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Resilient nations.*



Strengthening Women's Political Participation

An analysis of the impact of women's parliamentary
networks in Europe and Central Asia

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Photo: The Women's Caucus in Parliament in Kyrgyzstan working to finalize amendments to the law on domestic violence and the law on gender quotas at the local level.

Photo credit: Elmira Shishkaraeva, UNDP Kyrgyzstan.

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Foreword

Gender equality is fundamental to responsive and accountable democratic societies. Women's representation in elected institutions in equal proportion to men is key to the credibility and legitimacy of parliaments, national assemblies and local governments. Yet, globally, just over a fifth of members of parliament are women. In the Europe and Central Asia (ECA) region, this figure is barely 21 percent.

To combat discriminatory legislation and policies and improve gender equality outcomes in policymaking, elected representatives in countries in the region have established structures and strategic plans to improve women's political participation and gender equality. UNDP has facilitated the creation of such structures in many countries, recognizing the important role they play in empowering women as parliamentary representatives, supporting the emergence of gender-sensitive parliaments, and adopting gender-sensitive policy and legislative frameworks. The UNDP Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017 highlights the critical importance of gender equality and women's participation in decision-making to sustainable development, and calls for the empowerment of women as voters, political actors and decision-makers.

This paper examines UNDP's parliamentary assistance programming and support to existing gender equality initiatives in political participation, in particular, the role and impact of parliamentary structures for gender equality in the ECA region. It illuminates existing and planned UNDP parliamentary assistance initiatives, highlights good practice and identifies entry points for replication or scaling up. Its findings are intended to assist members of parliament and parliamentary institutions as well as civil society organizations and international organizations in advancing gender equality in parliamentary practices.

Our work in the region has shown that strengthening gender equality in parliamentary and sub-national governance makes elected institutions more inclusive, transparent and accountable. We thank all those who have shared their experiences and insights for this paper, and we look forward to working with colleagues and partners in advancing its recommendations in the Europe and CIS region.



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I. Introduction

Gender equality is both a requirement for effective, responsive and accountable democratic societies, and a means of increasing the credibility and legitimacy of elected institutions. Yet across the Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States (ECIS) region, women's participation in the lower houses of parliament remains at 21 percent, which is below the global average of 22.9 percent.¹ Women's representation in local elected office remains equally low, particularly in mayoral and leadership positions in local assemblies and councils. Women represent just 15 percent of mayors or leaders of municipal councils, and 35 percent of local or municipal councillors.² Where women do succeed in entering elected office, they continue to confront gender stereotypes regarding their roles and capacities, and endure the effects of discriminatory legislation, policies, practices and culture.

Box 1. A snapshot of women in parliament

Speakers of parliament: Women constitute only **18.8 percent** of presiding officers of one of the houses of parliament (52 of 193 parliaments). In **Europe**, women preside over one of the houses of parliament in Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, San Marino, Serbia, Spain, Turkmenistan and the United Kingdom.

Members of parliament: Worldwide, women represent **22.6 percent** of all members of parliament, with 22.9 percent in single or lower houses, and 21.3 percent in upper houses or the senate. In **Europe**, women make up **24.5 percent** of representatives of both houses: 25.1 percent in the upper house or senate, and 24.3 percent in single or lower houses.

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), *Women in Politics*, as of 1 August 2016. Available from: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>.

To address these challenges across the ECAREgion, women and men have established governance structures, support mechanisms, and strategic plans to improve women's political participation and gender equality. UNDP has facilitated the creation of such structures in many countries, recognizing the important role they play in empowering women as parliamentary representatives, supporting the emergence of gender-sensitive parliaments, and adopting gender-sensitive policies and legislative frameworks. The [UNDP Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017](#), which aims to eradicate poverty and reduce gender inequalities through women's empowerment and protection of women's rights, serves as a guiding document for current and future programming (see Annex 4).³

¹ Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). *Women in National Parliaments*, data as of 1 August 2016. Available from: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>.

² European Commission, DG Justice. "Women and men in decision making". Available from: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-decision-making/database/politics/municipal-councils/index_en.htm. The database calculates the number of women and men in the lowest levels of elected administrative office in EU-28 plus Iceland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia and Turkey. The term municipal councillor in this report refers to elected officials.

³ UNDP, *UNDP Strategic Plan 2014-2017*. Available from: http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/UNDP_strategic-plan_14-17_v9_web.pdf.

The [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015, serve as a framework for UNDP in addressing gender equality and women's empowerment.⁴ This paper will map initiatives and accomplishments that contribute to progress in relevant SDGs, including improvements in gender equality in society and parliamentary bodies, as outlined in Goals 5 and 16 and their targets (see Box 2).

Box 2. Political participation and the SDGs

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

- 5.5: Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life
- 5.c: Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels

Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries

- 10.3 Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard.

Goal 16: Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies

- 16.7: Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels
- 16.b: Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development

Source: United Nations, "Sustainable Development Goals: 17 Goals to Transform our World," 25 September 2015. Available from: <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

Scope and methods

UNDP programmes in democratic governance take a comprehensive approach, spanning the entire political and electoral process and recognizing the fundamental importance of empowering women as voters, political actors and decision-makers. In the sphere of parliamentary assistance, UNDP plays a convening role, bringing together a broad spectrum of actors integral to achieving gender equality in elected office at both national and local levels. As this paper will demonstrate, supporting gender equality in parliamentary and sub-national governance makes institutions more inclusive, transparent and equitable.

⁴ United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals. Available from: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/sustainabledevelopmentgoals>.

More specifically, this paper seeks to:

- **Illuminate existing and planned UNDP parliamentary assistance initiatives** in the ECAREgion, with a focus on those that include gender mainstreamed and/or gender-targeted components, as well as initiatives implemented by other international actors;
- **Highlight good practices**, successful mechanisms, and effective strategies to achieve gender equality in political participation; and
- **Identify entry points** for introducing, scaling up, or replicating local, national and/or regional gender equality initiatives in parliamentary assistance, where possible through innovative programming solutions.

The information in this paper was obtained from interviews with UNDP staff in Country Offices responsible for parliamentary assistance and/or women's political participation programming and from responses to questionnaires sent to UNDP Country Offices, members of parliament, assistants to members of parliament, or representatives of civil society. Unless stated otherwise in footnotes, all information contained in the study comes from oral interviews and responses to questionnaires. A list of persons interviewed is in Annex 1.

The paper is organized as follows: following the introduction, **Section II** explores the results achieved by parliamentary mechanisms and support structures to advance three main areas of women's political participation: improving gender sensitivity in parliament as an institution, advancing the proportion and capacities of women as elected officials, and establishing legislative frameworks for gender equality. **Section III** looks at global best practices in strengthening women's political participation. **Section IV** outlines a framework for analyzing the current efforts by parliamentary governance structures at national and local levels in the ECAREgion, highlighting gender-mainstreamed and gender-targeted initiatives, and presents an overview of existing UNDP parliamentary assistance programming in these categories. **Section V**, which identifies strategic entry points for enhanced programming for gender equality at both national and regional levels, based on lessons learned, UNDP priorities, resources, expertise and comparative advantage.



II. Parliamentary progress in women's political participation

Photo: Women in Causeni in Moldova discuss their policy concerns with the Women's Caucus in the Parliament of Moldova
Photo credit: UNDP Moldova

II. Parliamentary progress in women's political participation

The ECA region has made significant progress towards gender equality in political participation, in part due to the successes of gender equality committees in parliament, women's caucuses, political parties, and cross-sector alliances and networks. The creation of these groups is progress in itself, and their activities will be discussed further in subsections 2.1, 2.2, 2.3. This chapter is organized as follows:

- 2.1 Gender-sensitive rules and procedures in parliament.** This section explores the creation of gender equality groups and their impact on the establishment of gender-sensitive parliaments, including institutional procedures, as well as formal and informal parliamentary practices.
- 2.2 Equal participation and empowerment of women as elected representatives.** This section looks at the proportion of female representatives in parliament, and the empowerment and substantive representation of women, particularly to increase women's participation in decision-making positions and develop the capacities of women as elected representatives.
- 2.3 Legal frameworks for promoting gender equality in society.** This section examines gains made in the adoption of dedicated gender equality laws and policies, including gender-sensitive and inclusive national development strategies, and establishing and monitoring the implementation of legislative frameworks for gender equality.

2.1 Applying gender-sensitive rules and procedures in parliament

Gender-sensitive internal parliamentary policies, procedures, rules and practices are the pillars of a gender-friendly, non-discriminatory working culture and environment, which can increase substantive representation in practice by validating the views, perspectives and priorities of both women and men, whether serving as elected officials or as parliamentary staff (see Box 3). This section explores the creation of gender equality groups and their impact on the establishment of gender-sensitive parliaments.

The creation of groups in parliament that address gender equality issues is progress in itself towards gender equality in political participation. Without the collaboration of these groups, parliamentarians would be hard-pressed to institute gender-sensitive changes in legislation and activities of parliament.

Box 3. Gender-sensitive parliaments

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

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Gender-Sensitive Parliaments. Available from: <http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/gsp11-e.pdf>.

- **Gender equality committees** have proven to be the most successful in the adoption of gender-sensitive and gender-friendly legislative frameworks. These groups are dedicated to promoting gender equality inclusive policies and procedures and have the power to introduce new legislation.⁵
- **Multi-portfolio committees** cannot dedicate their attention solely to gender equality issues, but apply gender-sensitive and gender-mainstreamed approaches to the range of legislative proposals that they consider. Multi-portfolio committees with a specific gender equality mandate contribute to the empowerment of elected women representatives by developing their skills in drafting laws and in oversight and outreach.
- **Parliamentary women’s caucuses and councils** play important roles in advocacy and awareness-raising activities, and cultivate relationships with actors outside elected office. Their contributions are tangible in advocating for equal representation of women and men in elected office through temporary special measures, engaging in public awareness-raising on policy-related issues, and promoting gender-sensitive legislative reforms. As many caucuses do not have the power to initiate or draft legislation, they can influence parliament through research, awareness-raising and collaboration with external gender advocates. Caucuses can also play a role in creating *legislative voting blocs* (see Box 4). A successful voting bloc not only requires sufficient numbers of parliamentarians but also a willingness and ability to work across party lines, in some cases defying the orders of party leaders and whips and voting counter to the party line. In addition to lobbying for the adoption of gender equality legislation, parliamentary women’s caucuses have proven effective in achieving gender-sensitive reforms to parliamentary rules of procedure.
- **Internal party networks** work to build the capacities of female parliamentarians. Internal party mentoring initiatives are growing in popularity based on their success. Although many mentoring initiatives focus on building the capacities of women to run for local or national elected office, the involvement of women parliamentarians in these activities speaks to the impact that parliamentary gender equality groups can have on empowering women as political actors.

The following subsections will highlight recent advances in gender sensitization of parliaments in the three ECAsub-regions of the Caucasus and the CIS, Western Balkans and Turkey, and Central Asia.

Caucasus and CIS

In **Georgia**, the Gender Equality Council (GEC) in parliament submitted a proposal for the appointment of a special official on gender issues in the parliament’s administration in 2015. The official is mandated to serve as secretary to the council, ensuring coordination of the activities under the GEC, as well as providing support to the administration on parliamentary procedures, including recruitment and training, and ensuring that all procedures are gender-

⁵ IPU, “Gender-Sensitive Parliaments: Towards parliaments that respond to the needs and interests of both men and women in their structures, operations methods and work”. Available from: <http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/gsp11ex-e.pdf>.

sensitive and non-discriminatory. The official would support both members of parliament as well as parliamentary staff. Since 2016 is election year, it is anticipated that the issue of appointing gender officer will be postponed for the new parliament. Engaging male MPs in the Gender Equality Council has been another strategic decision since half of the 12 council members are men⁶ and their role is key in promoting gender equality principles in parliament. In addition, close cooperation between women MPs and civil society is essential to achieving gender equality legislative outcomes in the country, given the low representation of women in parliament – 12 percent⁷ – and the absence of a gender equality committee or sub-committee with the power to initiate legislation.

Parliamentary staff members are often governed by codes of conduct for civil servants, which can include more extensive provisions relating to non-discrimination and equal opportunities. In **Moldova**, for example, Law No.25, adopted in 2008, establishes a Code of Conduct for Public Servants. Article 4.1 of the code requires that public servants behave in a non-discriminatory, impartial and fair manner, without prioritizing certain individuals or groups on the basis of sex, among other grounds, while Article 4.2 requires public officials to behave in a respectful manner. Article 13.2 (a) requires that senior public officials ensure equal treatment and equal opportunities for subordinate civil servants. In accordance with its Parliament Strategic Development Plan, the Moldovan Parliament also introduced induction training for all incoming parliamentarians, which includes a module on gender equality and specifically on gender-responsive budgeting.

In 2016, in **Ukraine**, the Equal Opportunities Inter-Faction Union initiated the creation of the Public Council on Gender aimed at unifying and coordinating the efforts of MPs, civil society and international organizations to promote and advance gender equality. The council's main objective is to introduce a coordination and knowledge management platform to ensure information flow and cooperation on gender issues between key stakeholders in the country. The council has six permanent thematic groups:

- Group 1. Political participation (promote women's participation in decision-making and elections, promote women leadership);
- Group 2. Security and peace-building (monitor the implementation of the National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, support women's participation in peace-building);
- Group 3. Gender-sensitive parliament (ensure gender mainstreaming in reforms, legislation, European integrating processes and procedures and streamline regulatory frameworks on legislative and parliamentary business processes in parliament – the Verkhovna Rada);
- Group 4. Economic empowerment (promote gender-sensitive budgeting, support women's entrepreneurship, strengthen women's decision-making in the economic sphere);

⁶ Parliament of Georgia, "Gender Equality Council of the Parliament of Georgia: Members of Council". Available from: <http://www.parliament.ge/en/saparlameto-saqmianoba/komisiebi-da-sabchoebi-8/genderuli-tanasworobis-sabcho/sabchos-shemadgenloba>.

⁷ IPU, "Georgia Sakartvelos Parlamenti (Parliament)". Available from: http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2119_e.htm.

- Group 5. Implementation of the Istanbul Convention (support ratification and adherence);
- Group 6. Gender education (promote gender-sensitive education, including education of state servants, civic activists, journalists).

Central Asia

The informal group of women MPs in **Kyrgyzstan** supported the adoption of sector-based regulatory and legal acts that promote gender mainstreaming in all government activities. Specifically, the law of the Kyrgyz Republic “on normative legal acts” requires a mandatory gender analysis of all legislation, alongside other mandatory analyses conducted. The informal parliamentary caucus of women deputies strategically approaches men deputies as a means to build support on specific issues. This strategy resulted in the adoption of a bill on reproductive rights in 2015, following an extensive advocacy campaign.

The Women’s Affairs Faction in **Kazakhstan**, established in 2012, had 33 deputies from both chambers of parliament, making it the largest parliamentary faction in **Kazakhstan**.⁸ This is a significant development in a parliament with no previous experience with establishing or running parliamentary gender equality mechanisms. However, the faction has not been in existence since April 2016 as gender and family matters are covered by the Social Affairs Council, which was created by the largest ruling party in parliament.

Western Balkans and Turkey

In **the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**, the Macedonian Women’s Lobby has played a leading role in promoting and advocating for gender equality and women’s political representation. Established in 2001,⁹ it is the only structure that includes representatives of all political parties (MPs, local councillors and women politicians), as well as representatives of different sectors of society. The lobby serves as a coordination structure for different organizations working on gender equality and women’s empowerment. It has achieved important gender equality results due to its inclusive and representative nature and its success at networking, for example, through its active participation in the influential European Women’s Lobby based in Brussels. The lobby was instrumental in the establishment of the Women Parliamentarians’ Club in 2003.

In **Moldova**, UNDP facilitated the establishment of the Women’ Caucus in parallel with a gender audit of parliament, which informed the need for a cross-party Women’s Caucus. The audit provided comprehensive recommendations for improving the gender dimensions of the work of parliament, subsequently reflected in a gender equality action plan for parliament. A roadmap for the caucus was developed and agreed, outlining the main objectives and areas of focus.

In **Montenegro**, UNDP has popularized mentoring approaches, supporting more experienced MPs and women in politics to provide less experienced colleagues with coaching on gender

⁸ Official Site of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, “Strategy got gender equality in the Republic of Kazakhstan”. Available from: <http://www.akorda.kz/ru/o-nacionalnoi-komissii>.

⁹ Macedonian Women’s Lobby, “About Us”. Available from: <http://mzl.org.mk/en/about-us/>.

equality issues in political parties and political life. Joint activities and coordinated actions by women in politics and UNDP have resulted in upgraded statutes of women politicians and improved the integration of gender equality concerns in political party agendas in parliament, frequently focusing on better social protection of women and women's entrepreneurship. Prior to the start of the [UNDP Gender Programme](#) in 2010, only two out of 14 parliamentary political parties had women's groups. UNDP conducted educational training for women in all parliamentary political parties with the aim of establishing women's forums in the parties. These efforts resulted in women's groups being set up in all parliamentary political parties and coalitions. Furthermore, advocacy efforts of women's forums around the reform of the Electoral Law and the simultaneous introduction of affirmative actions, such as a quota of at least 30 percent for the less represented sex on party lists, led to women's presence in local parliaments going up from eight percent to 26 percent.

Additional measures have been introduced in the Electoral Law related to sanctions, whereby a party is fined when candidate lists do not meet the requirements for the prescribed numbers and positions of women, and candidate replacements. The Electoral Law along with affirmative measures was applied in the general elections in autumn 2016. Furthermore, with support from UNDP to women MPs and women in political parties, a Women's Political Club for Violence in Family was established in 2014. The club has been working with CSOs and the judiciary to improve existing policies and run campaigns against violence in the family.

Box 4. Creating a legislative voting bloc: uniting across party lines

Gender equality groups such as women's caucuses are most often established to influence policy and legislation, and specifically, to integrate women's perspectives in the legislative process. While many women's caucuses are not accorded the power to initiate or draft legislation, they can still exercise influence through the creation of **voting blocs**.

In **Kosovo**¹⁰, the Women's Caucus in the Assembly of Kosovo created a **voting bloc** when its concerns were not considered in a key piece of legislation. All 40 members of the caucus left the chamber during a plenary vote, leaving the plenary without the necessary quorum to vote on the legislation. Where numbers of women MPs are sufficient, building cross-party unity among women MPs and gender advocates can have a significant impact on the adoption of legislation. This strategy is particularly effective if alliances are developed across gender equality groups, involving representatives of both committees and caucuses.

¹⁰ References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

Box 5. The Women's Caucus in the Kosovo Assembly

Established in 2005, the Women's Caucus of the Assembly of Kosovo brings together all women parliamentary representatives. Recognized as an informal group in the assembly, the caucus lobbies to ensure "an effective representation of women for a successful functioning of democracy in Kosovo". The caucus has adopted several successful strategies to improve gender equality in the assembly, and specifically to ensure that women's concerns are reflected in its policy and legislation. In 2011, members of the Women's Caucus once blocked a plenary vote by leaving the chamber, in protest against its perspectives on the proposed law not being taken into account. Caucus members also sit as observers at meetings of committees that have no women members to identify issues relevant to gender equality and women's rights. By making itself highly visible in all parliamentary processes and by building relationships with key parliamentary bodies such as committees and the assembly leadership, the caucus has been effective in introducing gender-sensitive reforms to parliamentary procedures. In 2012, it succeeded in obtaining support from different committee members to introduce four amendments to the Assembly's Draft Rules of Procedure:

- 1) "more gender-sensitive language shall be adopted in all Assembly documents, including the rules of procedure, and in Assembly debates;
- 2) the President of the Assembly shall request the Women's Caucus to propose a candidate for the Deputy President of the Assembly;
- 3) the Chair and Deputy Chair of each committee shall not be of the same gender;
- 4) the composition of committees shall reflect the political power of political groups, and gender equality"¹

However, not all its lobbying efforts have proven successful. Although the caucus played a key role in the adoption of a legislated gender quota requiring at least 30 percent representation of women on party lists, it has not yet achieved gender quotas for parliamentary leadership positions. The caucus lobbied for, but did not succeed, in achieving the introduction of a "decision-making quota" into the Rules of Procedure to ensure that the president and vice-president of all parliamentary committees and bodies be of from both sexes.²

Nonetheless, the legislated gender quota that applies to elections has succeeded in building a critical mass of women politicians actively pursuing women's empowerment. Following two years of sustained lobbying, each political party now has a woman vice-president, while two of 15 committees have a woman president. This experience demonstrates the importance of developing a long-term, sequenced approach to women's political empowerment, beginning with political parties as gatekeepers, progressing to legislative reform and subsequently pursuing women's equal representation at decision-making levels.³ The caucus has influenced other parliamentary decision-making processes. When the Committee on Foreign Affairs was presented a list of ambassadorial candidates that only included male candidates, for example, the caucus called for greater gender balance, which resulted in the appointment of several qualified women to ambassadorial positions.

¹ OSCE/ODIHR, "Comparative Study on Structures for Women MPs in the OSCE Region", 2013.

² Natalya Wallin, "Beyond "Soft" Issues: The Women's Caucus of Kosovo Speaks Up," *Chicago Policy Review*, 2014. Available from: <http://chicagopolicyreview.org/2014/10/02/beyond-soft-issues-the-womens-caucus-of-kosovo-speaks-up/>.

³ Ibid.

2.2 Increasing the proportion of women parliamentarians and their capacity

Along with increasing the quantity of elected representatives, parliamentary and sub-national gender equality groups play a role in empowering women as elected representatives through capacity development, awareness-raising and knowledge-building exercises. They also prove effective in providing a neutral space where female politicians and gender advocates can come together across party lines to discuss issues of concern, whether related to policy and legislation, the procedures of parliament itself, or the working environment. In many ways, gender equality groups contribute to the empowerment of elected representatives in an indirect manner; women's capacities and skills are developed in the process of pursuing other goals.

In the past decade, a number of political parties in the ECA region have adopted internal quotas to ensure women's representation in party decision-making structures and processes (see Box 6). Such quotas may govern women's representation in party congresses, women's representation on the party's executive board, or membership on its candidate selection or nomination commission. Some political parties also require representation of internal party women's caucuses in party decision-making bodies and processes.

Box 6. Legislated gender quotas

In many cases, temporary special measures such as quotas helped achieve greater numerical equality in elected office:

In the **former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**, following the introduction of gender quotas in 2002, women's representation increased from 6.7 percent to 32.5 percent. Electoral Code stipulates that one in every three candidates for parliament should be reserved for the less represented gender.

In **Kyrgyzstan**, where legislated gender quotas entered into force in 2007, women's representation increased from 0 percent to 25.6 percent. The 2011 Electoral Law specifies a 30 percent quota for either gender on electoral lists.

In **Serbia**, legislated gender quotas adopted in 2002 saw an increase in women's representation from 5.1 percent to 21.6 percent, and in 2014, to 34 percent. Electoral Law stipulates that the candidate lists of political parties must include at least 30 percent of candidates of each gender.

Source: The Quota Project, "International IDEA". Available from: <http://www.quotaproject.org>.

Source: OSCE/ODIHR, "Gender Equality in Elected Office: A Six-Step Action Plan", 2011.

Parliamentary and party quotas combined with consistent efforts towards strengthening the capacities of women parliamentarians have helped to substantially improve women's political participation. The following sections, organized by sub-regions, present a snapshot of these advancements.

Western Balkans and Turkey

In **Montenegro**, UNDP has made a concerted effort to strengthen the political skills of women parliamentarians as well as their knowledge and understanding of gender equality issues. This has helped to raise their public profile and electoral support, all of which facilitates a stronger integration of gender concerns in their work. As a result of capacity development initiatives by UNDP, there is now a pool of trainers from all parliamentary political parties, which is frequently used. Of 18 trainers on gender equality in the political parties, four have become MPs at the national level, eight are members of local parliament, and three are heads of women's groups in their parties. Furthermore, all parliamentary political parties have integrated gender equality and women's empowerment in their political agendas and have established women's groups. Three political parties have voluntarily included a quota for women in their statutes. Intensive cooperation with the Parliamentary Committee for Gender Equality has resulted in more frequent interactions with other parliamentary bodies and enhanced the committee's mandate and capacities to monitor the implementation of legislation, in particular the Gender Equality Law.

Similarly, in **the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**, the Women's Lobby facilitated the development of a strategy to strengthen cooperation between national and local committees. In 2013, the Assembly formally adopted this strategy, which included a mentorship component whereby women MPs became official educators and mentors for men and women local councillors as well as mayors.

Women's CSOs in coordination with the Macedonian Women's Lobby also advocated for the adoption of legislated gender quotas, which was introduced in 2002 and has contributed to an increase in women's parliamentary representation from 6.7 percent to 32.5 percent. In 2015, notwithstanding a political crisis that included the withdrawal of the opposition from the parliament, the lobby collaborated with members of the Women Parliamentarians' Club to increase the gender quota to require 40 percent of the under-represented sex on political party candidate lists. In fact, the political crisis was an opportunity for women MPs, politicians and gender-equality advocates to put issues of electoral and political reform on the parliamentary agenda. Thanks to strong support and evidence-based advocacy from UNDP and UN Women, a quota was introduced in the new Electoral Code and is expected to ensure the presence of at least 40 percent of women at central and local levels in the next election. As the Women Parliamentarians' Club lacks the authority to initiate legislation, individual members have introduced gender quota reforms that enjoyed broad civil society and political support.

In **Serbia**, parliamentary elections held in May 2012 resulted in women constituting 33 percent of the incoming National Assembly, thanks in part to the application of a legislated gender quota requiring at least 30 percent of the under-represented sex on candidate lists. The women elected included both seasoned incumbents as well as those assuming office for the first time, creating momentum to establish an Informal Network of Serbian Women MPs, now known as the Women's Parliamentary Network. The network was launched in February 2013 and has proven particularly effective in enhancing women's representation in national and international parliamentary policy on issues outside the traditional sphere of "women's issues." For example, the network played an important role in influencing the work on regional peace and reconciliation as well as mainstreaming gender in national legislation and

adopting gender-specific policies such as laws on violence against women. UNDP's work with the Women's Parliamentary Network is aimed at demonstrating the status of gender equality in Serbia, assisting in formulating political goals as well as creating an environment for political networking among women parliamentarians.

In Albania, the recent amendments to the Electoral Code in 2015 require at least 50 percent representation of each gender on candidate lists for municipal elections. This was the result of sustained cooperation between the parliamentary Women's Caucus, gender advocates, and women's organizations. Civil society organizations are critical advocacy partners and may serve as the only credible advocates for legislative and electoral reform, particularly when political polarization within parliaments prevents effective cross-party cooperation. Previous attempts to secure gender-friendly amendments to the Electoral Code were marred by insurmountable divisions between parties.

Box 7. Bosnia and Herzegovina: successes and challenges

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) has made significant strides towards gender equality with legislative and policy frameworks. Important legal steps have been taken with conventions, laws and gender action plans promoting gender equality. However, a genuinely enabling environment requires a sharper focus on implementation of all policy instruments because women in BiH are still largely excluded from decision-making positions.

BiH election law requires "equitable representation" of both sexes on electoral lists, which is defined as 40 percent of candidates on the list belonging to the underrepresented gender, in line with the Gender Equality Law. The law also sets out rules for distribution of candidates on the list, so that one out of the first two candidates must be of the underrepresented sex, two in the first five, three in the first eight, and so on. What this means in practice is that a list with less than 40 percent of underrepresented candidates and incorrect distribution cannot be accepted by the Central Election Commission. However, the law only regulates electoral lists and does not set quotas for parliamentary seats. This reflects the general attitude towards gender equality in legislative bodies, where it is seen as an aspirational rather than a realistic goal, and secondary to the goal of equal ethnic representation.

In the last general elections in 2014, there were wide gaps between women's representation on electoral lists and the number of women who were elected. Overall, women were barely a fifth of all elected officials in the 2014 general elections. In spite of the commendable number of women on candidate lists, political parties tend to sideline them at election time. Out of 747 candidates for the House of Representatives, 306 were women, but only 10 were elected. Only one woman has ever been a candidate for the Presidency of BiH, without success. The percentage of women elected as mayors in 2012 was only 7.3 percent.

Caucasus and CIS

The Equal Opportunities Group in **Ukraine** introduced a legislated gender quota through a draft law (*On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine*) in 2013 to ensure equal

rights and opportunities for women and men in the electoral process. The draft law stated that no more than 60 percent of the first five names on the candidate list and no more than 70 percent in each of the next ten positions can be of the same sex.¹¹ However, the draft law was not included in the parliamentary session. Amendments to the Law on Political Parties stipulate a 30 percent quota for women on party lists, but this law is silent on single-mandate seats and the order of candidates on party lists, and there are still no enforcement and clear implementation mechanisms in place.

Yet, with international support, members of the group underwent extensive media training, which helped them to develop critical public speaking, debate and negotiation skills. Ukrainian women MPs are now more skilled in engaging with the media and building public support for gender equality in politics and society. Providing women's caucuses members with such technical support can be a particularly effective means of empowering women as elected representatives.

Another law (*Amendments to the Law on Local Elections*), introduced by a political party faction that included the Women's Caucus Co-Chair, Olena Kondratiuk, was approved by the Committee on Human Rights, National Minorities and Inter-Ethnic Relations in February 2014 and adopted in July 2014. The law requires at least 30 representatives of each gender on candidate lists for local elections. The law's passage owed a great deal to the cross-party advocacy efforts of members of the caucus. When the quota was applied during the October 2015 local elections, most parties complied with it for the oblast and city council candidate lists. As a result, women's representation on candidate lists increased to 29.6 percent for oblasts, and 32.1 percent for city councils. Following the elections, the proportion of elected women increased from 10 to 15 percent in "oblasts¹²" and from 14 to 18.4 percent in city councils. Importantly, the introduction of the quota also contributed to the opening of public debate on women's political participation.

In **Moldova**, joint efforts by UNDP and UN Women in partnership with civil society organizations resulted in the adoption of legislation introducing a 40 percent women's representation quota in government offices and on the electoral lists for local and parliamentary elections in April 2016.¹³ The impact of these measures on women's representation in decision-making positions will be seen in the general elections of 2018 and local elections of 2019.

In **Georgia**, a coalition of civil society organizations was responsible for drafting an initiative on legislated gender quotas, subsequently introduced in parliament by a woman MP who

¹¹ Ukraine National Review, "Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000) in the context of the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action", 2014. Available from: https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/Gender/publication/NV111.07_att1_att2_att3_merged.pdf.

¹² Oblast is an administrative division or region in Ukraine.

¹³ Official Gazette of the Republic of Moldova, 27 May 2016, No. 140-149. Available from: <http://lex.justice.md/index.php?action=view&view=doc&lang=1&id=365019>.

serves as a member of the Gender Equality Council. The initiative went before the Human Rights and Legal Affairs Committees, but was not passed in July 2016.

In **Belarus**, despite the absence of a legislated quota on the number of women in parliament, the share of women in the lower chamber of the National Assembly (parliament) has been close to 30 percent for the past two convocations – the highest among post-Soviet countries. In the new House of Representatives elected in September 2016, women account for 34.5 percent (38 out of 110 members of the lower chamber). In the outgoing House of Representatives, 13 out of 14 standing committees had women as deputy heads and two of the committees were led by women. Thus, every second female parliamentarian has been directly involved with the leadership of the lower chamber.

Although there are no explicit gender caucuses in parliament, men and women work together as part of the standing committees and pass laws geared toward gender equality. In September 2016, the Standing Committee on Labour and Social Matters successfully put in motion the passage of a law on the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including women with disabilities. Among local councillors, women number 8,700 or 46.3 percent of the total. Considering the opportunities of working with women in the parliament on multiple issues, UNDP will continue its engagement with the parliamentary bodies set up after the September 2016 elections and support women MPs in creating gender caucuses and pursuing gender equality outcomes in policy-making.

In **Armenia**, with UNDP support, almost 1200 local women councillors have been trained in political leadership, over 500 of whom have been elected to local office or become active in community politics.¹⁴ Two echelons have been created: the first including women supported to run for local elections, and the second including a cadre of thousands of women who have developed the political skills to run in the next local elections. UNDP promoted gender equality at the local levels of governance under two projects, “Gender and Politics in South Caucasus” (2004-2008) and “Women in Local Democracy” (WiLD) (2012-2016).

Central Asia

In **Kazakhstan**, where there is no gender quota in parliament, representatives of parliament and civil society came together to discuss the issue at a roundtable convened by UNDP and UN Women in October 2015. Participants discussed different quota systems, including the previous regime of “reserved seats”, concluding that a system aimed at a minimum representation of the underrepresented gender on candidate lists would be most effective in the country. The event was an opportunity for gender equality activists in parliament and civil society to discuss the issue as partners, and demonstrated a growing solidarity on gender equality within parliament itself.

In **Kyrgyzstan**, the absence of women in parliament before 2007 meant that civil society constituted the only venue through which to advocate for the introduction of special

¹⁴ UNDP, “Closing the Gap: An Overview of UNDP Results in Gender Equality in Europe and the ECIS”, 2014. Available from: <http://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/gender-equality/closing-the-gap-an-overview-of-undp-results-in-gender-equality-.html>.

measures. Through a series of events held in parliament as well as in public spaces, gender equality advocates raised awareness among the public and in parliament of the contributions women make to political life, and achieved the introduction of legislated gender quotas for candidate lists. Draft amendments to the Electoral Code were introduced in 2007 by the head of the Women’s Caucus, which required no more than 60 percent representation of one gender on party lists for local elections and the requirement that elected female candidates could not be replaced by male representatives following elections (a persistent problem in Kyrgyzstan). However, the amendments are still in discussion in parliamentary committees.

Following the December 2015 election,¹⁵ the proportion of female parliamentarians increased to 21 percent (26 women, 94 men). UNDP is building on the outcomes achieved through the “Ustat” mentoring programme of the [Roza Otunbayeva Initiative](#) to create a mentorship scheme linking women parliamentarians with aspiring women candidates across the country.¹⁶ Likewise, the development of leadership skills among women at the local level has resulted in the creation of a new generation of politically engaged women, who are now prepared to run for future elections.

2.3 Establishing legislative frameworks for gender equality

Strides have been made in the ECAREgion in securing gender-friendly and gender-sensitive legislative reforms and adopting gender equality laws, which include legislation on women’s health, domestic violence, and girls’ access to education and services.

[Central Asia](#)

In **Kazakhstan**, the drafting and enactment of two laws in parliament in 2009 – on equal rights and opportunities of men and women, and on elimination of gender-based violence – owed much to the interest in issues related to gender equality and the family among parliamentarians across the floor, with support from the group of women MPs.

The Women’s Caucus in **Kyrgyzstan** lobbied for amendments to the Criminal Code and contributed to the adoption of both the Family Code and the Code on Children, in cooperation with women’s organizations. Amendments to Articles 154 and 155 strengthen and require stronger enforcement of punishments for the offence of bride kidnapping. The caucus, in cooperation with civil society, has also lobbied for the adoption of policy frameworks for gender equality and development.

The caucus, alongside women’s civil society groups, has advocated and participated in the development of a long-term gender equality strategy, which was adopted by the Government in 2012. The National Strategy for Gender Equality 2020 addresses women’s economic empowerment and development, education for women and girls, access to justice

¹⁵ 24 Hours News Agency, “The women of Kyrgyzstan parliament: less than quarter of the Deputies,” 29 December 2015. Available from:

http://24.kg/vlast/25528_v_parlamente_kyrgyzstana_jenshin_menshe_chetverti_sostava_deputatov/.

¹⁶ Roza Otunbayeva Initiative. Available from: <http://www.roza.kg/initiative/democratic-governance/mentoring/>.

and women's political empowerment. In 2013, the Government adopted a National Action Plan (NAP) for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, the first in the Central Asian region. The NAP on Gender Equality (2015-2016) and the second NAP (2016-2017) are endorsed and in the process of implementation with close assistance from UNDP and the UN Gender Theme Group.

In May 2015, the caucus, also known as the Forum of Women in parliament, convened a meeting to discuss women's empowerment and access to water and sanitation services. It resulted in representatives of the Ministry of Health and local authorities producing concrete recommendations for the amendment of legislation, now ongoing, on access to water and sanitation at the local level.

In 2016, the Women's Caucus, with support from UNDP, discussed a draft law prohibiting religious leaders from performing religious marriages for under-aged persons by including criminal liability for all persons actively involved, including parents, with punishment spanning three to five years of imprisonment. The draft law has passed its second hearing and is expected to be endorsed in early 2017. Women parliamentarians also introduced amendments to the Law on Social and Legal Protection against Domestic Violence in 2016, with the support of UNDP in Kyrgyzstan and the Ministry of Labour and Social Development.

[Western Balkans and Turkey](#)

In the **former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**, the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, in cooperation with the Women Parliamentarians' Club, drafted a law on equal opportunities, first adopted in 2006 and revised in 2012. With additional advocacy and citizen mobilization from the Macedonian Women's Lobby, they succeeded in passing a law on prevention of domestic violence in 2014. The committee also supported legislative reforms initiated by the Government to support women's entrepreneurship, rural women's economic empowerment, survivors of violence, as well as people with disabilities. However, securing funding to implement gender equality legislation and gender-friendly legislative reforms still remains a stumbling block. The Women Parliamentarians' Club has accordingly focused its efforts on lobbying for funding for resources to implement gender equality legislation and reforms, and has achieved concrete results. In 2013, the club lobbied the Ministry of Finance to dedicate funds for gender equality through a specific budget line. As a result, resources to implement gender equality initiatives doubled by 2015. The club's lobbying of the Ministry for Healthcare in 2012 and 2013 resulted in the introduction of regular pap smears for women, which are now free of charge. The club has promoted the adoption of three major national strategic plans on gender budgeting, domestic violence and violence against women, and UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

A coalition of MPs, civil society advocates and experts lobbied for the adoption of a law on the prevention of domestic violence, which entered into force in January 2015. On-air debates brought broad attention to these issues and helped to define the concept of gender-based violence. With the mobilization of public support, gender-sensitive legislative provisions on domestic violence that had been stagnant for years have now been adopted.

In **Montenegro**, the Gender Equality Committee was instrumental in adopting two gender-related pieces of legislation in 2008. The Law on Gender Equality and the Law on Preventing

and Combating Domestic Violence in 2010. Since 2010, the committee has been working to mainstream gender in legislation, e.g., the Labour Law, Law on Social and Child Protection, Police Law. The committee has also organized several public hearings for the Ministry of Social Protection and Human Rights, increasing public visibility and ensuring that civil society voices are heard. The committee's campaigns on violence against women and violence in the family, with the involvement of male allies, raised the visibility of the issues among the public and in the media.

In **Serbia**, the Women's Parliamentary Network achieved several important gender equality results in gender-sensitive legislative frameworks:

- Successfully lobbied for amendments to the criminal law introducing harsher penalties for sexually-motivated assaults against children, making Serbia the second European country after the United Kingdom to strengthen its child protection provisions.
- Adopted amendments to the new Law on Police regulating the prevention of domestic violence, whereby the police will no longer react based only on urgency but also based on threats. This is clearly an important step in the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Prevention and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention).
- Adopted the amendment to the Law on Budget 2016 related to subventions for women entrepreneurs after three years of lobbying.

The network also promotes national policy development in the sphere of violence against women and domestic violence. In cooperation with the Committee on Human and Minority Rights and Gender Equality, the network organized a public hearing in 2013 on the implementation at the national level of recommendations to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Committee and the Council of Europe's *Convention of Preventing and Combating Violence and Domestic Violence* (the Istanbul Convention), where experts presented policy recommendations to address gaps in Serbian legislation vis-à-vis the Istanbul Convention. In 2014, the network signed the National Assembly's Memorandum of Understanding with the Association of Business Women of Serbia and the European Commission's office in Belgrade to support the growth of women's entrepreneurship in the country.¹⁷

The Women's Parliamentary Network has also played an increasingly important leadership role in facilitating regional exchanges among women MPs to improve gender mainstreaming. In March 2015, the network organized the first regional conference¹⁸ of women parliamentarians from southeast Europe, "Equal and Empowered – Stronger Together." The event resulted in the drafting of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), in which representatives of all parliaments in the region agreed to cooperate in the implementation

¹⁷ Women's Parliamentary Network of Serbia, PowerPoint presentation, Washington, October 10, 2014. Available from: <http://www.womeninparliaments.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Serbia-WPN-Washington.pdf>.

¹⁸ The conference was organized with support of the OSCE/ODHIR and the OSCE mission in Serbia.

of activities to promote gender equality. The MoU outlines the modalities of cooperation and sets objectives, including sharing information on national policies, facilitating networking among MPs, civil society, business and academia, and exchanging good practices in gender mainstreaming.¹⁹

In **Kosovo**, the Women's Caucus has achieved success in raising awareness of women's health and reproductive issues. In 2012, the caucus partnered with local women's caucuses, municipalities and local public health services to implement an awareness-raising campaign called "Don't be Late - Help Fight Breast Cancer". The campaign educated women about the importance of breast cancer testing and raised funds for the purchase of a mobile mammogram, to enable women in rural areas to access mammogram services.²⁰ Additionally, the Law on Gender Equality is the main Law regulating national gender equality priorities. In addition, gender issues are mainstreamed in several laws such as: The Law on Family, The Law on Anti-Discrimination, and the heritage related legislation etc. The implementation of the legislative framework is supported by a robust institutional network: The Women's Caucus of the Assembly, the Agency on Gender Equality in the Office of the Prime-minister, and the Gender Equality Officers located in all Ministries and Municipalities of Kosovo are the institutional bodies working on gender issues.

In **Albania**, a special parliamentary sub-committee on gender equality and juvenile issues began its work in 2014, after having been established in December 2013. At the request of parliament, the Minority Issues, Gender Equality and Domestic Violence Sub-Committee held a special parliamentary hearing on gender-based violence and domestic violence in June 2014, bringing together national experts in gender-based violence, parliamentarians and international organization representatives. This resulted in a set of recommendations on how to improve prevention of violence and protection of women's rights through legislation and in practice. The sub-committee also played a key role in lobbying for Albania's ratification of the Istanbul Convention and for the adoption of amendments to the Electoral Code, increasing the legislated gender quota from 30 percent to 50 percent of the under-represented gender on candidate lists.

South Caucasus and CIS

In **Georgia**, the Gender Equality Council has influenced the quality of policymaking at institutional and procedural levels. They lobbied for signing and ratification of the Istanbul Convention and subsequently introduced amendments to 10 separate pieces of legislation, including important legislation on violence against women and domestic violence. Previously, the council served as the sole public institution responsible for gender issues. In January 2015, however, following efforts by the council, civil society and gender equality advocates, a special advisor on human rights and gender equality was appointed in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). The advisor is mandated to facilitate drafting and implementation of Georgia's gender-related action plans, and to coordinate all government

¹⁹ Women's Parliamentary Network of Serbia, "Memorandum of Cooperation between Women Members of Parliaments from South East Europe," March 3, 2015. Available from:

<https://wpnserbia.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/memorandum-zpm-potpisan-3-03-2015.pdf>.

²⁰ OSCE Mission to Kosovo, "OSCE supports Kosovo Assembly Women's Caucus in raising funds for women's health issues," 26 November 2012. Available from: <http://www.osce.org/kosovo/97483>.

agencies with responsibilities under the action plans. This institutional development is timely, given that new action plans on UNSCR 1325 and on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence in 2016 and gender equality in 2017 need to be drafted. More importantly, the introduction of this position in the PMO signals the prioritization of gender equality at the executive level, and mandates bodies in both the executive and legislative branches to address gender equality as a key policy and legislative area. Previously, the council was responsible for both developing gender-related policy and monitoring its implementation.

Women parliamentarians have also actively participated in policymaking initiatives to enhance women's rights and gender equality. In 2014, following a significant increase in reporting of female infanticide and gender-based violence, the multi-agency and multi-partner Gender Theme Group in **Georgia** brought together women MPs, including representatives of the Gender Equality Council, to discuss and develop policy recommendations to address this issue. Although an ad-hoc, issue-based initiative, the Gender Theme Group managed to elicit consensus among women representing a broad range of political parties – a first step in identifying an issue requiring a policy response.

The “Equal Opportunities Inter-Faction Union”, also known as the Equal Opportunities Group or Caucus, was established in December 2011 as a voluntary association in the Verkhovna Rada of **Ukraine**. Although it holds no powers to initiate legislation, the group's strategy is to work across party lines to develop draft laws or amendments that can be subsequently introduced by individual MPs. This approach has proven successful in achieving key legislative outcomes in gender equality and women's rights. This includes securing amendments to the draft law “On Amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences for settlement of the question on responsibility for violence in the family”, which was adopted on February 12, 2015. The group has also developed three draft laws on violence against women, prohibition of trafficking in children, and provision of equal social protection to single mothers and fathers, which were all subsequently introduced by individual MPs.

The caucus has also been active in raising awareness among and educating political counterparts and the public on gender equality issues. Although support for gender equality is growing in Ukraine, gender advocates continue to confront deeply entrenched gender stereotypes and discrimination across all sectors. In response, the caucus has been involved in a number of high-profile advocacy events, including international conferences on women's political participation before and following the 2012 parliamentary elections, and awareness-raising campaigns on issues such as reproductive rights. It has also made an effort to reach out to the influential business community by writing a regular column in the publication, “Business Ukraine”.

The Equal Opportunities Caucus has actively supported ongoing efforts to resolve the conflict in the country, including through enhancing legislation on the provision of rights and freedoms to internally displaced persons and humanitarian aid to those affected by the conflict. Caucus members have been active in international events to raise awareness about developments in the country and the need to protect the rights of women and girls. The caucus has experienced its share of challenges as well. For example, in March 2013, as a result of political disagreement, members of one political party left the caucus and formed

their own body called "Equality." The Equality Caucus was not re-established following the 2014 parliamentary elections.



III. Global best practices

Photo: Women and representatives of various branch offices of the Ministry of Energy and the Ministry of Communal Services discuss results of the energy audit and energy management systems in Turkmenistan
Photo Credit: UNDP Turkmenistan

III. Global best practices

Although women's political participation has improved substantially in the ECAREgion, it still has a long way to go. This section looks at some of the achievements in countries outside of the region, to demonstrate good practice.

3.1 Gender-sensitive rules and procedures in parliament

In **Sweden**, a Speakers' Network for Female Parliamentarians was established in 1995 by the then Speaker of Parliament to increase women's substantive representation. It was subsequently re-named the Speakers' Reference Group on Gender Equality to demonstrate a shift in focus from women's issues to gender equality, an issue of concern to both women and men. As the group enjoys no legislative power, it focuses on developing awareness of gender-sensitive and gender-friendly parliamentary procedures and practices. Its members cooperate with the Male Network of the Swedish Parliament on gender equality issues as well as with the Network against Discrimination and Honour-Related Oppression. Such issue-based collaboration has resulted in the creation of stronger lobbies to advocate on matters of joint concern. The Speakers' Reference Group on Gender Equality has also established a working relationship with the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality in the European Parliament, enabling access to a Europe-wide platform in which to advocate jointly on issues of concern.

Similarly, the Network of Women Members in the Finnish Parliament have held joint meetings with the network of male MPs, established in 2010. The MPs discussed violence against women and domestic violence, particularly men's role in preventing and combatting the phenomenon. They also reached out and held joint meetings with a network of male MPs created in 2010, on topics related to men's role in preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

3.2 Increasing the proportion of women parliamentarians and their capacity

Globally, over 40 countries have adopted legislated gender quotas that require a minimum representation of each gender on candidate or party lists.²¹ In addition, many political parties have adopted internal or voluntary quotas to ensure women's representation on candidate lists as well as in party leadership positions. As research has shown, the adoption of legislated and voluntary gender quotas has resulted in an increase in women's parliamentary representation.²²

International parliamentary bodies have also adopted measures to ensure women's representation in parliamentary delegations. Since 1990, for example, the [Inter-Parliamentary Union](#) (IPU) requires that "Parliaments which comprise women members must include at least one woman in their delegations to IPU statutory meetings;" the IPU

²¹ The Quota Project, "Quota Database". Available from: <http://www.quotaproject.org/>.

²² Selected research on legislated quotas includes OSCE/ODIHR, "Gender Equality in Elected Office: A Six-Step Action Plan", 2011. Drude Dahlerup, "Women, Quotas and Politics" (ed), 2006. Mona Lena Krook, "Quotas for Women in Politics", Oxford University Press, 2009.

secretariat has tracked women's participation ever since.²³ Likewise, Article 2(d) of the Statute of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe states that "equitable representation of women and men on the statutory bodies of local and regional authorities in the member state, meaning that all delegations must include members of both sexes with a minimum participation of at least 30 percent of the underrepresented sex among the representatives and among the substitutes."²⁴

Quotas ensuring women's representation in *parliamentary* decision-making bodies or leadership positions are much less common, but good examples do exist outside the region. According to IPU, in **Iraq**, 25 percent of all parliamentary positions, including leadership positions, have been reserved for women. Likewise, in 2010, the **Mexican** Parliament reformed its chamber rules to ensure women's representation in decision-making structures, in particular the Senate Leadership Board and commission presidencies. By constitutional mandate in **Rwanda**, women must hold at least 30 percent leadership positions throughout parliament.²⁵

When it comes to parliamentary committee appointments, IPU has found that conventions rather than explicit rules tend to be in effect. For example, in **France**, the Senate follows a norm whereby both men and women are represented in leadership positions. In **Switzerland** and **France**, as in many countries, the process of committee appointments is determined by political parties, some of which abide by voluntary quotas or conventions to ensure women's representation in committee leadership positions, in parliamentary leadership bodies, and in delegations.²⁶

In **Poland**, representatives of the Polish Parliamentary Group of Women developed amendments to the Electoral Code requiring the introduction of a "zipper system" whereby, in addition to the legislated 35 percent minimum representation of each gender on the candidate list, every other position on the list is occupied by a woman (see Box 8). Although the amendments have not yet been adopted, the process has developed the law drafting, negotiation and consensus-building skills of women members of the caucus. The Parliamentary Group of Women in Poland has co-organized conferences and debates with civil society and self-governing bodies on raising the age of retirement for women and on cervical cancer prevention.

In **Finland**, the Network of Women Members of the Finnish Parliament has facilitated capacity development by supporting its members to attend international conferences, seminars and workshops, allowing women MPs to develop international connections and improve their networking skills.

²³ IPU, "Women in delegations to statutory sessions". Available from: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/dlgtns.htm>.

²⁴ Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, "Statute of the Council of Europe", 2015. Available from: http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/RoP/Statut_CE_2015-EN.pdf.

²⁵ IPU, "Gender-Sensitive Parliaments", 2011. Available from: <http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/gsp11-e.pdf>.

²⁶ Ibid.

Box 8. The Polish Congress of Women

The Polish Congress of Women, first held in 2009, has become a high-level event bringing together parliamentarians, politicians, government officials, media, academia, civil society and the business community to discuss women's contributions across all sectors.

The congress also serves as a political forum where specific policy issues can be discussed and debated. Attention to women's under-representation in political life led to calls for the introduction of a legislated gender quota in 2009, a call repeated in 2010 and 2011 until the quota was introduced in the Electoral Code.

Capitalizing on Poland's presidency of the European Union in 2011, the Polish Congress was transformed into the European Congress of Women. This was an opportunity for Polish women to articulate their policy priorities and interests to a European audience, and for good practices to be shared with Polish interlocutors.

Through its participation in this event, representatives of the Polish Parliamentary Group of Women have benefited from the creation of a broad platform of support on issues of particular concern to women.

In the **United Kingdom**, the Fabian Society's Fabian Women Mentoring Programme, associated with the Labour party, was launched in 2011 with the aim of building women's political skills, exposing women to parliamentary life, and creating networks of aspiring and established women politicians. The Fabian Women's Network Mentoring and Political Education Programme includes an intensive-skill development course, study trips to Westminster and the European Parliament, organization of various networking events, and opportunities to shadow UK members of parliament. Of the 100 participants in the programme thus far, six were selected as parliamentary candidates, and 21 have been elected to local office.²⁷

3.3 Establishing legislative frameworks for gender equality

In **Finland**, the informal cross-party Network of Women Members of the Finnish Parliament, established in 1991, drafted amendments to the law on gender equality in 1994 and the right of children to daycare in 1997 that were subsequently adopted by the parliament. The network also contributed to the drafting of legislation on the provision of microloans to women entrepreneurs.

In **Malawi**, the parliamentary cross-party women's caucus can be traced back to 1996. From the beginning this caucus adopted a women's interest agenda aimed at advancing the welfare and interests of women. The women's caucus worked closely with the Malawi Law Commission, the Women's Commission in the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, as well as women activists and academics, to change discriminatory legislation.²⁸

²⁷ Fabian Women Mentoring Programme. Available from: <http://fabianwomen.org.uk/mentoring/>.

²⁸ Chr. Michelsen Institute, "Acting jointly on behalf of women? The cross-party women's caucus in Malawi", May 2016. Available from: <https://www.cmi.no/publications/5820-acting-jointly-on-behalf-of-women>.

In the **United Kingdom**, the informal Parliamentary Group for Women in Parliament was founded in 2010 with the goals to have more female representation in politics as well as having a more positive portrayal of women in the media. In 2015, they created a new parliamentary select committee on Women and Equality, which was a result of their 2014 report titled: "Improving Parliament: Creating a better and more representative House."²⁹

In **Nepal**, there is an informal women's caucus in the Constituent Assembly, which was established in 2002.³⁰ As of the last elections in 2013, Nepal has a 30 percent representation of women in the assembly, with 172 women and 403 men.³¹ The Constituent Assembly Women's Caucus actively worked to ensure that inclusion, equal representation and women's rights were in the new constitution, which was adopted in September 2015.³²

In **Mongolia**, an informal women's caucus, founded in 2012, initiated funding for the construction of a maternal hospital and disposable clean delivery kits. They also introduced and passed legislation to ban smoking and initiated legislation on citizen health. They are currently in the process of revising the law against family/domestic violence.³³

²⁹ IPU, "Database on Women's Caucuses: United Kingdom". Available from: http://w3.ipu.org/en/womens-caucus/united-kingdom/from_search/.

³⁰ Agora, "Women's Parliamentary Caucuses. A Virtual Discussion on AGORA and iKNOW Politics", May 2016. Available from: <http://www.agora-parl.org/ar/node/3391>.

³¹ IPU, "Nepal: Byabasthapika-Sansad (Legislature - Parliament)", 2014. Available from: http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/2386_e.htm.

³² Constitution of Nepal: 2015. Available from: <http://www.icnl.org/research/library/files/Nepal/Nepalconst.pdf>

³³ IPU, "Database on Women's Caucuses: Mongolia". Available from: http://w3.ipu.org/en/womens-caucus/mongolia/from_search/.



IV. Strengthening gender equality in UNDP parliamentary assistance programming

Photo: Women in politics in Montenegro receive certificates after a UNDP training course in gender equality
Photo Credit: Vlado Kilibarda, UNDP Montenegro

IV. Strengthening gender equality in UNDP parliamentary assistance programming

This section focuses on the *approaches* in combatting gender inequality and maps UNDP programming.

Recognizing that women’s meaningful participation in democratic governance requires their equal participation in elected office at all levels of leadership. Parliaments that support both the empowerment of women as parliamentary representatives and the adoption of specific gender equality frameworks while simultaneously improving the application of a gender mainstreaming approach in policy making are more likely to achieve sustainable, substantive gender equality objectives. Accordingly, UNDP believes that sustainable progress towards gender equality rests on two complementary, strategic pillars: gender mainstreaming and gender-targeted approaches (see Box 9).

Box 9. Approaches for gender equality

The **gender mainstreaming** approach refers to the method of integrating a gender dimension into broader programming approaches. Programming dedicated to improving the law-making capacities of legislators, for example, might integrate a component focused on drafting gender-sensitive and non-discriminatory legislative provisions in line with international standards and commitments.

The **gender-targeted** approach involves programmes, projects or activities that specifically target men or women. This might include supporting parliamentarians in establishing a faction or informal network on combating violence against women, or building the capacity of women parliamentarians in public speaking. Gender-targeted approaches also include initiatives that specifically target men as parliamentary actors, ensuring that men contribute equally to the adoption and implementation of parliamentary gender equality policies, practices and processes.

A number of UNDP Country Offices in the ECA region do not implement parliamentary assistance programmes. The reasons vary and include a challenging political environment, limited donor resources, the presence of other parliament-oriented international actors, prioritization of other portfolios and/or alternative programmatic arrangements in this sphere (see Section 3.3). However, UNDP offers parliaments and local councils substantial **ad-hoc assistance** on a demand-driven or needs basis. This form of assistance is an opportunity to provide them with gender-mainstreamed or gender-targeted support.

Seven UNDP Country Offices implement parliamentary assistance programmes of some kind: **Serbia, Georgia, Moldova, Kosovo, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan**. Five of these programmes (in Kyrgyzstan, Serbia, Georgia, Moldova and Kosovo) have gender dimensions, while Tajikistan and Belarus have no programmes for parliamentary assistance. The remaining seven Country Offices implement ad-hoc parliamentary assistance initiatives, many of which include gender-targeted or gender-mainstreamed activities (see Annex 3).

4.1 Gender-mainstreamed parliamentary assistance programmes

In **Serbia, Kosovo** and **Moldova**, UNDP takes a gender-mainstreaming approach to parliamentary assistance. Through its [Strengthening the Oversight Function and Transparency of the Parliament](#) (2011-2015), **UNDP in Serbia** supported parliamentarians to enhance the oversight and scrutiny of practices in parliament. The cross-cutting nature of this programme allowed a gender perspective to be integrated in each of the thematic areas previously addressed, bringing in gender-sensitive rules and procedures in parliament, increasing the proportion and capacity of women parliamentarians, and establishing legislative frameworks for gender equality.

UNDP in Kosovo pursues both a gender-mainstreamed and gender-targeted approach in its parliamentary assistance programming. The UNDP [Parliamentary Development for Social Policies](#) (2011-2015) project developed parliamentarians' capacities for policy planning, implementation and administration, with a focus on participatory, inclusive and gender-sensitive development and social policymaking.

UNDP in Moldova supports electoral assistance and parliamentary strengthening in its democratic governance programme. It is innovative in its attempt to combine in one programme two areas of UNDP support often kept separate at the programmatic level. [Improving the Quality of Moldovan Democracy through Parliamentary and Electoral Support](#) (2012-2016) contains a strong gender component aimed at improving parliament's institutional capacity to meet European Union standards in human rights and gender equality and to mainstream gender considerations in electoral systems and processes.

UNDP in Ukraine has strengthened the gender-mainstreaming approach of its parliamentary assistance programme. The "Rada za Evropu: Capacity-Building in Support of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine" project (2016-2018) aims to strengthen the capacity of the Verkhovna Rada to produce quality legislation and monitor its implementation, including laws pertaining to the implementation of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement. The project includes a component for the development of gender mainstreaming capacities of the Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.

4.2 Gender-targeted parliamentary assistance programmes

UNDP in Kyrgyzstan uses a gender-targeted approach, in cooperation with the UN Gender Theme Group, taking actions to develop the capacity of women MPs, providing technical expertise to drafting and endorsement of gender-related draft laws, as well as advocating for national implementation of international human rights obligations, such as CEDAW. In the 2015 parliamentary elections, UNDP developed a [Gender Rating Analysis of Political Parties](#), thus promoting gender mainstreaming in the activities and campaigns of the political parties. The rating serves as a gender-screening tool for MPs. During the October 2015 parliamentary elections, UNDP implemented gender-related parliamentary initiatives through its project *Women as Peaceful Voters and Women as Candidates*, supported by the UN Peacebuilding Support Office. This is an example of how UNDP provides parliamentary support throughout the electoral cycle, linking several critical stages and expanding support to women politicians beyond the immediate the election. UNDP Kyrgyzstan mobilized women MPs elected in 2015 to serve as mentors to the new generation of women politicians at local and in rural areas of the country.

Through the [UN Joint Programme to Enhance Gender Equality in Georgia](#) (2012-2014), **UNDP in Georgia** partnered with UNFPA and UN Women to promote gender equality, with a focus on women's political and economic empowerment; realization of their sexual and reproductive rights; and elimination of gender-based violence. In addition, UNDP supported the establishment of mechanisms at the local level to facilitate networking and capacity development among women councillors and politicians, including with the establishment of a women local councillors' forum.

4.3 Success factors in gender-sensitive parliamentary programming

For both gender-targeted and gender-mainstreamed programming, a number of success factors have been noted by UNDP and parliamentary interlocutors. They are as follows:

- National policy-based programmatic initiatives
- Demand-driven programming processes
- Consultative approaches
- Programmatic flexibility
- Innovative programming arrangements
- Dual programming approaches: gender mainstreaming and gender-targeted approaches
- Application of gender equality tools at each programme and/or project management stage
- Effective donor coordination
- Programmatic coordination among international and local actors; in-house UNDP presence

Programmes built upon the foundations of **national policy** – whether national action plans for gender equality, national development strategies, or poverty-reduction strategies – are among the most effective and sustainable. In **Montenegro**, UNDP's gender equality initiatives, for example, are all based on the 2008 National Action Plan for Gender Equality. This means that the Department of Gender Equality in the Ministry of Human Rights and Minority Rights – responsible for overseeing implementation of the NAP – becomes the owner and key stakeholder in UNDP initiatives. In the case of gender-related parliamentary initiatives within the NAP, parliament serves as the key responsible actor.

Similarly, **demand-driven** approaches are usually most successful in achieving sustainable outcomes. In **Serbia**, UNDP's large-scale parliamentary assistance programmes are the result of prioritization of objectives by parliamentary actors, who identify entry points for UNDP programmatic support and ensure that the support UNDP offers is what the National Assembly needs. Such approaches are reinforced when accompanied by a **consultative process** involving key programme stakeholders, partners and beneficiaries – as, for example, in Montenegro, where women MPs serve as members of UNDP programme advisory boards established to identify and develop gender-related programming entry points for UNDP, including in parliament. In certain countries, however, parliamentary mobilization on gender issues is dependent upon UNDP-initiated interventions. In such contexts, UNDP plays a key facilitating role, enabling women MPs and staff to come together to discuss issues that are not systematically addressed within parliament itself.

Some programming arrangements can create opportunities for cross-fertilization of ideas and good practices within UNDP as well as externally, with important spillover effects for implementing partners and beneficiaries. In **Moldova**, UNDP has developed a joint parliamentary and election assistance project that requires close cooperation between two institutionally separate programming streams, partially breaking down the “silo” approach. Good practices emerging from UNDP’s engagement with the Central Election Commission have been transferred in a modified form to parliament. Likewise, in the absence of a fully-fledged parliamentary assistance programme, UNDP in **Kyrgyzstan** engages and supports women parliamentarians, women local councillors and parliamentary gender equality mechanisms through its electoral programming.

Programmatic flexibility is a critical success factor, particularly in the realm of politics. Political developments in **Ukraine** have disrupted traditional programming lines and diverted funds from traditional programmes; UNDP has responded by introducing a gender mainstreaming approach, with an emphasis on the Government’s broader governance restoration and reconciliation efforts.

UNDP in **Armenia** took a flexible approach on the eve of local elections in 2008, implementing activities aimed at encouraging women to run as local candidates in communities in five regions, resulting in a 20 percent increase in women candidates in these regions. Though the last-minute nature of the initiative limited its ultimate impact, given electoral regulations regarding candidate registration and the limited period in which to develop and run on an electoral platform, UNDP’s ability to quickly capitalize on a window of opportunity resulted in the large-scale Women in Local Democracy (WiLD) programme, which is still achieving results today.

Specifically, the initial project and its results revealed that there is interest and huge untapped potential among women at the community level to engage in local decision-making. With tested approaches and certain innovative components, the WiLD programme reached about 3000 women from 2012 to 2016. The programme developed the capacities of women in pre- and post-electoral periods and advanced participatory and gender-sensitive decision-making at the local level, and helped UNDP to act as a ‘Gender Hub’ for the ongoing territorial administration reform targeting community consolidation. Between 2012 and mid-2016, UNDP supported 148 women running for local office, of whom 99 were elected mayors or local council members.³⁴

A flexible programming approach has allowed UNDP in **Georgia** to scale up its local activities, using this programmatic stream as a means to indirectly engage national-level policymakers on local policy priorities identified by women local councillors. With limited parliamentary programming in place, UNDP in **Kazakhstan** has increasingly engaged women MPs and women’s civil society on issues such as gender quotas at activity level, which is an approach that allows the Country Office greater room for maneuvering.

³⁴ Note: At the time this report was written, elections were being held in more than 450 communities in Armenia. The complete picture on statistics of the WiLD project’s beneficiaries will become available in October 2016.

Introducing where possible a **dual approach to programming** – that is, both gender-mainstreamed as well as gender-targeted parliamentary assistance programming – facilitates the achievement of gender equality outcomes. A two-track approach ensures that specific gender needs are addressed, particularly in support to gender equality mechanisms, but also that gender mainstreaming capacity development initiatives are not neglected. Both UNDP's Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017 and its Strategic Plan 2014-2017, in which gender is mainstreamed across all its programming priorities, provide important **policy guidance** to UNDP Country Offices in the sphere of gender mainstreaming. Likewise, the development of **gender-specific programme management tools** – such as checklists for each stage of the programme or project cycle – provide a detailed and standardized approach to mainstreaming gender into programme development, implementation and evaluation.

Coordinating donor activities is critical to avoid overlap and duplication. In **Serbia**, UNDP participated in a mapping of donor initiatives to better coordinate and target international parliamentary assistance; this also allows for scaling up of activities and pooling of resources where relevant. An increase in the reporting of gender-based violence and female infanticide in **Georgia** led to the establishment of a Gender Theme Group (GTG) that includes representatives of international and national agencies working in an ad-hoc, issue-based manner. The Political Participation Task Force in the GTG allows international organizations, including UNDP, to work directly with national actors such as the Gender Equality Council to develop and coordinate advocacy initiatives, for example, the introduction of legislative gender quotas ahead of the 2016 parliamentary elections.

In an effort to pool resources and avoid duplication by numerous international actors in **Albania**, UNDP coordinates its programmatic planning and implementation with other key actors, resulting in an agreed-upon division of labour. With OSCE focusing on technical parliamentary support, UN Women on support to parliamentary gender equality mechanisms, UNDP has focused on integrating a gender perspective in local governance reform. Programmatic coordination has also enabled fruitful partnerships to develop, resulting in joint initiatives, such as the provision of support to the women's caucus established in late 2013; advocacy efforts of MPs to introduce gender quotas at local level; and the cross-party alliance of MPs promoting more effective implementation provision of gender-based violence.

Likewise, **coordination among international and local actors** is essential. UNDP in **Kosovo** channels all requests from the Assembly through its parliamentary assistance officer, creating a centralized mechanism through which UNDP can subsequently allocate programming requests to the most relevant department within the Country Office. Direct communication with parliaments can be facilitated through the placing of UNDP experts in parliament itself, as is the case with UNDP in Kosovo and UNDP in **Moldova**. In Kosovo, UNDP set up a project office in the assembly to provide immediate and coordinated programmatic support, while in Moldova, international technical experts have been placed in parliament to support the newly established Women's Caucus.

4.4 Challenges in gender equality mainstreaming

Despite a number of successes, challenges persist in mainstreaming gender concerns in parliamentary and other governance programming. Although many UNDP Country Offices are experimenting with new **institutional and organizational approaches** to programming to promote programmatic synergies and opportunities for collaboration, operational effectiveness still requires programmatic separation according to departments and divisions, sometimes leading to programming “silos”. As a result, even programming approaches that link sectors, such as the UNDP parliamentary and electoral assistance programme in Moldova, result in activities being implemented separately. In other cases, where UNDP Country Offices implement separate parliamentary assistance and gender-targeted parliamentary support programmes, for institutional, organizational and reporting purposes, opportunities for collaboration between programmes remain limited.

However, UNDP Country Offices across the region are increasingly experimenting with innovative ways of enhancing gender mainstreaming in programming. In **Serbia**, UNDP’s work on anti-corruption, for example, has spurred members of the Women’s Parliamentary Network to participate in the Global Organization of Parliamentarians against Corruption (GOPAC) caucus. In **Kosovo**, UNDP’s anti-corruption project involves the Women’s Caucus members. Women MPs are also expected to a part of the GOPAC chapter being set up in Kosovo with UNDP support. In Moldova, the Deputy Chairwoman of Parliament, who played a leading role in establishing the Women’s Caucus, was one of the initiators of the national GOPAC Chapter.



V. Entry points for programme support

Photo: Women MPs in Kosovo discussing the gender-based aspects of development
Photo Credit: UNDP Kosovo

V. Entry points for programme support

Given the broad range of gender equality mechanisms and strategies currently in place throughout the ECAREgion, there is no shortage of entry points for scaling up programmatic support to parliamentary and sub-national gender equality governance structures. This section provides an overview of programming recommendations, based on existing good practice. The entry points for further integrating a gender perspective in parliamentary assistance and related programming were assessed by asking the following questions:

- How can existing parliamentary assistance programming better integrate specific gender equality objectives?
- What existing programming good practices could be scaled up or replicated in the ECAREgion?
- What comparative advantage/niche does UNDP enjoy in the region and how can it be better capitalized on?
- What windows of opportunity exist to strengthen UNDP's parliamentary assistance programming from a gender perspective?
- What challenges will UNDP face, and how can these be addressed?
- What resources does UNDP possess and what further resources will it need to better support gender-sensitive parliamentary assistance programming?

Recommendations are presented according to the three thematic areas covered in this paper: 1) Gender-sensitive policies in parliament: representation of women and inclusive rules and procedures, 2) Empowerment of women in parliament, and 3) Adoption of legislative and policy frameworks for gender equality:

5.1 Gender-sensitive policies in parliament: representation of women and inclusive rules and procedures

5.1.1 Implement and review gender-sensitive parliamentary codes of conduct

Research indicates that, where they have been adopted, very few parliamentary codes of conduct include references to gender inequalities and gender-based discrimination.³⁵ Codes of conduct provide the overarching framework guiding the comportment of parliamentarians and staff.

- Build a strategic partnership with an international organization (for example, IPU, OSCE/ODIHR, NDI, UN Women, CoE) or national technical agency or think tank to research existing good practices of gender-sensitive parliamentary codes of conduct and develop guidelines on integrating a gender perspective into codes of conduct.
- Create a regional knowledge product that could be presented to parliamentary committees responsible for Rules of Procedure and parliamentary functioning. Such an initiative could be undertaken by specific Country Offices as a component of

³⁵ Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Gender-sensitive Parliaments", 2010 and OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), "Background Study on Ethical Standards for Parliamentarians in the OSCE Region", 2011.

parliamentary assistance programmes, or at the regional level by UNDP and other UN agencies, resulting in a regional compilation of good practices.

5.1.2 Utilize open data for procedures in parliament

Parliamentary assistance programme often contain a component to provide support to the administration or secretariat, for example, support to improve ICT or human resource services, or procure equipment.

- Include a component devoted to the parliamentary collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data, possibly as part of larger-scale programme aimed at building the capacities of statistical offices. Sex-disaggregated data is critical to gender-sensitive policymaking.
- Initiate activities such as field visits by parliamentary staff to the central statistical office in the country to learn more about data collection methodologies, as well as support to parliamentary research centres to enhance data collection and analysis techniques.

5.1.3 Enhance oversight functions of parliament

Though their oversight function, parliamentarians play an important role in developing inclusive gender-sensitive policymaking. **UNDP in Kosovo**, for example, supported this process through a project (2010-2015) dedicated to improving the capacities of parliamentarians to deliver gender-responsive policies. Addressing the policy disconnects between national and local levels is an important first step in making policy more gender-responsive. Women parliamentarians should also be empowered to participate in broader oversight functions such as in anti-corruption efforts.

- Develop programmatic activities to increase communication and cooperation on policy-related issues between national and local elected offices.
- Support the establishment of dedicated gender equality mechanisms in local councils, the establishment of regional task forces or networks, or the organization of regular meetings between national parliamentary gender equality mechanisms and their local counterparts.
- Facilitate the participation of women MPs in anti-corruption efforts and mechanisms.

5.1.4 Promote women's participation in parliamentary process bodies

More than 40 countries have introduced legislative provisions to ensure minimum representation of each gender on candidate or political party lists. Across the ECAREgion, many political parties have also adopted internal or voluntary quotas for women's representation not only on party lists, but also within party decision-making bodies and positions. These include provisions ensuring representation of women's caucuses in party congresses, delegations and in leadership bodies, such as selection or nomination commissions. By contrast, few parliaments have adopted rules stipulating a minimum representation of women MPs in decision-making bodies (such as committees), or positions (such as speaker, deputy speaker, party whip, or committee chairs and/or deputy chairs). UNDP is well placed to work with women's caucuses and/or other gender equality mechanisms on campaigns to achieve better gender balance within key parliamentary

bodies, such as committees, as well as in decision-making positions, including as speaker or deputy speaker.

- Create internal rules or conventions adopted by political parties, including gender representation requirements and provisions regarding national delegations to international bodies.
- Support internal party women's wings and cross-party women's wings or caucuses in parliament

[5.1.5 Promote cross-sectoral cooperation in parliament, electoral management bodies, and parties](#)

In recent years, some Country Offices have developed a more holistic approach to political and electoral support, by identifying programmatic entry points before, during and following elections.

- Increase joint programming between divisions responsible for parliamentary assistance, electoral support, and gender equality and/or women's political participation – on the lines of the UNDP programme in Moldova, "Improving Moldovan Democracy through Parliamentary and Electoral Support" – to further strengthen the UNDP comprehensive approach to the electoral cycle. Such programmes could provide an entry point for joint activities with MPs and representatives of electoral management bodies (EMBs) and political parties.
- Discuss technical topics including development of effective enforcement mechanisms vis-à-vis legislated quotas by EMBs, and monitoring enforcement by parliamentary bodies.
- Improve knowledge sharing among representatives to enhance effective voter outreach and awareness raising; preventing and addressing gender-based electoral violence; and collection as well as analysis of sex-disaggregated data.
- Utilize and share good practices in performing internal gender audits, developing gender action plans, drafting gender equality and equal opportunity policies, and ensuring capacity development of women members in these bodies.

[5.1.6 Conduct research on assistance to political parties](#)

Another area receiving increasing attention is the role of political parties as gatekeepers of women's political participation. Engaging political party leaders in supporting women's political candidacy is critical to increasing women's representation in parliament.

- Develop comparative research on internal party women's wings and cross-party women's wings or caucuses in parliament. Such research could shed light on similarities and differences in internal and cross-party structures as well as opportunities for increased cooperation between such structures on gender equality and women's empowerment advocacy.
- Determine the impact of adopted legislated gender quotas applied to local elections.
- Case study countries could be used to shed light on how the quota is applied, regional differences in complying with the quota, and a comparative regional analysis of the results. Such a study could shed light on gaps in current legislation,

identify factors contributing both to compliance and non-compliance, the study could serve as a basis for further programming.

5.1.7 Promote a regional networking of women parliamentarians

UNDP and other UN agencies, with IPU and other parliamentary actors such as the National Democratic Institute, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy and international civil society organizations should:

- Develop joint programming to support an annual regional meeting of women speakers and/or deputy speakers of parliament in the ECA region, modeled on the IPU annual meeting of speakers of parliament.
- Expand participation to include women deputy speakers or vice-presidents to increase the number of women able to participate, and provide them with a forum to discuss leadership strategies for reaching top parliamentary positions.

In addition, women are increasingly assuming leadership of parliamentary committees outside the realm of “soft” policy issues in the ECA region, for example, as chairs of committees on security, defence, foreign affairs, budget, public finance, and European Integration.

- Take advantage of opportunities for women chairs of such committees, with the aim of facilitating a sharing of experiences, strategies and lessons learned among women in these positions.

Regional conferences and workshops serve as invaluable networking opportunities for women parliamentarians and local councilors. However, such events do not always provide sufficient time for technical discussion and peer-to-peer knowledge sharing on specific issues, such as strategic planning, development of Memorandums of Understanding, or amendment of parliamentary Rules of Procedure. Such events would also provide an opportunity for staff members of women’s caucuses and/or gender equality committees to participate in international events.

- Support the development of training modules for MPs interested in establishing a women’s caucus, network or other gender equality mechanisms.
- Support the organization of working-level bilateral or regional meetings devoted to technical issues (in partnership with international actors such as OSCE, IPU, NDI, IRI, and the Westminster Foundation).
- Support sub-regional exchanges among women parliamentarians

5.1.8 Enhanced support to organizations and groups working on gender equality

Gender equality groups comprise a key component of almost all parliamentary assistance programmes in the ECA region. This support can be scaled up through regular regional and cross-regional meetings of representatives of gender equality mechanisms such as women’s caucuses. As noted in this study, the Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities has instituted a gender quota for national delegations to its meetings, while the IPU has adopted rules requiring minimum representation of women in national delegations

to annual IPU meetings. A similar approach could be supported as a means to increase women's representation in global or regional parliamentary caucuses, such as GOPAC.

- Support cross-regional events to encourage parliaments in the ECA region to establish such mechanisms.
- Facilitate partnerships between MPs from parliaments with advanced gender equality architecture and those from parliaments just establishing them.
- Initiate discussions with inter-governmental forums to support increased representation of women in national delegations to international meetings, conferences and discussions.
- Apply gender quotas for parliamentary study visits to other parliaments, participation in international UN conferences and meetings, or meetings of other international and regional bodies.

5.2 Empowerment of women in parliament

5.2.1 Mentorship programmes

Political mentorship programs are slowly increasing in number, and are building on the examples of mentorship networks for women in business and other professional careers. It is often a cost-effective investment and a means of developing long-term relationships between MPs and politicians. Mentorship relationships can be developed between women incumbents and those women newly elected to office, between men incumbents and newly entering women parliamentarians, between older and younger politicians, and between women in different areas of expertise. Existing mentoring models – such as those developed by the Danish NGO KVINFOR; the Mentoring Women's Network Foundation in the United States or UNDP in Montenegro could be adapted for this purpose.³⁶

- Support the establishment of a parliamentary mentoring network programme, in cooperation with existing gender equality mechanisms or with parliamentary leadership bodies, as a means to empower newly elected women MPs in particular.

5.2.2 Media and public relations training

Media training, including social media training, is a valuable investment for women parliamentarians and members of gender equality mechanisms. Intensive media training sessions prepare women to effectively communicate messages, influence target audiences in a succinct manner, develop crucial media bites, and cultivate negotiation and persuasion skills that are transferable to parliamentary core functions such as plenary debate.

- Tailor existing training specifically to gender equality mechanisms such as women's caucuses.
- Sustain public engagement and ensure high visibility using social media – for example, setting up Twitter accounts for parliamentarians and support the writing of

³⁶ The American Mentoring Women's Network Foundation provides a virtual mentorship programme, online leadership training, and the opportunity to participate in local chapter events. Available from: <http://mentoringwomensnetwork.com/>.

blogs – to generate high visibility for little or no investment. Use open source websites and free format for sustainability.³⁷

5.2.3 Promote collaboration of MPs with local councillors

Networks of women local councillors have been established in a number of countries in the region, including Albania, Georgia and Armenia. These networks provide invaluable opportunities for women at local level to share experiences and strategies as well as build solidarity across party lines. Making such networks sustainable is a constant challenge.

- Support the organization of annual forums or congresses for local women councillors from different regions in a given country.

5.2.4 Exchange of best practices

The iKNOWPolitics online portal provides a wealth of information on women and gender equality in politics. UNDP's online discussion on women's caucuses in 2012 constituted one of the first events of its kind, allowing representatives of women's caucuses, networks and informal parliamentary bodies to share experiences and lessons learned with one another, and other parliamentarians interested in establishing such mechanisms.³⁸ iKNOWPolitics also serves as an online networking forum among women politicians and gender advocates. The portal is currently available in English, Arabic, French and Spanish. Alternatively, hosting an online discussion on women's caucuses or other gender equality mechanisms directly in Russian could provide an opportunity for women MPs and politicians to share good practices and lessons learned with one another.

- Translate the iKNOWPolitics site into Russian and other languages relevant in the region
- Support programmes to provide technical assistance to recently established gender equality mechanisms, such as women's caucuses. UNDP in Moldova has pursued this strategy by hiring a former Canadian parliamentarian and gender advocate to work with the Moldovan Women's Caucus on topics related strategic planning, prioritizing objectives, engaging in outreach, and building relations with parliamentary leadership.

5.3. Adoption of legislative and policy frameworks for gender equality

5.3.1 Integrate public hearings on gender equality and related topics

A number of parliamentary assistance programmes have focused on enhancing constituency outreach capacities, including through the organization of public or "town hall" hearings. Such hearings provide an opportunity for citizens to directly communicate concerns and

³⁷ In Serbia, UNDP set up Twitter accounts for the Women's Parliamentary Network and GOPAC and for their blogs. The National Assembly assigned parliamentary staff to support their activities on social media. For more information, see UNDP study on sustaining public engagement using social media: Strategy of National Assembly for Building and Sustaining Public Engagement Using Social Media. Available from: http://www.rs.undp.org/content/serbia/en/home/library/democratic_governance/strategy-of-national-assembly-for-building-and-sustaining-public.html.

³⁸ iKnowPolitics, "Women's caucuses and alliances for sustainable development," January 31, 2012. Available from: <http://iknowpolitics.org/en/2012/01/womens-caucuses-and-alliances-sustainable-development>.

priorities to their elected representatives, and for members of parliament to receive expert input and feedback on draft legislation. UNDP has supported public hearings on violence against women and domestic violence, including on gaps in national legislative frameworks vis-à-vis the Istanbul Convention. While a number of resources on organizing public hearings are available, they do not address gender-related issues or provide guidance on how to make public hearings more gender-inclusive or gender-sensitive.³⁹

- Support public hearings on topics related to gender equality as part of a required activity of parliamentary assistance programmes including; organizing public hearings on specific legislative drafts, encouraging parliamentary committees to invite experts to provide a gender analysis of the proposed legislation, as well as presenting findings and recommendations as part of the public hearing event.
- Support a review of existing resources and develop guidelines for organizing gender-sensitive public hearings in the ECA region.

5.3.2 Enhance the role of women’s caucuses in the legislation process

Women’s caucuses are rarely endowed with powers to initiate legislation. However, where they have been established, such structures play a significant role in legislative advocacy. As a result, some women’s caucuses are developing strategies to increase their influence in the legislative sphere, such as in Kosovo through the formation of strategic voting blocs. Such a component could include skill development in areas such as negotiation, conflict management, advocacy, cross-party networking and media outreach.

- Integrate a specific component on effective strategies for influencing legislative and policy formulation, such as the formation of strategic voting blocs.

5.3.3 Utilize and develop tools and resources on gender-sensitive legislation

Important resources have been developed to guide the drafting of gender equality and violence against women legislation, such as the UN Women *Handbook for Legislation on Violence against Women*, and the *Handbook for CEDAW-based Legal Reviews* (for the Asia-Pacific region).⁴⁰ A template or checklist could contain technical information to support parliamentary committees in assessing draft laws from a gender perspective. Importantly, as not all parliaments host a gender equality committee or a multi-portfolio committee that addresses gender issues, the template should provide all parliamentary committees with guidance on assessing laws from a gender perspective.

³⁹ National Democratic Institute, “Service and Accountability: Public Hearings Manual”, 2007. Available from: <https://www.ndi.org/files/Service%20and%20accountability%20Public%20Hearing%20Manual.pdf> and OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, “Public Hearings Manual”, 2006. Available from: http://www.oscebih.org/documents/osce_bih_doc_2010122016042890eng.pdf.

⁴⁰ UN Women, “Handbook for Legislation on Violence against Women”, 2012. Available from: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2012/12/handbook-for-legislation-on-violence-against-women#view>; UN Women, “Do Our Laws Promote Gender Equality? A Handbook for CEDAW-based Legal Reviews”, 2010. Available from: <http://www2.unwomen.org/~media/field%20office%20eseasia/docs/publications/2012/do%20our%20law%20Opromote%20gender%20equality%20cedaw%20english.pdf?v=1&d=20150807T032941>.

- Support the development of a gender-sensitive legislation template, based on key international obligations contained in CEDAW as well as regional gender equality commitments, e.g., by the Council of Europe.
- Support national parliamentary committees and other gender equality mechanisms such as women's caucuses in adapting the checklist to country contexts, as a means to include national gender equality obligations as enshrined in the constitution or national legislation.

Annex 1. List of persons interviewed

Parliamentary representatives

Ainuru Altybaeva, Parliament of Kyrgyzstan
Elena Bodnarenco, Parliament of Moldova
Nada Drobnjak, Parliament of Montenegro
Dubravka Filipovska, Women's Parliamentary Network, National Assembly of Serbia
Mimoza Hafizi, Parliament of Albania
Manana Kobakhidze, First Deputy Speaker, Parliament of Georgia
Yulia Krasnogolov, Gender Coordinator, Equal Opportunities Group, Verkhovna Rada, Ukraine
Liljana Popovska, Parliament of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
Teuta Sahatqija, Assembly of Kosovo

Representatives of civil society

Charita Jashi, Georgia

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Bljana Nastovska, UNDP, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
Tatyana Kudina, UNDP Ukraine

Annex 3. Overview of approaches to address issues in UNDP parliamentary assistance programming*

Region	UNDP CO	Gender-mainstreamed programme	Gender-targeted programme	Ad hoc parliamentary assistance with Gender Dimension
Central Asia	Uzbekistan			Support to the Enhancement of Law-making: Rule-making and Regulatory Impact Assessment
	Kyrgyzstan		Women as Peaceful Voters and Women as Candidates: building capacity of women MPs, providing technical expertise for drafting and endorsement of gender-related draft laws	
	Kazakhstan			Parliamentary assistance component at activity level, rather than at project or programme level.
CIS	Armenia		Women in Local Democracy: capacity building of local elected officials	
	Ukraine	Rada za Evropu: Capacity-Building in Support of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine: enhancing law-making capacities of the parliamentarians to produce quality legislation and monitor its implementation, including legislation pertaining to the implementation of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement with a special focus on gender-sensitive capacity-building support to the Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada.		
	Georgia		UN Joint Programme to Enhance Gender Equality in Georgia: focus on women's political and economic empowerment, realization of their sexual and reproductive rights and elimination of gender-based violence.	Promoting Credible and Sustainable Electoral Institutions and Processes; Strengthening the System of Parliamentary Democracy in Georgia: *ended in 2014
	Moldova	Improving the Quality of Moldovan Democracy through Parliamentary and Electoral Support: improving the institutional capacity of parliament to meet EU human rights and gender equality standards and mainstream gender in electoral systems and processes.		
Western Balkans	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia			Support for gender budgeting as a means to work with local budgetary commissions on transparency-related issues.
	Montenegro			Gender equality programming is embedded within its social inclusion portfolio, focusing on women's political participation, empowerment and entrepreneurship.
	Serbia			Strengthening the Oversight Function and Transparency of Parliament: supporting parliamentary actors to implement good democratic governance practices, focusing on enhancing oversight of the parliament.
	Albania			Strengthening Electoral Processes in Albania
	Bosnia and Herzegovina			Strengthening parliamentary capacities and key institutions mandated with fighting corruption: enhancing parliamentary oversight.
	Kosovo	Parliamentary Development for Social Policies: capacity-building of the assembly, focusing on participatory, inclusive and gender-sensitive development and social policymaking		

* Note: As of March 2016, UNDP Country Offices in Azerbaijan, Belarus, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan do not offer or report substantial support for advancing gender equality in political participation.

Annex 4: Initiatives for gender equality in political participation linked to UN and UNDP policy frameworks

Areas for gender equality in political participation	Links to UNDP Strategic Plan 2014-2017 Outcomes	Links to UNDP Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017	Links to Sustainable Development Goal Targets
1a. Gender-sensitive policy-making at national level	Outcome 2: Citizen expectations for voice, development, the rule of law and accountability are met by stronger systems of democratic governance	Output 4.3: Evidence-informed national strategies and partnerships to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. Support legal and policy reforms to accelerate women's rights in law and practice, eliminate discrimination and eradicate sexual and gender-based violence	Target 16.b: Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development
1b. Development of gender equality advocates (among men and women) in Parliament and society	Outcome 2: Citizen expectations for voice, development, the rule of law and accountability are met by stronger systems of democratic governance	Support women's networks and civil society movements to bring gender equality perspectives into policy making and legal reforms	
1c. Adoption of gender equality legislation	Outcome 2: Citizen expectations for voice, development, the rule of law and accountability are met by stronger systems of democratic governance		Target 5c: Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels
2a. Increase in women's numeric representation	Outcome 2: Citizen expectations for voice, development, the rule of law and accountability are met by stronger systems of democratic governance	Equal participation of women, including young women and marginalized groups, in decision-making	
	Outcome 4: Faster progress is achieved in reducing gender inequality and promoting women's empowerment.	Promote women's participation as voters and candidates in parliamentary election processes	
2b. Adoption of gender-sensitive legislation and policy (gender-sensitive parliaments)	Outcome 2: Citizen expectations for voice, development, the rule of law and accountability are met by stronger systems of democratic governance	Support legal and policy reforms to accelerate women's rights in law and practice, eliminate discrimination and eradicate sexual and gender-based violence	Target 16.6: Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels
3. Empowerment of women in parliament including substantive representation in parliamentary decision-making		Output 4.4: Measures in place to increase women's participation in decision-making.	Target 5.5: Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life Target 16.7: Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels