



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

Evaluating the gender sensitivity of parliaments

**A self-
assessment
toolkit**

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Foreword

Modern societies increasingly demand gender equality. It is also a precondition for genuine democracy. Yet women are still underrepresented in most parliaments in the world. This undermines parliaments' efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy. It also hinders parliament's capacity to promote gender equality in society as a whole.

How can parliaments be agents of change and champion gender equality?

To begin with, parliaments must acknowledge that they are not a gender-neutral place. They must therefore do some soul-searching through a gender lens.

In 2012, IPU Members adopted a Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments which defines a gender-sensitive parliament as one in which there are no barriers – substantive, structural or cultural – to women's full participation and to equality between its men and women members and staff.

How can parliament achieve gender sensitivity? By thoroughly reviewing its structures, operations, methods and work so as to ensure they respond to the needs and interests of both men and women.

IPU's Plan of Action identifies seven key areas for gender-sensitive action: equality in participation, strong legal and policy frameworks, gender mainstreaming tools, gender-sensitive parliamentary infrastructure and culture, women's and men's shared responsibility for gender equality, political parties as gender equality champions, and gender-sensitive recruitment and staff development policies.

This is an ambitious yet indispensable agenda. If parliament is to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in particular on Goal 5 on gender equality and Goal 16 relating to good governance and strong institutions, it must embody gender equality and lead by example. Today's parliaments know that very well.

This toolkit has been designed in response to a growing desire by parliaments around the world to improve the way that they advance gender equality and to be models to the communities they represent.

The toolkit should help parliaments wishing to evaluate how gender-sensitive they are, assess their current practices and policies, identify possible areas for reform, plan for change, and establish mechanisms to monitor progress.

The toolkit draws on IPU's extensive experience in supporting national parliaments on gender-sensitive reform work. It proposes sets of questions to be tailored to each national context. They are designed to lead to open, constructive discussions.

The intention is not to rank parliaments. It is rather to help them identify their strengths and weaknesses in order to determine priorities for strengthening the institution.

Each parliament will find its own way through this process. But in all cases, the process will require strong leadership and commitment. It must include women and men, ensure everyone is on board, and bring about a change in culture.

I encourage all parliaments to undertake this healthy self-assessment of their level of gender-sensitivity.

IPU stands ready to assist parliaments in this endeavour and in the implementation of any ensuing recommendations. We will continue to document gender-sensitive practices everywhere and spread the word throughout the parliamentary community.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martin Chungong', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the left.

Martin Chungong
Secretary General

Gender-sensitive parliaments

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has been a leader in global research on women in parliament. Through its continual monitoring of the number of women in all national parliaments, and the publication of numerous research reports, it has documented the presence and absence of women, their successes and the challenges they face in accessing the political sphere, and their day-to-day experience of parliament.

By collecting best practices on gender equality in parliament, IPU has set global standards. It has provided evidence that a more gender-balanced parliament delivers better on gender equality and is a more effective institution.

IPU research has consistently found that women parliamentarians have traditionally been the main drivers of legislative and policy change on gender equality. Laws that protect against discrimination in all spheres of life and that empower women have been passed often because women fought to have them prioritized on the political agenda.

But we have noticed a change. While women are by far the strongest advocates for gender equality, all members – women and men alike – and parliaments as institutions also have a role. The IPU report *Gender-Sensitive Parliaments: A Global Review of Good Practice* (2011) aimed to identify what parliaments were doing to address gender equality in all aspects of their work and functioning. The report presents global research on the representativeness of parliaments; their leadership structures; their abilities to deliver gender-related legislation and policies; their working cultures, environments and infrastructures; and their specific mechanisms dedicated to gender equality.

The starting point of action on gender-sensitive parliaments is that it should facilitate the work of both men and women and enhance parliaments' ability to deliver on gender equality.

This report defines a gender-sensitive parliament as one that responds to the needs and interests of both men and women in its structures, operations, methods and work.

A gender-sensitive parliament is one that:

- Promotes and achieves equality in numbers of women and men across all of its bodies and internal structures.
- Develops a gender equality policy framework suited to its own national parliamentary context.
- Mainstreams gender equality throughout all of its work.
- Fosters an internal culture that respects women's rights, promotes gender equality, and responds both to the realities of MPs' lives – those of men and women – and to their need to balance work and family responsibilities.
- Acknowledges and builds on the contribution made by its men members who pursue and advocate gender equality.
- Encourages political parties to take a proactive role in the promotion and achievement of gender equality.
- Equips its parliamentary staff with the capacity and resources to promote gender equality, actively encourages the recruitment and retention of women to senior positions, and ensures that gender equality is mainstreamed throughout the work of the parliamentary administration.

IPU Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments, p. 11
<http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/action-gender-e.pdf>

In 2012, inspired by the response to the global report, the IPU membership adopted a Plan of Action for Gender-Sensitive Parliaments. The Plan outlines seven key action areas:

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Action area 1: | Increase the number of women in parliament and achieve equality in participation |
| Action area 2: | Strengthen gender equality legislation and policy |
| Action area 3: | Mainstream gender equality throughout all parliamentary work |
| Action area 4: | Institute or improve gender-sensitive infrastructure and parliamentary culture |
| Action area 5: | Ensure that responsibility for gender equality is shared by all parliamentarians – men and women |
| Action area 6: | Encourage political parties to be champions of gender equality |
| Action area 7: | Enhance the gender sensitivity of, and gender equality among, parliamentary staff |

The Plan of Action is an open invitation to parliaments – to look within; to examine critically their mode of operation and functioning; to assess, evaluate and engage in reform; and to both progress and lead the way. It does this by encouraging parliaments to design a process suited to their national context in order to initiate and implement gender-sensitive reform.

This toolkit aims to provide parliaments with a methodology that facilitates that reform process. All reform processes must begin with an evaluation – a stock-take of current practice and a discussion about possible improvements. By structuring that discussion, this self-assessment toolkit is a useful first step towards gender reform.

Methodology

Self-assessment: ensuring parliament's ownership of the process

A self-assessment can be defined as the assessment or evaluation of oneself or one's actions and attitudes, in particular of one's performance at a job or learning task considered in relation to an objective standard. A parliamentary self-assessment is one led, designed and undertaken by members of parliament and/or parliamentary staff.

External audit: an alternative form of assessment

This toolkit, however, could also be used as part of an alternative assessment process, such as an external audit. In such an instance, instead of conducting the assessment themselves, practitioners (members of parliament and parliamentary staff) might be just one of a range of stakeholders consulted in the process. These external assessments might entail gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop an objective understanding of current practices and processes. External assessments usually conclude with a report. During such assessments, an independent person or group of individuals (such as auditors, researchers or parliamentary development specialists) is responsible for collecting evidence, evaluating it, and formulating a judgement or set of recommendations that are communicated through a report to parliament. The report would then be used to improve subsequent learning.

The key difference between a self-assessment and an external audit lies in the overall ownership of the process.

Objectives of this toolkit

The purpose of this self-assessment toolkit is to assist parliaments and their members in assessing the degree to which they are "gender-sensitive", as defined by IPU in its report on gender-sensitive parliaments. Participants are invited to refer to the report, together with its Plan of Action, during their assessment. The report and Plan of Action can be downloaded from the IPU website or ordered from www.ipu.org.

While parliaments vary in their level of gender sensitivity, there is room for improvement across the globe. This toolkit is relevant to all parliaments, whatever political system they adhere to and whatever their stage of development.

The self-assessment process is not intended to rank parliaments, but rather to help parliaments to identify their strengths and weaknesses in order to determine priorities for strengthening the institution.

The toolkit provides a framework for discussion among members of parliament, decision-makers in the parliamentary administration and parliamentary staff. The method involves answering questions about the policy frameworks and work of the parliament concerned. These questions are grouped under seven topics:

- presence of women in parliament: number and positions;
- legal and policy framework for gender equality;
- mechanisms to mainstream gender equality throughout the work of parliament;
- infrastructure and policies to support a gender-sensitive culture;
- shared responsibility for gender equality among all parliamentarians;
- need for political parties to be champions of gender equality;
- role of parliamentary staff in supporting gender equality outcomes.

The questions have been deliberately phrased to promote discussion, rather than to extract factual, closed responses. It is hoped that in answering the questions, the group carrying out the self-assessment will engage in serious and systematic discussions on these issues, even if those discussions provoke disagreement.

The discussion should lead to a shared vision of the priorities for parliamentary development and then to recommendations for action to address these priorities.

The effectiveness of the self-assessment should be judged against the outcomes of the discussion, and the subsequent actions taken to ensure that the parliament becomes more gender-sensitive.

The following sections of this toolkit provide advice in undertaking a self-assessment.

Section A

Preparing for a gender-sensitive assessment

Supportive leadership

Undertaking a gender-sensitive assessment is a choice: it is both a decision that a parliament takes to reflect on its current practices and procedures, and an opportunity to improve them.

Because a self-assessment can lead to recommendations and proposals for change, it is vital that the process is supported by the leadership of the parliament, particularly the highest authorities of the parliament.

Inclusiveness and ownership

In order for leaders to accept change, a reform process must be supported. In order for proposed changes to be legitimate and gain support, they need to have been considered inclusively. This entails creating an understanding among parliamentarians and staff that the gender sensitivity of their parliament is in the interest of both men and women. In order to be inclusive, the process must be participatory and include a wide range of stakeholders.

One of the advantages of a self-assessment is that a parliament can take ownership of whatever findings and conclusions emerge from the exercise. Self-assessments are not used to create rankings or “league tables” of parliaments. International experts can be called upon as facilitators and/or to provide guidance and advice, but they do not sit in judgement of parliaments.¹ In a self-assessment, a parliament itself is the principal actor and judge.

Initiating the exercise and communicating about it

A self-assessment can be initiated by a range of individuals or bodies in the parliament, including a parliamentary committee, such as the dedicated gender equality committee; a women’s parliamentary caucus or a gender partnership group; and the speaker or secretary general/ clerk of the parliament.

Regardless of who initiates the self-assessment, it is vital to have a shared understanding of its purpose and expected outcomes at the beginning of the process. This implies having clear objectives from

1. For more details, see Common Principles for Support to Parliaments: http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/principles_en.pdf

the outset, preparing the ground with key messages, and taking action that aims to build parliamentary stakeholders' knowledge on gender equality (see "Starting the discussion" below).

That shared understanding could then be communicated in a parliamentary resolution, a media release or an internal document before the exercise begins.

What do you need?

Diversity of participants

The self-assessment should be conducted by a group of people, never by one person alone. To ensure a reflective discussion, a diverse group of participants is desirable. The diversity of that group is the best guarantee that the self-assessment process will be legitimate and that a plurality of views will be considered. Representatives of governing and opposition parties, men and women, parliamentarians and senior parliamentary officials should be included. Diversity from the viewpoint of minorities and age groups should also be borne in mind.

Other actors may also be invited to participate: gender experts, including those from civil society and national women's machineries, representatives of political parties, international donor organizations and the local media. These actors tend to bring some outside perspective to the discussion. Each parliament will choose whether it includes external participants in the self-assessment and how it interacts with them.

Logistics

Making administrative arrangements is essential to allow the group to carry out its mission. Depending on the number of participants, the self-assessment will require at least one or two meeting rooms so that discussions are not interrupted. Adequate time to allow groups to discuss and consider all the questions is very important.

Parliamentary time constraints

Even the best laid plans can go astray. Self-assessments are often scheduled during parliamentary sittings, because they require the participation of parliamentarians. This means that they are subject to the priorities of the chamber. If the chamber is debating a matter of

high public importance it will obviously take precedence over the self-assessment. Time to cover for unexpected absences should be built into the programme.

Structuring the discussion

Depending on the number of participants, the self-assessment can either be run as one large group, or as a number of working groups, which would consider different sets of questions. Either way, there should be a consensus within the whole group on the final recommendations or next steps.

Building on evidence

It is useful to collect and disseminate data on how the parliament functions from the viewpoint of gender, so as to prompt constructive debates and ensure they are based on evidence and some degree of common knowledge (see “Sources of data” below).

Facilitators

The participation of a gender expert as a facilitator may help but is not necessary. The advantages of facilitators are that they can assist the group in defining some of the terms used (e.g. “sexism”, “gender equality” and “women’s issues”), explain issues and provide examples. This might have financial implications, and so require planning ahead and allocating funds.

Common understanding on the longer-term perspective

A team should be designated from the outset to ensure follow-up to the main conclusions and recommendations (see “Results and action” below).

Actual change may take time. This must be accepted as an integral part of the process.

Sources of data

It is important to ensure that discussions and conclusions are based on evidence. While data are primarily collected from the responses of participants to a set of questions, the following sources of information can be useful in facilitating the discussion:

- list of men and women members of parliament (currently and in the recent past);
- list of men and women in positions of parliamentary leadership in the bureau or board (currently and in the recent past);
- list of committee membership, by sex, including positions of leadership (chairperson, deputy, other office bearers);
- list of parliamentary staff, by sex, including positions of leadership;
- standing orders/internal rules of the parliament;
- any laws relating to gender equality passed by the parliament in at least the past five years;
- the constitution and the national electoral law;
- any existing national action plan on gender equality;
- list of men and women in leadership positions in the major political parties;
- any government and opposition parties' policies or programmes concerning gender equality;
- any policies of the parliament that have an impact on gender equality (e.g. code of conduct, anti-discrimination policies, communications strategy);
- the parliament's strategic plan, or other plans of action;
- any indication of parliament's involvement in United Nations gender equality mechanisms, such as national reports tabled in parliament for submission to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; parliamentary debates held on those reports; and participation of parliamentarians at the Committee's sessions or at the annual Commission on the Status of Women.

Example: Creating a knowledge base for the self-assessment

In Chile, the parliamentary library prepared for the self-assessment by producing a series of detailed studies on the issues listed above, together with a set of comparative data about the situation for women in other parliaments across the region. The studies were distributed to all those taking part in the evaluation. In addition, the studies were briefly presented and explained by parliamentarians or parliamentary officials as an introduction to the discussions on a range of different questions. The studies therefore provided in documentary form a precise assessment of the state of affairs in parliament, which the participants could refer to throughout the evaluation.

Results and action

Outcome of the assessment

At the very least, an assessment will give parliaments an opportunity to reflect on the importance of gender equality in all aspects of their functioning and work.

Taking stock is a first step. Parliaments can then draw up and implement a roadmap for reform, with concrete objectives, actions and deadlines, suited to the national context.

The process has to be understood as encompassing many steps until actual change is achieved.

A report of the self-assessment should include:

- an examination of the process itself (how it went, participation, lessons learned);
- a summary of the discussions;
- findings and recommendations.

Follow-up

A follow-up report might include a set of recommendations with suggestions on how they would be implemented and publicized. A plan of action with concrete objectives, actions and deadlines could be developed to plan, monitor and evaluate the changes recommended in the self-assessment. Parliaments should identify a structure which will be specifically entrusted with monitoring implementation of the plan of action and efforts to achieve the goal of gender sensitivity. All parliamentary bodies dedicated to gender equality require the support of the political and parliamentary leadership to ensure that results are monitored and actioned in a timely manner.

Examples of actions taken as a result of a gender self-assessment activity

In Turkey

Gender equality has become part of the parliament's strategic plan. A gender checklist has been developed and is being used to guide MPs and staff in the development of legislation.

A woman was appointed to the parliament's finance committee for the first time.

Additional support was allocated to the gender committee, by the appointment of new staff.

In Uganda

The parliament amended its internal rules so that a 40% quota of women was required in leadership positions in parliamentary committees. The women's caucus subsequently proposed to further amend the rules so as to ensure gender parity in all leadership positions, including in committees, the office of the speaker and inter-parliamentary delegations.

Parliament has prescribed that, before being submitted to the United Nations, state reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women are to be presented for parliamentary review.

In Bangladesh

The parliament adopted a policy for gender mainstreaming which includes reinforcing the gender infrastructure and improving the work environment from a gender perspective.

In Argentina

Following an information seminar, a senator officially tabled a request to amend the rules of parliament in order to introduce internal quotas for women.

The self-assessment checklist

Support from leadership	Who or what supports the gender-sensitive self-assessment exercise?
Initiating the exercise	Who or what will initiate and organize the exercise? What are the objectives of the exercise? How is a common understanding to be developed on the usefulness of the exercise?
Participation	Who will participate in the exercise?
Logistics	Who will make the administrative arrangements for the exercise?
Facilitators	How will the exercise be facilitated? Is funding required?
Timeframe	Over how many days and sessions will the exercise take place?
Sources of data	Can other useful data be provided? Who will be responsible for providing the data?
Documenting the process	Will the exercise require a rapporteur?
Outcome of the assessment	What are the expected outcomes of the exercise? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a report?• a plan of action?• both? Who will be responsible for producing these?
Follow-up	What follow-up is expected? By when? Who will be responsible for following up?

Starting the discussion

To ensure a good, common understanding of the exercise, its objectives and its related concepts, parliaments could organize an information seminar before the assessment is conducted. The information seminar is also useful in gaining the support of the parliamentary leadership.

Example: Information seminars – understanding the basic concepts

In Rwanda, a half-day information seminar was held before the self-assessment. The seminar programme included presentations and discussions on the meaning of gender equality, gender mainstreaming and gender-sensitive parliaments. Participants were asked to describe in their own words what “an ideally gender-sensitive parliament” would be.

An assessment should begin with a discussion of the objectives and methodology of the exercise; what is expected from the assessment; and any concerns of participants about the process or possible outcomes.

A facilitator might be used who could bring expertise and an external eye to the exercise.

“It is difficult to conduct a self-assessment in our little box. We think we are doing well, but we need to have some others to help us compare with best practices: see the ideal, and compare ourselves to that, to see how much further we need to go to reach that ideal.”

Participant of the self-assessment, Rwanda, 2012

Designing your own questions

There is no one solution or one set of questions that will fit all national contexts. The questions below are therefore indicative, based on self-assessment exercises already conducted by some parliaments.

Parliaments may wish to tailor some of the questions below to their own national context. They need not discuss all the questions proposed and can also add questions of their own.

Section B

The questions

Question 1 – Numbers and positions of women

By definition, parliamentary democracy requires a parliament to be reflective of those it represents. Women's participation in parliament is therefore a question of democracy. While the story of women's political participation around the world is one of gradual improvement, there is still a need to consider how many women are in parliament and the positions of leadership they hold.

- 1.1 What factors have enabled the election or appointment of women to parliament?

What are the obstacles that hinder a greater participation of women in parliament?

- 1.2 Is the current level of representation satisfactory (for members of parliament; for the constituency; according to national and international targets)?

What mechanisms are, or could be, in place to ensure a certain numerical representation of women?

- 1.3 Are women elected or appointed through a temporary special measure (e.g. reserved seats) perceived in the same way as those elected through open competition with men?
-

- 1.4 What percentage of leadership positions are held by women?

What positions of leadership do women occupy in parliament?

How are positions of leadership allocated?

1.5 Are there any measures to guarantee women's access to positions of leadership in the parliament?

If yes, what are they?

If not, should they be adopted?

Could, and should, each committee be co-chaired by a man and a woman?

1.6 Are men and women represented in all committees?

In which committees are women mostly represented?

In which committees are women underrepresented or absent?

How is committee membership decided?

Are stereotypes of women's interests reinforced by committee membership?

1.7 How is monitoring conducted of the number of women working in parliament and the leadership positions they hold?

If there is a dedicated monitoring body, is that body required to report publicly and regularly to parliament?

Wrap-up

What has been the biggest recent improvement made in the above?

What is the most serious ongoing deficiency?

What would be needed to remedy this deficiency?

Question 2 – The legal policy and framework

Parliament has a fundamental role to play in ensuring that legislation does not discriminate against men or women and that it promotes gender equality. At the national level, this is achieved by implementing gender-sensitive legal frameworks, including gender equality laws. Parliaments can also be role models in promoting gender equality. For instance, they can ensure that their own internal processes and rules do not discriminate against any of their members. They can also design and implement gender-sensitive plans of action and strategic plans.

National framework

2.1 What national laws ensure gender equality?

How gender-sensitive is the country's constitution?

What are the most significant laws that parliament has adopted in the past two to five years to advance gender equality?

2.2 How are gender equality-related laws initiated or amended in parliament?

Is there a need to improve this process?

2.3 Is there a law or policy that mandates gender mainstreaming across the government and parliament?

If so, who or what is responsible for overseeing its implementation in parliament?

If not, is such a law or policy needed?

Parliamentary work

2.4 How does parliament ensure that existing and proposed laws comply with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other international and regional gender equality obligations?

2.5 Does parliament analyse laws from a gender perspective, so as to measure their differing impacts on men and women?

If so, who or what is responsible for that analysis in parliament?

Parliamentary policies and practices

2.6 Are the rules of parliament gender-sensitive?

If the rules of parliament have been analysed from a gender perspective, who or what was responsible for that analysis?

2.7 Does the parliament have an overarching strategic plan or plan of action that promotes gender equality?

If so, how is that plan implemented, monitored and evaluated?

If not, how could such a gender equality plan be developed?

2.8 Are there other plans of action in the parliament?

If so, are they gender-sensitive? Are there mechanisms to ensure monitoring and evaluation of these plans?

If not, how could these plans become more gender-sensitive?

Wrap-up

What has been the biggest recent improvement made in the above?

What is the most serious ongoing deficiency?

What would be needed to remedy this deficiency?

Question 3 – Mainstreaming gender equality

Parliaments require mechanisms and expertise to ensure that gender equality is systematically addressed, and that the impact of laws, policies and budgets is analysed from a gender perspective. Those mechanisms could be a dedicated parliamentary committee or a women's caucus. But they could also be a less formal structure, such as a network of focal points. Whatever the form of the mechanism or structure, relationships with organizations, such as national women's machineries and women's nongovernmental organizations, are essential.

- 3.1 What mechanisms or structures are used to mainstream gender equality in the work of the parliament?

For example, is there a dedicated committee on gender equality or a women's parliamentary caucus? Are there gender focal points? Is there a dedicated gender desk or unit to provide information and advice?

Should one or more of the above mechanisms or structures be established?

- 3.2 What tools has the parliament created for gender mainstreaming?

Has the parliament developed checklists by which to assess legislation from a gender perspective?

Does the parliament have access to sex-disaggregated data, and if so, how are they used?

Have any other tools proved useful in mainstreaming gender equality concerns in the work of the parliament?

Are sufficient resources allocated to gender mainstreaming?

- 3.3 How effective are the bodies responsible for gender equality in the parliament?

What relationships do they have with the national women's machinery, civil society organizations, the private sector, the media and others?

Do they have sufficient powers?

How well resourced are they (in terms of staff, meeting rooms, budget etc.)?

What changes have they been able to make in support of gender equality?

Should their positioning in the parliamentary organization be revised or upgraded?

3.4 If there is a parliamentary women's caucus, how does it work?

How is it organized? How are decisions taken?

How do those who are not members of the caucus perceive it?

3.5 Where there is more than one parliamentary body dealing with gender equality, how do they relate to each other?

Is there a formal coordination mechanism between them?

Is the working relationship effective?

3.6 Is gender equality mainstreamed in the budget and the budget oversight process?

If so, are there any difficulties faced in this process?

If not, how could gender be mainstreamed in this process?

Wrap-up

What has been the biggest recent improvement made in the above?

What is the most serious ongoing deficiency?

What would be needed to remedy this deficiency?

Question 4 – The culture, environment and policies of parliament

Women have tended to enter parliament later in comparison to men. Parliaments' facilities and procedures are therefore usually designed by and for men. One possible consequence of this is that aspects of parliamentary routine and infrastructure affect men and women parliamentarians in different ways. Members of parliament are expected to conform to their institution's written and unwritten rules and norms. These become the parliament's culture and create the space in which members feel comfortable (or otherwise) doing their jobs. Adjusting to that culture can be challenging, particularly when members first enter parliament.

4.1 In general terms, how is gender equality perceived in parliament?

Are there measures taken to enhance understanding of and support for gender equality?

What (other) measures would be useful to enhance support for gender equality in parliament?

4.2 How would you describe the culture (language, customs, dress codes) of the parliament with respect to gender: is it gender-sensitive, gender-neutral or gender-blind?

4.3 Are there discriminatory and derogatory stereotypes about women in parliament?

If so, how can these be eliminated?

4.4 Has the parliamentary building ever been reviewed from a gender perspective?

Do services available include those mainly sought by women?

How does the parliament building cater to the needs of the women and men who work there?

How does the parliamentary building cater to MPs with babies and young children? Are there, for example, special rooms for breastfeeding mothers, a childcare centre or a family room?

Does parliament provide childcare facilities?

How important is it to have such infrastructure in parliament?

4.5 Do the parliament's conditions of work allow MPs to balance work and family obligations?

Do sitting hours allow MPs to spend enough time with their family?

Are MPs given sufficient parental, maternity or paternity leave?

What happens to a member's vote while she or he is on parental, maternity or paternity leave?

4.6 Can the parliament be considered a gender-sensitive work space, in terms of both of facilities and symbolic references?

What criteria determine the allocation of office space and equipment in the parliament?

Do the names of rooms in the building reflect both men and women leaders and historical figures?

Who is responsible for taking decisions in this regard?

Has the artwork displayed in the building been commissioned from women and men artists?

4.7 Does the parliament have policies to ensure that the workplace is free of discrimination, sexism and harassment?

Is there a code of conduct? Is it used effectively to ensure appropriate behaviour in parliament?

How could the code of conduct become more gender-sensitive?

Is there an anti-harassment policy and a mechanism to address complaints of harassment and discrimination? Have complaints been resolved efficiently and effectively?

Is there a policy against discrimination?

4.8 What criteria determine the allocation of travel opportunities for members of parliament?

Is there agreement that these are distributed equitably among men and women parliamentarians? If not, what prevents an equitable distribution?

4.9 Are the communications (or media) and public outreach policies of the parliament gender-sensitive, gender-neutral or gender-blind?

How could these policies better reflect and give visibility to the work of the parliament on gender equality?

Has the communications material produced by parliament ever been reviewed or audited from a gender perspective? Did the review include communication on social media?

During public events held in parliament, do women and men participate in equal numbers?

Wrap-up

What has been the biggest recent improvement made in the above?

What is the most serious ongoing deficiency?

What would be needed to remedy this deficiency?

Question 5 – Sharing responsibility with men

In most societies, both men and women have become increasingly aware of the importance of challenging the social norms that perpetuate gender inequality. In addition, an increasing awareness of the same issue among younger men has resulted in stronger partnerships between men and women on gender equality. Gender equality cannot be achieved without the support and involvement of men and women. Moreover, it is increasingly clear that social and economic progress depend on the eradication of all forms of inequality. Parliamentarians understand that their electorates no longer accept the absence of women from the political sphere.

- 5.1 Is gender equality understood to also concern men and to be part of their responsibility?

Have men parliamentarians been involved in initiating or co-sponsoring legislation on gender equality?

What factors commonly motivate men to address these issues?

- 5.2 Do male parliamentarians take public stances on gender equality and, if so, what particular issues do they tend to publicly champion?

How regularly do men take the floor during parliamentary debates on gender equality?

How often do men parliamentarians raise their constituents' concerns on gender equality issues?

- 5.3 How receptive are women to men's involvement in, and contribution to, gender equality issues?
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- 5.4 Could, and should, men and women MPs share the leadership of parliamentary committees dealing with gender equality?
-

- 5.5 Are there professional development or training opportunities provided to men and women parliamentarians? Do these include seminars on gender equality issues?

5.6 Are men included on study tours or international delegations dealing with gender equality or gender mainstreaming?

5.7 Can the parliament be considered a role model for gender partnership?

If so, why has the partnership succeeded?

If not, how could the partnership be strengthened?

Wrap-up

What has been the biggest recent improvement made in the above?

What is the most serious ongoing deficiency?

What would be needed to remedy this deficiency?

Question 6 – Political parties

Political parties are generally seen as less transparent – and therefore less accountable – than parliaments on gender equality. Yet parties are increasingly the dominant form of political organization and the primary vehicle by which members of parliament are elected. The issue of gender equality in politics needs to be taken equally seriously by political parties.

6.1 What factors would define a political party as gender-sensitive?

In general terms, can the political parties currently represented in parliament be considered gender-sensitive?

6.2 Is there a need for political parties to increase the number of women in their ranks?

If so, how should this be done?

Are gender quotas applied in the governance structure of political parties?

6.3 Do the work arrangements and practices of political parties (such as meeting times, internal rules and processes for leadership promotion) encourage women's participation?

If so, what examples of good practice could be highlighted?

If not, how should these arrangements be improved?

6.4 How do political parties develop their policies on gender equality?

Is there, for example, a women's caucus within the party, or a working group or committee on gender equality?

6.5 How prominent are gender equality issues in the political party platform?

6.6 Do political parties communicate their commitment to gender equality to the electorate?

If so, how?

6.7 Are gender stereotypes conveyed by political party representatives?

If so, how are such practices dealt with internally?

6.8 If applicable, how do parliamentary party groups influence or propose gender equality policy and legislation?

Wrap-up

What has been the biggest recent improvement made in the above?

What is the most serious ongoing deficiency?

What would be needed to remedy this deficiency?

Question 7 – Parliamentary staff

Parliament is also a workplace for many professionals who support the chambers, committees and individual members. In many parliaments, the working conditions of parliamentary staff are similar to, or exactly the same as, those of government employees and are not the same as conditions for parliamentarians. However, while parliament is in session, parliamentary staff can often keep the same hours as parliamentarians, rather than government employees. In this sense, there is merit in reviewing the policies that apply to parliamentary staff.

- 7.1 Is there a gender balance in the number of staff working for the parliamentary administration?

If so, have special measures been used to ensure that balance?

If not, should special measures be adopted to redress the imbalance?

Are there disparities among parliamentary services or units regarding their gender composition?

Who is in charge of setting up recruitment panels? Are gender requirements applied when panels are formed?

- 7.2 Are men and women represented equally among the senior staff of the administration?

Which departments or units are led by women?

- 7.3 Does the parliamentary administration have policies to ensure that the workplace is free of discrimination, sexism and harassment?

Is there an anti-harassment policy and a mechanism to address complaints of harassment and discrimination? Have complaints been resolved efficiently and effectively?

Is there a policy against discrimination?

Is there an equal pay policy? If so, what mechanisms exist to ensure non-discrimination among male and female staff?

7.4 Are there equal development opportunities for men and women?

7.5 Do the parliament's conditions of work allow staff to balance work and family?

Are staff entitlements to parental, maternity or paternity leave considered sufficient?

Is financial support provided to staff with dependants in order to cater for childcare and elderly care expenses?

How are staff compensated for long parliamentary sitting hours?

7.6 How does the parliamentary building cater to staff with babies and young children?

Are staff entitled to use any special rooms for breastfeeding mothers, childcare centres or family rooms that exist?

Does parliament provide childcare facilities?

7.7 Does the staff of the parliamentary administration include experts on gender equality?

Do the specialized staff provide services to all MPs or to a dedicated structure such as a parliamentary committee?

How are the staff in charge of gender perceived in parliament?

Do the specialized staff have access to the same information as other staff in the secretariat?

Are they able to provide expert advice on all legislation?

7.8 Are there professional development opportunities provided to parliamentary staff who work on gender equality?

Are these provided to all staff, male and female?

Does performance appraisal of staff include gender-equality-related objectives?

Useful IPU resources

Gender-Sensitive Parliaments; A Global Review of Good Practice (2011)

<http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/gsp11-e.pdf>

Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments (2012)

<http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/action-gender-e.pdf>

Evaluating Parliament: A Self-assessment Toolkit for Parliaments (2008)

<http://www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/self-e.pdf>

Women in Parliament: The Year in Perspective (annual)

<http://www.ipu.org/english/perdcls.htm#wmn-year>

IPU statistics on women in parliament

Global and regional averages: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>

Country data: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>

Definitions

Gender ^a

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

Gender mainstreaming ^a

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

Gender-sensitive parliament ^a

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

Gender-sensitive budgeting ^a

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

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

Gender-based violence^b

Acts of physical, mental or social abuse (including sexual violence) that are attempted or threatened, with some type of force (such as violence, threats, coercion, manipulation, deception, cultural expectations, weapons or economic circumstances) and directed against a person because of his or her gender roles and expectations in a society or culture. A person facing gender-based violence has no choice: he/she cannot refuse or pursue other options without serious social, physical or psychological consequences. Forms include sexual violence, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, early marriage or forced marriage, gender discrimination, denial (e.g. of education, food and freedom) and female genital mutilation.

Gender blindness

Gender blindness refers to a failure to identify or acknowledge difference on the basis of gender where it is significant.

Gender neutrality

Gender neutrality eliminates (or neutralizes) any reference to, or impact of, gender. Gender-neutral language, for example, discourages the use of gender-specific job titles (such as policewoman, fireman, stewardess, chairman) in favour of corresponding gender-neutral titles (such as police officer, firefighter, flight attendant and chairperson or chair).

b) The definition is adapted from UN WOMEN, Virtual Knowledge Centre to End Violence against Women and Girls, last accessed on 30 September 2015.

Gender sensitivity

Gender sensitivity is used to describe policies and processes that take into account the different impacts that they have on men and women, boys and girls.

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The development of this toolkit has also benefited from self-assessment experiences conducted in the parliaments of Bangladesh (2012), Chile (2012), Rwanda (2012), Sweden (2010), Turkey (2012), and Uganda (2012). In addition, regional seminars on gender-sensitive parliaments in Africa and Latin America have inspired follow-up action at the national level, some of which has informed the present toolkit. IPU is grateful to the parliamentarians, parliamentary staff and partners who participated for their constructive approach to these assessments and regional seminars.

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