 women of childbearing age must provide a special room where women can pump and appropriately store breast milk during working hours.

The absence of breastfeeding facilities was seen as particularly problematic for Rwandan deputies, given that – unlike their Senate colleagues – they share offices and thus have no private spaces available to them in parliament. While legally, breastfeeding mothers can take an hour off each day, practically, it is difficult for them to do so. Facilities for breastfeeding mothers are something the leadership has said it is “open to”, but nothing has happened “yet.” Parliamentarians agreed that having childcare and breastfeeding facilities would, in the words of one female senator, “help mothers relax.” But most did not seem to consider it a major priority for the institution, and certainly not one that the limited budget of the parliament could easily accommodate. They note that no other governmental institution in Rwanda has such facilities either. (Case study, Rwanda)

In Australia, it is a historic convention of the Westminster parliamentary tradition that no person other than a parliamentarian or parliamentary officer (i.e. staff member) is permitted on the floor of the chamber. The practice originates from the historical need to protect the activities of parliament from the monarchy. Today, its relevance is arguably less pressing. Interestingly, the practice of ensuring that “strangers” (now referred to as “visitors”) do not enter the chamber has been mostly challenged by the presence of babies and toddlers. For example, in 2003, when Kirstie Marshall, a member of the (State) Parliament of Victoria, breastfed her 11-day-old baby in the Legislative Assembly before the house was called to order, she was asked to leave the chamber by the Sergeant-at-Arms. Now, however, the Speaker of Victoria’s Legislative Assembly has the discretion to admit an infant into the chamber to be breastfed under standing orders. At the Commonwealth level, ensuring that mothers – be they parliamentarians or staff – can breastfeed their babies has been taken more seriously since 2008, when the parliament became accredited as a “Breastfeeding-Friendly Workplace”. Technically, babies are not allowed in either chamber, although this rule appears to have been relaxed. In September 2008, an opposition member brought the Chair’s attention to the presence of a baby in the House:

Mr Hockey – Mr Deputy Speaker, can the *Hansard* note that there is a stranger in the House, Ryan Karlovic, and

even though he is most welcome in the House his vote should not be counted on this occasion!

The Deputy Speaker (Hon. BC Scott) – I thank the member for North Sydney for bringing that to my attention.

A government member – We don't need his vote, but if we did, we'd use it! (see *Hansard Debates*, p. 8622).

“I have been struggling to get a maternity room, because we have said that everybody over 18 can go to parliament, there are a lot of young people who are members of parliament with young families and so on and a lot of the staff are young people. So every now and then somebody is expecting, so I have been trying without success to get a maternity room where they can take care of their children and still do their work.”

Woman parliamentarian, Uganda

Childcare and family rooms

Family rooms (with games/toys for older children) are almost non-existent, with only 6.2 per cent of the parliaments surveyed reporting their existence. Childcare centres on parliamentary premises are becoming more common. Just over 20 per cent of the parliaments surveyed noted that there was a childcare facility on site. Where these exist, however, it has been because of persistent pressure brought (mostly) by women, as was the case in Australia:

Mr Abbott — This childcare centre almost certainly will not be named the Jackie Kelly centre, but I rather feel it should be because it was her ceaseless badgering of the coalition party room, even to the point of threatening

to vote against the budget if this measure did not go ahead, that finally brought us to this happy pass (see *Hansard Debates*, 24 June 2008, p. 5783).

“There is a childcare center in the South Korean Parliament. We have a long, long waiting list, so it's not really practical or feasible for us to leave my child at the day care center.”

Woman parliamentarian, Republic of Korea

“There is also day care upstairs in the parliament for all the staff and all the parliamentarians. It costs something and there was a debate on it but it is there and is being used now.” **Woman parliamentarian, Netherlands**

The question of who these centers are for is quite complex. In some parliaments, centers are for the children of parliamentary staff (Germany) while in others, they are open to children of parliamentarians (Sweden). In the sub-national parliament of Scotland, the crèche is also available to the children of visiting members of the public.

The parliaments of the Arab and Sub-Saharan Africa regions did not report childcare centers. Some men in the Arab parliaments expressed the view that their female counterparts do not need special facilities inside the parliament such as nurseries or family rooms on the grounds that they can efficiently manage their personal affairs and can most often find solutions to those needs. To this end, an MP from Yemen noted, “Sessions are usually held in the morning.”

Elaborating on the absence of childcare centers in parliaments from Sub-Saharan Africa, one parliamentarian remarked that if they have one, parents



must use their offices as a place for their children to stay during the day while they are at work (Africa regional report). While a crèche was installed during the first parliament (1994-1999) in South Africa, it has since closed. Potential reasons for the closure include the fact that most women parliamentarians entered parliament once their children were no longer of school age, and that women with children found it easier to have full time child minders in their homes, given the long hours they work and the unpredictability of events that may arise because of a political crisis. One young woman parliamentarian with children noted she had to employ a full time caregiver in her constituency of KwaZulu Natal which is some considerable distance from the Western Cape, although this was a source of concern and stress while she is at work. Anecdotes were also given of women MPs who had brought their children to Cape Town but then had to find a new house for the children and her kin because the whole family could not be accommodated in the parliamentary village. (Case study, South Africa).

“I think that women have moved from the private to the public sphere, with very little help and very little co-participation on the part of men. As long as there is no co-responsibility between men and women, it will be complicated, because men have more time than women, therefore, we are forced to follow an agenda designed for men’s timetable, not for that of shared co-responsibility”.

Woman parliamentarian, Spain

“We men have organized life, in short, we have organized it so that we do not have to go home (...) You would expect that women’s inclusion, of course, with the same rights, would entail some social changes (...) I have the feeling that men’s organisation of the world for their convenience has not changed, woman haven’t managed to change it either. Men’s parameters...Women adapt themselves to men’s parameters, more than the world adapts to the new parameters of women”.

Man parliamentarian, Spain

Breaking through the work-family nexus

When asked how Parliament could contribute to improving the reconciliation of work and family life, parliamentarians tended to focus more on the private sphere than on measures that could be taken at the parliamentary level.

Conclusion

On entering parliament, parliamentarians are expected to conform to the institutional rules and norms, both written and unwritten. These rules and norms create a parliamentary culture in which women note they are not always comfortable. A feeling of being an outsider springs from the use of language which can be derogatory and sexist, and the (occasional) incidence of sexual harassment. Over time, the building of parliament has had to change to be more accommodating of women, including the basic provision of rest rooms for women. In addition, some women parliamentarians reported being discriminated against in the distribution of resources like office space, computers, staff and research facilities.

By far the greatest challenge highlighted by respondents of this study is that relating to the balance of work and family. Parliamentarians typically note that they are unable to spend a great deal of time with their family. Continuing stereotypes which see women’s role in the home make this particularly difficult for women MPs and they are essentially undertaking both roles.

Parliaments could address this challenge by rearranging the sitting hours so that there are no late night sessions or sessions during school holidays, ensuring that all Members are entitled to a leave of absence to attend to their children – not just when they are born, but whenever is required. Parliaments can also make particular arrangements for women returning to the workforce after their maternity leave. They can allow for a proxy vote, so that a woman breastfeeding does not have to attend a vote in the plenary; they can create dedicate special rooms to breastfeeding mothers; and perhaps most importantly, they can institute childcare centers in parliament.

Box 9.6

Selected responses: Child care facilities

Childcare facilities provided by an outside contractor are available for Senators, [members of] their staff and parliamentary staff. [Australia, Questionnaire A]

The German Bundestag has its own ‘Kindergarten of the German Bundestag’ for children of parliamentary staff. Children of parliamentarians can only attend this facility if there is available capacity. [Germany, Questionnaire A]

Childcare facilities: The crèche is open to all Members and staff and in that sense, is not gender specific, therefore the answer is no, in terms of childcare facilities. [Ireland, Questionnaire A]

The Parliament includes subsidies and a nursery in the facilities for parliamentary staff and parliamentarians. [Portugal, Questionnaire A]

Childcare facilities - \$ 1,100,000 this year (2010) for 292 children. [Republic of Korea, Questionnaire A]

Childcare is provided for parliamentarians. [Sweden, Questionnaire A]

Chapter ten

Gender equality in parliamentary departments

"I think that in regards to the staff, a positive plan of action is required; to have gender training, to increase appreciation of gender issues and gender mainstreaming."

Woman parliamentarian, Belgium

In this chapter you will find:

- Analysis of gender-sensitive practices and policies in parliamentary departments;
 - Analysis of women's presence in senior posts of parliamentary departments;
 - Prevalence of gender equality policies in departmental recruitment and promotion;
 - Prevalence of gender-sensitive training in parliamentary departments.
-

Parliament is also a place of work for a number of less politically-motivated individuals who support the work of chambers, committees and individual members. As will be outlined in this chapter, in many parliaments the working conditions of parliamentary staff are similar to, or exactly the same as, those of government employees. While these conditions certainly differ from those of parliamentarians, in many cases the working hours can be the same while parliament is in session. Some of the policies that apply to parliamentary staff need to be closely examined.

The presence of women in parliamentary departments

Among the parliaments responding to the IPU questionnaire, women represented just over 25 per cent of all parliamentary staff. This figure combines all positions, from Secretary General to secretary; from Clerk to cleaner. However, when the top leadership positions are extracted, women fare better: 27 per cent of the Secretaries General and 40 per cent of the Deputy Secretaries General.

As well documented in organisational research, the work done by parliamentary staff can also be highly sex-segregated. In Costa Rica, for example, women represent 52 per cent of the parliamentary administrative staff, but only 39 per cent of those appointed by political party caucuses to positions of "political trust". In Viet Nam, the figures on staff working for the National Assembly include cleaners (all women) and drivers (all men). Women working in the parliamentary departments of Arab parliaments also reportedly hold low-ranking positions.

Special measures to ensure women hold management positions

Affirmative action measures for women were not widespread among the respondents: only 12 per cent of the parliaments surveyed reported some kind of measure to ensure women held management positions. Where such measures were in use, they included the practice of preferring women where men and women candidates were found to be equally qualified. In Sweden, the Gender Equality Plan includes the goal of an equal division of management positions (40% to 60%). In Germany, the gender equality goal is addressed through training programmes for women.

Box 10.1

Selected responses: Special measures

Advancement plan consists of measures for information, involvement of senior managers and heads of departments and divisions, nomination of a person in charge of equal opportunities, awareness raising, etc. [Austria, Questionnaire A]

This issue has been taken into account in the new gender equality plan of the parliament, which was adopted in October 2009. [Finland, Questionnaire A]

§§ 8, 9 Act to Enhance the Equality of Women and Men/ Federal Equal Opportunities Act (Bundesgleichstellungsgesetz): In cases of equal qualification, aptitude and expertise of the applicants, female applicants will be given preferential treatment for those salary groups and careers in which females are under-represented, unless there are preponderant reasons to give preference to another applicant. Equal Opportunities Plan for Federal Administration (Gleichstellungsplan der Verwaltung): The plan strives to enhance women's participation in all salary groups and working areas in which females are underrepresented by setting targets for how to fill free positions. The Bundestag Administration has special training and advanced training programmes to promote women. [Germany, Questionnaire A].

There are no special measures, but policies, guidelines and audits are in place to ensure equal opportunity for positions at managerial level. [Ireland, Questionnaire A]

The HR Department is working on a set of measurements that will be implemented in 2010. These measures are about selection, recruitment and balance between work and private life. A more general, gender-based set of measures is focused on the way young men and women can be counselled on their way to top jobs: "Talent to the Top". [Netherlands, Questionnaire A]

The Riksdag Administration Plan for gender equality (2008) includes the goal to have an equal (40%-60%) division of management positions between men and women. The Plan for gender equality is revised and followed up each year. [Sweden, Questionnaire A]

Article 11 of the General Statute of Public Function stipulates that "Subject to the special provisions required by the nature of functions and which could be taken in this respect, no discrimination shall be made on the basis of gender in the implementation of the present law." Thanks to this favourable legal framework and to the outcome of efforts since independence to secure access for girls to education, the percentage of women holding management positions in the Chamber of Deputies is on the rise (from 32% in 2004 to 36% in 2009). [Tunisia, Questionnaire A]

Equal employment opportunities are created and gender-sensitive short listing is practiced at all times, although ultimately performance during interviews and merit result in appointment. [Zimbabwe, Questionnaire A]

Box 10.2

Testimonial: The difference women members have made for parliamentary staff

When I was vice-president of the Senate, the female members of staff were not allowed to wear trousers. They asked me to change this. I had already asked top functionaries in the Senate to change this. They said 'no no, this is not necessary'. Periodically, a limited assembly of the bureau takes place to discuss matters regarding the Senate's procedures and functioning. When the president was hindered, the vice-president has to chair the meeting. (...) During a certain meeting I was chairing, everybody stood up and wanted to leave the room after having discussed all the agenda topics. I called them back in, saying 'Colleagues, but there is still a varia point we have not discussed'. 'Oh, is there a varia?'. 'Yes, I have added another item on the agenda; I would like to discuss today the proposal to allow female members of the administrative staff to wear trousers'. Objections were raised: 'This is not the style of the Senate, this had not been discussed earlier'. I said that I didn't understand why there would be any objections against it, that it was totally outdated not to allow it, and that we should decide on it today. Then the point was raised that it was not elegant. I responded I felt offended, as I was wearing trousers that day. They responded: 'Oh no, president, you always dress very elegantly'. I replied that it couldn't pose a problem then for the administrative personnel as well to wear trousers. I then said that I would meet with the head of the administrative personnel to inform them of our decision." **Woman parliamentarian, Belgium**

Policies of recruitment and retention of parliamentary staff

Parliaments can improve the gender composition of their parliamentary staff by instituting various mechanisms to promote gender equality. Questionnaire responses reflect a widespread need for improvement in this area (see table 10.1). While half the parliaments responding to the questionnaire reported having formal equal opportunity policies for parliamentary staff, such policies were often the same as those applying to all government employees. Some parliaments, however, reported no such policy, inasmuch as equality was “taken for granted.” Affirmative action measures to promote women, for example, were not commonly reported. Almost two thirds of the responding parliaments reported having issued statements on non-discrimination in respect of staff retirement, but fewer (50%) had done so in respect of staff recruitment. The greatest area for improvement pertains to gender training: respondents reporting that their parliaments had implemented gender training for management and staff, or included a gender equality component in their staff induction training, were in the minority.

Table 10.1
Gender equality policies implemented in parliament (N= responses)

	Yes (%)	No (%)
A formal equal opportunities policy for parliamentary staff (N = 82)	56	44
Affirmative action/positive measures policy for women staff members (such as promotion...) (N = 83)	28	72
A statement on non-discrimination in the recruitment process (N = 78)	61	39
A statement on non-discrimination in the retirement process (N = 78)	50	50
Gender training for management and staff (N = 79)	29	71
Induction training includes a gender equality component (N = 79)	29	71

Source: Questionnaire A, www.gender-parliaments.org

Box 10.3

Selected responses: Policies for gender equality for parliamentary staff

In the introduction for new staff and also in the manual for staff the office of the parliament declares its policy about gender equality among parliamentary staff. [Iceland, Questionnaire A].

There are a number of Acts that provide protection in terms of equality in the workplace, and to prevent harassment and discrimination. The grounds on which discrimination is prohibited are laid down in this legislation and cover recruitment, access to employment, conditions of employment, training or experience and promotion. For further information on employment equality please see the website of the Equality Authority at www.Equality.ie. The policy for Parliament is laid down for all government departments and offices centrally by the Department of Finance. The terms of employment for parliamentary staff are laid down by the Department of Finance. On their website you can find reports and circulars on issues such as gender balance in government departments, anti-harassment policies and changes in relation to paternity leave (www.finance.gov.ie/ViewDoc.asp?fn=/documents/equality/main4.htm&CatID=29&m=c). [Ireland, Questionnaire A]

The National Assembly has a specific mechanism that ensures gender equality in the recruitment process. Under this mechanism, a screening committee is formed to check the job seeker's educational attainment (diplomas) and eligibility to fill the position regardless of his/her sex. The most competent, educated and suitable candidates are eventually chosen to fill the vacant position. Offices, departments and administrations in parliament are distributed equally to all employees, who have the same rights and obligations regardless of gender. [Kuwait, Questionnaire A]

To ensure that the civil service is able to attract a fair share of talent and recruit the candidate with the best fit overall to the requirements of the job and the culture of the organisation, recruitment is based on the following principles: (a) meritocracy, (b) impartiality and incorruptibility, and (c) efficiency. [Singapore, Questionnaire A]

The Equality Act (LEg) entered into force on 1st July 1996. It is an important instrument for promoting gender equality in real terms. The Act applies to all areas of professional life - from recruitment to in-house training and dismissal, salaries and sexual harassment in the workplace. The act prohibits any form of direct or indirect discrimination and makes provisions for financial assistance for innovative projects and consultancy services aimed at promoting gender equality in the professional sphere. The Federal Act on gender equality of 24 March 1995 (Gender Equality Act, LEg). [Switzerland, Questionnaire A]

Case Study 10.1 Legislative protection for parliamentary staff in Sweden

According to Swedish anti-discrimination law, employers are required by law to actively promote equal conditions for men and women and prevent discrimination between them. The Swedish Parliament Administration has developed an equality and diversity plan with goals and active measures to promote a process that leads to good results. The plan is monitored each year and is renewed every three years.

The main objectives of the equality and diversity plan are:

- Working conditions in the Swedish Parliament Administration should be such that they are suitable for both men and women. Both men and women should be able to influence their work situations.
- The Swedish Parliament Administration should be organised in such a way and have such an approach that makes it possible to combine work and parenthood.
- No employee shall be subjected to humiliating treatment such as victimisation, sexual harassment or harassment based on gender, ethnicity, religion or belief.
- Women and men should have equal opportunities for professional development. The Swedish Parliament Administration should take advantage of and benefit from the skills of both men and women.
- The Swedish Parliament Administration shall pursue a gender balance (40%-60%) in all organisational units and occupations and at all managerial levels.
- Salary policy and salary levels shall be determined in such a way that pay differentials are factual and not based on gender.

These objectives are broken down into quantitative short-term goals that are assessed every year.

Case study, Sweden

Codes of conduct for parliamentary staff

A little more than half the parliaments responding to the questionnaire reported having codes of conduct (or ethics) for parliamentary staff. Some of the codes cited were more detailed than others. "Guidelines" cited in the case of Denmark related to good behaviour. In India, both chambers of parliament had established staff conduct "Rules". In Jordan, parliamentary staff are required to sign a code, to signify clearly their acceptance and understanding of the rules.

Box 10.4 Selected responses: Codes of conduct for parliamentary staff

The Code of Conduct for parliamentary staff states that: The Parliamentary Service provides a fair, flexible, safe and rewarding workplace. [Australia, Questionnaire A]

In February 2007, the Senate Administration adopted the Statement of Values and Ethics of the Senate Administrations. [Canada, Questionnaire A]

The organisational vision states guidelines for good behaviour. [Denmark, Questionnaire A]

The Lok Sabha Secretariat (Conduct) Rules 1956 is applicable to the employees of the Lok Sabha Secretariat. [India, Questionnaire A]

The Code of Conduct of 11 July 2006. Employees were required to sign the said code distributed to them on 16 November 2009. The code heeds gender equality and applies it to all civil servants. [Jordan, Questionnaire A]

The special provisions provided for in the Staff Regulation shall apply to the parliamentary staff. Article 54: Responsibility for Conduct (Staff Regulation)

The employee shall be held liable for his/her conduct and shall be subject to disciplinary penalties if he/she – whether deliberately or out of negligence - fails to honour his/her obligations under the enforced regulations and laws, especially the obligations provided for in Articles 14 and 15 of the present legislative decree. Disciplinary prosecution shall not stand in lieu of the judicial prosecution of the concerned employee before the competent civil or criminal courts if need be.

[Lebanon, Questionnaire A]

The code of conduct includes a provision that staff must not discriminate against, or harass other staff on the grounds of sex, marital status, or family status. [New Zealand, Questionnaire A]

Parliamentary staff policies on sexual harassment

Almost 60 per cent of parliaments have no policy on sexual harassment for parliamentary staff. This is troubling, not least because of the working conditions and culture in some parliaments. Women parliamentarians interviewed from South Africa, for example, cited incidents of female staff being

sexually harassed by male members of parliament. They described a parliamentary climate in which women were considered sex objects or sexual service providers but were reluctant to take action against powerful members. The South African Parliament has a policy covering sexual harassment by staff but no policy offering redress for harassment by parliamentarians. A test case arose in 2006, when a senior member was found guilty of harassing a woman staff member. He

was temporarily “dis-endorsed” but reinstated a few months later.

There are, however, some good practice models of harassment policies operating in parliament. In Canada, for example, the policy covers sexual harassment and harassment in general, outlining related principles and a clear grievance mechanism (see following section for more on grievance mechanisms).

Box 10.5 Protection from harassment – the example of Canada

The House of Commons Administration Policy, *Prevention and Resolution of Harassment in the Workplace*, was approved in 2001.

Policy Statement: “Harassment is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. The House of Commons Administration is committed to providing a positive work environment that is free of harassment and discrimination. The Administration provides persons that it employs with mechanisms to resolve potential harassment situations early and takes appropriate and prompt action when harassment is found to have occurred in the workplace.” The policy covers “harassment” and “sexual harassment”.

Policy Principles: “The House of Commons Administration will endeavour to uphold the following principles: *Provide a Harassment Free Environment*: The organisation will protect the right of persons employed by the House of Commons Administration to work in a harassment-free environment and will ensure that managers and employees take appropriate action to protect others in the workplace by helping to create a harassment-free environment. *Provide Competent Address and Resolution*: The House of Commons Administration will encourage the reporting of all potential harassment incidents and provide competent, expedient, confidential and fair mechanisms for addressing and resolving harassment complaints. *Respect Confidentiality*: The House of Commons Administration will respect the confidentiality of all inquiries, whether or not they lead to a complaint of harassment. All persons involved in a harassment complaint are expected to take the necessary action to ensure the confidentiality of complaints. All documents gathered during the course of a harassment complaint will be treated in a manner that respects their personal nature.”

This Policy applies within the House of Commons Administration workplace and to all persons employed by the House of Commons Administration, including indeterminate and term employees and employees on assignment to or from other departments or agencies. (Canada, Questionnaire A)

Grievance procedures

Where they exist, grievance mechanisms offering redress for parliamentary staff victims of harassment are quite impressive. Most parliaments have appointed specific people to deal with complaints. In Israel, for example, the Knesset has a dedicated person responsible for dealing with cases of sexual harassment, while in India, committees have been specifically appointed to consider these matters. In Germany, a range of contact points are made available in such cases, including the Commissioner of Gender Equality, physicians, staff council representatives, human resource staff, an external psychosocial service, and representatives of disabled employees. A number of parliaments reported appointing women as official contact persons. In Australia, the Department of the House of Representatives has “Harassment Contact Officers”, who are peer officers of the department and act as first port of call to discuss harassment incidents. As illustrated by the examples below, parliaments offer a range of other procedures for dealing with such complaints, including a mediation process, counselling and provisions for official complaints.



Box 10.6

Selected responses: Examples of grievance procedures

Application of national law is communicated through a staff memorandum and in the welcome brochure (see relevant extract attached) on violence, mobbing and sexual harassment in the workplace. According to Article 29 paragraph 2 of the ROP, one must be treated with dignity and courtesy by one's supervisors, colleagues and subordinates. Obviously, one also has a duty in carrying out one's functions to treat each and every person with due respect. The Act of 11 June 2002 protects workers against violence, mobbing and sexual harassment, further to which the Senate appointed external advisers on prevention who specialize in the social and psychological aspects of the problem, and a trusted person within the organisation. The principal purpose of the external advisers and the trusted inside person is to assist victims, advise them and ensure that they are properly looked after. Victims are free to turn either to the external adviser or the trusted person, with whom they can file a complaint. Both external advisers and the trusted person collaborate in the development of appropriate procedures. The trusted person assists the external advisers to the extent possible and is in regular contact with them. **[Belgium, Questionnaire A]**

Policy on Workplace Harassment (revised 2008). Parliamentary staff through the Parliamentary Services Act 1999 and the associated procedures for Handling Suspected Breaches of the Code of Conduct. **[Australia, Questionnaire A]**

An establishment agreement concerning protection of employees and partnership-based conduct installs a multi-tiered process, in order to react to cases of discrimination, workplace bullying and sexual harassment. Victims can seek personal advice, information and support to solve the conflict at a contact point. Contact points are the Commissioner of Gender Equality, the company physicians, the staff council, the human resource department, psychosocial service or the Representative for Disabled Employees. If the problem cannot be solved through one of the contact points, the psychosocial service will act as a conflict coach or mediator. Serious conflicts are handled by the human resource department. They will try to find an amicable arrangement, but will also respond with sanctions (instructions, disciplinary warning letter or even discharge). **[Germany, Questionnaire A]**

In discrimination cases, employees can make a complaint to the rapporteur in charge of equal opportunities. On the basis of the rapporteur's written opinion a mediation process follows. The disapproved measures cannot take place until the end of the mediation process, but with a maximum of 10 days. In case of disagreement the employee can turn to the courts. **[Hungary, Questionnaire A]**

The Knesset has a person responsible for the status of women, who deals especially with sexual harassment. Currently the position is held by a woman deputy secretary general. (In 1998, the Law on Sexual Harassment of Women was passed, and since then the position exists in the Knesset.) **[Israel, Questionnaire A]**

The Lok Sabha Secretariat has a Grievance Redressal Committee to look into the grievances of Secretariat employees. The jurisdiction of the Committee, inter alia, includes all matters relating to conditions of service and welfare of the serving employees irrespective of gender. Similarly, in the Rajya Sabha, a three-member committee headed by a lady joint secretary has been constituted in the Secretariat to address the complaints relating to sexual harassment. The guidelines for addressing sexual harassment of women at the workplace laid down by the Supreme Court of India in 1997 are observed. **[India, Questionnaire A]**

For parliamentary staff, the Assembly's legal department rules on all matters related to gender equality at work are in line with the Constitution and the law. The department also weighs cases of harassment or sexual violence, which are referred to the judiciary when corroborated. **[Kuwait, Questionnaire A]**

Sexual harassment and violence are prohibited under the code of conduct. Acts of violence may be criminal offences and could render the perpetrator subject to prosecution. **[New Zealand, Questionnaire A]**

Table 10.2**Parental leave conditions of parliamentary staff** (N= responses)

	No special provisions exist	The provisions are the same as those prescribed by national law	The parliament has adopted its own policies	Countries in which parliaments have adopted their own policies
Maternity leave (N= 81)	6.2	90.1	3.7	Argentina, Japan, Oman
Paternity leave (N=72)	22.2	73.6	4.2	Japan, Oman, Switzerland
Parental leave (if different) (N=59)	25.4	67.8	6.8	Japan, Netherlands, Oman

Source: Questionnaire A, www.gender-parliaments.org**Box 10.7****Selected responses: Balancing work and family**

There is a parents-children room for the staff. It has a diaper changing table, toys and a crib. If the child of a mother or father gets sick, and cannot go into the children's daycare, parents are allowed to take the child with them and work in the parents-children room instead of their office for that day.

[Germany, Questionnaire A]

Limited funding of childcare facilities is allotted through the general provisions of the Parliament's budget (i.e. staff salaries, etc) [Greece, Questionnaire A]

Childcare subsidies provided. [Portugal, Questionnaire A]

The general rules and regulations governing public servants determines the provisions of Article 46 as follows: "State agents shall be entitled to special leave of twelve (12) consecutive weeks for maternity leave, two (2) weeks of which must be taken before delivery and six (6) after delivery. The act on preventing and cracking down on gender-based violence stipulates: "A woman who has delivered shall be entitled to maternity leave of three (3) months and one hour of breastfeeding per working day for twelve (12) months starting from the end of the maternity leave". [Rwanda, Questionnaire A]

The general rules and regulations governing public servants determines the provisions of Article 46 as follows: "State agents shall be entitled to special leave of twelve (12) consecutive weeks for maternity leave, two (2) weeks of which must be taken before delivery and six (6) after delivery. The act on preventing and cracking down on gender-based violence stipulates: "A woman who has delivered shall be entitled to maternity leave of three (3) months and one hour of breastfeeding per working day for twelve (12) months starting from the end of the maternity leave". [Rwanda, Questionnaire A]

Parliamentary staff combining work and family

Maternity and paternity leave provisions are generally better for staff – often because prescribed by national law – than for parliamentarians. In very few parliaments have provisions been specifically made for parliamentary staff. Provisions in Finland encourage men to take time off following the birth of their children. Fathers taking the last two weeks of full-time or partial parental leave are entitled to paternity leave for an additional 1-12 weekdays (known as "paternity month"). Similarly, in Spain, under

the 2007 Gender Equality Law, new fathers are entitled to 13 days of paternity leave. This benefit is expected to be gradually increased to four months by 2013.

Detailed responses noted a variety of mechanisms to facilitate women's (and men's) return to work following the birth of a child. Germany's parliament offers a parents room equipped with baby-friendly features, such as a changing table and crib. In Rwanda, mothers are allowed one hour a day to breastfeed during the first year of their child's life. Alternatively, some parliaments provide funding for childcare fees.

Conclusion

If parliaments need to become more gender-sensitive toward their members, the same is equally true of the hundreds and thousands of people who staff them. Working conditions for parliamentary staff are often the same as those for public servants, even though, it should be remembered, their hours can be just as long as those of parliamentarians when parliament is sitting.

Through their attitudes and behaviour, parliamentarians themselves can have an impact on the workplace culture for parliamentary staff. This research uncovered examples of this in the dress codes for parliamentary staff (which women members have fought to relax) and in cases of sexual harassment (perpetrated by members on staff). For these reasons and others, there is a clear need to continually examine how the workplace culture and infrastructure affects parliamentary staff.

Chapter eleven

Conclusions and recommendations

“One of the challenges is that the parliament must also be included in these processes. Gender mainstreaming and budgeting cannot only be realised through the administration or the government, but it has to be realized within the parliament as well. I think we have to institutionalize this somewhere. It will not derive from the mere motivation or talent of some individuals in parliament who accidentally have expertise on the matter. A lot of the young colleagues who enter parliament do not have that baggage anymore. Because, of course, they have entered politics in a time in which they no longer have to challenge [the status quo]. But this means that they have lost some of the skills to pick up on gender inequalities. I [want to know] which parliamentary procedures or mechanisms we [need to] create. It is a blind spot. What is the parliamentary mechanism to ensure, to realise all those mainstreaming processes which we have come to praise and want so much? Nothing will happen on its own. Everything has to be given its own place, given its own mechanism. This mechanism does not exist now. The parliament will have to create something for it.” **Woman parliamentarian, Belgium**

In this chapter you will find:

- The main findings of the report;
 - Recommendations for gender-sensitive mechanisms and policies in parliament.
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The gender-sensitive parliament: a recap

A gender-sensitive parliament is one that responds to the needs and interests of both men and women in its structures, operations, methods and in its work. A gender-sensitive parliament is founded on the principle of gender equality – that is, that both men and women have an equal right to participate in its structures and processes, without discrimination and without recrimination. A gender equality policy provides direction for the setting of priorities and strategic, well targeted interventions to achieve them.

A gender-sensitive parliament also promotes gender equality.

A parliament that meets the basic premise of gender equality is one whose rules: are accessible to all members do not exclude, restrict or discriminate against women; and provide for gender-neutral

language. It is an organisation that accepts the need to review all policies, laws and practices from a gender perspective, either through a dedicated committee on gender equality or by sharing that responsibility across all of its bodies.

It is an institution that favours less aggressive parliamentary language and behaviour; more family-friendly sitting hours; the introduction of childcare facilities and parental leave; and gender-sensitive training programmes for all members.

Using everyday opportunities to mainstream gender equality

A gender-sensitive parliament mainstreams gender equality throughout its work processes and outputs, with members assuming responsibility for mainstreaming gender in their everyday activities: legislating, overseeing and representing.

In **legislating**, parliamentarians develop and debate laws and policies and review and approve their national budgets. From a gender perspective, they can initiate gender equality laws and institute gender-based analysis of all legislation; ask questions during debate about the effect of legislation on men and women; and consider whether taxation and spending allocations are equitable for men and women, or at least detrimental to neither.

In drafting legislation, members of parliament always need to remember who the audience is, and how a bill may affect different sub-groups of that audience, most particularly women and men, girls and boys.

In carrying out their **oversight** responsibilities, members scrutinise government activity and expenditure through debate, questioning and inquiries. For example:

- during question time (or interpellation), they can ask ministers about the effectiveness of their programmes from a gender equality standpoint, generating publicity about related issues;
- They can send written questions to ministers or their departments requiring responses in greater depth with sex-disaggregated data;
- during budget debates, they can question ministers on public expenditures and their impact on women and men, girls and boys;
- as committee members, they can question a broad range of groups and individuals, including public agencies, academics and private organisations, about their views on the effectiveness of government programmes and activities; and
- they can use the media to publicise their findings.

The **representative** function of parliament includes being accountable to the people, representing the needs and interests of citizens and informing constituents about debates, new laws, government spending and policies. From a gender perspective, members need to ensure that they understand and reflect the needs of diverse groups in their constituencies. They can do this by ensuring equal access for all citizens to their district offices, especially at times when both men and women can attend.

Members of parliament also need to network effectively with a broad range of groups – both among their own constituents and nationwide – including representatives of national women’s machineries, NGOs, unions, and academics working on gender equality issues. Women’s parliamentary caucuses have been created to facilitate this effort. Members can also use opportunities such as conferences, forums, study tours, exposure visits and workshops to network with other parliamentarians, the media and civil society. Building and maintaining strong

networks enables parliamentarians to keep informed about gender issues. Above all, men and women need to work together to promote gender equality.

Ultimately, parliamentarians need to take every opportunity available, not only to ask questions, but to publicise the answers they receive. Where gaps exist, they can propose solutions, either through amendments to current law or entirely new legislation.

Making systematic change for gender equality

Improving the inclusivity of parliaments is a multi-faceted challenge for all. In addition to a broader, more fundamental push for democracy, it requires a combination of greater numbers of women; stronger gender-sensitive infrastructure; more democratic and accountable political parties; and stronger gender equality policy and legislation. The recommendations on these points are as follows.

Increase the number of women in parliament and strengthen their presence

While women’s representation in parliaments has increased over time, it does not yet match women’s representation in society more broadly. In pursuing that goal, parliaments should be implementing legislated special measures to ensure that greater numbers of women are selected by parties to run for election and occupy “electable” positions on the ballot. Amendments can be made to electoral laws, constitutions and political party platforms. Measures legislated should include sanctions where parties do not meet the standards set out in legislation.

While numbers of women are important, it is also vital to have women in positions of parliamentary leadership. There are relatively few women presiding officers (or deputy officers) in the parliaments of the world. While they are increasingly taking up the position of committee chair, women tend to chair committees on the “soft” portfolio areas, such as women’s affairs, labour and education. The process of appointing women to committees is dominated by the political parties. Change here would require a more transparent method for matching members’ diverse abilities, work experience and preferences with committee assignments. Affirmative action – giving preference to women over men where qualifications are equal – would also improve the acceptability of women leaders. Iraq is a positive role model in that it has reserved positions of power for women in proportion to their representation in parliament (25%).

Institute or improve gender-sensitive infrastructure and parliamentary culture

It is a notable finding of this report that while some women have faced, or witnessed, occasions of discrimination or condescension, others have felt very comfortable

working in the parliamentary environment. This notwithstanding, there is a common misunderstanding about the role of gender equality policy, particularly on matters related to sexual harassment. Codes of conduct need to have regard to gender concerns, and policies are required to ensure that harassment is seen as a discriminatory practice not to be tolerated. Adequate complaint/grievance procedures should be a part of those policies. In Costa Rica, it was suggested that the parliamentary culture would be improved if all members were required to attend an introductory course on gender and parliamentary work.

It would be useful for parliaments to analyse more in detail the “maleness” of the institution, looking into culture, mores and practices in the institution’s everyday functioning – the gendered nature of procedures, speech, rituals or ceremonies, etc. In one parliament, it was suggested that such maleness could be analysed based on the art works displayed in parliament buildings, or the names given to meeting rooms.

How parliament communicates to its representatives – and how gender issues are treated by both men and women – also needs to be reviewed. Gender issues need to be given more visibility – as increasingly demanded by an ever more socially-responsible electorate.

There is an almost universal view that parliaments, as work places, must respond to the growing need for balance between work and family life. They could start by rearranging the sitting hours so as to eliminate late-night sessions, or sessions during school holidays. As another example, this survey uncovered that parliaments have generally not created child-friendly spaces within the parliamentary precinct, be they crèches, family rooms, or areas for women to breastfeed their newborns. These are things parliaments need to do: in increasing numbers, younger parliamentarians – both men and women – are having children. By providing such facilities, moreover, parliaments can serve as important role models for other organisations in the wider community. Not surprisingly, both men and women parliamentarians commented frequently on the need for more family-friendly spaces within the parliamentary precincts – spaces where families can be together while mother or father works.

Parliaments could also set a better example in adapting their maternity/paternity/parental leave benefits to the specific circumstances of the parliamentary workplace.

Expand the role of parliament in gender mainstreaming and develop adequate mechanisms to implement mainstreaming processes

Parliaments require mechanisms through which to mainstream gender equality concerns, be they dedicated parliamentary committees, women’s caucuses or the parliamentary methods traditionally used to ensure accountability. Where dedicated parliamentary committees are established, they need

to have strong links – formalised relationships – with outside women’s machinery and research institutes, to ensure they have up-to-date, accurate information. A good practice followed in Pakistan is for committee reports to be sent directly to the relevant minister for action.

Where gender mainstreaming efforts are concentrated in a dedicated gender equality committee, that committee should have the same role, responsibilities and powers as other parliamentary committees, and should be similarly resourced. Where possible, such committees should employ their support staff for no less than a full parliamentary term, to ensure that gender expertise is not lost too frequently. It is vital that these committees be recognised as permanent parliamentary structures.

The process by which committees mainstream gender should be explicit and clearly spelled out in public information materials and on the parliamentary website. Committees on gender equality should have systematic consultation processes with women’s organisations and gender experts, particularly when reviewing draft legislation. The committee should have access to sex-disaggregated data, so that initiatives can be analysed from a cost-benefit standpoint.

Women’s parliamentary caucuses have also forged strong bonds of solidarity among women for the improvement of gender equality in society. Caucuses have worked most effectively where party lines can be put aside, to focus on issues that women of all political persuasions can agree on. Where gender mainstreaming is entrusted to a women’s caucus, that caucus needs to be valued as an important parliamentary body, provided with adequate support, and spared derogatory remarks.

Following the example of Latin America, national parliaments should also consider establishing technical units to provide the specific information needed to advance gender mainstreaming in all areas of parliament.

Ensure that responsibility for gender equality is shared by all parliamentarians, men and women, and that the strategy for gender mainstreaming is evenly distributed across all parliamentary work

Parliaments need to change how they address gender equality concerns and increase their commitment to gender mainstreaming. Not enough men or women are committed to advancing the gender agenda within their respective committees, so as to permeate the entire legislature. Gender mainstreaming must not be “ghetto-ised”: all parliamentary committees should be involved. Without necessarily duplicating work on gender issues, all committees should have clear processes for considering the gender implications of what they do.

A first step is to have at least two women present on all parliamentary committees, not because women have to

represent women but because women are the ones – for the most part so far – who keep gender issues on the agenda. Having at least two women reduces the burden of being the only woman on a committee, and perhaps the only member to view matters through a gender equality lens. An alternative would be to have a man and a woman designated as responsible for gender mainstreaming on each committee.

A second step is to identify and rally men who are sympathetic to the gender cause, involving them in gender equality committees, women’s caucuses, debates on gender equality issues and outreach activities. Men should be invited to sponsor and take ownership of gender equality legislation. Sensitising men has been seen as important of this effort. Men are being included in public celebrations of International Women’s Day, for instance, or asked to join study tours or training seminars on gender equality, so as to appreciate gender issues as they relate to their communities. Men have also been entrusted with overseeing gender mainstreaming processes.

A third step is for members to gain more familiarity with existing parliamentary mechanisms – debates, question time with ministers, “call attention” notices, petitions or grievance debates. This can be achieved through induction or orientation training that includes a gender perspective, for both new and incumbent parliamentarians. However, gender-specific measures, such as gender advisors or (multiple) gender focal points on each committee, should also be institutionalised.

Finally, parliaments need to enhance their research capacity on gender equality issues. Research services need to be well equipped with books, computers and online research databases, so that men and women have access to the best information with which to make their contributions to parliamentary debate.

Make political parties more democratic and transparent

Political parties are generally not considered open or transparent organisations. Despite the rhetoric of being open to women’s participation, parties remain dominated by men. This is an issue because political parties are increasingly the dominant form of political organisation and the mechanism through which women and men can pursue a legislative platform for gender equality.

The main avenue for women’s participation within parties is through a “women’s wing” or “organisation”. While beneficial in some ways, this strategy can also leave women ostracized. Parties are nonetheless working to foster gender equality policy-making through seminars and lectures by gender experts on important topics, and through the creation of strong links with stakeholders in academia and non-governmental organisations. Parties should push for amendments to their internal statutes

and rules to ensure women’s representation in their memberships and leadership positions.

Women have encountered barriers to equal participation in the executive and decision-making structures of their parties: either they are seriously outnumbered by men, or their participation requires resources not readily at the disposal of some women. Moreover, both women and men are frequently challenged in their ability to initiate legislative proposals not agreed to by their parties, facing serious consequences if they do, including expulsion from the party. Some women have in fact resorted to remaining “silent” for the sake of party consensus.

It appears that parties rarely adopt gender mainstreaming as a comprehensive strategy for pursuing gender equality, often for a lack of resources (both financial and human) or political will. Some parties see no need for gender mainstreaming. Others *do* see such a need, and the concern there is about monitoring and evaluating their gender mainstreaming work. The need for monitoring networks is an area requiring far more strength and support. In addition, parties could adopt overarching gender equality plans with clear mainstreaming strategies, and establish dedicated party committees to oversee their implementation.

Strengthen gender equality legislation and policy

Gender equality laws have certainly been pursued in a number of countries. Where they have not been, such laws should be enacted. Where gender equality laws are now over ten years old, they should be updated to include frameworks for gender mainstreaming. These laws need to be supported by adequate infrastructure, such as committees with commensurate powers to monitor their implementation and, more particularly, their gender mainstreaming frameworks. Some parliaments were of the view that legislative impact assessments (which currently accompany each legislative initiative) could include a gender component.

Detailed plans of action outlining concrete measures would also help parliaments identify gaps in their legislation and overall policy objectives. This could entail an initial “gender audit” of what has been done and what remains to be done, as currently practiced in Rwanda.

Offer gender awareness training seminars for all members and parliamentary staff

This study has uncovered varied understandings of the meaning of gender, gender mainstreaming and gender-sensitive parliaments. Some parliaments are well versed in these concepts; others are less aware or knowledgeable about them or less inclined to consider them in their work (technical, administrative and legislative). Conceptually, there is confusion about how parliaments should oversee gender issues. They may wish to organise training workshops on some concepts, which should include the message that gender equality issues are “everyone’s business”.

Some of the members surveyed saw a need for greater awareness about the presence and situation of women legislators, including statistical breakdowns, by gender, on member performance over time. Parliaments should make this an ongoing effort.

Finally, for both members and staff, there is a significant need to build capacity for gender analysis. Checklists to analyse legislation from a gender perspective, such as the one created in Cambodia, need to be developed in every parliament, and their use monitored.

Improve the gender sensitivity of parliamentary staff

Another finding of the study is that work in parliamentary departments is often sex-segregated. A more equitable distribution of work, not based on sex stereotypes, should be the clear intent of gender equality policies in these workplaces. Also, gender policies should foster the promotion of greater numbers of women to leadership positions, through affirmative action favourable toward women, if necessary.

Finally, training for functionaries on gender equity issues has been limited. Parliaments rarely acknowledge gender experts as skilled professionals, or as an asset to be valued in parliamentary work. It has been a considerable challenge to attract and retain technical talent in this field, a trend that needs to be reversed.

Gender-sensitive parliaments

What does this mean?

A gender-sensitive parliament responds to the needs and interests of both men and women in its structures, operations, methods and work.






Is your parliament gender-sensitive?

- 1 How many women are there in your parliament? What positions do they hold?
- 2 Are there laws to support gender equality? Does your parliament have gender equality objectives and a gender equality plan of action? Are workplace policies in tune with men and women's realities?
- 3 Are gender considerations integral to the work of parliament?
- 4 Is the parliamentary culture non-sexist? Are there facilities suited to men and women?
- 5 Are men shouldering their gender equality responsibilities?
- 6 How sensitive are political parties to gender?

This poster can be downloaded from www.ipu.org

Inter-Parliamentary Union

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Appendix I

About this project: objectives and methodology

In 2008, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) began a collaborative project to examine the gender sensitivity of parliaments around the world, working in partnership with the UNDP Parliamentary Development Initiative in the Arab Region and with International IDEA in Latin America.

The project builds on the IPU's 30 years of research on gender and parliament, and directly follows on from the IPU's 2008 research publication *Equality in politics: A Survey of women and men in parliaments*. A clear finding of that survey was that women are overwhelmingly the main drivers of change in terms of gender equality in parliament, and that there is scope to lay some of the responsibility for that change with parliaments more broadly. The question then became: what are parliaments, as institutions, doing to encourage and foster gender equality? What policies inform their gender equality efforts? Are the institutional structures of parliaments around the world gender-sensitive?

The purpose of the Gender-sensitive Parliaments Project was to gather primary information on the ways in which parliaments can best become gender-sensitive institutions and effectively mainstream gender into their work. Primary research (including survey questionnaires, face-to-face interviews with parliamentarians and parliamentary staff and the production of country case studies) was carried out between 2009 and 2010.

The project's objectives

1. Increase knowledge on gender-sensitive parliaments

The project's aim was to investigate the gender sensitivity of parliaments in terms of their operational and institutional culture. A parliament's operational culture is reflected in different ways: the facilities available, sitting times, budget allocations and services. Institutional culture refers to the unwritten rules, norms and mores adopted over time in institutions primarily designed by men.

The project also set out to distil current best practices for mainstreaming gender into policy development and parliamentary work and to examine the mechanisms best suited for that purpose, such as parliamentary committees, caucuses of women parliamentarians or the use of gender budgeting.

2. Provide tools for parliaments and other stakeholders on gender-sensitive parliaments and gender mainstreaming

Based on the research conducted, the project aimed to highlight examples of best practice and distil guidelines and benchmarks for use in assessing a parliament's gender sensitivity and capacity for gender mainstreaming. The guidelines would also outline the various reform measures parliaments could take to become more gender-sensitive institutions.

3. Build capacity for gender-sensitive parliaments

Another aim of the project was to bolster the capacity of parliaments as gender-sensitive institutions. Measures for that purpose include technical assistance and training activities to support the capacity of parliamentary committees and caucuses for dealing with gender equality matters. A series of activities are planned to promote these activities in parliaments and raise awareness among key stakeholders

Research methodology

Three sets of **questionnaires** (see Appendix II) were designed in 2008 following consultations with parliamentarians and experts on gender and parliament. These questionnaires were directed to:

- 1) Parliamentary authorities, seeking information on policies, frameworks and infrastructure that may provide for inclusive parliaments;
- 2) Parliamentary (party) groups in parliament, seeking information on their decision-making processes and inclusiveness; and
- 3) Parliamentarians, seeking their views and perspectives on the inclusiveness of parliaments.

Ninety-five responses to the first questionnaire were received from parliamentary authorities in 77 countries. Seventy-one parliamentary party groups from 42 countries completed the second questionnaire, and 123 parliamentarians from 50 countries responded to the third. The responses came in equal numbers from men and women members.

Responses to each survey were entered into an online database created with the assistance of the Swedish-based internet technology consultancy firm *Transmachina* and maintained at www.gender-parliaments.org.

In addition to the questionnaires, face-to-face interviews were held with men and women parliamentarians from every region of the world, many as part of country case studies prepared between 2008 and 2009. Countries were selected on the basis of recent innovations and emerging good practices in their respective parliaments. Fourteen case studies as well as a regional report were prepared for each region, in the countries shown below:

Africa: Burkina Faso, Rwanda, South Africa

Arab States: Jordan, Tunisia

Asia-Pacific: Australia, Cambodia, Malaysia, Viet Nam

Europe: Belgium, Spain, Sweden

Latin America: Argentina, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Peru

Based on visits to (and observation of) parliaments and meetings with a range of stakeholders, including members, parliamentary administration staff and (in some cases) civil society representatives, each national case study aimed to:

- Identify the main entry points for gender mainstreaming in parliament, i.e., the avenues through which a gender equality perspective can be shared, or a forum where women members of parliament can debate issues of mutual concern. Such entry points could include a parliamentary committee (e.g., on gender equality), a women's caucus with research capability, gender budgeting initiatives, plenary debates, liaison with civil society, etc.
- Assess how "gender-sensitive" the parliament is based on the special infrastructure or arrangements it provides, such as feeding rooms or crèches, budget allocations for gender concerns, a review of sitting times to address the needs of members with families and the use of gender-neutral/sensitive language.
- Examine potentially discriminatory "unwritten" rules, practices and mores, such as "old boys' clubs", harassment, language, exclusion, etc.
- Analyse how the parliament is performing in terms of gender mainstreaming, identifying good practices and highlighting challenges that need to be addressed.

Profile of parliamentarians

Numbers and origins of respondents

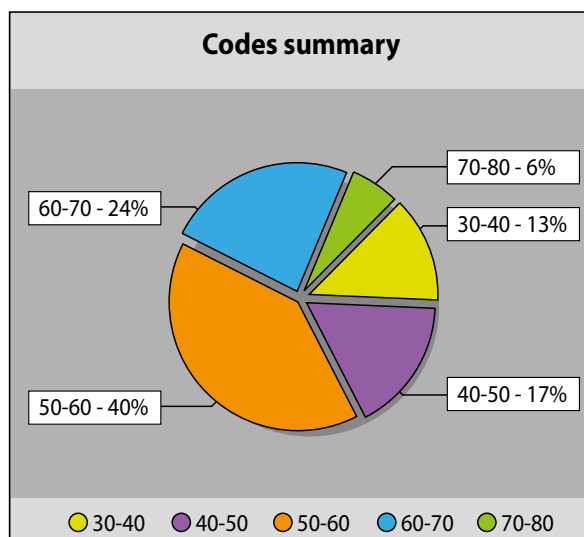
Between 2009 and 2010, 123 members from 50 countries responded to the IPU's questionnaire for parliamentarians. Fifty-two per cent of the respondents were men, and 48 per cent were women, so the report captures the views of both sexes on gender equality.

The respondents came from every region but the Pacific, and predominantly from Latin America (29%), Europe (25%) and Sub-Saharan Africa (18%).

Region	Female	Male	Total
Americas	16	19	35
Arab States	6	13	19
Asia	8	6	14
Europe	12	18	30
Nordic Countries	-	1	1
Pacific	-	-	-
Sub-Saharan Africa	16	8	24
Total	58	65	123

Age of parliamentarians

Seventy percent of the respondents were over the age of 50 (mostly between 50 and 60). Seventeen per cent were between 40 and 50, with only 13 per cent between 30 and 40.



Civil status

The vast majority of respondents were married or cohabitating: 57 per cent of the women and 93 per cent of the men. There are clear differences for this indicator between men and women (see table below). Women respondents were far more likely to be divorced, widowed or separated (27%, compared with 5% of the men) or single (16%, compared with 2% of the men).

Civil status	Women		Men	
	n	%	n	%
Married/cohabiting	32	57%	55	93%
Single	9	16%	1	2%
Divorced/widowed/separated	15	27%	3	5%
Total	56	100	59	100

Levels of education attained

Sixty per cent of the women and 70 per cent of the men respondents had postgraduate university degrees. None of the respondents had less than a secondary school qualification. Women were slightly more likely (38%) to hold a university or polytechnic degree than men (27%). This ranks parliamentarians, on average, as very highly educated professionals.

Highest level of education attained	Women		Men	
	n	%	n	%
No formal education	0	0	0	0
Primary school only	0	0	0	0
Secondary school only	1	2	2	3
University or polytechnic degree	21	38	17	27
Post-graduate university degree	22	40	32	52
Other higher education	11	20	11	18
Total	55	100	62	100

It is interesting to note that women in certain regions are more highly qualified than their male counterparts. Many women parliamentarians in the Arab region, for example, have academic backgrounds. In Kuwait, the first four women candidates elected to parliament are all academics and PhDs.

Occupational background

The survey asked respondents about their occupation prior to entering parliament. The most common backgrounds reported by men were the legal profession and the civil service or local administration, each accounting for 16 per cent. The women most commonly reported backgrounds in the education profession. An equal proportion of male and female respondents came from political party backgrounds (8%). Women were slightly more numerous than men in coming from civil society, journalism, social work and nursing backgrounds. Civil society organisations in particular are shown to remain a strong source of support for women seeking elective office.

Occupation prior to entering parliament	Women		Men	
	n	%	n	%
Legal profession	5	10	10	16
Political party official	4	8	5	8
Civil service and local administration	6	12	10	16
Finance, management or business	5	10	5	8
Education	9	17	5	8
Journalism, broadcasting, media	1	2	0	0
International civil service	0	0	1	2
Home-making, care-taking	0	0	0	0
Social work	1	2	0	0
Agriculture/farming	0	0	2	3
Sciences	0	0	0	0
Writer, literary, artist	1	2	0	0
Architect, surveyor, engineer	2	4	2	3
Armed services	0	0	0	0
Clergy	0	0	1	2
Clerical, secretarial, administration	0	0	1	2
Trade union official	0	0	1	2
Civil society	1	2	0	0
Research	1	2	0	0
Physician, dentist	3	6	5	8
Nursing	3	6	0	0
Other (explain)	10	19	13	21
Total	50	100	61	100

Constituency represented

Members were asked to indicate the type of constituency they represented. While a similar number of men and women represented "nation-wide" constituencies (28% of the women and 27% of the men), women were more likely to hold seats for urban districts (38%, compared with 27% of the men), while men were more likely to hold "semi-urban" seats (24%, compared with 11% of the women).

Type of constituency	Women		Men	
	n	%	n	%
Rural	11	21	9	18
Semi-urban	6	11	12	24
Urban	20	38	13	27
National/nation-wide	15	28	13	27
None	1	2	2	4
Total	53	100	49	100

Parliamentary terms served

Forty-five per cent of the respondents (men and women) had been directly elected from a party list. There were, however, greater differences between men and women directly elected by a constituency: almost half of the men respondents were more often elected to these seats, while just over 35 per cent of women were. Women were slightly more likely to be appointed by the head of state or government, or by a series of “other” means.

Mode of obtaining a seat	Women		Men	
	n	%	n	%
Directly elected from a party list	25	45	25	42
Directly elected by a constituency	20	36	28	47
Indirect election	3	5	3	5
Nominated by the assembly/parliament	0	0	0	0
Appointed by the head of state/government	2	4	1	2
Other	6	11	3	5
Total	56	100%	60	100%

There were also some significant differences in the number of attempts men and women had made to stand for parliament. While 25 per cent of the men respondents had tried four times or more, only 8 per cent of the women had. The majority of women had stood either once (44%) or twice (36%).

Stood for parliament	Women		Men	
	n	%	n	%
Once	22	44%	26	47%
Twice	18	36%	12	22%
Three times	6	12%	3	5%
Four times or more	4	8%	14	25%
Total	50	100%	55	100%

The finding that women tend to stand for parliament on fewer occasions obviously translates into the number of times women have been elected to parliament. Again, 20 per cent of the men, but only 4 per cent of the women, had been elected four times or more. Eighty-five per cent of the women and 75 per cent of the men had been elected once or twice.

Been elected to parliament	Women		Men	
	n	%	n	%
Once	28	58	30	54
Twice	13	27	12	21
Three times	5	10	3	5
Four times or more	2	4	11	20
Total	48	100	56	100

Seeking re-election

Respondents to the IPU’s questionnaire for parliamentarians revealed that more women members (28%) than men (14%) were of the view that women would be less likely to seek re-election. On average, however, members were mostly of the view that women were as likely to seek re-election as men.

Likelihood of women seeking re-election			
	More likely than men	About the same as men	Less likely than men
Women	11%	61%	28%
Men	7%	79%	14%
Average	9%	71%	20%

Where members elaborated on their views, they mentioned family commitments and political party “gatekeepers” as possible explanations for women not seeking re-election. Most respondents, however, attributed the same level of ambition to men and women and saw no real obstacle to women’s re-election.

Appendix II

Questionnaires

Questionnaire for Parliamentary Authorities

GENDER COMPOSITION OF PARLIAMENT

1. What is the gender composition of the parliament?

2. Are any special measures instituted by law to facilitate the presence of women parliamentarians in parliament?

Yes

No

If yes: What types of special measures are in use?

Tick all that apply	Special measures	Details including number of seats	Date introduced	Source/law

3. What is the gender composition of members of the bureau/leadership of parliament?

Total (list positions applicable, e.g. Speaker, Deputy Speaker, Secretary General, Quaestor, etc.)	Man	Woman

4. What is the gender composition of committee chairs, deputy chairs and rapporteurs in parliament?

	Total	Men	Women	How often is the position renewed?

5. Please list the gender composition of the following committees only (if they are applicable).

	Name of committee	Total members	Men	Women
	Family / Children / Youth/ Elderly / Disabled			
	Women's Affairs / Gender Equality			
	Education			
	Trade / Industry			
	Foreign Affairs (including foreign aid)			
	Health			
	Public Works / Territorial Planning			
	Agriculture / Food / Forestry / Fishing			
	Home Affairs / Immigration (including integration and refugees)			
	Finance / Budget			

6. Are there any special measures instituted by parliament (formally or informally) to ensure women serve as chairpersons or deputy chairpersons of parliamentary committees and/or in the bureau?

Yes No

7. What is the gender composition of the staff in parliament?
Please complete the categories that apply in your parliament, and add others as needed.

	Total	Men	Women
All parliamentary staff (widest possible count)			
Political appointments			
Senior managers			
Department heads			
Advisors/researchers			
Clerks			
Parliamentary assistants			
Secretarial			

8. Are there any special measures instituted by parliament to ensure women hold management positions?

Yes No

9. Has the parliament implemented any of the following to promote gender equality among parliamentary staff?

	Yes	No
A formal equal opportunities policy for parliamentary staff		
A statement on non-discrimination in the recruitment process		
A statement on non-discrimination in the retirement process		
Affirmative action/positive measures policy for women staff members (such as promotion...)		
Gender training for management and staff		
Induction training includes a gender equality component		

POLICIES OF THE PARLIAMENT

10. Does the parliament have a gender equality policy?

Yes No

11. Which policy/law determines the maternity/paternity leave or parental leave conditions of parliamentarians?

Policy/law	Select as applicable		
Maternity leave	<input type="checkbox"/> No special provisions exist	<input type="checkbox"/> The provisions are the same as those prescribed by national law	<input type="checkbox"/> The parliament has adopted its own policies
Paternity leave	<input type="checkbox"/> No special provisions exist	<input type="checkbox"/> The provisions are the same as those prescribed by national law	<input type="checkbox"/> The parliament has adopted its own policies
Parental leave (if different from above)	<input type="checkbox"/> No special provisions exist	<input type="checkbox"/> The provisions are the same as those prescribed by national law	<input type="checkbox"/> The parliament has adopted its own policies

12. Which policy/law determines the maternity/paternity leave or parental leave conditions of parliamentary staff?

Policy/law	Select as applicable		
Maternity leave	<input type="checkbox"/> No special provisions exist	<input type="checkbox"/> The provisions are the same as those prescribed by national law	<input type="checkbox"/> The parliament has adopted its own policies
Paternity leave	<input type="checkbox"/> No special provisions exist	<input type="checkbox"/> The provisions are the same as those prescribed by national law	<input type="checkbox"/> The parliament has adopted its own policies
Parental leave (if different from above)	<input type="checkbox"/> No special provisions exist	<input type="checkbox"/> The provisions are the same as those prescribed by national law	<input type="checkbox"/> The parliament has adopted its own policies

13. When parliamentarians are on maternity/paternity or parental leave is there a parliamentary policy specifying how the position/vacancy is filled?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
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14. Does the parliament have a code of conduct (or code of ethics)?

For parliamentarians	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
For parliamentary staff	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes

15. Does the parliament have a policy on sexual harassment and/or violence?

For parliamentarians	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
For parliamentary staff	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes

16. Does the parliament have a policy on equal access to resources, such as financial benefits, allowances, office space and computers?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
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17. Does the parliament's media strategy promote gender equality requirements in any of the following?

The parliamentary website	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Press releases	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Language (use of gender-sensitive language)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Other, please specify	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

18. Does the parliament have a policy or complaints procedure that deals with gender equality related matters or harassment?

For parliamentarians	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
For parliamentary staff	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes

OPERATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS OF THE PARLIAMENT

19. How much time is devoted to the following in parliament?

Activity	Please provide details as applicable (use averages if times are irregular)
Sitting times	
Total number of sittings per year	

Number of days per sitting	
Hours of sitting per day	
Committee work	
Total number of hours per week during sitting times	
Plenary	
Total number of hours per week during sitting times	
Vacation time/recess	
Total number of days per year	
Constituency work	
Total number of days per year	

20. Do parliamentary sitting times accommodate the needs of parliamentarians with family (or caring) responsibilities? Check all that apply.			
	Yes	No	Debated but not adopted
Night sittings discontinued			
Sittings aligned with school calendar			
Longer periods in constituencies			
Other, please specify			

21. Have any measures been implemented to support the needs of parliamentarians in fulfilling their parental roles? Check all that apply.			
	Yes	No	Debated but not adopted
Childcare facilities provided in parliament			
Special arrangements for breastfeeding mothers			
Proxy voting for parliamentarians who are absent because of child care responsibilities			
Flexible working hours			
Family room			
Financial assistance to parliamentarians for childcare			
Travel allowances for family members provided for commuting between constituency and parliament			
Other, please specify			

22. Do parliamentary rules and practices ensure non-discrimination? (for example: language and behaviour, dress codes,)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

23. Does parliament's budget contain any gender specific allocations (for example, childcare facilities and training programmes)? Please list other allocations as appropriate.			
	Yes	No	Specify how much is allocated
Childcare facilities			
Gender equality training			

GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE WORK OF PARLIAMENT

24. Which parliamentary bodies deal specifically with gender equality issues?

(Note: 'Parliamentary body' includes caucuses, commissions, committees, sub-commissions, sub-committees etc.) Please list and describe all bodies that deal with gender equality

25. Are there mechanisms for mainstreaming gender across the work of parliament?

Gender advisors/specialists	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Gender focal points	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Gender-sensitive budgeting	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Hearings with women's groups	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Submissions from women's groups	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Sex disaggregated data in legislative work	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Liaison with national women's machinery	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Training on gender equality	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

26. Has parliament implemented any of the following?

	Yes	No	Please explain
Disseminated information on gender equality issues to members of parliament and staff			
Celebrated International Women's Day (8 March)			
Equipped its library with recent information on gender issues			
Other, please specify			

27. Are there any mechanisms to ensure parliamentary oversight of government action in relation to gender?

28. Please provide details on any major laws or motions regarding gender equality that have been passed in the last 5 years.

GOOD PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES

29. Please describe any other good practices from your parliament about ensuring gender equality in the operations and outputs of parliament.

30. Please describe the major challenges in mainstreaming gender into the work of parliament.

Questionnaire to parliamentary party groups

1. Name of parliamentary group:

2. Is your parliamentary group a coalition of multiple groups?

Yes No

3. Does your party identify with any of the following party international groups?

<input type="checkbox"/> Centrist Democrat International	<input type="checkbox"/> International Democrat Union	<input type="checkbox"/> Liberal International	<input type="checkbox"/> Socialist International	<input type="checkbox"/> Global Greens	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (explain)	<input type="checkbox"/> None
--	---	--	--	--	--	-------------------------------

4. Current number of members of the parliamentary group:

Total	Men	Women
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5. How often does your parliamentary group meet on average?

<input type="checkbox"/> More than once a week	<input type="checkbox"/> Once a week	<input type="checkbox"/> Every two weeks	<input type="checkbox"/> Once a month	<input type="checkbox"/> As needed	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (explain)
--	--------------------------------------	--	---------------------------------------	------------------------------------	--

6. Does your political party (or parties in your parliamentary group) have any special measures to promote the presence of women in parliament?

Yes No

If yes: What type of special measures are in use?

Special measure	Details including amount	Date introduced	Source/policy
<input type="checkbox"/> A proportion of electoral candidates must be women (candidate quotas)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Funding support for women			
<input type="checkbox"/> Training or capacity building for women			
<input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify			

7. Please list the different leadership positions within your parliamentary group.

Level/position, for e.g. leader, vice leader, whip, vice whip, heads of sub-groups/chairpersons, spokespersons, advisors, etc.	Total	Male	Female

8. Please list the main organ/s responsible for initiating policy/legislation in your parliamentary group.

Name of organ/s (list all) with influence over the development of policy in your parliamentary group, including the executive committee of the political party, sub groups etc, and explain the policy development process.	Total members	Number of women

9. Has your parliamentary group adopted mechanisms to ensure women's participation in its policy making processes?

Yes No

10. Does your parliamentary group have an official position or policy on gender equality/gender mainstreaming in the development of policies and laws?

Yes

No

Don't know

11. Does your parliamentary group have its own processes for consultation (formal and informal) with women (party members/women's wing/civil society groups) during the legislative process?

Yes

No

12. Please describe how committee portfolios and committee chairs are allocated within your parliamentary group.

13. Do you liaise with other parliamentary party groups about gender issues of common concern?

Yes

No

Don't know

14. Please describe any practices from your parliamentary group that aim to mainstream a gender perspective (e.g. gender training, use of gender experts, and so on) and explain topics dealt with or discussed

15. Please describe the major challenges faced by your parliamentary group in mainstreaming a gender perspective in its work

Questionnaire to parliamentarians

YOUR BACKGROUND

a. Personal background:			
Country			
Chamber (select one)	<input type="checkbox"/> No Single	<input type="checkbox"/> Lower	<input type="checkbox"/> Upper
Date of birth (dd/mm/yyyy)			
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> Male	
Number of dependents			
Marital status	<input type="checkbox"/> Married/cohabiting	<input type="checkbox"/> Single	<input type="checkbox"/> Divorced/widowed/separated
			<input type="checkbox"/> Other

b. Parliamentary background			
b. 1. Mode of obtaining seat (check only one answer)			
Directly elected on a party list	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (specify)	
Directly elected in a constituency	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Indirect election	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Nominated by the assembly/parliament	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Appointed by the head of state/government	<input type="checkbox"/>		
b. 2. What type of constituency do you represent? (check only one answer)			
Rural	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (specify)	
Semi-urban	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Urban	<input type="checkbox"/>		
National/nation-wide	<input type="checkbox"/>		
None	<input type="checkbox"/>		
b. 3. Are you a member of a parliamentary committee or caucus?			
Committee	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	If yes, please give name/s:
Cross party caucus	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	If yes, please give name/s:

C. Political party	
c. 1. Are you a member of a political party?	
Yes	If yes, please give the name of your political party:
No	
Other	Please explain, for e.g., member of a parliamentary group only and not a member of a political party)
c. 2. Does your party belong to any of the following party international groups?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Centrist Democrat International	<input type="checkbox"/> Global Greens
<input type="checkbox"/> International Democrat Union	<input type="checkbox"/> Socialist International
<input type="checkbox"/> Liberal International	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify)

d. What was your occupation prior to election?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Legal profession	<input type="checkbox"/> Writer, literary, artist
<input type="checkbox"/> Political party official	<input type="checkbox"/> Architect, surveyor, engineer
<input type="checkbox"/> Civil service and local authority administration	<input type="checkbox"/> Armed services
<input type="checkbox"/> Finance, management or business	<input type="checkbox"/> Clergy
<input type="checkbox"/> Education profession	<input type="checkbox"/> Clerical, secretarial, administration
<input type="checkbox"/> Journalism, broadcasting, media	<input type="checkbox"/> Trade union official
<input type="checkbox"/> International civil servant	<input type="checkbox"/> Civil society activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Home-maker, care-taker	<input type="checkbox"/> Research
<input type="checkbox"/> Social worker	<input type="checkbox"/> Physician, dentist
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture/farming	<input type="checkbox"/> Nursing
<input type="checkbox"/> Sciences	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (explain)

e. What is your highest level of education attained?	
<input type="checkbox"/> No formal education	<input type="checkbox"/> University or polytechnic degree
<input type="checkbox"/> Primary school only	<input type="checkbox"/> Post-graduate university degree
<input type="checkbox"/> Secondary school only	<input type="checkbox"/> Other higher education

f. How many times have you stood for, or been elected to, parliament?				
	Once	Twice	Three times	Four times or more
Stood for parliament				
Been elected to parliament				

g. What was your main channel of entry into politics?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Political party activity	<input type="checkbox"/> Member of local or district council
<input type="checkbox"/> Trade union activity	<input type="checkbox"/> Member of sub-national legislature: provincial or state level
<input type="checkbox"/> Social work	<input type="checkbox"/> Family connections
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-governmental organisation (which one?)	<input type="checkbox"/> Community activist
<input type="checkbox"/> Other, specify	

PARLIAMENTARY WORK

Committee Assignments

1. How much influence did the following groups have in determining the committee/s in which you serve?				
	Great deal	Fair amount	Not very much	None
<input type="checkbox"/> Speaker of parliament/bureau				
<input type="checkbox"/> Parliamentary/party group leadership				
<input type="checkbox"/> Self nomination				
<input type="checkbox"/> Other, specify				

2. Please describe how committee portfolios and committee chairs are allocated within your parliamentary group

3. Do you hold committee portfolios of your primary choice?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
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4. Do you consider that the number of women in parliament is sufficient to ensure their input into committee work?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/> No
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5. In your opinion, how effective is the committee on gender equality in its work?

<input type="checkbox"/> Very effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Fairly effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Not very effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all effective	<input type="checkbox"/> No gender equality committee
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6. Relative to the stature of other committees in parliament, how do you think the gender equality committee is perceived by fellow parliamentarians?

<input type="checkbox"/> Better	<input type="checkbox"/> Equal	<input type="checkbox"/> Lesser	<input type="checkbox"/> No opinion	<input type="checkbox"/> No gender equality committee
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Policy Areas

7. How active are you in the following areas?

	Very active	Fairly active	Not very active	Not at all active
Economic and trade matters				
Education				
Environment				
Family-related matters				
Finance				
Foreign affairs				
Gender equality matters				
Healthcare				
Infrastructure and development				
Internal or home affairs				
Justice and constitutional matters				
Labour				
National security, defence, military affairs				
Women's issues				
Other, specify				

8. Please provide an example of how you are active in any of the above areas, e.g. membership in the committee or parliamentary group, participation in parliamentary debates, raising awareness among parliamentary colleagues, speaking to constituents, lobbying the relevant minister, etc.

9. How much influence, in your opinion, does the following have in affecting the adoption of gender-related legislation?				
	Great deal	Fair amount	Not very much	None
Ruling party support				
Opposition party support				
Speaker (President) of parliament				
The number of female parliamentarians				
Support of male parliamentarians				
Support of female parliamentarians				
Support of your constituency				
Support of civil society groups or interest groups				
Support of the business community				
Support of the international community				
Other, specify				

10. Have you personally taken action to specifically promote gender issues in your parliament?			
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, regularly	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> No, not usually	<input type="checkbox"/> No, none at all

11. In your experience, how strictly is discipline enforced in your parliamentary group?			
<input type="checkbox"/> Strictly	<input type="checkbox"/> Fairly strictly	<input type="checkbox"/> Not very strictly	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all

12. Are individual parliamentarians able to pursue an agenda not determined by the parliamentary group?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

Gender Mainstreaming

13. How regularly are gender equality concerns mainstreamed into the work of parliament?					
	All the time	Regularly	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
In parliamentary committee debates					
In policy sessions/debates in your party caucus					
In plenary debates in parliament					
In parliamentary hearings					
In cross-party caucuses					
Other, specify					

14. In your opinion, what are the main obstacles to gender mainstreaming in parliament?

15. What changes would you make to improve gender mainstreaming in parliament?

16. How effective is the parliament in overseeing executive action on gender issues?			
<input type="checkbox"/> Very effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Fairly effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Not very effective	<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all effective

Cross-party/group Initiatives

17. If there is a cross-party caucus of women parliamentarians in your parliament, are you a member?

- Yes, I am a member
 No, I am not a member
 I was formerly a member
 No, there is no cross-party caucus

18. If you are (were) a member of a cross-party caucus of women parliamentarians, please highlight some positive examples of its work

19. How effective has the caucus been in gaining political support across party/partisan lines in the following areas?

	Very	Fairly	Somewhat	Not at all	Don't know
Violence against women					
Non discrimination/equal opportunities					
Equal pay					
Inheritance rights					
Citizenship/status law					
Healthcare					
Reproductive rights					
Prostitution/trafficking					
Children's rights					

20. If you are (were) a member of a cross-party caucus of women parliamentarians, please highlight some of the practical challenges that affect the functioning of the caucus

21. Are men able to join or provide support to the women's caucus?

- Yes
 Sometimes
 No

Parliamentary Environment

22. How would you rate the gender sensitivity of the following:

	Excellent	Good	Average	Below average	Poor
Infrastructure of parliament (restrooms, amenities)					
Rules and practices of parliament (standing orders)					
Language / discourse in plenary					
Language/discourse in informal settings in parliament					
Sitting hours of parliament					
Dress codes for MPs (if applicable)					
Maternity/paternity leave provisions					
Child care facilities					
Provision of induction training					
Parliamentary culture					
Access to resources e.g. staff, computers, research facilities					
Other, specify					

23. How much of the following, in your opinion, occurs in parliament?					
	All the time	Regularly	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
Sexual harassment of women MPs					
Sexual harassment of male MPs					
Sexual harassment of female staff					
Sexual harassment of male staff					
Demeaning verbal remarks based on sex					
Gender discrimination in the allocation of allowances to MPs					
Gender discrimination in allocation of parliamentary resources (office space, computers, staffing , security)					
Gender discrimination in external travel abroad/conferences					
Other, list					

24. Have you personally faced any difficulties in fulfilling your parliamentary mandate?					
	All the time	Regularly	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
Disparaging or harassing remarks because of your sex					
Unwritten "rules" and norms have negatively affected your work					
Balancing family life and political commitments					
A 'gentlemen's club' dominates in parliament					
Lack of resources or information to support my work					
Lack of access to sex-disaggregated data and information					
Other, specify					

25. Do you believe that women are more likely or less likely than men to seek re-election to parliament?

More likely
 About the same for women and men
 Less likely

26. Have you ever lodged a complaint regarding gender discrimination in parliament (informal or formal complaint)?

Yes
 No

27. What new structures or services, if any, would you put in place to make the parliament more sensitive to the needs of both men and women?

28. Has your parliament implemented any of the following activities to promote gender equality?			
	Yes	No	Explain
Training on gender equality for parliamentarians			
Training on gender equality for parliamentary staff			
Provided access to sex-disaggregated data			
Adopted a gender action plan or working group			
Debates, meetings and seminars			
Disseminated information on gender issues			
Disseminated information on gender mainstreaming			
Celebrated International Women's Day, 8th March			
Equipped its library with relevant and timely information on gender issues			
Developed a media strategy or outreach strategy			
Other, specify			

29. Are there any mentoring programmes for new parliamentarians, formal or informal?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, formal	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, informal	<input type="checkbox"/> No, there are no mentoring programmes

30. Please describe any other good practices from your parliament about ensuring gender equality in the operations, work and outputs of parliament.

Appendix III

Case studies

National case studies

Gihan Abu Zeid, 2010, 'Mechanisms and Measures for Gender-sensitive Parliaments Tunisia Report' Case Study for IPU Gender-Sensitive Parliaments Project, Geneva

Daphne Cuevas, 2010, 'Gender mainstreaming in Parliament: A Mexican case study' Case Study for IPU Gender-Sensitive Parliaments Project, Geneva

Lenita Freidenvall, 2010, 'Gender Equality in the Swedish Parliament' Case Study for IPU Gender-Sensitive Parliaments Project, Geneva

Carmen de la Fuente Méndez, 2010, 'Gender Study in the Spanish Parliament' Case Study for IPU Gender-Sensitive Parliaments Project, Geneva

Ana Isabel García Q., 2010, 'Gender mainstreaming in the Costa Rican Legislative Assembly' Case Study for IPU Gender-Sensitive Parliaments Project, Geneva

Amanda Gouws, 2010, 'Mechanisms and Measures for Gender-Sensitive Parliaments: The Case of South Africa, Case Study for IPU Gender-Sensitive Parliaments Project, Geneva

Beatriz Llanos, 2010, 'More women, better quality? Case study of gender mainstreaming in the Peruvian Parliament' Case Study for IPU Gender-Sensitive Parliaments Project, Geneva

Jutta Marx and Jutta Borner, 2010, 'Levels of Gender Mainstreaming in the Argentine Congress: A Case Study' Case Study for IPU Gender-Sensitive Parliaments Project, Geneva

Petra Meier and Eline Severs, 2010, 'Gender Mainstreaming in the Belgian House of Representatives and Senate' Case Study for IPU Gender-Sensitive Parliaments Project, Geneva

Dunia Mokrani Chávez and Patricia Chávez León, 2010, 'Study of Mechanisms and Measures for Gender-Sensitive Parliaments in Bolivia' Case Study for IPU Gender-Sensitive Parliaments Project, Geneva

Sonia Palmieri, 2010a, 'Finding a role for Parliament: Gender, institutional rules and cultural difference in Malaysia' Case Study for IPU Gender-Sensitive Parliaments Project, Geneva

Sonia Palmieri, 2010b, 'Recognising gender equality as a key to development: Gender mainstreaming in the Cambodian Parliament' Case Study for IPU Gender-Sensitive Parliaments Project, Geneva

Sonia Palmieri, 2010c, 'Strong infrastructure requires strong capacity: Gender mainstreaming in the National Assembly of Viet Nam' Case Study for IPU Gender-Sensitive Parliaments Project, Geneva

Sonia Palmieri, 2010d, 'Changing the workplace: Gender mainstreaming in the Australian Parliament' Case Study for IPU Gender-Sensitive Parliaments Project, Geneva

Elizabeth Powley, 2010, 'Rwanda' Case Study for IPU Gender-Sensitive Parliaments Project, Geneva

Fanta Same, 2011, 'Gender-Sensitive parliaments: The example of Burkina Faso', Case Study for IPU Gender-Sensitive Parliaments Project, Geneva

Walid Husni Zahra, 2011, 'Mechanisms and Measures for Gender-Sensitive parliaments, the case of Jordan' Case Study for IPU Gender-Sensitive Parliaments Project, Geneva

Riadh Zghal, 2010, 'Mechanisms and Measures for Gender-Sensitive parliaments, Tunisia' Case Study for IPU Gender-Sensitive Parliaments Project, Geneva

Regional reports

Gihan Abu Zeid, 2010b, 'Regional Study on the Mechanisms and Measures for Gender-Sensitive Parliaments in the Arab Region' IPU Report, Geneva

Jutta Marx and Jutta Borner, 2010b, 'Gender-Sensitive Parliaments in Latin America' IPU Report, Geneva

Sonia Palmieri, 2010e, 'Tigers need strong claws: Gender and parliaments in Asia' IPU Report, Geneva

Elizabeth Powley, 2010b, 'Gender and Parliaments in Sub-Saharan Africa' IPU Report, Geneva

Lenita Friendevall, 2010b, 'Gender-Sensitive Parliaments in Europe', IPU Report, Geneva

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