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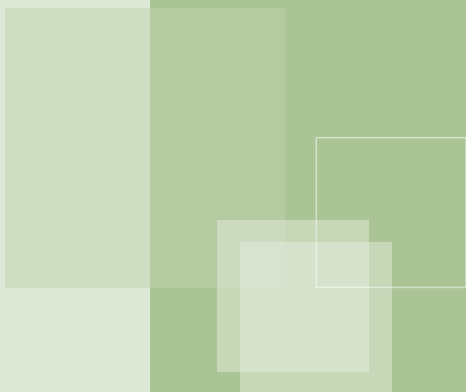
A framework for developing internal gender policies for electoral management bodies

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Acknowledgements

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1 Introduction

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) has conceptualized this Framework in order to provide an example of the main elements of an internal gender policy for an electoral management body (EMB). Its purpose is to support EMBs in their aspirations and efforts to create their own internal gender policies in recognition of their mandates and political status in different countries around the world.

An 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—such as referendums, citizens' initiatives and recall votes—if those are part of the legal framework. Such bodies have a variety of shapes and sizes, with a wide range of titles to match, such as Election Commission, Department of Elections, Electoral Council, Election Unit or Electoral Board. The term 'electoral management body' refers to the body or bodies responsible for electoral management, regardless of the wider institutional framework in place (International IDEA 2014).

Lessons from initiatives involving EMBs in International IDEA Member States, as well as EMBs in other states, show that EMBs recognize that, as key national institutions, they need to address and overcome both internal and external gender inequalities. Such inequalities exist within EMBs' operations, systems and processes and, more generally, in the management and administration of electoral processes. Despite this recognition, most EMBs have not yet developed explicit internal gender policies.

In view of the global consensus and commitments to achieve gender equality in all spheres of life, the premise in formulating the Framework is that EMBs are increasingly challenged to address gender inequalities in their internal systems, processes and culture. The Framework is therefore a response to this challenge and a question from the EMBs for 'an example of an internal gender policy and a description of the content of an internal EMB gender policy'.

An internal gender policy is a visible mechanism that addresses a central concern, namely: to what extent does an EMB have an explicit commitment 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.

While it is possible for EMBs to tackle internal gender inequalities, policy commitments alone do not create gender equality. The challenge for any EMB is to take this first step to institutionalize a gender policy in its systems and processes. This undoubtedly requires sustained and sufficient commitment and leadership within the EMB in order to translate gender policy commitments into practical action.

Between 2014 and 2015, the conceptualization of this Framework benefited from validation and pilot testing initiatives and brainstorming sessions with the Electoral Commission of Namibia, the Independent Electoral Commission of Lesotho, the Union Elections Commission of Myanmar, the High Independent Commission for Elections of Tunisia and the Electoral Commission of Zambia. These are the EMBs which, on their request, International IDEA cooperated with and supported to institutionalize a gender approach within their institutions and processes. The drafting of this Framework also included a review of existing gender policies of the Electoral Commission of Namibia, the Independent National Election Commission of Nigeria and the Election Commission of Nepal.

There are three distinct areas of electoral reform processes in which an EMB may have different roles: legal, administrative and political reform. The introduction of an internal gender policy by an EMB falls under its internal administration, where it 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 (International IDEA 2009).

This Framework reinforces and complements existing tools and guides that articulate the importance of promoting gender equality within EMBs and their external management and administration of electoral processes. For instance, as the United Nations development Programme (UNDP) and UN Women state: '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).

The Framework first presents the rationale for an internal gender policy in an EMB. It then provides a reflection on initiating and developing an internal gender policy. This is followed by an outline of the key components of a gender policy, including the context, principles, objectives and performance indicators that should be stipulated in such a policy. The Framework then discusses internationally recognized gender-mainstreaming strategies for implementing a gender policy.

2 Rationale for an internal gender policy in an electoral management body

Gender equality is a fundamental human-rights issue that cuts across all spheres of life and is intrinsic in all the pillars of sustainable democracy building in any society. Although no single strategy can completely address the gender inequalities that span the world in all spheres of life—including in democracy-building contexts such as electoral processes—EMBs can contribute to the achievement of gender equality in the way that they manage their internal operations and processes.

This can be facilitated through the introduction of internal gender policies that are supported by clearly defined plans for their implementation. 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 have an effect on the EMBs' management of electoral processes within the phases of the electoral cycle, including pre-election, election and post-election 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.

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. 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. 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.

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. 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. Discernible changes relating to gender

equality can occur in every cultural and organizational environment if a gender policy is in place and is seriously implemented.

An internal gender policy helps an EMB to define operational objectives, responsibilities and targets on gender equality. The operational objectives and targets or indicators serve to provide clarity of purpose and guidance on what must be implemented throughout the EMB. By defining the operational objectives, the EMBs set an accountability system against which overall performance will be evaluated. The effective translation of a gender policy's objectives will also require clear reporting requirements. Equally important is that a gender policy helps in the explicit identification of responsibilities at management levels and across all working levels, defining these in terms of the actual outputs within the EMB.

Importantly, an EMB's internal gender policy can inculcate an awareness of the need to attain and maintain a gender balance in the EMB's staff and leadership. Attaining and maintaining gender balance has to be reinforced by measures to ensure that there is equal access and opportunities for both women and men to hold positions at all levels, including leadership positions, within the EMB. In this way, having an internal gender policy allows the EMB to model good practices for other public institutions, given its status and national responsibilities in each country.

An explicit internal gender policy provides opportunities to strengthen gender awareness, as well as the analytic skills and knowledge of the leadership and staff of the EMB. With a gender policy in place, it becomes part of an EMB's institutional development plan to provide appropriate capacity-building and learning opportunities on gender mainstreaming. In order to be effective, such learning opportunities should focus on the key elements of the work done by an EMB's commissioners, and by the different categories and levels of staff in the internal administration and management of the EMB's mandate.

In some countries, EMBs may be required to provide information on their operations to various stakeholders through different media outlets. An internal gender policy can present significant opportunities to influence and improve media coverage on gender equality and women's political empowerment in electoral processes. When an EMB disseminates and conveys information taking into account gender-sensitive perspectives in line with its internal gender policy, it delivers the public a message about the importance of striving for gender equality and thus has the potential to influence the media's reporting on electoral issues in gender-sensitive ways.

3 Initiating and developing a gender policy

Developing an internal gender policy is an important first step and benchmark for the EMB's aspirations to promote gender equality, starting within its operations, processes and management practices. In any organization, the effective implementation of the process of initiating and developing an internal gender policy depends on shifts in mind-sets and a redefinition of values on gender, as well as a willingness to learn and embrace non-discriminatory norms and perspectives. In most institutional contexts, this is a long-term process requiring sustainable approaches, persistence and consistency.

There is no 'one-size-fits-all' model—hence, the process of development and the content of each gender policy has to be adapted in alignment with the national context, as well as the EMB's mandate and its ambition to promote gender equality. At the onset of the internal gender-policy development, there should be high-level ownership, leadership, dedicated staff at different levels to spearhead inclusive processes and greater staff involvement if the policy is to be effectively institutionalized and affect the EMB as a whole. The process of developing a gender policy can be valuable as a capacity-building strategy in its own right, especially if the process includes the institute-wide involvement of staff and leadership in consultations and dialogue.

Two essential components provide the impetus for action on initiating the development of an EMB gender policy. First, building internal support for gender initiatives and developing a gender policy requires high-level leadership, management and a common understanding among both the leadership and staff of the EMB. In order to build and sustain the internal support for the policy development process, a decision on who takes the overall responsibility for the policy development will be required. Such a decision has to be communicated effectively throughout the EMB.

In addition, as part of the EMB leadership, a taskforce made up of key designated staff from different departments can be established to coordinate the policy development process. The taskforce should have a clear mandate and the necessary resources to spearhead this process. Internal brainstorming sessions and dialogues facilitated by both male and female 'gender champions' can create an enabling and supportive environment for the policy development and strong sense of organization-wide ownership.

For example, in 2015 the Independent Electoral Commission of Lesotho and the Electoral Commission of Zambia initiated processes for developing internal gender policies by investing in creating awareness, knowledge and building consensus among all staff and commissioners on the need for an internal gender policy. This is important in order to minimize the risks of resistance and the simplistic approach of just 'ticking the box' on the follow-up implementation of a gender policy.

Second, an internal gender assessment should be conducted to gather information about the internal context in the EMB. This is a useful starting point to identify gender gaps and inequalities, gender norms and roles, to collect sex-disaggregated data and examine how gender inequality is perpetuated, both internally and externally. The assessment enables the EMB to reflect on its current strengths, weaknesses, future opportunities and threats to act in accordance with gender equality objectives. Conducting a gender assessment is also a key step that indicates to staff and leadership, as well as other stakeholders, that the EMB is committed to being a gender-responsive organization.

A gender assessment permits the EMB to identify existing practices and attitudes at the individual, departmental and organizational levels. Finally, the gender assessment findings should help to identify the opportunities for capacity development and recommendations for the EMB to articulate its position on gender, and on how it will address gender issues in its daily operations.

The following are key aspects that should be included in the gender assessment:

- Assessment of gender-related attitudes, behaviours and understanding among the EMB staff and leadership;

- Identification of skills, knowledge, current practice and willingness of the EMB staff and leadership to undertake gender mainstreaming in the EMB's operations;

- Assessment of structures, systems and processes to promote planning, implementation, reporting and monitoring of the EMB's operations;

- Identification of gender issues and gaps that affect the male and female staff and leadership of the EMB; and

- Assessment of existing and past initiatives or approaches, and opportunities to take gender issues into account in the work of the EMB.

In order to collate the information related to the gender assessment, specific context-based questions corresponding to the key aspects identified above need to be defined. The outcomes of the gender assessment provide a baseline for institutional consultations as well as inclusive and participatory processes for writing the internal gender policy. The assessment should be timed in order to secure the required institution-wide attention and participation. The ultimate indicator of success for a gender assessment lies in the follow-up actions, which are built into an internal gender policy based on the gender assessment's recommendations. The follow-up actions will also require an EMB to develop its internal capacity to address gender issues.

4 Key components of an internal gender policy for an electoral management body

Context for an internal gender policy

An EMB's internal gender policy should have a section on context, which takes into account and reflects on the broader situation in relation to the challenges on gender equality and women's empowerment in the country. Under the context section, the internal gender policy could outline the major societal/cultural gender attitudes and practices in the country as well as notable advances and efforts by government and non-state actors towards addressing discriminatory gender attitudes and practices. The context section should also highlight how the internal gender policy is in congruence with and builds on gender equality guarantees stipulated in national constitutions, legislation and national gender policies and frameworks.

Since internal gender policies are institutional mechanisms for translating policy aspirations and commitments into practice, this section will show how the EMB's internal gender policy is integrated in other strategic frameworks. For instance, the policy should reflect and reinforce the EMB's legislated mandate, its strategy documents and plans as well as other key institutional policies.

In addition, the context section should anchor the policy in a way that reflects an EMB's awareness of the key international, regional and sub-regional frameworks and instruments on human rights and gender equality. These include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR); the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action; the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (particularly Sustainable Development Goal 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls); and International IDEA's International Obligations for Elections, which states that one of the key questions in addressing gender equality in electoral processes is whether there 'are provisions to promote gender equality in the election administration' (International IDEA 2014: 110–17).

Following the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action in 1995, several countries put in place national gender policies that aim to operationalize the commitments articulated in both national legal frameworks and internationally agreed-on covenants by government institutions. However, few EMBs have developed internal gender policies in order to align their systems and practices with national constitutions, legislation and international frameworks that promote gender equality.

Boxes 1 and 2, relating to the Electoral Commission of Namibia and the Independent National Electoral Commission of Nigeria, respectively, provide examples of what can be included in the context section of an EMB internal gender policy. These two examples reflect the extent to which electoral commissions have articulated their gender policies' context in relation to national constitutions, national gender policies and international instruments and agreements.

Box 1. Context section in the Electoral Commission of Namibia's Gender Policy (2016)

The overall legal and policy framework in Namibia creates an enabling environment for addressing gender inequalities and promoting gender equality in both the private and public spheres of life. Consequently, the ambition of the Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN) to put in place an institutional gender policy is in congruence with the Namibian Constitution (1990). For instance, article 10 of the Constitution provides for equality of all citizens and prohibits any discrimination based on the grounds of sex, race, colour, ethnic origin, religion, creed or social or economic status. Furthermore, article 23.3 provides for the adoption of laws and practices to encourage and enable women to 'play a full, equal and effective role in the political, social, economic and cultural life of
the nation'.

Notably, the Constitution provides for gender equality and affirmative action in favour of previously marginalized populations, including women. Equally important is the existence of the National Gender Policy of the Republic of Namibia 2010–20, which is a comprehensive framework to guide actions on
the integration and mainstreaming of gender in the country's development processes.

The legal and policy context of Namibia is premised on the provisions of several national, regional and international legal instruments which the Namibian Government has adopted, signed and or ratified for the promotion and achievement of gender equality. Namibia is a state party and signatory to various international instruments and agreements including the Convention
on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW),
the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. The 2015 adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which has the specific goal to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, enhances the impetus for the ECN vision on gender equality.

Sources: Republic of Namibia, National Gender Policy, 2010–20 (Windhoek, Namibia: Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, 2010); Electoral Commission of Namibia, Gender Policy (2016)

Box 2. Context section in the Independent National Electoral Commission of Nigeria's Gender Policy (2014)

The Independent National Electoral Commission of Nigeria's gender policy is a response to the National Gender Policy (2006) and Vision 20:20 (2009), which recognize that gender equality and women's empowerment are basic human rights that lie at the heart of equitable development, and which call on all state and non-state actors to promote gender equality through their institutional practices and policies.

As a state actor, the Commission is committed to addressing gender gaps within its own organization, and to promoting a gender-responsive electoral process. This is in accordance with equity—one of the Commission's core values—which requires it to maintain fairness and justice in dealing with all of its stakeholders.

In addition to the domestic legal imperatives, including Nigeria's Constitution (1999, as amended), which specifically prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex, and the Electoral Act of 2010 (as amended), the Electoral Commission's gender policy is also informed by the international and regional obligations to which Nigeria is a signatory. These instruments include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR); the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); the International Covenant on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; the African Charter on Human and People's Rights; the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa; the African Union Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa; the Millennium Development Goals; the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–15; the Beijing Platform for Action; and United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.

The Commission's gender policy is further informed by the historic disadvantage faced by Nigerian women in the civil, political, social, economic and cultural spheres, and a recognition of the direct correlation between the condition and position of women in the country and its level of national development. These disadvantages can be traced to a number of factors, including a general apathy towards politics among women, premised on religious and cultural bias; the absence of regular civic and voter education; a lack of resources to compete with men; low membership in political parties; and challenges related to personal security and violence. The culmination of these factors explains the poor performance of women in elections since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999.

The Commission is responsible not only for conducting elections, but also for deepening the democratic process in Nigeria by promoting sound democratic knowledge. Part of this effort has been to ensure the participation of marginalized and disadvantaged groups across the country.

Source: Independent National Electoral Commission of Nigeria, Gender Policy (2014)

Principles for an internal gender policy

An internal gender policy should define the underlying principles that the EMB upholds and will institutionalize in undertaking its operations. The gender policy should include the following principles:

1. *Gender is a crosscutting theme.* By acknowledging that gender is an integral aspect of all facets of its work, an EMB commits to addressing gender issues in its institutional structures, systems, processes, practices as well as in the design, implementation and monitoring of its activities.

2. *Equality and non-discrimination.* EMBs should uphold the principle to promote substantive gender equality and non-discrimination, as this is an essential element of any democratic society. The commitment to promote equality and non-discrimination can be undertaken through the provision of equal opportunities and access to professional development within the EMB. An EMB should also uphold this principle by tracking performance on the implementation of the gender policy by collecting and reporting on key data by sex and age. This will allow the analysis of opportunities and benefits available to both males and females at the different levels within the EMB.

3. *Inclusive participation and representation.* The internal gender policy should be anchored in the principle that, as a gender-sensitive organization, the EMB strives for meaningful participation and representation within its systems, structures and processes. For example, the Electoral Commission of Namibia stipulates that at least two of its five Electoral Commissioners (i.e. 40 per cent) should be women in order to ensure gender representation and balance in the leadership of the EMB. This principle, which is stipulated in the electoral legislation, is fundamental and should therefore be applicable in the EMB's internal systems.

4. *Transparency and accountability.* The implementation of the internal gender policy will be based on the principle that the EMB undertakes to ensure that information on the policy, its intended outcomes and effective implementation will be accessible to all within the EMB. Generally, it is argued that accountability has a number of positive effects on the operations of EMBs, in particular that it aids transparency and promotes good governance which is a key conduit for promoting gender equality (International IDEA 2009). Inasmuch as an EMB has a responsibility in terms of financial accountability, the same principle is also applicable to gender equality in relation to actions to address gender issues within the EMB's operations.

Objectives of an internal gender policy

The internal gender-policy objectives set out how and what the EMB will focus on in order to achieve gender equality. Thus, the objectives serve as a driving force and offer clear guidance to the EMB leadership team and staff by 'translating' general (and sometimes abstract) ambitions into specific actionable areas of work and activities. The objectives have to relate clearly and directly to the EMB's operations, working practices and systems, aspects of staffing and the institutional culture.

Examples of objectives in an internal gender policy could include:

- to build gender awareness and the internal capacity of the EMB on promoting gender equality;
- to integrate gender in the planning, management and working systems and practices of the EMB; or
- to ensure gender balance and equal opportunities in human resources systems and processes on selection, recruitment, employment and professional development.

The internal gender policy will only be effective if an implementation strategy and action plan is developed and institutionalized. An internal gender policy action plan, which aligns with the overall EMB operational plan, should include a blueprint for the specific levels of responsibility, activities, indicators of progress, mechanisms for reporting on performance and reporting timeframes. In order to have an actual effect on the EMB, the action plan should state how the EMB will achieve the policy objectives, specifying the areas of focus, the activities, performance indicators and the expected achievements over a defined period of time.

In the action plan, each action needs to be targeted and in compliance with the objectives stated in the policy as a way of tracking the effectiveness of the activities in meeting the defined objectives. In addition, the action plan should be reinforced by the appropriate allocation of financial and human resources. The action plan therefore serves as an important marker against which the EMB can track its performance and the extent to which it has achieved what it intended to achieve internally through the implementation of the gender policy.

In developing the action plan, there are areas that the EMB will have to prioritize to make progress towards the achievement of gender policy objectives. The selection of areas of priority should also be informed by and respond to the internal gender assessment findings. Examples of the priority areas of focus include internal gender capacity development for staff and the leadership, reforms in recruitment practices and processes and career advancement opportunities for both male and female staff. A detailed outline of the areas of focus and types of activities becomes the basis for the allocation of appropriate human and financial resources within the EMB.

Box 3 provides an example from the gender policy of the Electoral Commission of Namibia on the areas that an EMB can prioritize in its action plan for an internal gender policy.

Box 3. Priority areas in the Electoral Commission of Namibia's Gender Policy (2016, extract)

Internal systems and processes

'Progress on the implementation of the Policy will be included in the reports prepared by the ECN offices at all levels. The Chief Electoral and Referenda Officer is ultimately responsible for the day to day operational implementation of the Policy and will report on the implementation to the Commissioners.

Human Resources: the recruitment and appointment of the ECN staff, officials for different stages of the electoral process, hiring temporary staff and consultants for assignments shall be implemented on the basis of inclusiveness and gender equality to attain gender balance and representation at all levels and types of positions. Responsibility on mainstreaming gender equality will be integrated into the Commissioners Terms of Reference, the job descriptions/profiles and annual performance objectives of ECN staff/employees.

Capacity development: organisational learning on gender mainstreaming will be conducted regularly for the ECN staff at all levels through gender awareness, knowledge and skills development initiatives. The induction and orientation of current and new staff on the Gender Policy will be integrated as a mandatory component in staff training and office management plans. The ECN will conduct internal staff surveys to gather information from staff the ECN's performance on gender equality as well as identification of areas for improvement.

Monitoring and Reporting: under the leadership of the Commissioners and direction of the Chief Electoral and Referenda Officer, the institutional plans and performance reports will systematically report on the ECN work on the implementation of the Gender Policy priority areas through the Head office, Regional and Constituency offices. Financial Resources: ECN will allocate sufficient funds in its annual budget for realising the commitments of the Gender Policy.'

Source: Republic of Namibia, National Gender Policy, 2010–20 (Windhoek, Namibia: Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, 2010), <http://www.africanchildforum.org/clr/policy%20per%20country/namibia/namibia_gender_2010-2020_en.pdf>, accessed 23 November 2016

Examples of gender equality indicators in an internal gender policy

Gender equality indicators are measures to track and monitor the required performance and changes during the implementation of gender-mainstreaming interventions. The definition of gender-equality indicators should be based on addressing key questions such as what changes are envisaged and what the successful implementation of the internal gender policy might look like within a specified time. Three examples are outlined below.

Objective: To build gender awareness and the internal capacity of the EMB on promoting gender equality

Indicators:

- At least 50 per cent of EMB staff receive gender training and skills in gender mainstreaming during the first year of the internal gender policy approval and the other 50 per cent in the second year of the gender policy approval

- Guidelines/checklists on gender mainstreaming have been designed by the end of the first year after the internal gender policy is approved

- Gender equality objectives are included in the annual performance objectives and appraisals of all staff with managerial responsibilities

- Oversight on the implementation of the gender policy action plan is included in the performance targets of the Commissioners and management team

Objective: To integrate gender in the planning, management and working systems and practices of the EMB

Indicators:

- The EMB strategy document includes gender equality as a strategic goal and objective

- Planning processes and systems of EMB departments and units, and the implementation of all operations, ensure the integration of gender aspects

- Reporting on gender equality indicators is included in all quarterly and annual reports of EMB departments and units

- An action plan on gender is monitored and regularly updated by the EMB management

- The proportion of staff demonstrating an understanding of gender aspects and actively mainstreaming gender issues in their work is measured in comparison to the period prior to the internal gender policy's institutionalization

Objective: To ensure gender balance and equal opportunities in human resources systems and processes on selection, recruitment, employment and professional development

Indicators:

- Gender sensitivity and mainstreaming experience are routinely assessed in all selection, recruitment and employment processes, systems and interviews

- Responsibilities with respect to gender mainstreaming are included in staff job descriptions and in consultants' terms of references

- Responsibility for and actions to address gender are assessed in all performance appraisals

- Gender distribution and balance are monitored and reviewed twice a year

- Reports on the gender disaggregation of staff remuneration are compiled

- Information on equal opportunities for personal and professional development are disseminated to all staff on a monthly basis

5 Implementation strategy for an internal gender policy

An internal gender policy should define the overall implementation strategy as well as the monitoring and reporting system. This Framework recommends gender mainstreaming as the implementation strategy, as this approach is designed to build organizational commitment and leadership based on the goal of gender equality. (Derbyshire, Dolata and Ahluwalia 2015). Gender mainstreaming was also endorsed as a major global strategy to promote gender equality in the Beijing Platform for Action from the Fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995.

The strategy of mainstreaming is defined as the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's and men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality (UN Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women 2002).

In the long term, gender mainstreaming aims to transform discriminatory social institutions, recognizing that discrimination can be embedded in laws, cultural norms and community practices. For example, laws and norms may limit women's access (UN Women 2014) to public spaces and information and cause the unequal participation and representation of women and men in positions of power and decision-making, or unequal participation within institutions such as EMBs. Hence, gender mainstreaming should situate gender equality at the centre of an EMB's structures, systems and processes at the different levels.

However, there has to be a recognition within the EMB that gender mainstreaming can also encounter challenges due to the changes required at both the individual and collective organizational levels. Generally, gender equality objectives are long-term aims for transformation.

Reporting on performance is crucial for any EMB operation to ensure performance accountability. As part of the internal performance accountability, an EMB's lower structures must account to the higher structures for their performance on gender policy implementation. The key responsibility of EMB managerial staff is to ensure that the performance of an EMB fulfils the work plans anchored in its strategic goals and policies, including the internal gender policy.

EMB staff with managerial responsibilities should monitor and assess the institutional performance and take corrective action in relation to activities that do not meet required output targets. (International IDEA 2009). The reporting timeframes can be monthly, quarterly, half-yearly or annual, in line with the defined action plan.

6 Conclusion

As more and more countries establish EMBs as the key institution with the mandate to administer and manage democratic electoral processes, EMBs face the challenge of ensuring that their institutional processes, systems and practices are based on gender equality as a key democratic principle.

The broader societal context always has a significant influence on the process of building and supporting an EMB's commitment to promote gender equality within its operations. Gender remains a key determinant of who does what, who has what, who decides and who has power (UNICEF 2011). In view of this reality, the role of EMBs in promoting gender equality, starting internally, cannot be over-emphasized.

Over the past two decades, there have been notable gains in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment around the world. A number of international instruments, agreements and resolutions, national constitutions and laws have stipulated guarantees of the right to participate in electoral institutions and processes for both women and men. Different countries' obligations in compliance with agreed-on international instruments serve as catalysts for state institutions such as EMBs to develop their internal gender policies.

This Framework is intended to be a functional tool to support EMBs in their aspirations to write internal gender policies. The first step in developing an internal gender policy is a key building block for an EMB to explore, learn from and develop its capacity on promoting gender equality within its main sphere of influence.

If commitments to promote gender equality internally are implemented systematically and consistently, it can be argued that in the long term this could ultimately give EMBs the motivation to utilize the same approach for the broader management and administration of external electoral processes. This incremental approach might help to allay the hesitation within EMBs to embark on gender mainstreaming in external electoral processes and by so doing overcome the potential risk of being perceived, as one participant at a 2011 International IDEA Member State EMB Dialogue put it, as 'carrying out their mandate like gender equality advocates'.

Key concepts and definitions

Gender: The socially constructed roles and relationships, personality traits, attitudes, behaviours, values, relative power and influence that society ascribes to the two sexes on a differential basis. Gender is relational and refers not simply to women or men but to the relationship between them.

Gender equality: Gender equality entails the concept that all human beings, both women and men, are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles or prejudices. Gender equality means that the different behaviours, aspirations, and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally.

Gender equity: Fairness and justice in the distribution of responsibilities and benefits between women and men. To ensure fairness, temporary positive measures must often be put in place to compensate for the historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from operating on a level playing field. Equity is a justice-based means—equality is the human rights-based result.

Gender identity: Women's and men's gender identities determine how they are perceived and positioned in a society, and how they are expected to think and act according to traditional views of masculinities and femininities.

Gender mainstreaming: The process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres.

Gender roles: A set of prescriptions for action and behaviour assigned to men and women by society according to cultural norms and traditions.

Sex: The biological characteristics that define humans as female or male.

Women's empowerment: The process of gaining access to and developing women's capacities with a view to participating actively in shaping one's own life and that of one's community in economic, social and political terms.

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About International IDEA

What is International IDEA?

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization that supports sustainable democracy institutions and processes worldwide.

International IDEA acts as a catalyst for democracy-building by providing knowledge resources, policy proposals and supporting democratic reforms in response to specific national requests.

It works together with policymakers, governments, international organizations and agencies and regional organizations engaged in the field of democracy-building.

What does International IDEA do?

The Institute's work is organized at global, regional and country level, focusing on the citizen as the driver of change. International IDEA produces comparative knowledge in its key areas of expertise: electoral processes, constitution-building, political participation and representation, and democracy and development, as well as on democracy as it relates to gender, diversity, and conflict and security.

IDEA brings this knowledge to national and local actors who are working for democratic reform, and facilitates dialogue in support of democratic change.

In its work, IDEA aims for:

• Increased capacity, legitimacy and credibility of democracy

• More inclusive participation and accountable representation

• More effective and legitimate democracy cooperation

Where does International IDEA work?

International IDEA works worldwide. Based in Stockholm, Sweden, the Institute has offices in Africa, the Asia-Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean. International IDEA is a Permanent Observer to the United Nations.

This Framework outlines the key considerations for developing an internal gender policy for an EMB and the key components of a gender policy, namely the context, principles, objectives and performance indicators. The Framework also highlights the importance for a gender mainstreaming implementation strategy. Its purpose is to support EMBs in their aspirations and efforts to create their own internal gender policies in recognition of their mandates and political status in different countries around the world.