

## 6. ECOWAS Election Observation Missions / EAU:

The Electoral Assistance Unit of ECOWAS should ensure that long-term and short-term election observation missions provide equal opportunity for males and females to enhance the knowledge of women in the electoral process. Election Observation should assess the member state's progress in terms of gender and election.

## 7. Funding Gender and Election:

Special funding should be provided for women candidates in countries where there is no public funding of political parties. This will ensure that women candidates have equal access to campaign resources and thereby leveling the electoral playing field.

## 8. Gender and Electoral Security:

Elections in West Africa by their nature have been prone to violence. However, election-related violence against women, and women human rights defenders, is a major factor hindering women's participation in politics. Member states should make special security arrangements to ensure that women are protected from harassment, intimidation and violence.

## 9. The Media, Gender and Election:

The media in any West African country has yet to undertake gender-sensitive reporting and provide special focus on gendered electoral rights. State media especially in countries using the FPTP (First Past The Post) electoral system, should provide an equitable platform to highlight programs and grant visibility to female candidates.

## 10. Post-election Capacity Development for Elected Women:

Once women are elected, their capacity to contribute effectively to processes of law making and governance in general, should be enhanced. States should endeavor to include males in the capacity building of elected legislators to support gender equity bills.

# ACTION PLAN OF THE ECOWAS GENDER AND ELECTION STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The plan provides a list of activities for the period of 5 years (2017 – 2022), and it seeks among others to:

- Mainstream gender in all legal framework for elections;
- Enhance the participation of women in the management of the electoral process; Produce gender disaggregated electoral data;
- Identify and address challenges faced by women in the electoral process;
- Reduce the cultural and religious barriers/challenges to women's political participation and representation;
- Strengthen platforms of women's NGO networks for peaceful elections;
- Enhance the technical capacity of women to effectively engage throughout the electoral cycle, including after they are elected;
- Adopt gender sensitive civic and voter education; and to enhance the knowledge of female candidates in the use of a variety of media channels (to be media savvy);
- Mainstream gender, and improve the participation of women in election observation at both regional and domestic levels in ECOWAS member states;
- Promote female candidature; and garner support from males at all levels;
- Ensure the safety and security of women throughout the electoral cycle at all levels; and to promote political tolerance towards female candidates;
- Encourage partnership with media to promote female candidates and to promote gender and security sensitive media reporting.



## ECOWAS GENDER AND ELECTION STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



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MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF DENMARK  
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# ECOWAS GENDER AND ELECTION STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

## INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality remains a major barrier to representative democracy, peace and security and human development in West Africa. In recognition of the crucial role of women in promoting peace, development and strengthening of democracy in West Africa; aware of the abysmally low numbers of women in the various legislature in the region, which is the lowest in the world due to the myriad of cultural, social, political, economic barriers in the processes and structures to exercise and enjoy their electoral rights; the ECOWAS Member States are desirous to enhance women's political participation and representation in line with the Mechanism (1999) and the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance and other relevant international conventions and treaties.

ECOWAS Members states adopted a Gender and Election Strategic Framework (GESF) and Action Plan in January 2017 in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, to serve as an advocacy tool to mobilize support from all stakeholders including Governments, Election Management Bodies (EMBs), religious and traditional authorities, legislature, civil society, political parties and the judiciary. Enhancing political participation and representation of women in West Africa should be a shared responsibility of both women and men.

The GESF acknowledges that West African countries are signatories to a number of key international legal documents and human rights standards relating to non-discrimination and women's rights and there is no better time for action than now.

## OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of the GESF is to serve as an advocacy document to promote women's political participation and representation in democracy and their role in the electoral processes. The GESF specifically sets out to achieve the following:

- Improve the integration of gender equality perspectives in political parties' governance processes, structures and systems;
- Enhance the role of national electoral stakeholders and
- Support gender dimension in the activities and the electoral process.

## ECOWAS GENDER AND ELECTION TEN STRATEGIC PILLARS

These are to address political, electoral and socio-economic barriers to women's participation in elections in West Africa:

### 1. Gender and Legal Framework for Elections:

A gender-friendly electoral system promotes a fair political representation of men and women. ECOWAS countries using Proportional Representation system should adopt a list of candidates, which provides both men and women equal opportunity of being elected. Countries that use FPTP (First Past The Post) electoral system should adopt a requirement for every political party to have at least 30% of its candidates to be female or male. An incentive and sanctioned system should be set up for political parties in this regard to respect this minimum requirement.

### 2. Stakeholder Mobilisation and Strategic Partnerships:

Cultural and traditional practices are very entrenched in the undercurrents of women's political participation and representation in West Africa. One of the barriers that women face in the electoral process is the disapproval by certain traditional authorities of female candidates. Traditional/religious/educational authorities and other male local communities' gatekeepers should lend their support to the political participation and representation of women.

### 3. Pre-elections Gender and Election Capacity Building:

Long-term capacity building enhances the quality of women's political engagement and boosts their electability. Political party in the various ECOWAS countries should identify and nurture young women and endeavor to alternate youth leadership position between female and male.

### 4. Civic and Voter Education:

Special programmes aimed at sensitising the public on the situation of women is needed to promote tolerance and consolidate the political rights of women.

### 5. Gender and Institutional Framework for Elections:

With the collaboration of ECONEC, all EMBs in West Africa, regardless of model, should have a well-resourced Gender Desk, and effective gender policy to assist in addressing major barriers that women face in the electoral process. Equitable recruitment of women as polling officials and as party agents should be encouraged. Data on women's participation in electoral process should be published as part of the information declared after every election, which should include:

- a) Number of males/females registered;
- b) Number of males and females candidates;
- c) Number of males and females who voted;
- d) Number of males and females elected.