



ECOWAS COMMISSION
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GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND ELECTION MANAGEMENT BODIES IN ECOWAS MEMBER STATES

An Assessment Report and Action Plan

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September 2019



FOREWORD

Gender mainstreaming in electoral processes in West African countries is a multidimensional theme, involving a consideration of much more than just a few concepts and aspects that may first come to mind. While an assessment of the extent of gender mainstreaming within election management bodies (EMBs) in ECOWAS Member States may connote an exercise framed by a specific reference to the EMBs in West Africa. The reader is urged to keep in mind that analyses and scope of this report are framed by the Five-Year (2017 - 2022) Action Plan under the ECOWAS Gender and Election Strategic Framework developed by the ECOWAS Commission.

The 5-year Plan seeks, among others, to achieve the following sustainable outcomes in each ECOWAS member nation:

- (i) mainstream gender in all legal framework for elections;
- (ii) enhance the participation of women in the management of the electoral process;
- (iii) produce gender disaggregated electoral data;
- (iv) identify and address challenges faced by women in the electoral process;
- (v) reduce the cultural and religious barriers/challenges to women's political participation and representation;
- (vi) strengthen platforms of women's NGO networks for peaceful elections;
- (vii) enhance the technical capacity of women to effectively engage throughout the electoral cycle, including after they are elected;
- (viii) adopt gender-sensitive civic messaging in voter education to enhance the knowledge of female candidates and voters in the use of a variety of media channels;
- (ix) mainstream gender, and improve the participation of women in election observation at both regional and domestic levels in ECOWAS Member States;
- (x) promote female candidature and garner support from males at all levels;
- (xi) ensure the safety and security of women throughout the electoral cycle at all levels;
- (xii) promote political tolerance towards female candidates; and
- (xiii) encourage partnership with the mass media to promote female candidates, and gender-sensitive media reporting.

This report is simply an assessment of gender mainstreaming in election management bodies in ECOWAS Member States and it cannot adequately address all the above-listed reference points of the Action Plan. This is because many of the reference points are beyond the regular statutory functions of any electoral management body. As EMBs with their functions and operational activities related to elections are creations of laws, it is self-



evident that an EMB can only mainstream gender in electoral processes to the extent envisaged, anticipated and allowed by those enabling legislations. Therefore, this report should not be seen as being critical or of being judgemental of the work of West African EMBs. Rather, it should be seen as a scholarly attempt to understand the cross-cutting issues involved in the mainstreaming of gender in partisan politics and electoral processes in the context of West Africa and strategies that EMBs can adopt to address them.

We hereby commend the Gender Directorate, the Electoral Assistance Division of the ECOWAS Commission, ECONEC and the respective teams that carried out various aspects of this work. We would like to suggest that similar related studies be done in the future.

Long live the people and Member States of ECOWAS!

Dr. Siga Fatima Jagne

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& Gender, ECOWAS Commission*

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LIST OF CONTENT

LIST OF CONTENT	4
LIST OF TABLES	6
LIST OF DIAGRAMS	7
ABBREVIATIONS	8
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	9
1. INTRODUCTION	10
2. METHODOLOGY OF THE ASSESSMENT	11
2.1 Limitations of the Methodology	11
3. GENDER AND DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF ECOWAS MEMBER STATES	12
3.1 Population Distribution of Member States	12
4. OVERVIEW OF WOMEN'S EVOLVEMENT AND INVOLVEMENT IN STATE AFFAIRS/INSTITUTIONS	16
4.1 Women in the Legislature in ECOWAS Member States	16
4.2 Female Representation on National Parliamentary Committees	18
4.3 Female Representation in the Executive (Ministers)	19
4.4 Female Representation in the Judiciary	20
4.5 Programmes to Encourage Women's Political Participation	21
4.6 Statistics on Female Voters	23
5. IMPACT OF EXISTING LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION	24
6. EMB STRUCTURE, PROCESSES AND WOMEN'S POSITIONING	26
7. POLITICAL PARTIES AND PROMOTION OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION	30
7.1 The Number of Political Parties Led by Women in West Africa	31
7.2 Legal Provisions of Political Parties to Encourage Women's Participation in Elections	32
7.3 Political Parties Finance as a Means to Encourage the Participation of Women in Politics	33
7.4 EMBs - Political Party Collaboration	34
8. ELECTORAL STAKEHOLDERS AND PROMOTION OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION	34



8.1	Public Awareness of the Situation of Women in Politics	35
8.2	Gender Sensitive Training for Media and Civil Society Organizations	36
8.3	Security Personnel and Promotion of Women's Participation in the Electoral Process	36
8.4	EMBs and Other Electoral Stakeholders	37
9.	ADDRESSING THE GENDER GAP: PROSPECTS AND EFFECTIVENESS OF GENDER FOCAL POINT/ UNIT/DIVISION OF ELECTION MANAGEMENT BODIES	38
9.1	A Gender Policy and its Effectiveness	38
9.2	Rationale for a Gender Policy in EMBs (IDEA 2009)	40
9.3	Gender Focal Points in EMBs in ECOWAS Member States	40
9.4	Structure of Gender Unit/Division	42
9.5	Capacity Building for Gender Focal Units in EMBs in ECOWAS Member States	43
9.6	Availability of Statistics of Women in Gender Unit/Division/Focal Points	43
9.7	Funding of Gender Focal Points in EMBs in ECOWAS Member States	44
9.8	Gender Focal Persons in the EMB's Sub-national Structures	44
10.	A PROPOSED STANDARD SCOPE OF WORK OF A GENDER UNIT IN EMBs IN ECOWAS MEMBER STATES	45
10.1	Rationale for ECOWAS EMB Gender Standard Scope of Work	45
10.2	Purpose for ECOWAS EMB Gender Standard Scope of Work	45
10.3	Duties and Responsibilities	45
10.4	Policy, Strategy and Action plan on Gender-mainstreaming	46
10.5	Analysis, knowledge development and information activities	46
10.6	Support toward Gender-mainstreaming at EMB Headquarters	47
10.7	Regular monitoring and reporting on gender mainstreaming	47
10.8	Proposal Development	47
10.9	Supervisory Responsibilities	48
10.10	External Relations	48
11.	SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS	48
12.	RECOMMENDATIONS	50
13.	REFERENCES	52
	APPENDIX	54



LIST OF TABLES

Table 1:	Population Distribution of West Africa	13
Table 2:	Ranking of literacy rate of young girls and nexus between fertility rate and primary school attendance in ECOWAS Member States	15
Table 3:	Women in Highest Electoral Judicial Decision Making Bodies in ECOWAS Countries as at July 2019	20
Table 4:	Women in EMBs in ECOWAS Member States	28
Table 5:	Proportion of Political Parties led by Women in ECOWAS Member States as at June 2019	31



LIST OF DIAGRAMS

Diagram 1:	Population, Gender and Literacy Distribution in ECOWAS Member States	15
Diagram 2:	Types of EMBs in West Africa	27
Diagram 3:	EMBs with Gender Policy	39
Diagram 4:	EMBs with Gender Focal Point	41
Diagram 5:	Gender Focal Points with Statistics on Women	44



ABBREVIATIONS

ACE:	Electoral Knowledge Network
BRIDGE:	Building Resources in Democracy Governance and Elections
CSOs:	Civil Society Organizations
DCAF:	Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces
EC:	Electoral Commission
ECONEC:	ECOWAS Network of National Electoral Commissions
ECOWAS:	Economic Community of West African States
EMBs:	Electoral Management Bodies
GESF:	ECOWAS Gender and Election Strategic Framework
GFPs:	Gender Focal Points
GIMPA:	Ghana Institute for Management and Public Administration
GSW:	Gender Scope of Work
INEC:	Independent National Electoral Commission
IDEA:	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IPAC:	Interparty Advisory Committee
IPU:	Inter-Parliamentary Union
ISS:	Security Sector Institutions
LoCASL:	Local Council Association of Sierra Leone
MDAs:	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
RGPH:	Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitat
SEND:	Social Enterprise for Development Foundation
UN:	United Nations
UNDP:	United Nations Development Programme



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ECOWAS Gender and Elections Strategic Framework which is to guide all electoral stakeholders, in the promotion and protection of women's rights to equitable political participation and representation acknowledges the dimensions of the challenges that women face in the electoral process.

The research sought to gain deeper insights into the barriers that women in ECOWAS Member States face in exercising their franchise as citizens and to identify strategies that EMBs adopt to address them. A questionnaire was chosen to be the main resource document for data collection. The questionnaire was administered to EMBs in the 15 Member States. Eminent election and gender specialists in the region were also interviewed for primary source of data. Data was analysed on the basis of comparative analysis of country experiences to draw conclusions and generalizations.

The assessment report provides a baseline information on the achievements, challenges and prospects of EMBs and other electoral stakeholders in enhancing the participation of women in the electoral process at all levels. It has led to the documentation of the barriers women face in accessing the electoral process and efforts by key electoral stakeholders to address them. The study revealed that women are underrepresented in major institutions that are important to election administration such as EMBs, the legislature and the judiciary. Few of such institutions are being headed by women. It also revealed the unavailability of data on vital electoral activities and lack of national programmes to encourage women's effective participation in the electoral processes.

It was recommended that availability of gender-disaggregated data on turnout in electoral activities, a well-resourced gender focal point in EMBs, and effective networking can contribute to the achievement of gender equity in the electoral process to enhance women's representation in decision making bodies. It concluded that there is under-representation of women at all levels of governance and decision-making resulting in a democratic deficit and under performance in national developmental effort.



1. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In 2017, the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government adopted the ECOWAS Gender and Elections Strategic Framework (GESF). This framework is to provide a guide for all electoral stakeholders to live up to their responsibilities in promoting and protecting women's rights to equitable political participation and representation. This normative framework highlights the challenges women face in the electoral process and acknowledges the various dimensions of these challenges, which include economic, socio-cultural, electoral and legal. The Framework provides 10 Strategic Pillars, which should serve as the blueprint for all stakeholders in Member States in the region.

The pillars stipulate that the electoral legal framework should have electoral systems that provide equal opportunity for both male and female to be elected. It also enjoins political parties to make provisions to facilitate an equitable participation of women in an electoral process. Special civic education programmes targeted at women should be organised to provide useful information on the need for political tolerance and ensure the safety and security of females in their capacity as candidates, electorates and electoral staff. Security personnel in Member States are expected to be sensitized to appreciate the relevance for special provision toward protecting electoral stakeholders in general and women in particular. The ECOWAS GESF also provides a mechanism for assessing progress of Member States in relation to women's political evolution during election observation missions. Each Election Management Body (EMB) is required under the ECOWAS Gender and Election Strategic Framework, to establish a well-resourced gender unit or division to mainstream gender equity in the management of electoral processes. EMBs are also expected to ensure gender equality in the recruitment of electoral staff and to provide gender-disaggregated data on voter turnout during proclamation of the final results.

This assessment report on gender mainstreaming by EMBs provides baseline information on their achievements, challenges and prospects of enhancing the role of women in the electoral process as voters, candidates, election administrators, electoral adjudicators, political party leaders, and party agents, among others. The study also provides some understanding of the legal framework, the demographic and the socio-cultural imperatives within which EMBs in ECOWAS Member States function. A highlight on the number of women in decision-making positions showing the percentages of women heading parliamentary committees and holding ministerial positions in government in ECOWAS Member States is also done. Furthermore, the study sought to document mechanisms and legal provisions for protecting women at all levels of the electoral process; the capacity building programmes on gender and electoral violence against women; the gender composition of EMBs; challenges relating to participation of women, for instance, in the registration and voting processes at both national and local levels; whether there are provisions which enforce rules on finance regarding gender equality; whether EMBs have gender policies, gender focal points as well as decentralised structures and programmes for these units; and the main challenges faced by the units and how these are surmounted.



Political parties are indispensable partners for any electoral gender mainstreaming initiative and the study sought to gauge the extent to which EMBs liaise with political parties to enhance their role in gender mainstreaming. Other equally relevant partners in electoral gender mainstreaming are the media and civil society organizations. This assessment also sought to bring to the fore the nature of existing collaboration between EMBs and all the relevant stakeholders.

The GESF has a well thought out action plan, part of which requires assessing how EMBs are mainstreaming gender. This assessment finally serves as an achievement of a part of the activities scheduled in the action plan of the ECOWAS Gender and Election Strategic Framework.

2. METHODOLOGY OF THE ASSESSMENT

An effective assessment mechanism requires a reliable baseline data. One of the primary sources of information for the assessment was the Gender Focal Persons in the various EMBs. The tool for data collection to assess gender mainstreaming by EMBs in electoral processes in West Africa was a questionnaire. This questionnaire was divided into seven sections namely;

- i General gender related demographic information on ECOWAS Member States;
- ii Information on women's involvement in state affairs and institutions in ECOWAS Member States;
- iii Gender and the electoral legal framework;
- iv The EMBs' structure and processes;
- v Promotion of women's political participation;
- vi Information on gender focal points/desks/units/committees/divisions and;
- vii Electoral stakeholders and promoting women's participation.

The questionnaire was administered to EMBs in the 15 ECOWAS Member States. Responses were received from the following countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Cape Verde, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

Another major source of information is eminent election and gender specialists in the region who were interviewed. These eminent persons include former chairpersons of EMBs, female candidates of legislative elections and gender advocates.

Data analysis was done based on comparative analysis of country experiences and drawing conclusions and generalizations as well as highlighting some best practices as far as gender mainstreaming by EMBs is concerned.

2.1 *Limitation of the Methodology*

A major challenge to gathering data through a questionnaire for this assessment was realised during the analysis of responses. It was noticed that some gender focal persons did not understand some of the electoral concepts and terminologies used in the questionnaire. It



would have been very helpful if respondents were taken through a methodology workshop to enhance their understanding of some of the issues and concepts before the questionnaire was administered to them. It was obvious that some responses had to be discarded; and further information sought through online and other sources.

3. GENDER AND DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF ECOWAS MEMBER STATES

Election is a people centred activity which directly affects both men and women. The ratio of men to women in a population lends justification to the urgency for EMBs and electoral stakeholders to make provision for equity in political participation and representation of both sexes.

3.1 *Population Distribution of Member States*

According to the UN, in 2015, the West African region had a population of 367 million constituting about 5% of the world's population. The United Nations estimated the current population of West Africa to be 389,782,261 as of April 10, 2019. In Benin, there is a total population of 11.9 million with 50.7% being females and 38% being literate. Out of the female population, 42% are literate. With a population of 20,244,080 as at 2018, Burkina Faso has females constituting 51.7% of the population and 26% of the female population being literate with a general literacy rate of 34%.

Cape Verde, with the smallest population of 537,231 in the region has the highest literacy rate of 89% and a female literacy rate of 84%. In Cote d'Ivoire, 49% of the female population are literate. Females constitute 48.32% of the total population of 22,671,331 (RGPH, 2014). However, it is 43.9% of the entire population that is literate.

Gambia and Guinea Bissau have a population of less than 2 million inhabitants each. With a total population of 1,857,181, Gambia has 50.8% females (RGPH, 2014); and female literates being 47.6% (2010). Guinea Bissau on the other hand, has 52% of its population being females, 45% are literate and 34% of the female population being literate as well.

Ghana has the second highest number of inhabitants in the region with about 29,463,643 people as of 2019. The country has a higher percentage of women being 50.51% of the population. The country has a 76.6% adult literacy rate (that is counting persons from age 15 and above as at 2015) while about 71 % out of the female population are literate.

There are about 10.6 million people in Guinea, out of which 51.74% are females. The literate population in Guinea is 45% while the female literate population is 22%. Liberia has a population of 4.7 million (2017) of which 49.57% are females. The literate population at the end of 2017 was about 45.53%.

In Mali, with a population of about 18.6 million, women make up 51% with 34.3% of this population being literate. 24.6% out of the female population are literate. Niger has a total



population of about 21.5 million, 28.4% literate population, and 20% literacy among women, who constitute about 50% of the population according to 2017 figures.

Nigeria has always been the most populous country in the region and even on the African continent. It has a population of 190.9 million people (World Bank 2017) and 48% (2016) out of this population are females; 59.6% (2019) literate population with 49.68% (2019) literate females.

Sierra Leone and Togo have a population of 7,092,113 (Statistics 2016) and 6,191,155 (PHC, 2010) respectively. Both countries have about 51% female population. In Sierra Leone however, there is 51.3% literacy rate in general and 43.8% of the female population are literate. Senegal has a total population of 15,726,037 and about 50.22% female population.

On this basis of the information available, which is not current by any acceptable standard, it may be said that the literate population in the region is estimated at 55% with a female literacy rate of 39%. The female population in the West African region in 11 out of 15 countries is higher than that of the male

The distribution of population in the region, in terms of gender and literacy. Is presented in Table 1 and the graph below shows the gender distribution and literacy of ECOWAS Member State.

Table 1: Population Distribution of West Africa					
S/N	Country	Total population	% Female Population	% Literate population	% of literate Females
1	Benin	11,911,429	50.7	38 (2015)	42 (2013)
2	Burkina Faso	20,244,080 (2018)	51.7	34.5 (2014)	26.1 (2014)
3	Cape Verde	537,231	49.7	89.0	84.7
4	Cote D'Ivoire	22,671,331	48.32	43.9 (RGPH 2014)	49 (RGPH 2014)
5	Gambia	1,857,181	50.8	55.5	47.6
6	Ghana	29,463,643	50.15	76.6 (2015)	71.35
7	Guinea	10,599,848	51.74	32.0	22.0



S/N	Country	Total population	% Female Population	% Literate population	% of literate Females
8	Guinea Bissau	1,800,000 (2012)	52.0	45.0	34.0
9	Liberia	4,700,000 (2017)	49.57 (2016)	45.53 (2015)	-
10	Mali	18,540,000	51	34.3	24.6
11	Niger	21,466,863	50.1	28.4	20 (2010) 37 (2019)
12	Nigeria	199,805,437 (2016)	48 (2016)	59.6 (2019)	49.68% (2019)
13	Senegal	16,209,125	50.22	-	-
14	Sierra Leone	7,092,113	51.0	51.3	43.8
15	Togo	6,191,155	51.4	-	-

A correct knowledge of a country's population helps to make projections into future elections. This knowledge also helps in procurement purposes, it helps in the correct allocation and distribution of electoral materials and resources. With correct population knowledge, a targeted voter education is made easy while an all-inclusive voter education can be ensured. The distribution of the population directs the EMB on how to effectively package the message in an electoral process. Education efforts are often targeted at groups that are less likely to vote or face challenges in participation thus the type of educational materials, language and symbols in voter education is determined by gender, literacy and other variables such as disability. Population literacy is vital in voter information and education campaigns.

Voter education is particularly influenced by literacy. In countries with low literacy rates, the use of party symbols has had a significant impact in making the campaign and the voting process more easily understood by the electorate' (The ACE Electoral Knowledge Network). Population also plays a critical role in the demarcation of electoral boundaries for voting purpose.

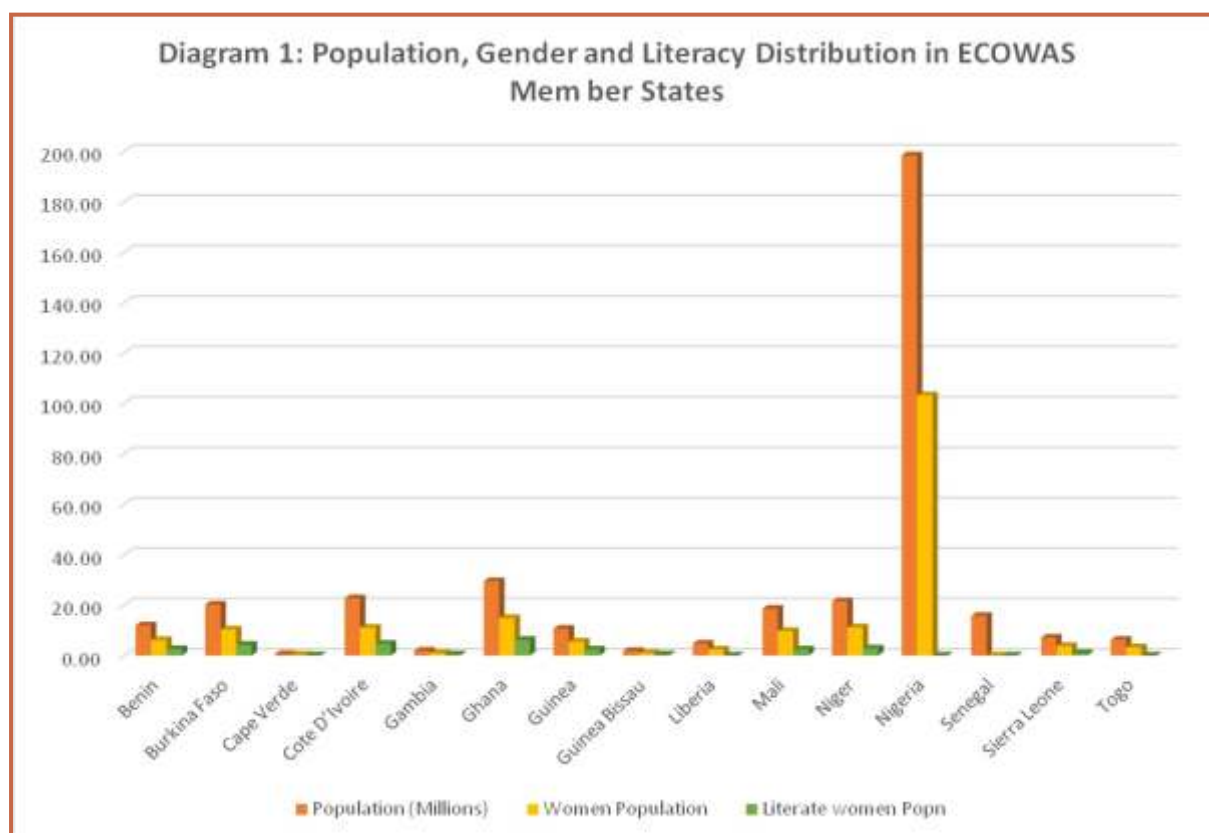


Table 2: Ranking Of Literacy Rate Of Young Girls And Nexus Between Fertility Rate And Primary School Attendance In Ecowas Member States

S/N	Ranking: ECOWAS State	Literacy Rate of Young Girls (15-24 Years 2006-2013) %	Birth Rate Among Girls Age 14-18 Years per 1,000	Primary School Attendance Rate, Girls in (2011-2014) %	Fertility Rate (2010 - 2015) %
1	CAPE VERDE	94	92	-	2.4
2	GHANA	83	65	62	4.2
3	TOGO	73	77	87	4.7
4	GUINEA BISSAU	71	137	62	5
5	SENEGAL	71	80	66	5.2
6	GAMBIA	67	88	66	5.8
7	NIGERIA	58	123	66	5.7
8	SIERRA LEONE	56	131	74	4.8



S/N	Ranking: ECOWAS State	Literacy Rate of Young Girls (15-24 Years 2006-2013) %	Birth Rate Among Girls Age 14-18 Years per 1,000	Primary School Attendance Rate, Girls in (2011-2014) %	Fertility Rate (2010 - 2015) %
9	CÔTE D'IVOIRE	39	125	66	5.1
10	LIBERIA	37	147	43	4.8
11	MALI	34	178	50	6.4
12	BURKINA FASO	33	136	50	5.6
13	BENIN	31	98	73	4.9
14	GUINEA	22	154	53	5.1
15	NIGER	15	210	46	7.6

Source: UNFPA (2015); UNICEF (2015) Report about Children in the World 2015

The statistics above show that between 2006 and 2013, the average literacy rate for young women aged between 15 to 24 years of age in ECOWAS countries is 52.3%. The best performing countries in female literacy are Cape Verde (94%), Ghana (83%) and Togo (73%) while the worst performing countries in female literacy are Benin (31%), Guinea (22%) and Niger (15%). From the same statistics it is seen that the average fertility rate among ECOWAS countries is 5.1%. It may be said that countries within ECOWAS that have higher birth rates for girls between the ages of 14 to 18, also have lower school attendance rates for girls.

4. OVERVIEW OF WOMEN'S EVOLVEMENT AND INVOLVEMENT IN STATE AFFAIRS /INSTITUTIONS

The level of women's involvement in the running of state affairs may be an important determinant of the development projections of a country. According to Nelson & South Asia Research, 'Women's active participation in electoral competitions is a valid indicator of the efficacious growth of democracy in any country of the world today'. As an indicator of equality and freedom, there should be gender equity in the sharing of political power and providing liberty and space to women within the democratic framework of electoral politics.

4.1 Women in the Legislature in ECOWAS Member States

Women need access to the legislature to ensure that their views are considered in developing electoral legal frameworks, to allocate electoral resource, and to sustain their level of political participation and representation.



The legislature is the body responsible for making laws, including electoral laws, approve government budget and usually scrutinize all public accounts, including those of the EMB. Adequate representation of women in the legislature will help in effectively ensuring gender equity in the enactment of laws that affect both women and men. The data obtained gives a clear indication that there is underrepresentation of women in the legislature, either elected or appointed in ECOWAS Member States.

It is observed in the region that Senegal is the country with the highest number of female representation of 41.8%, followed by Cape Verde, which has 23.6% women's representation in Parliament. Nigeria with the highest number of 469 representatives in the legislative body has 6% being women. Burkina Faso has about 10% of female representation in parliament out of 177 members. It is worth noting that the West African average of women's representation at the legislature at the end of April 2019 is 14.4%.

The West African average in female representation at legislature is below the Sub-Saharan African average and the World's average of 23.7% and 24.3% respectively. The two respective averages are still below the 30% threshold marked for female representation in legislature. Appendix 'A' is a Table showing representation of women's involvement and involvement in state affairs in the ECOWAS Member States.

Some reliable indication of the political participation of women can be provided when we measure together the following: the number of women who are members of political parties, the number of women occupying decision making roles within political parties, the number of women nominated by governments to decision making positions and the availability of gender-disaggregated data on voter turnout. The numbers in the legislature would obviously give a picture of gender representation. Even though the respondents were unable to provide data on the voter turnout of women, it is believed that:

"When it comes to political participation, a higher number of women voted in the last election (2016 General Election) than men", but when it comes to leadership and representation, I think we don't have enough women. So, participation yes, but representation terrible", F - Gloria Ofori-Boadu, Professor and Head of Dept. (Gender & Development) GIMPA.

"Many of our linguistic groups think the woman's place is not to do with politics. The fact that we don't have a lot of women traditional chiefs is suggestive. But apart from that, there are all kinds of notions and ideas associated with women who are engaged in politics - 'Obaa akoko nini (female cockerel)'. They are not supposed to be upfront. There are some cultural barriers where women are rooted in the house, in homework. There is also, even the ones who are highly educated and yet they will be sceptical breaking away from traditional ways. Initially, we thought the problem was financial, but we think men as well sometimes are the source of the problem. Women are not easily forthcoming. They are not easily willing to be potential candidates".

- Kwadwo Afari-Gyan, a former EMB chairman, Ghana.



“The major obstacle faced by women in their participation is insufficient numbers. All the laws and electoral texts in Côte d'Ivoire are silent on the question of gender. In the absence of an efficient EMB gender policy, women will continue to be marginalized in all electoral activities. What is really for gender equity in this area is the goodwill of all leaders of election-related stakeholder entities.”

- Marguerite Yolibi Kone, EMB Commissioner, La Cote d'Ivoire.

These statements obviously suggest that a lot more needs to be done to encourage women to be involved in political activities. To reduce the incidence of low female participation and representation, gender activists in the West African region are of the view that legislation such as affirmative action will be appropriate.

While there are several factors that affect women's political participation, electoral systems are key among them. Majority-based and candidate centred systems such as First Past The Post electoral system tend to put women at a disadvantage thereby discouraging their real representation.

"It is unfortunate because usually when only one candidate has to be selected, due to historical and socio-cultural imbalance and the patriarchal system, leadership selection is usually associated with men and not women. So, if it is one person to be selected, then people will ensure that the one person who passes the post or who takes all is a man". It has been established that the first past the post system is not the best for equitable representation of both men and women because the system operating in majority of ECOWAS Member States discriminates against women.

Low female representation is a problem also at the ECOWAS Parliament. It is in the light of this that in August 2018, Vice President Jewel Howard Taylor of Liberia called on the Speaker, Deputy Speakers and members of the Fourth Legislature of the ECOWAS Parliament to ensure at least 30% of women representation in that body. She made the call during the launch of the ECOWAS Gender and Election Strategic Framework, which targets mainstreaming and encourages equal gender representation in politics across all the 15 Member States. She said that the ECOWAS Parliament as the regional legislative body should implement Article 18 of the Supplementary Act on the Enhancement of the Powers of the Parliament: Article 18 states that "each Member-State shall ensure at least 30% female representation in their Parliamentary Delegation to the Parliament."

4.1 Female Representation on National Parliamentary Committees

Parliamentary committees are key entities, which assist the functioning of a legislature in investigating issues and bills (proposed laws) in detail, so that the Parliament can be well informed before making decisions of national significance, according to the Parliamentary Education Office (Australia). A gender-balanced composition of parliamentary committees invariably provides an enriched perspective for deliberations of national issues as they affect both men and women.



The knowledge of representation of women in Parliamentary Committees, or women serving as the heads of these committees may provide some perspectives to how gender is mainstreamed in the discussions of issues within the committees. It is worth noting that there is female representation in almost all the Parliamentary committees in the various parliaments in ECOWAS Member States. However, in several Member States it is almost rare to find women heading some of the Parliamentary Committees. For instance, Benin has 7 females in the legislature. 5 of these women are members of parliamentary committees but only one of the women is heading a committee and that is the Education Committee. In Ghana, there is a total of 31 parliamentary committees, with female representation in almost all the committees. However, the only parliamentary committee headed by a woman in the Parliament of Ghana is the Local Government Committee of that parliament. In Burkina Faso, 18 women are represented in 8 parliamentary committees, out of which a woman heads just one. In Guinea, 26 women are represented in the 13 parliamentary committees with 1 of the women heading the Security and Defence Committee. In Cote D'Ivoire, 28 women are represented on the 6 parliamentary committees with none of them heading any of the committees. In Sierra Leone, women head 2 out of the 31 Parliamentary committees even though there are 20 female committee members. The general situation in the Member States is that there is female representation on parliamentary committees however it is rare for them to be headed by a woman.

When considering the gender disaggregation of the staff in the Office of Parliament, it is clear from the data obtained that the number of males far exceeds that of females. For instance, Benin has a total of 179 staff of parliament 54 of whom are women; Guinea Bissau with a total of 194 parliamentary staff has 53 being females and with 140 parliamentary staff, Guinea has 31 females.

Men and women's equal participation and representation at all levels of decision-making processes is critical for equal and equitable prioritization of women and men's practical needs and issues. An under-representation of women at any level of governance and decision-making will result into a democratic deficit. It is a proven fact that better decisions are made within groups that are diverse, especially when such groups have a task that has to do with representing the interests of citizens at all levels. It is therefore important to attain gender balance at both national and local levels.

4.3 Female Representation in the Executive (Ministers)

The executive arm of government is responsible for setting the development agenda of a country. It must be emphasised that the equal participation of men and women in the executive arm of government facilitates highlighting issues that impact the development of all. Appointive or nominative positions could serve as a critical means to addressing the gender imbalance in the management of the affairs of a country. In West Africa, there is a great difference in the proportion of female ministers to that of males. According to the Daily Observer, a Liberian Newspaper, 'In West Africa, Nigeria ranks even lower than Ghana which has as of 2016, about 10.7% female representation in the parliament, and 27% females as cabinet ministers. Togo comes up second with about 17.60% women representation in its



national parliament as of 2017, and 18.4% in ministerial positions". Senegal ranks among the best 12 countries in the world with women representation in national parliaments.

From the data obtained during this survey, Cape Verde with a total of 14 ministries has 3 female ministers, representing 21.4%. Ghana with the highest number of ministries (110) has only 18 female ministers, a percentage of 16.4, while Guinea has 12% female ministers out of a total of 33. It is therefore seen that male ministers in government far out-number females in almost all the ECOWAS Member States.

Women head a number of national and state-level institutions, their overall representation remains dismal. Within the leadership of state institutions, 8 Member States have women heading some para-statal institutions. Togo and Ghana have the highest number of 10 women each, heading state institutions. Countries like Guinea and Gambia have no females heading any of the para-statal institutions. In other instances, in Ghana, out of 70 public boards, there are only 6 who are chaired by females. 6 out of 70 is obviously so inadequate.

Female participation and representation in decision-making levels are determined by various factors some of which are country specific and localised in nature. It has been observed that their participation is generally lower than that of men, which may be because they have been socialised differently, especially as far as marriage, motherhood, employment and property ownership are concerned.

4.4 Female Representation in the Judiciary

An independent judiciary is an essential element for preserving the rule of law and therefore the most important in ultimately enhancing good governance and development. In each ECOWAS Member State, there is a highest national judicial body for the resolution of election dispute. It is either the constitutional courts in Francophone member countries (these courts also have the responsibility to declare final election results) or the supreme courts usually in English-speaking countries. It is expected that women play an important role in the judicial system in each ECOWAS Member State. Information on the composition of the highest judicial bodies would provide a story of gender representation in the resolution of election disputes.

Table 3: Women in Highest Electoral Judicial Decision-Making Bodies in ECOWAS Countries as at July 2019

S/N	Ranking	Total number Judges	Number & Percentages of Female Judges	
1	La Cote d'Ivoire	7	3	43%
2	Liberia	7	2	28.5%
3	Ghana	15	4	27%



S/N	Ranking	Total number Judges	Number & Percentages of Female Judges	
4	Guinea	9	2	22%
5	Burkina Faso	10	2	20%
6	Gambia	5	1	20%
7	Sierra Leone	5	1	20%
8	Nigeria	16	3	19%
9	Niger	7	1	14%
10	Senegal	7	1	14%
11	Benin	11	1	9%
12	Mali	32	3	9%
13	Togo	11	1	9%
14	Cape Verde	3	0	0%
15	Guinea Bissau	11	0	0%

There is no woman among the 11 members in the Constitutional Court in Guinea Bissau. Cape Verde also has no woman out of 3 members in the Supreme Court. Togo and Benin on the other hand have only 1 woman out of the 11 members in their Constitutional Courts. Côte d'Ivoire has 3 women out of the 7 members, Guinea has 2 women out of 9 and Benin has 1 female judge out of 11 judges. There are 3 female judges out of 32 judges in the Constitutional Court of Mali; 3 female judges out of 16 judges in the Supreme Court of Nigeria; 1 woman out of the 5 in Sierra Leone; and 4 out of 15 in Ghana's Supreme Court. This situation depicts the gender imbalance within the Judiciary of Member States. It would have been interesting to also assess the composition of judicial structures that resolve disputes relating to legislative election, because in some countries, a lower court may be charged with such responsibility.

4.5 Programmes to Encourage Women's Political Participation

There are programmes to encourage women's political participation in almost every ECOWAS Member State, with the involvement of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). In Nigeria, there is 35% Affirmative Action National Policy to encourage women's political



participation, alongside capacity building. In Gambia, there are programmes, such as capacity building, that encourage women's political participation. In Cape Verde, there is a network of women parliamentarians who support women's representation. Ghana has an Affirmative Action Bill, lying in parliament for a couple of years, waiting to be passed into law. In Nigeria, Ghana and Sierra Leone, CSOs have a number of programmes to ensure women's representation. For instance, in Sierra Leone, there is CSO's 50/50 Campaign for Good Governance, Sierra Leone Market Women's Association, Women's Forum, Social Enterprise for Development Foundation (SEND) and Local Council Association of Sierra Leone (LoCASL) who have programmes to encourage women's political participation in Sierra Leone. There are also instances where UNDP supports capacity buildings for women candidates and inter party dialogue for women to be selected as candidates.

In Ghana, even though there is no national programme, CSOs such as Abantu for Development, Gender Centre for Empowering Development and others support sensitization and empowerment programmes on women's participation. The Electoral Commission has often collaborated with development partners to organise capacity building programmes for female candidates in elections.

The timing of sensitization or any gender-based civic or voter education programmes have often been described as not fully contributed to encouraging women's participation in the electoral processes. Civic education is not continuous and happens only in an election period which does not encourage women's participation in elections. Sensitization needs to be done during pre- and post-election periods. The main challenge of continuous sensitization on gender issues throughout the electoral cycle hinges on availability of funding. Moreover, it is not seen to be part of the agenda of the Ministries of Gender. Most CSO efforts are short-lived, with the usual excuse of lack of funding even though gender equity in elections is a critical issue.

Civil society organizations deal with a wide range of issues - such as democratic development, women's empowerment, legal reform, human rights, civic education, governance and rights for people with disabilities, which are very linked to EMB's activities. Regular consultation with these stakeholders as is practised in Ghana and Nigeria is key. For instance, both Ghana and Nigeria have periodic Interparty Advisory Committee (IPAC) meetings with political parties. CSOs and development partners are often invited into Ghana's IPAC meetings. For example, INEC, Nigeria holds quarterly meetings with CSOs, political parties, media and security agencies to engender cross fertilisation of ideas on the integrity of the electoral process. They can directly advise EMBs of the specific needs of certain categories of voters, provide a forum for discussion on pertinent issues and can support publicizing the EMB's programmes.

Some EMBs organise educational programmes for women's effective participation with donor support. The EC of Ghana and Nigeria through their Gender Units have been organising capacity building programmes for female candidates and sensitization



workshops for women's groups. There have been trainings on Local Council Procedures, Disability Awareness and Mainstreaming Women's Political Participation in Sierra Leone. Unfortunately, post-election assessments of women who lost elections are rarely conducted and there are also no structured plans to encourage female candidates who lost elections to contest again or assess the reasons for their electoral losses.

4.6 Statistics on Female Voters

The ECOWAS Gender and Election Strategic Framework (2017) stipulates that all EMBs in the region should publish gender disaggregated statistics on voter turnout as part of final election results. At the time of the preparation of the assessment report in April 2019, there was no EMB in any ECOWAS Member State that had published information (at least on their own official websites) on the number of women who voted at the most recent election and in the last two periodic elections even though these pieces of information are available within the EMBs.

In Ghana, 5,353,563 females representing 47.6% were voters in the 2012 General Elections and 5,233,801 females representing 48.1% were voters in the December 2016 General Elections. In Nigeria, 47.14% of the registered voters were women in the February 2019 General Election. Data on the number of females who voted is yet to be approved by the INEC Nigeria several months after the general elections. One of the reasons provided for the delay is the need to avoid errors in compiling and generating the statistics. The method of collection of data on the gender of voters requires that it is factored into the design of the polling station results declaration sheet as is the case in Cote d'Ivoire, except that the data is not treated by EMBs as part of priority information during declaration of voter turnout. The voter turnout of election, in West Africa as in any part of the world, is regarded as a very key information during results declaration but that turnout information would be more meaningful and more useful if it is gender disaggregated.

It has been observed that there are often no or limited special legislations to encourage women's participation in the voting process in ECOWAS Member States. However, there are some special provisions to facilitate the participation of women. For instance, pregnant and lactating mothers are given preferential treatment at electoral activity centres in Benin, Ghana and Nigeria. In these countries, women are not allowed to join long queues at registration, exhibition and polling centres. In countries like Guinea, Mali and parts of Nigeria, there are separate queues for female voters.

Lack of vital data from EMBs does create a challenge to gauging the extent of progress with respect to women's participation in registration and voting exercises, because there is need to respect the principle of inclusivity for any election to be seen as being free and fair.

All heads of Gender division/unit/desk need to be proactive in making verified gender disaggregated data on voter turnout on the website of all EMBs in the ECOWAS region. Some heads of the EMB gender units indicated that their job descriptions with the EMBs do not

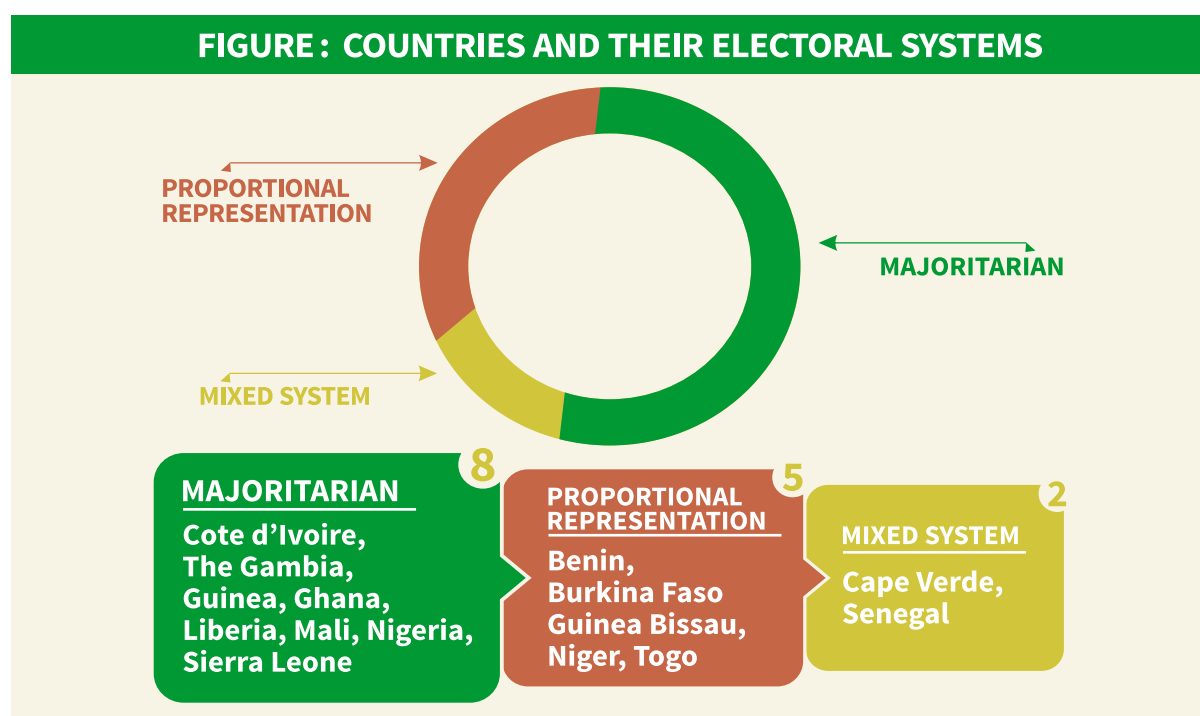


allow them to undertake such responsibilities. Collecting gender disaggregated data would have been more effective when undertaken in collaboration with EMBs' Research & Monitoring Department and Gender Focal Points.

5. IMPACT OF EXISTING LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION

Simply, an electoral legal framework consists of all the laws, rules and regulations guiding the systems, processes and operations in an election as well as the conduct of all electoral stakeholders. An assessment of the electoral legal framework in West Africa from a gender perspective, may require a close look at the existing electoral systems (formula for determining winners); provisions to encourage women to participate in the electoral processes -to facilitate registration and voting (whether the need for proof of identity in the electoral law is not a barrier; whether there are provision such as women-only registration teams; and women-only polling stations or booths within the polling station, where necessary), to participate as candidates; especially provision for independent female candidates; provisions which define violence against women in elections and provide specific protection; and provisions for follow up mechanism of women participation in the electoral processes.

One very key distinguishing feature of the legal framework for election in West African countries is the diversity of electoral systems. An electoral system may be defined as how votes gained in an election are translated into available seats. There are basically three different electoral systems being practiced in the West African region. They are the Simple Majoritarian, Proportional Representation and the Mixed Member Proportional Representation system. Below shows the electoral systems per the countries for legislative elections.





One of the electoral systems in the world that has not proven to promote women's representation is the majoritarian system, which is rather widely used in West Africa. In all West African countries there are general laws allowing all qualified adult citizens, both men and women to vote and be voted for, which is however not enough positive legal provision to encourage women to participate in the electoral process. Special laws and quotas enhance women's ability to surmount barriers to be elected representatives.

It can be summed that in West Africa, there are four (4) categories of legal provisions, which have contributed positively or failed to promote women's electoral participation and representation.

1. In some countries, there are no special laws or quotas for women but there are special provisions to facilitate the voting process of some category of women. These countries are Benin, Ghana and Nigeria. At these countries pregnant and lactating mothers are given preferential treatment at the polling stations. These provisions have however, not yielded an increase in the proportion of women in parliament. Even data on the level of women's participation in the voting process in ECOWAS countries is still not easily verifiable owing to unavailability of current gender data (women and men disaggregated on) voter turn.
2. In other countries like Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Togo, legal provisions have been made for women's participation but there is lack of the will to have them operationalized. For instance, Article 36 of the Constitution of Côte d'Ivoire provides for promoting political representation of women, which is yet to reflect on women's representation in legislature. Recently, in Côte d'Ivoire, a bill to promote the representation of women in elected assemblies was adopted by the Council of Ministers on 06 March 2019. This bill institutes measures to promote the representation of women in fully or partially elected assemblies by increasing their chances of having access to representation in these assemblies.
3. Also, there are countries where the electoral legal framework is being reviewed to include special provision to enhance women's representation. In the case of the Republic of Cape Verde, the Cape Verde Parliament approved the Parity Law on the 28, November 2018).
4. Senegal has a gender parity law. As of January 2019, it is adjudged the best in West Africa, the 4th best in Africa and the 11th best in the world with 41.8% of the national parliament composed of women. These facts are according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).
5. The Republic of Guinea adopted on 2 May 2019, a Law on Parity that says women must make fifty per cent of the candidate lists for elective positions. Article 2 of the Law, which was adopted by an unanimous vote, stipulates that: "Parity applies to any list



of candidates for national and local elections, as well as for the holding of elective offices in public institutions" (UN Women, Friday, May 10, 2019). The UN Women states that the law has been in the making since the legislature election of 2013, where women, representing 51.7 per cent of the population and 50.8 per cent of voters obtained only 25 seats (21.9 per cent) out of 114 seats in the National Assembly (IPU data). UN Women and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) supported Guinean parliamentarians with the drafting of the Law on Parity as part of a joint project funded by the Government of Canada. They have also supported advocacy efforts by women parliamentarians and civil society organizations leading up to the adoption of the law in parliament.

6. The Republic of Benin has revised the electoral codes and charters for political parties. It has also reviewed seats in the Chamber of Deputies where seats were increased from 83 to 109 seats out of which 24 were reserved for women. These changes were amended in the Constitution and the amendment was voted into law by the Benin Parliament on the 1st of November 2019.

7. Another success story in the region is The Gambia which has new proposals for gender quota in the draft Constitution of The Gambia. The proposals are:

Only elected Members shall constitute the National Assembly:

- (i) 53 elected from single member constituencies;
- (ii) 14 elected women, two from each Administrative Area; and
- (iii) 2 persons, elected by persons with disabilities from amongst the members of the federation representing such persons

14 seats are reserved for women at the national assembly. These seats can only be contested for by women only at the regional level.

The general situation in most West African countries is that there are no rigorous and sanctionable parity laws to encourage most political parties to regularly provide opportunities for women representation. It is worthy of note that the Gambia is the only country in West Africa where local councils have special representation for women and youth groups.

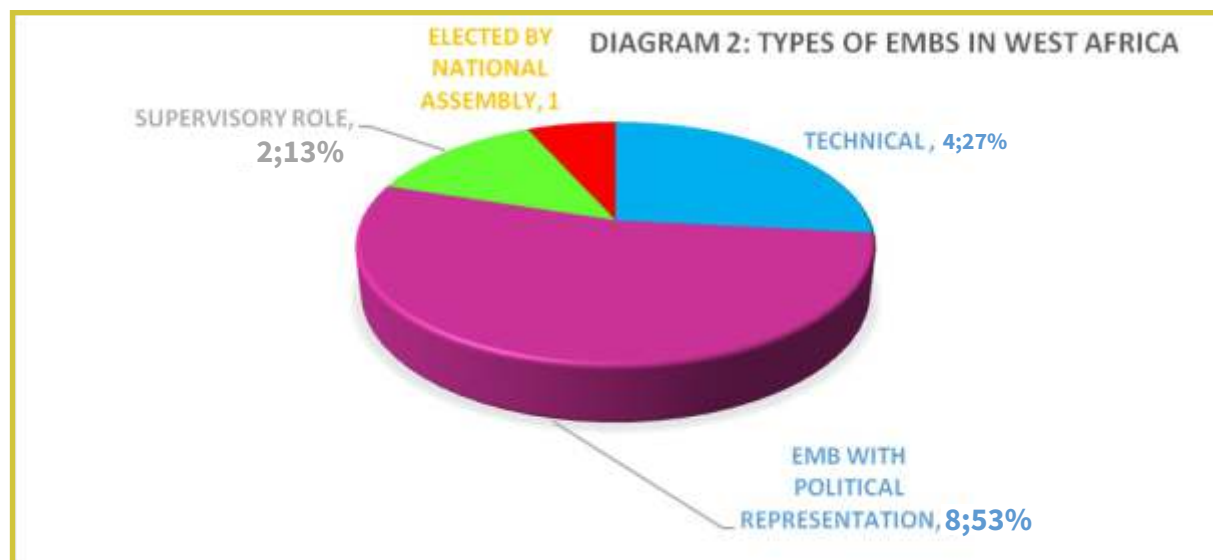
6. EMB STRUCTURE, PROCESSES AND WOMEN'S POSITIONING

According to International IDEA Handbook on Electoral Management Design, "an Electoral Management Body (EMB) is an organization or body that has the sole purpose of, and is legally responsible for, managing some or all of the elements that are essential for the conduct of elections and direct democracy instruments". Though all the countries in West Africa have an EMB, their statuses, functions or responsibilities as well as their compositions and tenure vary substantially. This situation is influenced by each of the countries' unique socio-political context. EMB responsibilities may include legal framework formulation, registration of political parties, drawing up of electoral boundaries, registration of voters,



oversight of campaign finance, civic and voter education and media monitoring. Others include design of the ballot paper, polling and tabulation of votes, resolution of electoral disputes, and others.

Some countries have EMBs with political party representation such as Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte D'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Liberia and Togo. Other countries such as The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Nigeria and Sierra Leone have technical EMBs; Senegal and Mali have electoral commissions with purely supervisory roles. Cape Verde's Electoral Commission is



EMBs with mixed membership have party political representatives and representation of politically non-aligned members, such as judges, academics, civil society representatives and career public servants. Political parties' law and judicial societies and government ministries may appoint members. This may combine advantages from both models, producing even-handed bodies that have both political parties buy-in and transparency in their operations.

Membership of EMBs in ECOWAS Member States varies irrespective of the type. Guinea has the highest number with 25 Commission members, followed by Togo and Côte D'Ivoire with 17 each, Mali and Burkina Faso with 15 members and Nigeria and Senegal with 13 and 12 members respectively. Guinea Bissau has the lowest number of members who are 4. Four (4) out of the 17 commissioners in Côte D'Ivoire are women, 3 out of 5 Commission Members in Cape Verde are women, and 4 out of 7 Commission Members in Ghana are women and 7 out of the 25 in Guinea are women. There are 3 women among the 13 Commission Members in Nigeria, 2 women among the 15 in Mali while 1 woman is present in the 5 member EMB of Sierra Leone.



Table 4: Women in EMBs In ECOWAS Member States

S/N	Ranking	Total Number of Commissioners	Females Commissioners	Percentage %
1	Cape Verde	5	3	60%
2	Ghana	7	4	57%
3	Liberia	7	3	43%
4	Guinea	25	7	28%
5	Senegal	12	3	25%
6	Cote d'Ivoire	17	4	23.5%
7	Nigeria	13	3	23%
8	Gambia	5	1	23%
9	Benin	5	1	20%
10	Sierra Leone	5	1	20%
11	Burkina Faso	15	2	13%
12	Mali	15	2	13%
13	Togo	17	2	12%
14	Niger	10	1	10%
15	Guinea Bissau	4	1	25%

It is observed from the table above that there is gender-equity in the composition of the membership of EMBs only in Cape Verde (60%) and Ghana (57%), and the EMB in Guinea Bissau has 1 female commissioner within NEC Guinea Bissau.

It is worth stating that the responsibility of appointing female members of an EMB rests with the authorities legally mandated to do so. Therefore, it is obvious that political parties that



have representation in EMBs that are composed with political party representatives as those in Burkina Faso, Guinea and Niger, are not under any national obligation to consult each other during the appointments of their EMB representatives, for an opportunity to discuss gender equity or balance in their appointments. However, where the ruling party has the opportunity to appoint multiple EMB members, as is the case of Burkina Faso, appointments may usually not be done through a gender-equity lens. But the law in Burkina Faso is that the incumbent party must appoint 5 EMB members while opposition parties who are more than 150 in number are also to appoint 5 other EMB members.

Apart from Benin, Cape Verde and Niger, the rest of the Member States have sub national structures of the EMBs, a few of which are headed by women. The data obtained indicates that there are female permanent staff in the EMBs in almost all the Member States. However, few women occupy senior management roles at the EMBs. It is evident that both men and women are recruited as either permanent or temporary staff of the EMBs. In their last elections, Togo had 29.9% female election officials, Niger had 20% and Guinea had 15% of election officials as women. There is however no available information on the other Member States concerning the number of female electoral agents.

Almost all EMBs in Member States do not publish or gazette statistics on women's participation in electoral activities. The reasons are varied. Some of them do not have any data on participation at all; those who have some data do not have it in gender disaggregated form. In the case of Ghana, it is not specified in the Electoral Laws for those statistics to be published and gazetted during elections. Only items on the declaration of results sheets are gazetted and published. However, disaggregated data on the participation of Women in the electoral process is readily available at the Research, Monitoring and Evaluation Department of the Commission. Election results give data of the number of both women and men registered voters as well as the number of men and women candidates at both national and local levels in EMBs in the Member States except Cape Verde, Gambia Guinea with no attached reasons.

About 6 Member States have gender-based civic or voter education programmes. Civil Society Organisations also conduct gender-based civic and voter education programmes in countries like Ghana, where the EMB in collaboration with donor organisations organise female only voter sensitization programmes for female candidates and women's groups as well.

On the average, female registered voters among the total number of registered voters in Member States are about 50%. For instance, Burkina Faso has 47.3% of its registered voters recorded as females, Côte D'Ivoire has 49.09% of its voters recorded as female registered voters, Gambia has 53.65% of its registered voter population as females, Guinea Bissau has 50.68% of its registered voter population that are females and 52% of registered voters in Sierra Leone are females according to the electoral roll.



Women's participation in voting is key to a lot of ECOWAS Member States. Thus, there are programmes, which encourage women to vote in 11 out of the 15 Member States. Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Senegal and Togo have no such programmes in their countries. The study also revealed that 6 Member States have not had any capacity building programmes on gender for the members of their Electoral Commission. Other countries have had programmes such as the BRIDGE Gender Training, Gender Mainstreaming in the electoral process and other internal capacity building programmes on gender for both members of the Commission and the Personnel of the EMB. All EMBs in Member States surveyed require a number of trainings for the various categories of staff and members. These requirements range from short-term to long-term trainings such as leadership and personal development, organizational leadership, conflict management and gender-sensitive electoral operations, gender mainstreaming, gender sensitive budgeting, gender analysis, development of a gender policy, disability and elections strategies and mitigating violence against women in election. Quite a number of EMBs in Member States organise gender sensitive training for polling staff.

EMBs are ultimately responsible for safeguarding the legitimacy of democratic institutions and therefore, they need to ensure all aspects of any electoral contest meet global norms and follow the fundamental guiding principles such as integrity, efficiency, professionalism and inclusiveness, among others.

7. POLITICAL PARTIES AND PROMOTION OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

"A political party is a group of people who share the same interests, views, ideas and associate themselves in an organization that aims to be elected to exercise power and to implement a political project or a common program ..." (Dictionary la Toupie www.toupie.org). In essence, political parties are groups in which men and women put together their skills and resources for public life and political management of a country. It is clear that men often do the management of the affairs of a state, which raises the question of the participation of women in politics. This assessment, which considered the practices, legal context and functioning of political parties in the 15 West African countries, provides an opportunity for the appreciation of the place of women in political parties.

One major question to begin with, is what is the contribution of political parties in the promotion of women in politics? In other words, how do political parties promote women's participation in politics? An attempt to answer this question within the context of ECOWAS Member States provides an assessment of the contribution of political parties in promoting women's participation.

Another interesting question is to know how EMBs can collaborate with political parties for the promotion of women's political participation.



7.1 *The Number of Political Parties Led by Women in West Africa*

In West Africa, many political parties are involved in the political life of the States. The table 6 below shows the number of political parties that share the political space in the 15 countries of West Africa and the number of political parties that are led by women. It provides information on the countries, number of parties, total population, proportion of women in the population and the number of parties that are headed by women.

TABLE 5: PROPORTION OF POLITICAL PARTIES LED BY WOMEN IN ECOWAS MEMBER STATES AS AT JUNE 2019						
S/N	Ranking	Number Of Registered Political Parties	Number Of Political Parties Led by Women	%	Total Population	% Of Women in Population
1	Cape Verde	8	1	12.5%	537,231	49.7
2	Sierra Leone	17	2	11.8%	7,092,113	51.0
3	Ghana	25	2	8.0%	29,463,643	50.15
4	Liberia	26	2	7.7%	4,700,000	49.57
5	Niger	107	7	6.54%	21,466,863	50.1
6	Nigeria	91	3	3.3%	199,805,437 (2016)	48
7	Côte d'Ivoire	More than 160	5	3.1%	22,671,331	48.32
8	Burkina Faso	161	3	1.9%	20,244,080 (2018)	51.7
9	Mali	235	4	1.7%	18,540,000	51
10	Senegal	299 (April 2018)	5	1.7%	15,726,037	–
11	Togo	110	1	0.9%	6,191,155	51.4
12	Guinea Conakry	120	1	0.83%	10,599,848	51.74
13	Benin	250 (Sept. 2018)	2	0.8%	11,911,429	50.7
14	Gambia	9	0	0%	1,857,181	50.8
15	Guinea Bissau	47	0	0%	1,800,000 (2012)	52.0



The first observation made from the above table is that there are more political parties in French-speaking countries than in the English-speaking and Portuguese-speaking countries of the region. There are 250 in Benin, 161 in Burkina Faso, more than 160 in Côte d'Ivoire, 120 in Guinea Conakry, 235 in Mali, 107 in Niger, 299 in Senegal, and 110 in Togo; while there are 8 in Cape Verde, 9 in the Gambia, 25 in Ghana, 47 in Guinea Bissau, 26 in Liberia, 91 in Nigeria (with an estimated population of 200 million) and 17 in Sierra Leone. Out of the 160 political parties in Côte d'Ivoire, women head 5; that is 3.1%. The ratio is 1.86% in Burkina Faso, 12.5% in Cape Verde, 0.83% in Guinea Conakry and 1.70% in Mali. Women head 6.54% of the political parties in Niger 1.67% in Senegal and 0.9% in Togo. The Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone have 0%, 8%, 7.69%, 3.29% and 11.8% of female-headed political parties respectively.

In general, women head less than 15% of the political parties in the ECOWAS countries. This analysis highlights the fact that the leadership of political parties is reserved for men in more than 85% of the political parties in West African countries. Questions that should be posed are these:

- i Where are the women in political parties?
- ii What is their role in political parties?
- iii What positions do they occupy in the political parties?

The ECOWAS Strategic Framework for Gender and Elections demonstrates that political parties are very often led by men in West African countries. According to this strategic document, "the male domination of politics, political parties and the culture of formal political structures is a major factor that impedes women's political participation". Women are only relegated to female cells to mobilize the electorate to either the parties or to vote at elections.

7.2 Legal Provisions of Political Parties to Encourage Women's Participation in Elections

Legal provisions governing the operation of political parties at the national and subnational levels are the main tools to improve the political representation of women. The existence of a specific legal framework that encourages political parties to nominate women for elective positions in legislative and local elections would favour the emergence of women in decision-making positions in political parties. All West African countries have gender equality stated in their constitutions; yet gender equality is not practiced in almost all spheres of life within the region, including the political space. For instance, Article 8 of the Constitution of the Republic of Guinea states: "All human beings are equal before the law. Men and women have the same rights. No one should be privileged or disadvantaged because of his sex ..." However political party activities do not encourage the participation of women. In like manner, on equality and freedom from discrimination, Articles 12, 17, 27 and 29 of Ghana's 1992 Constitution provides that all persons shall be equal before the law and no persons shall be discriminated against on grounds of gender, race, colour, ethnic origin, political opinion, religion, creed or disability or social or economic status; yet women's



involvement in political party activities is not quite encouraging. Also, in Sierra Leone there are no current legal provisions that encourage women's participation in political parties but a lot of advocacies are done by women's groups to encourage affirmative action for women.

A few West African countries have specific legal provisions, which encourage political parties to nominate women for elected positions in legislative or local elections. This is the case in Mali, where the 'Political Parties Charter Act' grants 15% of public funding to political parties that have elected women members of parliament or local counsellors. This is also the case in Niger (the law on quotas) and Senegal (Law 2010-11 of May 28, 2010, establishing totally or partially the absolute parity between men and women for all elective positions). Also in Mali, the Law N ° 052 of 18th December 2015 promotes the social, professional and political advancement of women by imposing a 30% quota on nominative and elective functions.

7.3 Political Parties Funding as a Means to Encourage the Participation of Women in Politics

Funding of political parties is increasingly recognized as an important means for the consolidation of democracy in countries. Political parties need funding to be able to play their part in the electoral process. Most political parties are funded by contributions from party members and individual supporters through membership fees, dues, personal and private donations from organizations, which share their political thoughts, or which can benefit from their activities. Funds raised within political parties are meant to finance party activities in general and not to support candidates whether male or female. It is known widely that funding is one of the major challenges which lead to women being severely underrepresented in decision-making processes and political bodies across the world at all levels; therefore, it is necessary for States to fund female candidates.

In the West African region, countries like Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Niger, Sierra Leone and Togo have legal provisions that allocate funding to political parties in terms of state subsidies. However, there is no public funding specifically allocated to women to encourage their participation in political parties and in the politics of many ECOWAS Member States. In Togo, the electoral laws grant a reduction on the amount of filing fees for female candidates to encourage political parties to nominate women during elections. There is also the Nigerian Women's Trust Fund under the Ministry of Women's Affairs, which is aimed at building the capacity of women in the electoral processes. In Ghana, female parliamentary candidates who are able to pull 12.5% votes have their filing fees refunded in full as part of the election regulations. This, however, has not encouraged political parties to field more women as candidates and therefore not helped to increase women's representation because the provision has not been tied to enhancing political participation and representation of women. In the 2006 District Level Elections in Ghana, the Electoral Commission, without any legal provision, provided some financial cushion to all female candidates, with support from a development partner. The kind support however has not been renewed ever since in Ghana.



Statutory provisions within political parties that guarantee financial support to female candidates are rare although parties sometimes provide support to women candidates. Very often this financial support is inadequate and does not allow the women to go far in their political ambitions. Some political parties encourage women to contest in elections by waiving off part of their filing fees. In Ghana for instance, some political parties waive off 50% of the filing fees for women during their party primaries. Also, funding for campaign and other political activity is rather non-existent in most cases in ECOWAS Member States.

The work of CSOs in promoting women's participation in politics should be emphasized at this level. Although CSOs do not provide direct funding to women, they encourage them to engage in politics in various ways. Civil society is investing in the promotion of women's rights from sensitization to training, preparing them to occupy and manage positions of responsibility and even coaching them as elected representatives. Over the last few decades, women's organizations in civil society have been very influential and have a strong commitment to the advancement of women at all levels, especially at the political level (e.g., the Women's Forum in Liberia, the Groupe de reflexion et d'action Femme Démocratie et Développement in Togo and Abantu for Development in Ghana). In the field of elections, some women's organizations run very professional and effective election situation rooms.

7.4 EMBs & Political Parties' Collaboration

It is essential for EMBs and Political Parties being the two main electoral stakeholders to collaborate to ensure women's political participation. This collaboration, which must be built on trust, can take various forms:

- 1 EMBs can organise meetings with political parties to discuss how to encourage women's political participation;
- 2 EMBs can organise training sessions for political parties or for women in political parties;
- 3 Political parties' representative in an EMB can be part of its gender department;
- 4 EMBs can conduct advocacy activities that will sensitise and encourage political parties and governments of their countries to adopt the quota laws in countries where they do not exist;
- 5 EMBs can offer various advisories on how to encourage women's participation within the political parties.

8. ELECTORAL STAKEHOLDERS AND PROMOTION OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

According to the Electoral Knowledge Network (ACE), the stakeholders of an EMB are those individuals, groups and organizations that have an interest or 'stake' in its operations. They can be classified as either primary stakeholders, who directly affect or are directly affected by the EMB's activities, policies and practices; or as secondary stakeholders, who have just a loose connection with the EMB's activities. Genuine and open dialogue with stakeholders can build confidence in the electoral process and trust in the EMB's activities. There is



therefore an imperative for EMBs to collaborate with the stakeholders to promote women's involvement in the electoral process at all levels.

The promotion of women's participation in politics and decision-making processes is an issue of paramount importance that requires the engagement of all socio-political actors. Far from being a subject to be reserved for political parties alone, this question calls for synergy of actions involving all the actors in an electoral process. Apart from political parties, many other actors or electoral stakeholders are needed for involvement in electoral processes. National Institutions, Government Ministries, CSOs, the Security, Media, Bilateral and Multilateral Partners and Electoral Management Bodies are to collaborate as stakeholders at different levels to carry out actions that contribute in one way or the other to promoting women's participation in politics. The analysis of the points that will follow, will allow for an appreciation of the commitment needed from various actors in the promotion of women's participation in politics as well as the various collaborations that can be demonstrated between these stakeholders and the EMBs.

8.1 Public Awareness of the Situation of Women in Politics

In all countries in West Africa, there is a lot of sensitization work on women's participation and representation in public and political life. Civil society organizations are more often involved in raising this awareness. State structures and Election Management Bodies and other actors also have awareness programs on the subject. There has often been partnership in some cases between some state institutions such as ministries and CSOs in advocacy campaign for women's participation in the decision-making process. This partnership is appreciated in relation to field interventions or the development of awareness programs on the subject.

On an ad hoc, spontaneous or rarely sustainable basis, awareness campaigns are carried out to the populations in general and women in particular. Sensitization and advocacy are also carried out with decision-makers with the aim that there could be legal measures to back actions that are meant to encourage the participation of women in politics.

The simplistic analysis of the issue would be limited to awareness-raising actions aimed at encouraging the participation of women in politics in the ECOWAS States. It would be more relevant to know:

- i** The extent to which the gender approach is integrated into the actions of awareness raising;
- ii** The extent to which the design of these actions takes into account the gender approach as a tool to promote women's participation in politics and
- iii** How the promotion of the participation of women is made - through the tools of sensitization, the target groups, the teams or structures for the sensitizations, and others.



EMBs should also develop a strong collaboration with the media for their awareness programs. In that vein, some EMBs sign a Memorandum of Understanding with media houses (mostly private media) for the coverage of their activities at no fee since the state media is almost always free of charge. EMBs can also use this avenue to organise radio and television broadcasts to discuss issue on women's political participation.

8.2 Gender Sensitive Training for Media and Civil Society Organizations

It must be admitted that the media plays a very important role in the development of countries since they constitute the 4th Estate of the Realm. Promoting women's participation in politics and decision-making processes is a societal issue that must be known by all to generate more commitment from all actors involved in the electoral processes. The media an indispensable tool that should be effectively used to promote women's participation in the democratization process. It is also a tool which women themselves must use to get their messages across to gain support for their ideas. The important role that the media should play regarding the promotion of women's issues requires that their capacities be reinforced on gender sensitivity and transformation.

Training on gender sensitivity assumes that these key actors, the media and civil society, are trained on how to integrate the gender approach into their work and actions. Some Gender sensitivity trainings have been organized for some media and civil society organizations in some West African countries. But it is important that these opportunities be multiplied and given to many more media professionals and civil society actors. Often, it is the civil society that is actively involved in this type of training with support from technical and financial partners. Even though the ministerial departments of women's promotion and other actors are also involved, civil society has a strong mastery in this field.

Thus, building the capacity of the media and civil society on gender sensitivity will allow a better engagement of these important actors in promoting women's participation in politics.

One can take into consideration the role that the media and CSOs play in electoral processes as primary stakeholders, for which matter EMBs should be more proactive in engaging them. The engagements can be done through the gender department/desk/focal point which is well able to not only provide critical information on women's political participation at various levels to call for action, but also to build the capacity of these stakeholders on gender sensitivity. The gender department/desk/focal point should be encouraged to go beyond the training and sensitization programs or activities to reflect on other actions or means of collaboration with media and CSO.

8.3 Security Personnel and Promotion of Women's Participation in the electoral process

Security and gender in the electoral process is an area where data is hardly available in all EMBs in West Africa.



A study commissioned in 2011 by the Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces (DCAF) on "Police, Defence, Justice and Prison Services in the ECOWAS Countries" reveals that historically West African Security Sector Institutions (ISS) mainly employed men. Women are underrepresented in this sector. The study makes it understandable that the representation of women in ISS is very low. Women make up about 12% of the police, armed forces, prison services and the judiciary. At the ECOWAS EMB level too, the presence of female security staff involved in the electoral process is very minimal. Data on the percentage of female security staff involved in electoral processes are also not available or non-existent. Beyond this chronic lack of data related to security personnel is the problem of the unavailability of gender disaggregated data at all levels of the electoral process in ECOWAS countries. In the case of Ghana for instance, the checklist produced to monitor the electoral processes only ask of the presence of security and the number of personnel recruited for particular exercises, without asking of their gender.

It has also been found out from this study that the EMBs under study do not make specific requests for the inclusion of female security staff in the security forces recruited to support electoral activities. It is important for EMBs in their request for security presence for activity centres to first ask for the inclusion of a lot more women as a means to encourage women's participation in the electoral process. Aside this, there should be adequate gender disaggregated data on the security persons involved in the electoral process of the county. A well-resourced gender department of an EMB can help produce data on female security staff involved in the electoral processes. It can also bring to the agenda of decision makers of the EMB and national security departments, the importance of inclusion of female security agents for gender-specific needs. These are gestures that give a great deal of motivation to women to fully participate in elections and publishing of data on women's participation at the needed places would encourage other women to also get involved at every stage of the electoral process.

It is widely observed that women are mostly victims of violence in elections, leading to some of them abandoning the process. They will be encouraged to fully participate in elections when they notice the presence of female security personnel involved in the activities, to guarantee their emotional security. Thus, to encourage more women's participation in the electoral processes, adequate measures should be taken to ensure their protection at all levels of the process.

8.4 EMBs and Other Electoral Stakeholders

There are many stakeholders involved in the electoral processes. Apart from Government Agencies or Ministries, political parties, CSO, media and Development partners, there are also some other actors whose involvement or actions are indirectly or directly felt on the electoral processes. Among them, we have a number of religious bodies or Faith based Organizations, Academic Institutions, Sub Regional or Regional Bodies etc. The focus of an EMB should be on how to develop a strategic collaboration with these stakeholders irrespective of the organization or institution, on how to better mainstream gender within



the EMB and to a larger extent how to encourage women's participation more and more at both the national and local levels.

9. ADDRESSING THE GENDER GAP: PROSPECTS AND EFFECTIVENESS OF GENDER FOCAL POINT/ UNIT/DIVISION OF ELECTION MANAGEMENT BODIES

The quality of an Election Management Body significantly determines the credibility of the Electoral Process. Election management is an essential part of any inclusive democratic process, under the equal political participation of women and men. An EMB's credibility can be promoted both locally and internationally if it ensures that there is a gender balance among the personnel and equal participation in the electoral process whether or not required by any electoral legislation or government policy. Thus, EMBs have a responsibility to ensure that they reflect the society's gender composition and aspirations in their internal and external activities. Elements of this responsibility may be defined in electoral and gender equity laws, and some may be adopted voluntarily by an EMB.

9.1 *A Gender Policy and its Effectiveness*

EMBs can ensure women's full participation in all of the aspects of the electoral process when they do the following: adopt an internal gender policy, carry out a gender audit or mapping of all electoral activities, follow a gender mainstreaming policy and have a designated senior staff member who oversees gender inclusion and checks for gender equity and inclusion. An EMB needs to provide a good example on gender balance issues in all its activities. This will become possible if the EMB has a working document in terms of a gender policy to guide an inclusive election administration of the country.

Apart from Nigeria, Liberia, Côte D'Ivoire, and Sierra Leone other EMBs of the region do not have gender policies. A gender policy in an EMB indicates a commitment to advancing gender equality in its own workforce, to develop strategies to close the gender gap through research, gender-responsive planning, policies and implementation of programmes which give due attention to gender considerations and promote equity and equality between women and men in the electoral process.

It is only with a gender policy that gender can effectively be mainstreamed into the electoral process and its activities in a structured and sustained manner. "In view of the global consensus and commitments to achieve gender equality in all spheres of life, EMBs are increasingly challenged to address gender inequalities in their internal systems, processes and culture" (International IDEA). "An internal gender policy, serves as a visible mechanism that addresses a central concern of the extent an EMB is committed to mainstreaming gender in the electoral process and to promote gender equality in its internal systems and processes. Without an institutionalised policy that defines an internal mechanism to address gender inequalities systematically, EMBs' efforts in this area may be insufficient and inconsistent or even non-existent" (International IDEA). While it is possible for EMBs to tackle internal gender inequalities, policy commitments alone will not create gender equality. The



challenge for any EMB is to take the first step to institutionalize a gender policy in its systems and processes (International IDEA). This undoubtedly requires sustained and sufficient commitment from leadership within the EMB to translate such commitments into practical action. Internal gender policies will help to create enabling environments for mainstreaming gender within an EMB.

The pie chart below gives a picture of EMBs in West Africa that have gender policies guiding their activities. The chart shows that close to 70% of Member States have no gender policies in their EMBs.

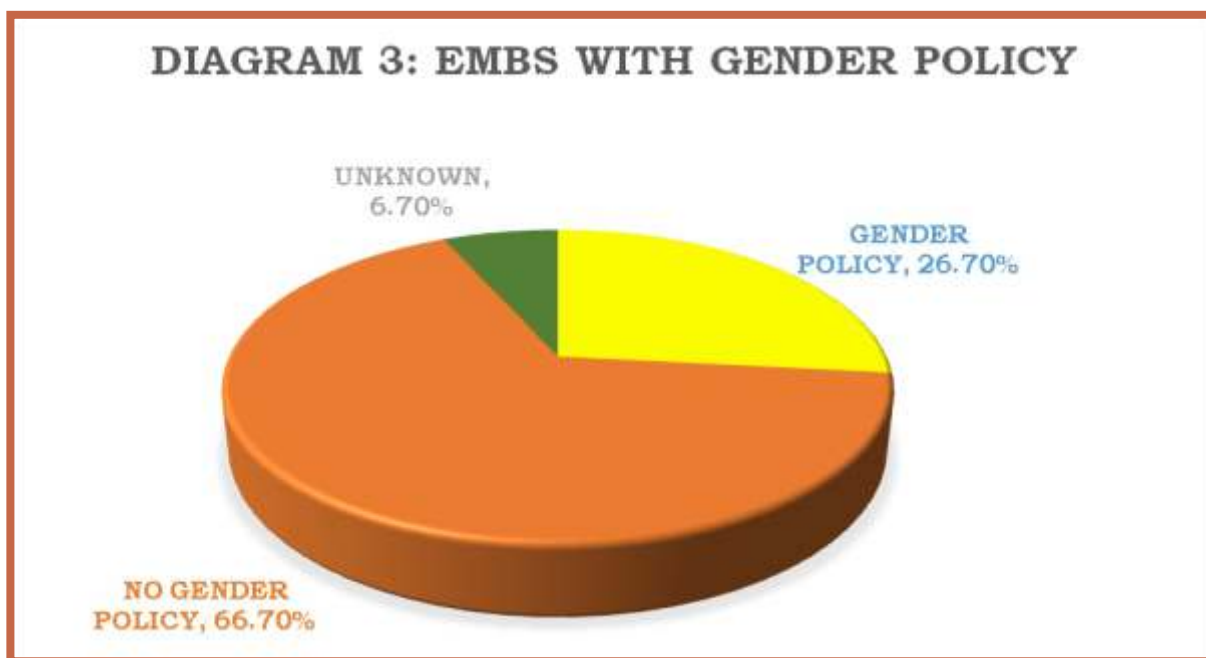


Diagram 3: Countries with Gender policies in EMBs with gender policies

The introduction of an internal gender policy by an EMB falls under its internal administration. The EMB can have more control over the management of its internal operations. This could potentially also influence the external management and administration of electoral processes, due to the EMB's increased awareness of the importance of applying a gender lens to the electoral process (IDEA 2009).

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Women 'ensuring gender equality in any organization requires political commitment. An explicit manifestation of that commitment is a gender policy' (UNDP and UN Women 2015: 24). Likewise, the International Foundation of Electoral Systems (IFES) emphasizes that it is important for EMBs to institutionalize gender policies (IFES 2014: 13-14).



9.2 *Rationale for a Gender Policy in EMBs (International IDEA 2009)*

1

Through the introduction of internal gender policies that are supported by clearly defined plans for their implementation, EMBs can contribute to the achievement of gender equality in the way that they manage their internal operations and processes.

2

In countries where EMBs have the sole mandate to manage most of the key constituent parts of the electoral process, it can be inferred that when an EMB has an internal gender policy in place, in the long term this might influence the EMBs' management of electoral processes within the phases of the electoral cycle, including pre-election, election and postelection periods. For example, an EMB can perform a research and advocacy role and, through its cultivation of support among key stakeholders, ensure that a gender lens is applied to the management of the electoral process.

3

An internal gender policy helps foster an EMB's recognition of gender equality as an integral issue in organizational systems and processes by acknowledging how gender-based inequalities can affect all aspects of women's and men's opportunities to participate in these systems and processes.

4

An explicit gender policy would thus make gender equality visible and an integral aspect in the designing, planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting on internal operations, systems and processes of an EMB.

5

Due to the recognition of the intrinsic nature of gender in organizational systems and processes, a gender equality policy establishes an institutional mechanism for the EMB to identify and implement the approaches that address barriers to the equal participation of men and women within EMBs.

6

Internal gender policies help to create enabling environments for mainstreaming gender within an EMB. The attitudes, behaviours, and practices of the leadership and management play a critical role in creating an enabling organizational environment for gender-sensitive organizational changes. There must be ownership of the policy by the leadership and management of the EMBs.

7

A gender policy aims to address discriminatory norms and negative gender stereotypes that affect the internal operations, systems, processes and practices within the EMB and ultimately in the overall administration and management of electoral processes.

9.3 *Gender Focal Points in EMBs in ECOWAS States*

The need for all EMBs in West Africa, regardless of type, to have a well-resourced Gender Focal Unit or Division to assist in addressing major barriers that women face in the electoral process, cannot be overemphasised. This will ensure that resources within the EMB is



dedicated to spearhead and monitor gender initiatives as well as review potential EMB policies and programs to see how they affect women as well as men (IDEA, A Framework for Developing Internal Gender Policies for Electoral Management Bodies).

Fortunately, some Member States have Gender Focal Points within the EMBs. Nigeria established a gender desk in 2006; one was established in Ghana in 2008; Sierra Leone in 2013 while Niger established one in 2017. The existence of a focal point will serve as a link between the EMB and external organisations on matters relating to equal participation in the electoral process.

The chart below is a presentation of EMBs with gender focal points. 40% of the countries in West Africa do not have gender focal points as illustrated in the diagram below.

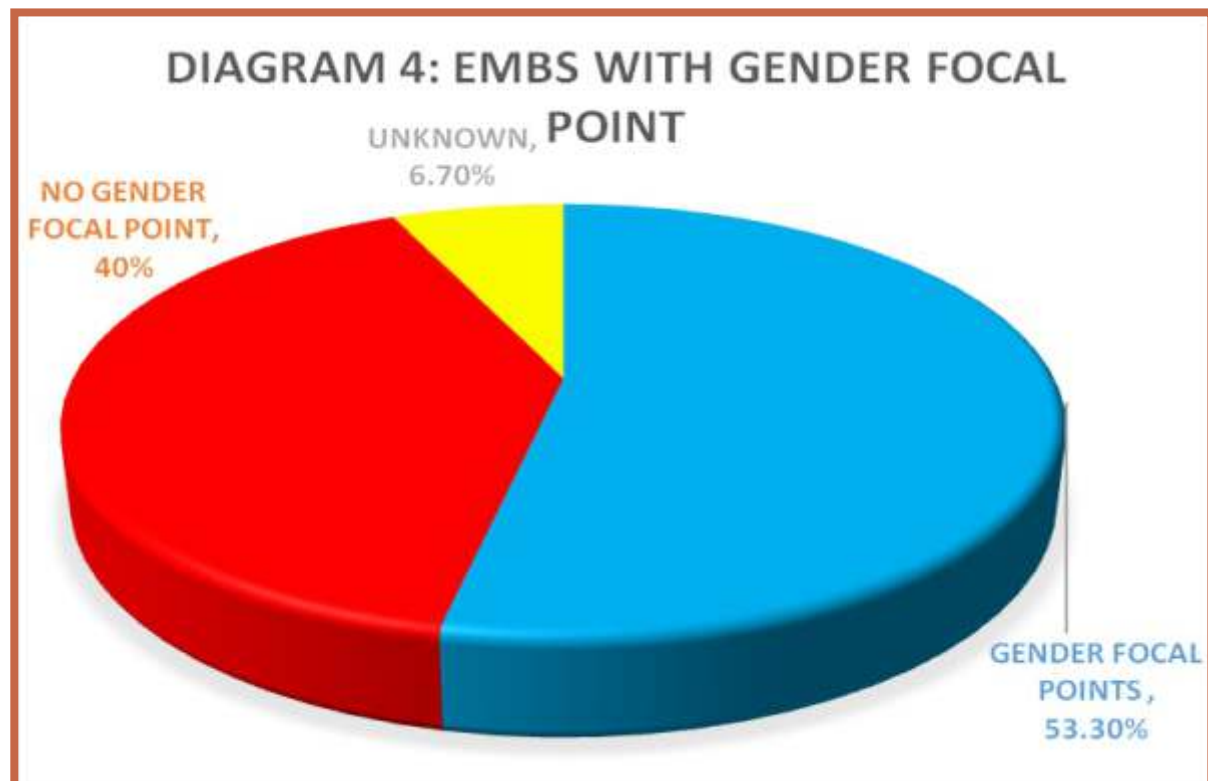


Diagram 4: EMBS with Gender Focal Points



9.4 Structure of Gender Unit/Division

The structure of gender unit vis-à-vis the organogram of an EMB provides an idea of the technical and professional relevance that it is accorded. In the EMB in Ghana, the Head of the Gender Desk (Unit) reported directly to the Chairperson of the EMB upon its establishment in 2005 until the development of a 5-year strategic plan (2014-2020) when it was moved to the Human Resource Department. At present, the desk is under the Electoral Services Department. The foregoing indicates that there have not been any strategic thoughts on the positioning of the Gender Unit within the structure of the Ghana EMB. While other EMBs in the ECOWAS region are beginning to give importance to the setting up and functioning of their gender units, it is rather losing its prominence in the structure of the organisation and the unit is completely missing in the organogram of Ghana's EMB. There are 10 sub national structure of the Gender Desk.

In Niger, the Gender Focal Point, headed by a female Commissioner is responsible for responding to all gender issues within the EMB. She is the supervisor of the communication, training, awareness, civic education and accreditation department.

In Nigeria, there is a Deputy Director, an Assistant Director and six other staff in the Gender Division. There is also a gender focal person in every department at the Headquarters of INEC Nigeria and a gender desk officer in every state office across the country, including the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The Gender Division in INEC is situated in the Department for Voter Education, Publicity, Gender and Civil Society. The Department has established an external advisory committee made up of relevant MDAs and development bodies which meets quarterly on the implementation of INEC Gender Policy.

In Sierra Leone, the Gender Unit is under the supervision of the Director of Human Resource/Gender and Disability. It has a head (Chief) who supervises and directs and an Assistant Electoral Officer (who implements and gives recommendations).

A gender focal point must have a clear mandate and should report to and receive support from the leadership of the EMB. The work of a gender focal point is to support gender mainstreaming by advocating, advising and supporting professional staff, monitoring and reporting on progress - if necessary using consultants or external specialists. Dissemination of information and competence development, through training and seminars, should also be part of the work of the gender focal points. Some of the duties and responsibilities of the Gender Desk of Ghana's EMB include liaising with the Chairman, Deputy Chairmen, Commission Members and Directors on gender and disability issues in the electoral process; representing the Commission in conferences, workshops and seminars; ensuring the effective and efficient implementation of gender policies and programmes; assisting in formulating proposals for negotiations with appropriate bodies on matters relating to gender and disability and performing any other task unspecified but relevant to the desk assigned by the chairman, deputies and directors.



9.5 Capacity Building for Gender Focal Units in EMBs in ECOWAS States

Building the capacity of gender focal persons helps to deepen their understanding of basic gender concepts; explore thematic areas dealing with key gender and women's issues; understand gender architecture within organisation; be able to apply gender mainstreaming tools and have developed skills in advocacy and communication.

It is realised that only a few of the Gender focal persons in ECOWAS Member States have gone through some form of capacity building programs on gender. For instance, the Gender focal person in Gambia has gone through Gender and Election Strategic Framework implementation workshop, held in the Gambia and an ECOWAS-UN BRIDGE workshop held in Abidjan in 2018.

Gender focal persons in other West African countries have undergone BRIDGE Training on Gender and Election. Some focal persons, head of units or division have also undergone relevant professional development courses in the field such as Professional Certificate in Strategic Gender Equity Planning Studies; Certificate in Gender & Development, 'Women in Management' Training Programme and "Women in Leadership" Training Programme. It is worth noting that capacity building can lead to EMB networking, where EMBs can share ideas and best practice with each other, especially when focal persons from different EMBs are brought together.

9.6 Availability of Statistics of Women in Gender Unit/Division/Focal point

A vibrant Gender Focal Point should be one that has statistics on women's participation in the electoral process and other important data that will help to facilitate the work of mainstreaming gender in the activities of EMBs.

The statistics that need to be readily available should include female candidate nomination, registration, voting and women's participation in the electoral and political processes in general. It is only a few countries like Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Togo that have started compiling some statistics in this respect.

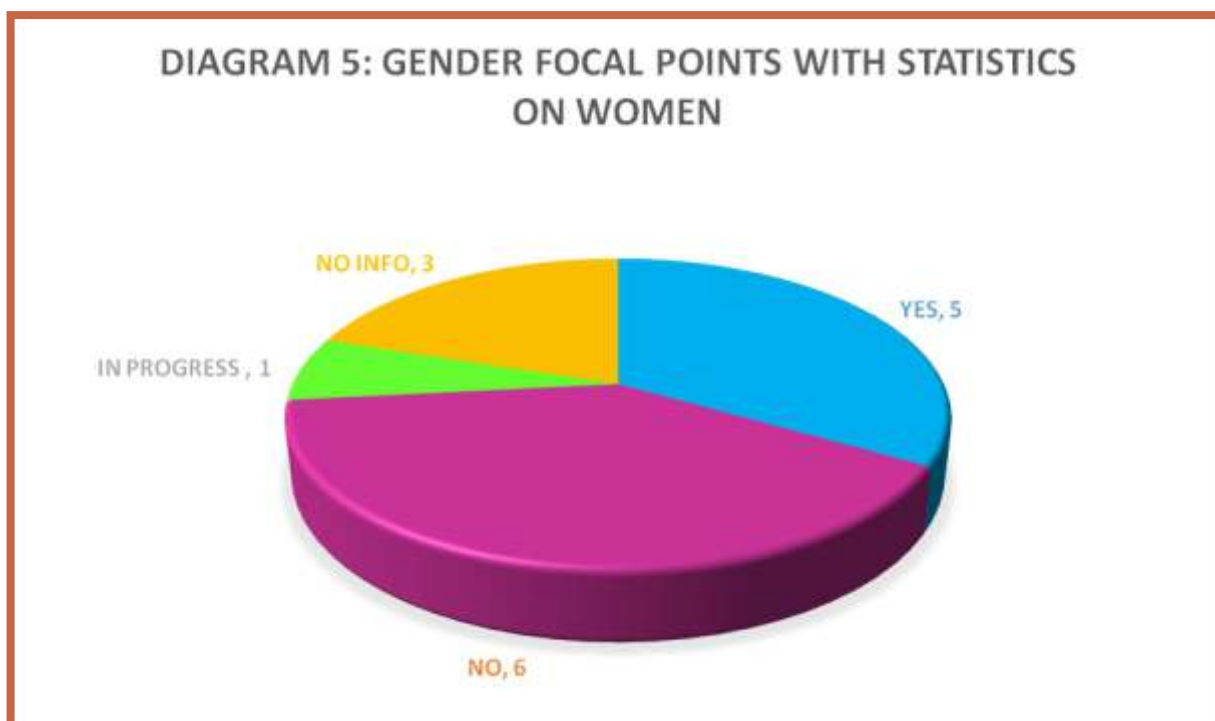
For instance, the Ghana EMB Gender Desk has data on the nomination of candidates, women elected parliamentarians and the trend of women in parliament since 1960. The desk has been undertaking gender disaggregation of data in voter registration, voter turnout and all Parliamentary Nominations from 1992 to 2016 as well as on nominations and the per cent of men and women elected to the local governments (District Assemblies) from 1998 to 2010. However, no such information is readily available on the EMB's website.

Sierra Leone has a Gender analysis for Elections of 2018, while Togo has gender disaggregated data on the 2013 and 2018 Legislative elections. In Nigeria, there is data on females elected in the 2015 general elections. Work is however in progress on the development of statistics on women in Cape Verde.



By default, data of women who won elections are naturally available in election declaration forms (EMB) in member countries. Data that is not easily available in EMBs, is statistics on the number of women who contested for party primaries and either won or lost.

The chart below shows the number of EMBs that have statistics on women.



9.7 Funding of Gender in EMBs in ECOWAS States

Electoral events are a core function of a democratic state. The state thus remains the primary source of funding for the core costs of most EMBs. Donor agencies have also extended support to most EMBs in the region.

For instance, in Nigeria, the Gender Division is fully funded by the INEC, as part of state/public funding of electoral activities, whilst in Ghana and Sierra Leone the EMB gender focal points are partly public funded and partly donor funded. In situations where donors fund most of the activities of the EMB gender units, donor funding cycles which may be difficult to coordinate with the timing of EMB needs affect the activities of the units

9.8 Gender Focal Persons in the EMB's Sub-national Structures

It is worth noting that the only Member States that have gender focal persons in their EMBs' sub-national structures are Ghana, Guinea and Nigeria. Gender focal persons in these countries are trained by the EMB and they are responsible for the coordination of activities of



the gender unit at the regional level and they report directly to the head of the unit at the head office of the EMB. The existence of these gender focal persons has facilitated nationwide programme implementation, thereby reducing work pressure on the head of the unit.

10. A PROPOSED STANDARD SCOPE OF WORK OF A GENDER UNIT IN EMBs IN ECOWAS MEMBER STATES

10.1 Rationale for ECOWAS EMB Gender Standard Scope of Work

EMBs in the ECOWAS Member States are not the same in terms of structure and function. In tackling barriers to women's political participation, EMB priorities also differ from one country to the other country. Regardless of the different types of EMBs and their priorities in the region (different structures and mandates), a standard Gender Scope of Work (GSW) for its Focal Points or Units will be a useful guide for establishing, mainstreaming and enhancing the participation of both men and women in the electioneering process in the various countries. The following Standard Scope of Work for ECOWAS EMBs has been derived from renowned organisations that take gender issues seriously. It also shows that the area of gender is technical and requires a professional.

10.2 Purpose for ECOWAS EMB Gender Standard Scope of Work

- 1 To assist the Commission in addressing gender issues with respect to election activities and the welfare of staff
- 2 Serve as a link between the Commission and external bodies / organisations on issues relating to gender
- 3 To advise the Commission on issues relating to gender and elections
- 4 Act as adviser on gender mainstreaming to the EMB

10.3 Duties and Responsibilities

- 1 Manage the Gender Desk, Unit or Division;
- 2 Champion the development of gender policies with its implementation framework;
- 3 Ensures the effective and efficient implementation of gender policies and programmes;
- 4 Represent the Commission at conferences, workshops, seminars and events where information on gender mainstreaming in the EMB is requested and to disseminate information on progress made in gender mainstreaming in the EMB as relevant;
- 5 Encourage gender parity in unit/office events, training and projects, and among EMB staff;
- 6 Provide advice on request on gender perspectives in all aspects of the work of the EMB using own resources or outside expertise;
- 7 Assists in formulating proposals for negotiations with appropriate bodies on matters relating to gender;
- 8 Assist in the preparation of speeches and other presentations on gender mainstreaming by the EMB and other senior managers, using own resources or outside expertise;



- 9 Encourage staff to identify gender issues for meetings, trainings, and events with constituents
- 10 Promote inclusion of gender-specific objectives, outcomes and indicators, and activities in the work of the national and sub-national offices, in conjunction with headquarters departments or vice versa
- 11 Participate in preparing programming activities with gender-responsive objectives and work plans
- 12 Act as a "help desk" on where to find information and materials on election-related gender issues and work on making detail gender statistics and information readily available on EMB websites
- 13 Assist in organizing capacity building for colleagues on decent work and gender equality
- 14 Contribute to sharing knowledge and promote the unit or office's relevant good practices
- 15 Help colleagues identify processes and contacts for strengthening links with gender equality machineries/expertise including at country level and contribute to relevant gender networks
- 16 Perform any other task unspecified above but relevant to the desk assigned by the leadership of the EMB;

10.4 Policy, Strategy and Action Plan on Gender-mainstreaming

- 1 Support the development of a policy statement, to be endorsed by senior management, which provides a framework - the mandate, rationales and goals - for the work of the unit/desk/department on gender mainstreaming;
- 2 Develop, based on the policy statement, an inventory of the roles and work methods of the EMB, a strategy, to be endorsed by senior management, to be included in the medium-term plan. This strategy should outline the overall approach to gender mainstreaming to be taken in the headquarters (and in the field where relevant) and designating responsibility and accountability throughout the EMB;
- 3 Develop an overall action plan, to be endorsed by senior management, outlining the initial concrete actions to be taken by the unit/desk/department, to be included in the programme budget;
- 4 Prepare periodic review of the Gender Policy, where it exists.

10.5 Analysis, knowledge development and information activities

- 1 Support the preparation, at an early stage, (if this has not already been done in the EMB) of a concept paper on gender perspectives in the substantive work of the EMB which would outline the linkages - i.e., the ways in which gender perspectives are relevant and important to what the EMB does - as the basis for efforts to promote gender mainstreaming. Particular attention should be paid to the synergies and to the ways in which mainstreaming a gender perspective can support the achievement of the goals of the EMB. Revise the issues-paper as needed over time.



- 2 Develop, maintain and disseminate a comprehensive knowledge base on the gender perspectives in the area of work of the EMB to promote the professional development of staff in this area and provide information as required for different purposes.
- 3 Develop and disseminate a collection of good practice examples of gender mainstreaming in different types of work carried out in the EMB.

10.6 Support toward Gender-mainstreaming at EMB Headquarters

The gender focal point would be expected to advocate for greater attention to gender perspectives, providing the necessary rationales and advice on approaches to support gender mainstreaming. This requires that the gender focal point understands the work of the unit, what the relevant gender perspectives are, and how these perspectives can be incorporated into on-going work or can be supported with external resources. The following activities would be included, carried out with any additional needed support from outside experts:

- 1 Advice and support to senior management at policy level and other staff members at operational level.
- 2 Development of necessary methods and tools, such as overall guidelines for specific processes and the work of different parts of the EMB.
- 3 Initiation of a competence development programme, if not already carried out, and initiate on-going activities to increase the professional capacity of all staff in gender mainstreaming, using own resources or outside expertise.

10.7 Regular monitoring and reporting on Gender mainstreaming

An on-going process of monitoring will take place through participation in strategic policymaking and through the daily contacts with other staff members in relation to the operational work. The gender focal point will also need to develop mechanisms of regular monitoring and reporting, with necessary support from outside experts.

- 1 Develop indicators for assessing progress with gender mainstreaming, adapted to the various types of work in different parts of the EMB.
- 2 Collect, analyse and disseminate on a regular basis, statistics on the representation of women in all processes and bodies established in the work of the EMB, to provide a holistic picture of the representation of women and men in the work of the EMB.
- 3 Arrange for the preparation of special reports as needed, on particular gender issues.

10.8 Proposal Development

The EMB gender focal unit should make proposals to:

- 1 Organise programmes and/or meetings to enable women in the Commission perform their social duties at home
- 2 Review electoral laws to accommodate women and to enhance their participation in electoral process and activities.
- 3 Establish a day care and crèche at the workplace to ease the burden of nursing mothers



10.9 *Supervisory Responsibilities*

The EMB gender focal unit should:

- 1 Directly supervise all aspects of programmes under the desk's jurisdiction, including external resource persons, and gender focal persons in the sub national units sectional relations:
- 2 Maintain consultative and advisory relations with all departmental and sectional heads
- 3 Communicate management decisions to the sub national gender focal persons

10.10 *External Relations*

The desk should:

- 1 Serve as the center for information sharing on gender
- 2 Assist external clients with data for research purposes

11. SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

This assessment of the gender mainstreaming in EMBs in ECOWAS Member States may be summed up as follows:

- 1 There is an under-representation of women at all levels of governance and decision-making resulting in a democratic deficit and under performance in national developmental efforts.
- 2 The literacy rate for women is often lower than men in the region. On an average, the literate population in the region is about 55% with a female literacy rate of 39%. The female population is also higher than the males at over 50%, which directly affects political participation and representation.
- 3 Looking at the number of women in the legislative bodies of ECOWAS member countries, it is clear from the data obtained that there is underrepresentation of women in the legislature, either elected or appointed. Similarly, women are outnumbered when it comes to nomination to the position of a minister in a government. Among parliamentary staffers, women are again in the minority. Though women head a number of national and state-level institutions, their overall representation remains dismal.
- 4 There is more political participation of women than political representation; however, both need to be enhanced in almost all ECOWAS Member States. There is female representation on parliamentary committees however only few of them are headed by Women in Member States' parliaments.
- 5 There is quite a number of political parties in ECOWAS countries, especially in the French speaking countries but few are headed by women (less than 15%). The leadership of political parties is reserved for men.



- 6 There is therefore a need for legal measures to improve the participation of women. There is also a need for radical collaboration between EMBs and various stakeholders for an effective involvement of women at all levels of the electoral processes.
- 7 Various primary and secondary stakeholders are involved in the electoral processes. The focus of EMBs should be how to develop a strategic partnership with them to ensure that women's participation and promotion is encouraged in the electoral processes.
- 8 Almost all ECOWAS Member States have certain programmes, mostly championed by CSOs to promote women's political participation. Sensitization has not been sustained during pre- and post-election periods because the focus is only on election periods.
- 9 There is gender imbalance within the Judiciary of Member States. It would be interesting to assess the composition of judicial structures that are charged to resolve election related disputes to determine whether the lower courts or the higher courts in Member States have such responsibility.
- 10 The assessment has revealed that there is a gender focal point in quite a number of EMBs in Member States and their focal persons have undergone some training. Their effectiveness depends on the leadership of the various EMBs. On the other hand, about half of the EMBs in the region do not have internal structures or unit or focal persons responsible for gender issues. Establishing gender focal points is important; and building the capacity of gender focal persons will help to deepen their understanding of basic gender concepts and explore thematic areas dealing with key gender and women's issues;
- 11 It must be emphasised that the position of a gender focal point is established to support senior managers in the implementation of gender mainstreaming in election administration. The work of the gender focal point or unit is to support gender mainstreaming by advocating, advising and supporting professional staff, monitoring and reporting on progress - if necessary through the use of / support from consultants or external specialists. Dissemination of information and competence development, through training and seminars, is also part of the work of the gender focal points. There should be a clear mandate and scope of work for the position of head of EMB gender units, which should be systematically integrated into decision-making processes related to programming and activities of EMBs in the sub region.
- 12 There are a lot of challenges faced by gender focal points in EMBs in ECOWAS Member States. The main challenge among the lot is that some gender focal persons recruited within EMBs are not necessarily gender specialists. Individuals appointed to these



positions sometimes have limited experience in promoting gender equality or are completely new to the domain. Other challenging issues include lack of a gender policy, funding, the structure of the EMB, lack of logistical means, lack of human resources and capacity building. A very worrying problem, one of the biggest challenges in some instances is the gender insensitivity among some senior managers, some members of the Commission or at the leadership or policy making level of the EMBs.

- 13 Data on the percentage of female security staff involved in electoral processes are not available if not non-existent. Another finding of this assessment is that EMBs neither make specific requests for the inclusion of female security staff from security forces to support electoral activities nor collect gender disaggregated data on the security forces for record purposes and decision making.

It is hoped that funding, adequate training, development of a gender policy, a well-developed gender structure, support from electoral partners including ECOWAS and the United Nations, early release of funds for activities, gender sensitive budgeting, empowering focal points/ units to be part of decision making and ensuring compliance of policies and activities will help to address some of the challenges raised. Without these, gender focal points would merely exist in name, but would not be able to make meaningful contributions to support the gender dimension in the activities in the electoral process and within the EMB.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations have been made in the light of the analysis and conclusion of the assessment of gender mainstreaming in EMBs in ECOWAS countries:

1. Gender disaggregated data on participation in the electoral process should be adequately obtained and published same on the website of the various EMBs. This will lead to ready availability of information for researchers, donors and other stakeholders. Adequate information will also facilitate decision making of the EMB;
2. Opportunities should be given for Gender Focal Points to participate in network meetings, thematic panels, gender audit trainings, facilitation teams, and ECOWAS inter-regional gender learning forums. These opportunities need to be provided for acquiring gender-related expertise and advocacy skills. If the gender focal persons appointed have not worked with gender mainstreaming they should be provided with opportunities for professional development throughout their term of office, including an initial programme of competence development, and should have access to advice and support from gender specialists in other organisations;
3. There is need for post-election assessment of the female candidates who lose in elections and a well-structured support plan put in place to encourage them;



4. Regular consultation between EMBs and stakeholders is needed to directly advise the EMB on specific gender needs as well as a forum for discussing and publicizing EMBs' gender programmes;
5. EMBs may also build positive relationships with CSOs by using them as partners to implement electoral activities such as training temporary electoral staff and voter education and information programmes;
6. Encourage countries in West Africa where there are no provisions on parity or quota to promote the emergence of women in politics to enact laws that establish parity or institute a minimum quota for promoting women's participation in decision-making processes;
7. Encourage countries to have legal framework that encourages political parties to nominate women for elective positions and enforce nomination rules concerning the number of women candidates;
8. Encourage political parties to implement relevant actions that encourage women's leadership in political parties;
9. Encourage all West African countries to have legal provisions for public funding to political parties by including clauses that favour women;
10. It is necessary that EMBs prepare a gender sensitive budget, where the activities of the gender Unit are factored into the activities for management of the electoral process. EMBs should also set their agenda to contribute to addressing the barriers to women's political participation;
11. EMBs that are yet to establish Gender units should be encouraged to recruit professionals with gender expertise as Heads of the units or the focal persons just as other departments within the EMBs require experts and professionals to manage their activities;
12. There should be a multiplication of the awareness-raising actions of different target groups on the situation of women in politics;
13. Accounts should be taken of the gender approach in the actions and awareness programs of different actors and target groups;
14. Organize more training on gender sensitivity for media and civil society organizations and EMBs who are directly involved in the management of electoral processes;



15. Train media professionals on a good presentation of the image of women in politics in the media;
16. Strengthen the capacity of women's organizations and women's networks on advocacy and other thematic areas related to promoting women's participation in politics;
17. Women's networks must be better organized to form strong and credible organizations able to influence political decisions to promote the emergence of women in politics;
18. Commission studies on the involvement of women security staff or personnel in elections in West Africa;
19. EMBs must be urged to generate data on the involvement of women at all levels of the electoral processes;
20. Organise trainings for EMBs to generate data on the involvement of women in electoral processes and develop a league table of Women Voter Turn, in all ECONEC Members
21. Gender units should be mandated to engage in data collection and processing on issues concerning both women and men in the electoral process. The efforts of the Gender division/unit/desk need to be complemented by the EMBs' Research Departments in making available reports on gender as a vital reference document on EMB official websites.

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Appendix A: Women's Evolvement and involvement in State Affairs /Institutions

COUNTRY	WOMEN MEMBERS IN LEGISLATURE	TOTAL NO. OF MEMBERS IN LEGISLATURE	NO OF PARL C'TTEES	WOMEN HEADS OF PARL C'TTEE	WOMEN PARL C'TTEES MEMBERS	NO OF MINISTERS IN GOVT	NO OF WOMEN MINISTERS	MEMBERS OF CONST. COURT	FEMALE MEMBERS IN CONST. COURT	STAFF OF OFFICE OF PARL.	FEMALE STAFF IN OFFICE OF PARLIAMENT	SUPREME COURT MEMBERS	FEMALE SUPREME COURT MEMBERS
Benin	7	83	5	1	7	22	4	7	1	179	54	4	-
Burkina Faso	18	127	8	1	18	33	7	10	1	18	5	228 (for the 3 courts)	90 (for the 3 courts)
Cape Verde	17	72	5	2	12	14	3	3	0	237	115	7	3
Cote D'Ivoire	48 (29 National Assembly; 19 Senate)	351 (252 National Assembly; 99 Senate)	6	0	28 (National Assembly only)	36	7	7	3	9	18	13	4
Gambia	6	58	18	2	6	21	4	-	-	153	65	5	1
Ghana	35	275	31	1	35	110	18	-	-	-	-	15	4
Guinea	26	114	13	1	26	33	4	9	2	19	3	10	10
Guinea Bissau	14	102	9	-	3	26	3	11	0	194	53	11	-
Liberia	9	103	36	3	7 (National Assembly)	19	2	-	-	-	-	7	2
Mali	14	147	12	1	14	32	11	9	2	23	4	32	3
Niger	25	171	7	1	29	43	7	7	1	16	1	-	-
Nigeria	28	469	147	-	28	36	3	-	-	-	-	16	3
Senegal	69	165	11	2	-	39	8	7	1	14	7	-	-
Sierra Leone	20	146	31	2	20	25	7	-	-	140	31	5	1
Togo	15	91	9	3	4	26	6	11	1	11	3	14	5



APPENDIX B: List of Participants for the EAD & ECONEC Validation Workshop with EMB
Gender Focal Points 1-3 May 2019, Accra, Ghana

S/N	COUNTRY	NAME	POSITION	CONTACT
FOCAL POINTS ECOWAS REGION				
1	BENIN	Mrs. Geneviève Nadjo	Vice President CENA	
2	CABO VERDE	Mrs. Maria Do Rosario LOPES PEREIRA GONÇALVES	President of National Electoral Commission	maria.r.pereira@cne.cv
3	COTE D'IVOIRE	Me Amlan Victoire ALLEY	Deputy General Secretary	amlanalley@gmail.com
4	GUINEE	Mme. Séraphine KONDIANO	Gender Focal Point	skondiano@gmail.com
5	ECOWAS	Dr. Sintiki Tarfa Ugbe	Director, Humanitarian and Social Affairs, ECOWAS Commission	sintiki.ugbe@gmail.com
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